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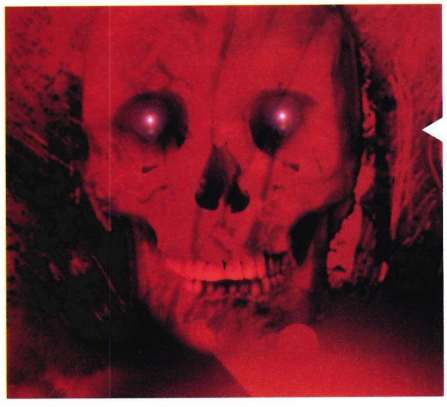
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As usual, all the latest development whispers, video game gossip and insider industry banter can be found within our factual fun-packed news pages. Join us this month for tales of the unexpected on Lara Croft's looming pop stardom, the new McLaren F1 car, The Spice Girls, Allied General, Tenka, Millennium, Tekken 3, Street Fighter 3, Kick Off 97, Manga madness and Lunatik. Oh yeah

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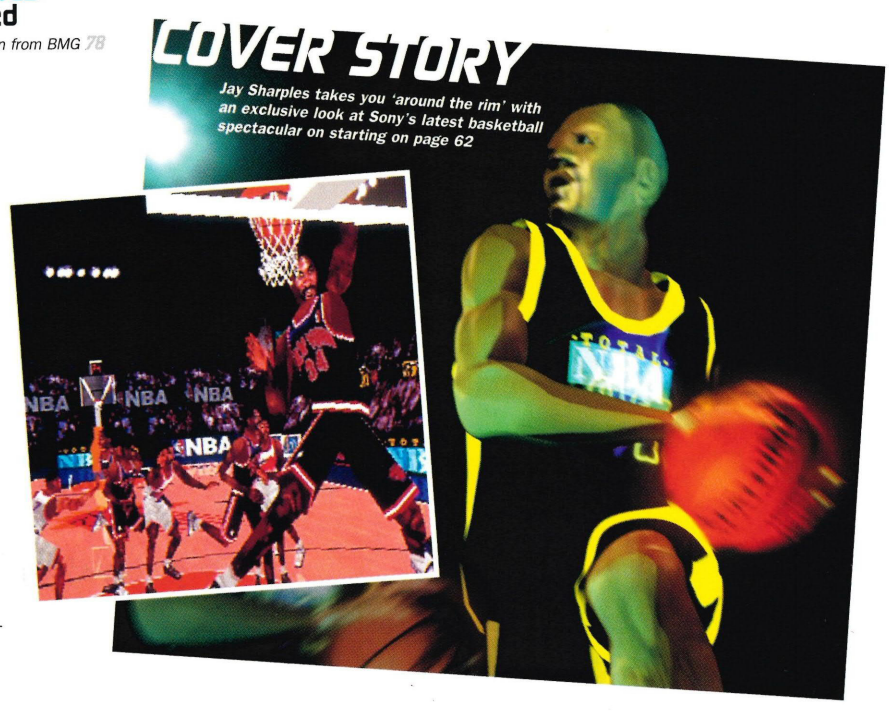
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66 The Glittering Pro Awards 1997
You sent in your loves, hates and votes for numerous 'Best Of '96' awards. Here, in an award ceremony to rival the Brits, our resident industry whore, Dan Whitehead, pops out of a bright red sequinned evening dress and reveals the results. Who will win? Who will lose? Find out inside



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PLAYSTATION PRO was brought to you by: **Ed:** Alex Lee (alexl@idg.co.uk) **Art Ed:** Fiona Howarth **Coaster:** Lomu's Ear **Dep Ed:** Jay Sharples **Reviews Eds:** Steve McNally, Andy Sharp, Dan Whitehead **Production Eds:** Alan Mac & Justine Bowden **Managing Director:** Ian Bloomfield **Publisher:** Robin Wilkinson **Circulation Director:** David Wren **Sales Director:** Carol Ann Barrett **Ad Manager:** Lisa Jo Oliver **Ad Exec:** Mark Osborn **Marketing Manager:** Steve Tagger **Database Manager:** V Quin-Harkin 0171 8319252 **Scans:** Mark Forbes **Production Controller:** Barbara Newall **Production Manager:** Alan Capper **Systems:** Nic Moran **PSPro's at:** IDG Media Freepost (SK3038) Macclesfield SK10 4YE Tel: 01625 878888 Fax: 01625 879967 April Issue out 20th March. Don't forget!

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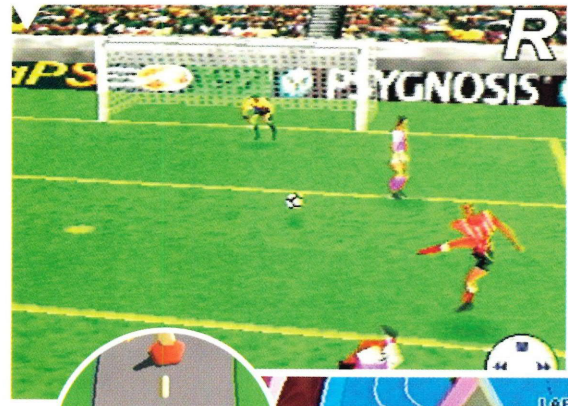
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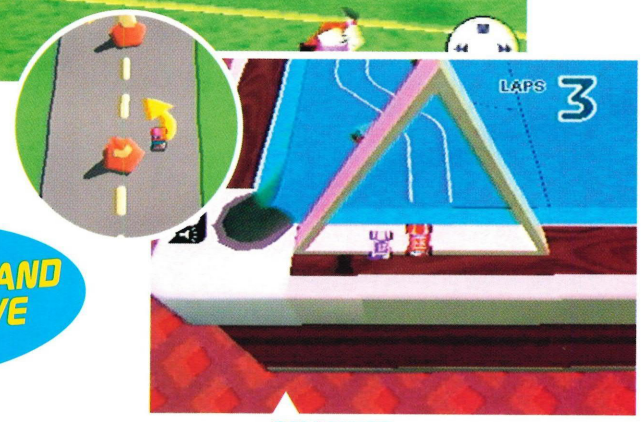
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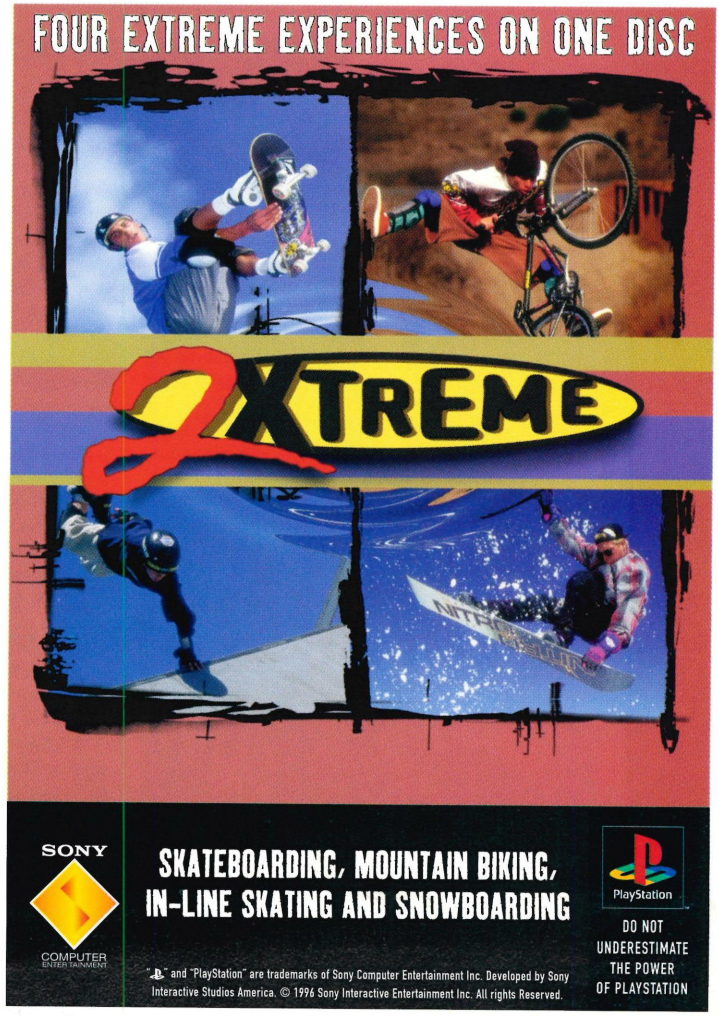
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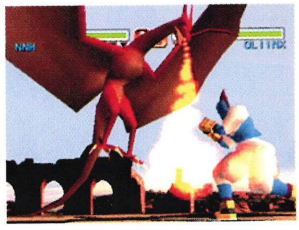




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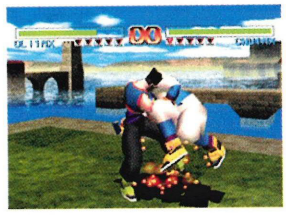
Fire-breathing dragons and scary fireballs a go go! Tobal part deux kicks ass! Oh yeah!

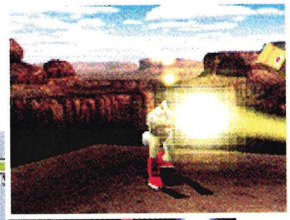
Tobal to Return

Tobal No.1, Square's first 3-D fighting game and its PlayStation debut, returns greatly enhanced as the unimaginatively named Tobal 2. Just like the original, Manga giant Akira Toriyama of Dragon Ball fame undertook the art direction including character and stage designs, making the fighters smoother and richer by employing more polygons and plenty of Gouraud shading touch-ups.

For more precise and realistic control, Tobal 2 has been made compatible with SCE's new analogue controller and the 360-degree battle system now features projectile attacks and more attack/defence options to use from difficult holding positions. The Quest Mode has also been expanded.

The game is being prepared by Dream Factory, the independent team of programming masters who joined forces after separate stints at both Sega AM2 and Namco to produce such beat 'em-up classics as Virtua Fighter 2 and the god-like Tekken. About the only thing missing is an original title. We can but wish...



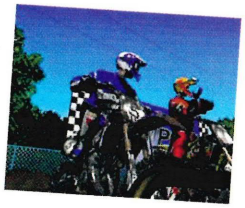


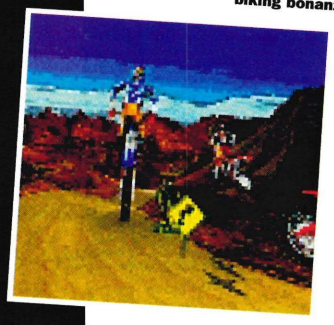


Projectile attacks and all-new characters feature heavily in Tobal No.2

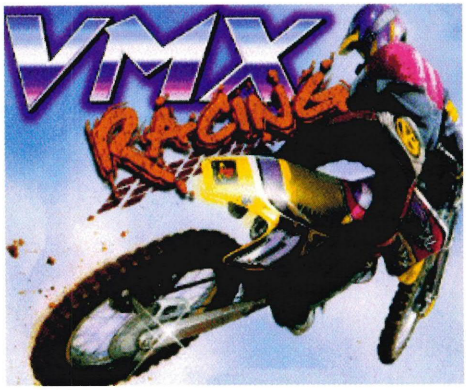
VMX Bandits!

Get down and get dirty with this two-wheeled off-road biking bonanza









Off-road motorcycle mayhem comes to the PlayStation later this year thanks to our friends at Playmates Interactive Entertainment. In its forthcoming racing treat, VMX Racing, you'll get the chance to perform incredible stunts and awesome tricks during play as you have a quick razz around the indoor Supercross circuit or experience outside fun on the specially designed dirt Motocross tracks, ideally suited for big thrills and even bigger spills.

Players compete in a unique fully 3-D real-time racing environment which Playmates reckons sets the standard for all future Motocross simulations. Special throttle settings allow players to perform various manoeuvres and tricks, such as wheelies, kick-outs and skids, on any one of up to eight selectable bikes over a series of eight different tracks. Qualify in all the tournaments and you'll be rewarded with three hidden bonus tracks.

A split-screen two-player mode is also available with an added option to set up the camera angle anywhere you please. Which is nice. Expect a late summer release for this one kids.

RUMOURVILLE



● **HOLLYWOOD OR BUST:** *NAMCO* is allegedly involved in the production of a computer animated movie with graphics to rival the likes of *Disney's* super cool *Toy Story*.

● **SOUL BLADE TO RETURN:** *Yes, Soul Blade 2* has apparently been spotted in the very early development stages over in Japan.

● **A NEW MILLENNIUM?** *Sony* has signed up software developer *Millennium Interactive* to produce the action adventure, *Medieval*, for the PlayStation.

● **PSX RULES:** In a recent issue of Home Entertainment magazine the PlayStation came out on top in a 'CD games machine showdown' – alongside the Saturn and Nintendo's new 64bit marvel. Hurrah!

● **OH ARSE (1):** The official UK version of *Soul Blade* has had its UK release date delayed until May.

● **ROBOTS REVENGE:** *Kileak The Blood 2*, or *Epidemic* as it's now known, is on its way soon. In fact we'll have a full review for you next issue.

● **DIZZY DAN:** Our very own Dan went to the *Activision* press day last week, drank a pathetic two glasses of mulled wine, passed out, cracked his head on a table and woke up in a pile of sick, right in front of the bemused crowd of European industry bods and medieval jesters. Silly sod. It was all to do with the heat, apparently.

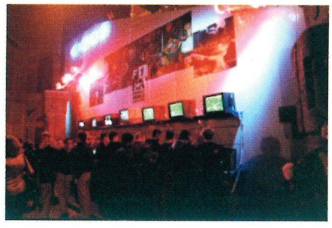
● **EIDOS FC?** Creators of *Soccer 97* and the big boys behind *Tomb Raider* are rumoured to be in the bidding for the Chelsea FC sponsorship rights. Rough costings of such a venture are allegedly around the £10 million mark. Apparently, *Philips* is also interested.

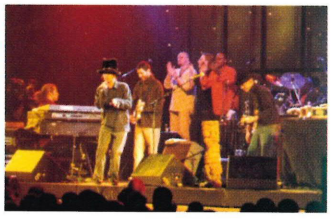


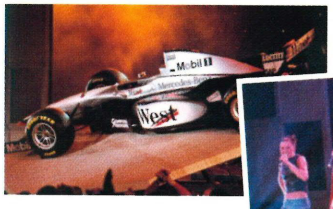
● **OH ARSE (2):** *Eutechnics' Micro Machines* clone, *Motor Mash*, has been put back a few months on the release schedule, as has the *Namco* scorcher, *Rage Racer* and EIDOS Interactive's *Test Drive: Off Road*.

WIN A Video With Fights On

If you thought all Manga videos were about over-the-top martial arts scrapping, you'd be right. In fact, there have been so many memorable pagga moments over the last few years, they've been stuck together in a single 18-rated compilation called Mean and Mercenary – The best fight sequences in the world... ever! From Chun Li's epic scrap with Vega to Sengoku taking on the cybernetic ghost of Yoshikazu Amachi – they're all there. They will be in the shops from 17 March and the Mean and Mercenary label will continue to produce top quality anime, the only catch being you can't win them. To win the first one however, simply enter our easy competition. Just fill in the form below, stating that you're over 18 and answer the question correctly. There are 15 videos up for grabs and, as ever, you don't even have to pay for a stamp (although if you win you'll probably see a fair few going in on the video). Good luck – entries to be in by 30 April. ***Question – Name the hardest member of the PlayStation Pro team***











EIDOS show off, Maclaren shows off its car, Jamiroqui shows off his hat, the lovely Lara Croft shows us her pistols and those irritating Spice Girls show themselves up. Again

Some Stars And A Car, But Where's The Bar?

One of our many jaunts out of the office this month took us to the huge Alexandra Palace in London, where Maclaren was showing off its new F1 car to the world's press. We got dragged along by EIDOS Interactive where, upon arrival, it proved it really has scooped the F1 licence and was showing off about it – big time.

As you can see from the piccies, EIDOS and Maclaren wowed the crowd with a massive video game terminal, a handful of leggy blondes and, of course, good old Lara Croft. Other performing guests on the night included F1 hero David Coulthard, BBC Sports' Steve Rider, funk monkies Jamiroqui, some woman from 'God's Gift' and the dress-popping, let's-all-talk-at-the-same-time-whenever-someone-puts-a-microphone-in-front-of-us female irritations, The Spice Girls.

The music, merriment and laughter went on until the early hours, but unfortunately we got chucked out at 11pm for not being posh enough and giving the hired help grief. Never mind, three cheers for EIDOS anyway.

coming soon...

Tenka



This first-person-perspective blaster from Psygnosis is just one of the many titles we simply didn't have space for this month. This, and all the following, will be here in some shape or form next issue. We promise.

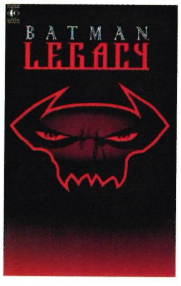
Battlestations



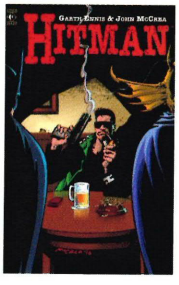
Electronic Arts has Wing Com 4 and Ten Pin Alley all ready for action, but this battle baby's first in line for a full review

Read A Book!

Titan Books gave our office book shelf even more grief this month; three super cool graphic novels arrived for inspection. Batman: Legacy sees the caped crusader off on another mission to stop the nasty 'clench' disease that shook Gotham in the previous book, Contagion.



Gotham's other dark warrior stars in his very own book debut this month too. Hitman, in case you didn't know, is an assassin who was assaulted by some demon and ever since has had the ability to read minds and see through walls. Needless to say, these new talents help his 'business' no end and he sets off to rid Gotham of the evil underground criminals. It's a right riveting read, as they say, and you can get yourself copies of both these titles right away, they are in the shops priced £9.99 and £8.99 respectively.



Triple Fox Treat

Following up on its success with Die Hard Trilogy, Fox Interactive has three new titles lined up for release this summer. X Philes will be thrilled once more when they delve into the X Files: Data Files with the trusty Scully and Mulder.

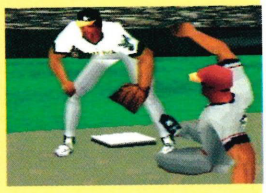
Anastasia, based on the American animated movie of the same name (which is, fact fans, the currently-in-production Silicon Graphics rendered movie hot on the heels of Toy Story, featuring the voice talents of Meg Ryan and Angela Landsbury among others) is next in line, closely followed by the Argonaut-produced action romp, Alien Resurrection. Whether this new interest in the classic sci-fi movie Xenomorph is to tie in with the new Alien 4 flick is unconfirmed at the time of going to press. But we bet it is.





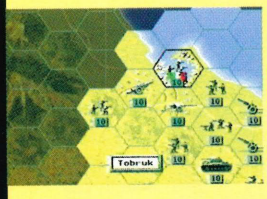
coming soon...

VR Baseball



Distruptor creators, Interplay go stateside for its latest virtual sports release, so expect lots of bat waving and comedy "Steeeerike!" gags coming your way soon

Allied General



Mindscape churns out another army strategy romp for anyone interested in invading inter-continental islands

Lost Vikings 2



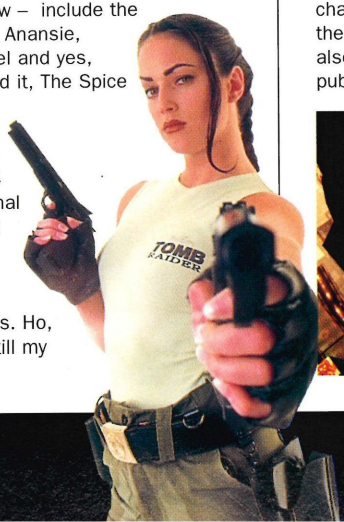
The revamped SNES classic returns in this brand-new PSX stormer from the boys at Interplay

Attractive Girl In Instant Record Deal Shock!

It had to happen, didn't it? EIDOS unleashes Lara Croft and before you know it, Simon Fuller (the man responsible for force feeding us The Spice Girls) has signed up the adventurous action babe for a bid at pop stardom.

Yes, it's true; Lara has her debut single entitled 'Raiders' pencilled in for a March release. The CD will feature not only the title track, but the full-length Tomb Raider advert and pop video that accompanies her tune.

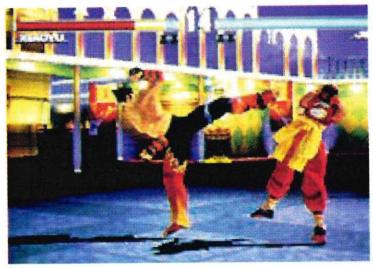
The video is produced by Glassworks and its previous video credits – in case you didn't know – include the likes of Skunk Anansie, George Michael and yes, you've guessed it, The Spice Girls. You can get yourself a copy of Lara's debut from 24 March. One final gag: The track is being released on – wait for it – Raider Records. Ho, ho, ho... be still my aching sides.



Sony Renew Namco Partnership

Yes, you heard correctly, Sony Computer Entertainment has snapped up the rights once again to distribute the next nine of Namco's forthcoming PlayStation releases. Included in the list are Point Blank, Time Crisis and the much-awaited Tekken 3.

Mr Yasuhiko Asada, executive marketing director of Namco Ltd, commented on the deal, "The fact that we have chosen to continue the solid partnership with Sony exclusively is a testament to the quality of the PlayStation and the strength of the Sony marketing and distribution infrastructure". So you can expect big name titles coming your way soon, via our mates at Sony. Great stuff.



Nutjob

Behold! The first shot of Lunatik, from Pure Entertainment, to be published in time for Christmas by EIDOS. As mentioned in issue 3, Lunatik is a 3-D shoot 'em-up which Pure and EIDOS have high hopes for.

Harry Holmwood, Pure's Managing Director, commented, "We had a lot of publishers chasing after Lunatik – in a market brimming with 'me too' products. The response we've had confirms that we have something very special here. From the very beginning, EIDOS has been massively enthusiastic about the game and about Pure Entertainment. I'm convinced it has got the right strategy, the right people and the right attitude, and that we'll have a long and successful relationship".

Pure is also working on two as yet untitled products – members of the team have previously toiled on hit PC titles such as Sim Isle, Azrael's Tear and Z. Employing 17 staff, the London-based company has created a revolutionary 3-D character animation system for one of the aforementioned products which is also due out in time for Christmas, published by Psygnosis.





The PC demo of Hexen 2 looks pretty cream-worthy, but will the PSX version keep up the standard?

Activision hex GTI

In a coup that makes Russian hardline Communists look like a bunch of old men lost in the park, Activision has snagged the rights to distribute the long-awaited 3D shooter Hexen 2. The announcement came only weeks after GT Interactive finally announced that they'd be releasing the long delayed PSX version of the original Hexen, which is now bloody ancient.

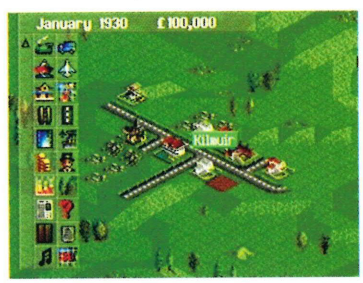
If things go according to Activision's scurrilous plan, the sequel could hit the shelves only a few months after the original, thus pulling the rug from under GT's tardy feet. The sequel is based on Id Software's popular Quake engine, compared to Hexen's use of the Doom engine, and basic levels of the PC version have already wowed the press. Some people even passed out at the sight of the intricate hi-res graphics.

How much of this makes it across the cyber-gulf and onto the Playstation version depends on how well Quake converts, but things are looking good. With 32 weapons, 30 levels and four character types to choose from, this could be a pack leader when the summer slew of PC Doom-type conversions begins. The PC version is pencilled in for a summer release, and the Playstation conversion should be ready about October time.

Transport Tycoon

Microprose's Transport Tycoon arrived here two days before deadline so, as it's a bit on the involved side, we're sticking it in next month's review section. Two days isn't long enough to give any game justice, never mind such an in-depth effort.

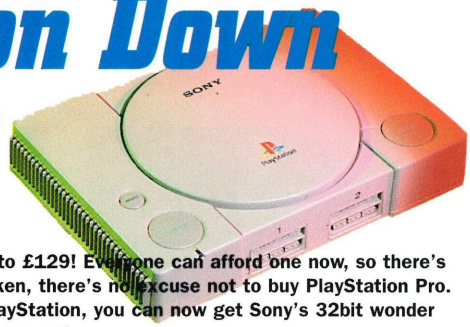
With gameplay and graphics along similar lines to that of Sim City, Transport Tycoon should appeal to gamers fed up with 'quick' pursuits such as race games, sports sims and beat 'em-ups. Dan's already got obsessed with it – ranting on about oil supplies.



Transport Tycoon continues Microprose's long line of in-depth strategy games

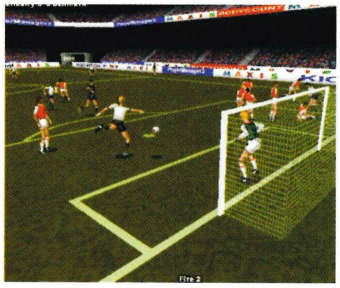
If Microprose's most recent PlayStation strategy release, X-Com: Terror from the Deep, is anything to go by Transport Tycoon should be pretty well received, regardless of the less than inspiring title.

PlayStation Down To £129!



As from 24 March, the PlayStation is down to £129! Everyone can afford one now, so there's no excuse not to buy one. By the same token, there's no excuse not to buy PlayStation Pro. Where you were once looking at £200 for a PlayStation, you can now get Sony's 32bit wonder machine and two or three games for the same amount.

The knock-on effect for us all is that more games will come out, they'll get cheaper – all Sony's new titles will be £35 from now on with the platinum range £20 each (including such legends as Ridge Racer and Tekken) – and the world of the PlayStation will become an irresistible one. And remember, PlayStation Pro will remain at the bargain price of £2.95 for the foreseeable future – written by experts, read by winners.



That's us! The PlayStation Pro team winning a game of footy

The Big Kick Off

To promote Kick Off 97, Maxis held a day out at Highbury, home of Arsenal FC. PlayStation Pro was invited to enter a team for the five-a-side competition. We took the tournament by storm, winning our first three matches, only to crash out in the quarter final stages to the eventual winners, Dennis Publishing. For the record, we beat Anco (Kick Off 97's development team), Match Of The Day magazine and a team from some Internet mag or other. A release on the PC is imminent but Kick Off 97 won't grace the PlayStation until autumn. However if the PC version is any indication, it should look and play like a cross between Actua Soccer and Striker '96.

Cheats Never Prosper

Those of you who enter our competitions will know that we give you a Freepost address to send your entries off to. This service, as you know, costs you absolutely nothing. Unfortunately, certain members of our growing readership seem to be abusing this service, and our intelligence too. Sending in one or two entries for the same competition is fair enough we suppose, but people who mail multiple entries are frankly, taking the piss.

We're not stupid, we can recognise the cheats when fishing through the post bag, so please don't bother doing it. For example, this month we received 12 entries from the same person for the "Free Car Please!" compo. All arrived on the same day, each one in the same handwriting and stuffed inside identical envelopes. Not only that, but the chap responsible had given every possible answer for the multiple choice competition question in a vain attempt to win. This sort of behaviour doesn't wash with us, so Paul Ellsion, aged 14 from Rochdale, if you're reading this... DON'T DO IT AGAIN!

We want people to enter our competitions, of course we do, but please don't try and be smart with us. It doesn't work and any future multiple entry cheekiness will be frowned upon and removed from the competition. So play fair, don't cheat and who knows, you may even win something. Thank you.

SF3 Unveiled!

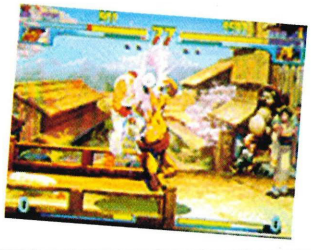
Street Fighter III: New Generation is big news. A PlayStation conversion hasn't even been confirmed as yet, but we know how much you love drooling over stuff months in advance. It is heading to an arcade near you very soon, so lap up the pics below. Rest assured that all the usual SF hoo-harr, special moves and button-bashing combos are included in this latest version.

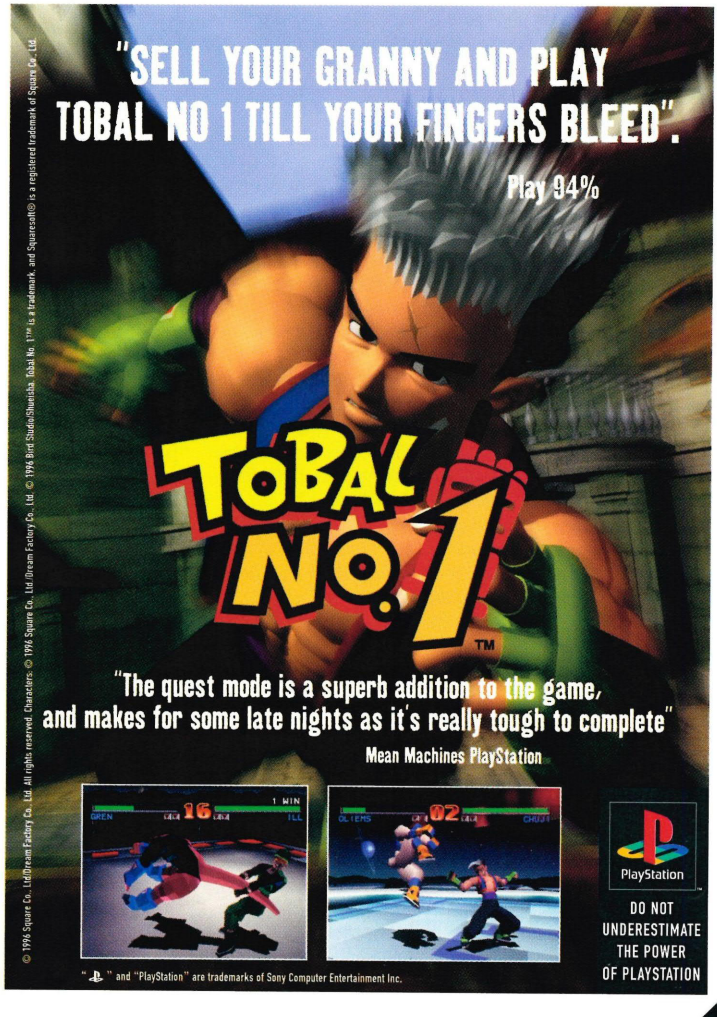
We thought we'd bring you fresh screenshots of the new fighters instead of harping on about Ryu, Ken and flaming fireball combos like all the other mags. We've even managed to grab a hold of a screenshot featuring hidden bloke Yan too. One noticeable gripe though on our behalf though, it seems that the entire character select base is somewhat smaller than previous versions. Quality over quantity, perhaps? We'll have to wait and see.



New bloke Necro prepares for a battle to the death with the new chick, Abuki



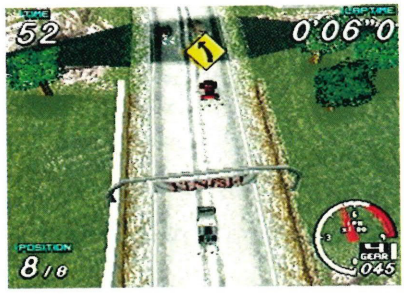


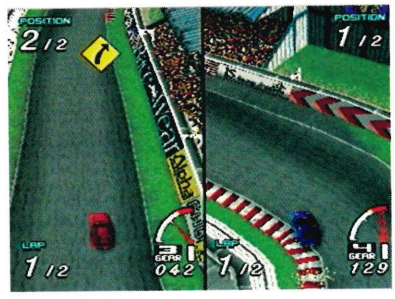


Unusual Slant On A Race Game

Finally Psygnosis has given in to consumer demand for a two-player split screen race game. Having proved itself as one of the leading PlayStation development houses with hits such as WipeOut 2097, Formula 1 and Destruction Derby 2, Psygnosis is set to continue its tradition of giving PlayStation owners some of the best racing games for the console.

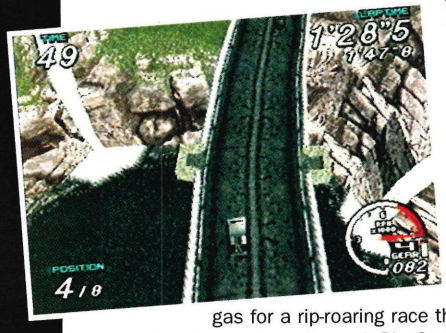
Speedster is a top-down racing game – the first Psygnosis title to feature a split screen option for two-player racing. Unlike EA's Need For Speed, for example, the screen is split vertically rather than horizontally with the view angle being various elevations of the bird's eye view, not a 'behind the car' effort.





This could turn out to be the most playable race game to grace the PlayStation

Players are given the choice of performance cars or more off the wall/off road vehicles in a race to glory. Each scenario from the night time cityscapes to the freezing Arctic tracks is fully 3-D and all the vehicles, as you'd expect, have different acceleration, top speed and road handling capabilities.



Psygnosis invites you to 'Step on the gas for a rip-roaring race through mountain roads, logging yards and more'. PlayStation Pro promises the first full, official review next month of this refreshingly different racing game.

EIDOS In Soccer Shocker

Hot on the heels of the 'improved' Olympic Soccer sequel (a.k.a. Soccer '97 because EIDOS realised the Olympic licence wasn't best suited to a football game) comes All Star Soccer. You'll be surprised as much as we were to hear that it's not another version of Olympic Soccer. No siree. Not only does it boast a completely new game engine, but a whole new concept in footy games.

You play the game and also get to do the Frankenstein bit by creating players of your dreams/nightmares by determining their head, body and leg type. Apparently, the player's physical attributes affects his mental ones, so expect the big, thick-looking footballers to perform more like thugs than wizards of the dribble.

When it comes out in May, gamers will be able to configure almost every aspect of their team's tactical play, so anyone's vision of how football should be played is theoretically possible. All Star Soccer offers a full range of moves, including skills, tricks and hidden feats. Commentary is supplied by the 'hilarious' Alistair McGowan, so don't be at all surprised if it sounds like Alan Hansen.



Les Creatures De La Nuitmare

Mindscape in Olde London town shenanigans combined with good gameplay shocker



According to new Bordeaux-based development force, Kalisto (formerly Mindscape Bordeaux), history is full of coincidences and often repeats itself. The role of chance, however, is less significant than people presume. Nightmare Creatures takes gamers through ye olde London town in the days when dense fog was as common as thick cockneys and by the looks of early preview material we've seen, the French development supremos aren't leaving anything to chance.

The Great Fire of London in 1666 and the fire of 1834 at first do not appear related, yet rumour has it that a secret society called the Brotherhood of Hecate rose and declined in the 17th Century. Adam Crowley, however, sought to restore it to its former power in 1830. The story goes on to tell of a foggy night when London was overrun by monstrous creatures until suddenly no further references to the Brotherhood and the monsters of the fog were made.

Also mentioned were two mysterious people – black-coated Ignatius, a man of God said to have chased away the Creatures with the help of a young American with a killer blade, Shirley F. Long hours of investigation suggest the story could be true. It only takes the actions of a few careless cranks to turn an entire town into a maelstrom teeming with hideous, nightmarish monsters. It takes a man who is not only brave, but honest enough to ask himself, "Do I dare fight my own nightmares?"



Taking the role of the hero, the player enters the third person perspective 3-D world of Nightmare Creatures. As you can see by the screenshots, the environment is entirely designed in textured 3-D. For more on this exciting 3-D action prospect, buy next month's issue of PlayStation Pro. The game is due out over here in time for summer.



WIN A Trip To The Spider House

BMG Interactive, famous for Legacy Of Kain (9/10 PlayStation Pro), is offering PlayStation Pro readers a chance to win a trip to London Zoo and its arachno-packed Spider House.

Not only can one person win this (and a copy of the Spider PlayStation game), but that lucky fellow/lass will star in the magazine when the trip to the Zoo is featured in the July issue. See a load of spiders, be wined and dined and appear in your favourite magazine. What more could you want? Five runners-up will each win a copy of Spider.

QUESTION – What is the term for a fear of spiders?

Answers to – Spider, Freepost SK3038, PlayStation Pro, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4YE

Entries to be in before 31 April please.



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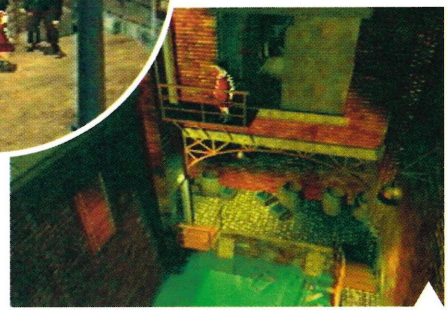
BY STEVE MCNALLY

The City of the Lost Children

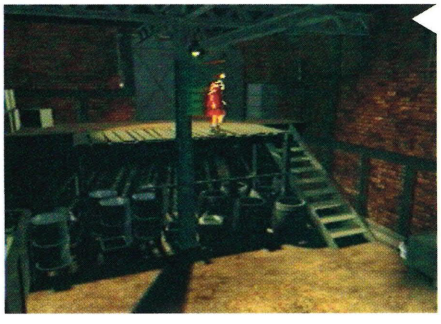
Yet another female lead character, but hopefully not one that all the sad lads will fancy (as they did pointy headed Lara Croft), what with her being a 12 year old girl and everything!



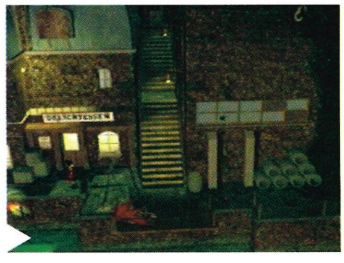




The locations are all fully rendered and the characters motion captured, making for a stunning looking game



It's about more than just looks though, underneath there are some great puzzles



Dramatic effect is gained by clever use of camera angles and positions

Now this is just my kind of game. An adventure with stunning looks, a great plot, logical puzzles and most importantly, no morals whatsoever! I hate all those namby pamby, goody goody, save the universe and kill all the bad guys type of games. So it was with great anticipation that I started to play The City of the Lost Children, a game in which you must help a 12 year old girl break into places and nick loads of stuff!

I'm glad to say it didn't disappoint on any count. This game is based on a film that the majority of you probably haven't seen, unless they're the type who goes to arty cinemas or film festivals. You may however be familiar with the film maker's previous effort, Delicatessen, a film which was largely applauded by the critics but hated by the general public because it was just too damned surreal.

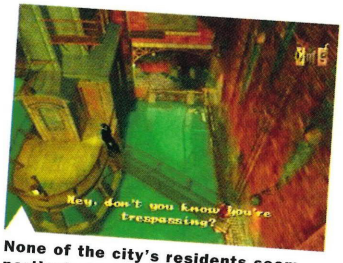
Well either Junet and Caro (both film's directors) have reigned their overactive creative juices for this one, or the game's developers have toned down the stranger parts, because The City of the Lost Children is hardly even bizarre, let alone surreal.

The storyline is sort of a twisted version of Dickens' Oliver Twist in some ways. The main character, and part that you play, is that of Miette, a 12 year old living in the city's grim orphanage. She is forced to steal by the orphanage's terrifying governess Pieuvre (the Fagin of the piece, who is actually a pair of Siamese twins) to pay for her keep.

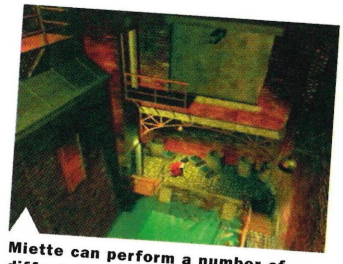
However, stranger things are afoot in the city, providing the main meat of the game's plot. Vans are travelling through the narrow streets by night, driven by burly men who are snatching children off the streets and throwing them into the back, before vanishing at high speed leaving only shadows behind. There used to be lots of children, but now only a handful remain.

Thankfully Miette is one of them and, while initially your concerns are to do as Pieuvre bids and steal whatever she (or rather they) want, the deeper story unfolds as you progress and more important things start to concern you as you begin to wonder where all the children have gone.

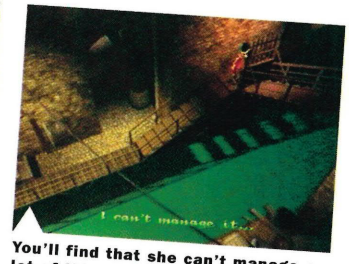
Miette is as cunning as a fox but always seems to be on the wrong side of any grown up that crosses her path. Being small and nimble helps her get into places no adult could and this makes her the perfect thief. Your first task is to



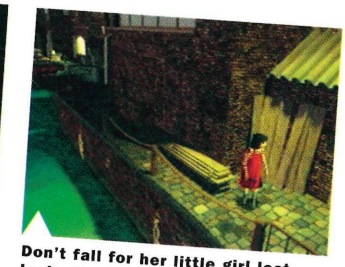
None of the city's residents seem particularly well disposed towards children for some reason



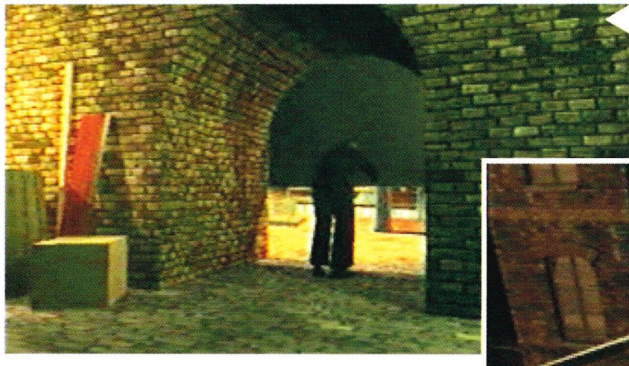
Miette can perform a number of different actions including bending down to look for clues and hiding



You'll find that she can't manage a lot of things. Why does she have to be so annoying when she tells you?

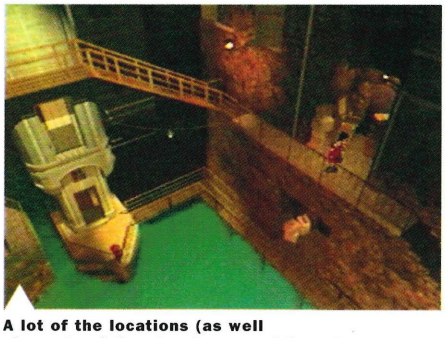


Don't fall for her little girl lost look. She knows exactly what she's doing!

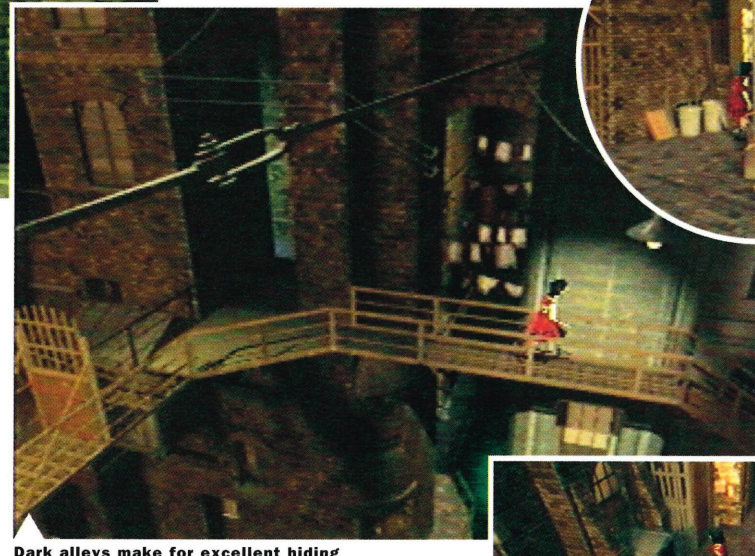


The Watchman's a right grumpy sod, and if you're not careful you'll end up locked in his warehouse

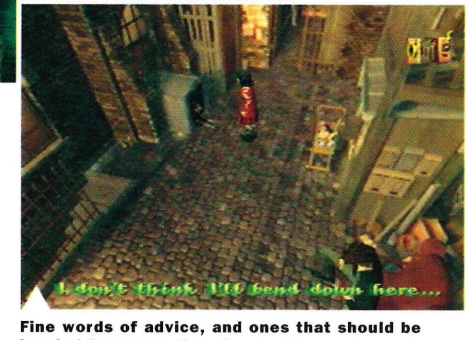




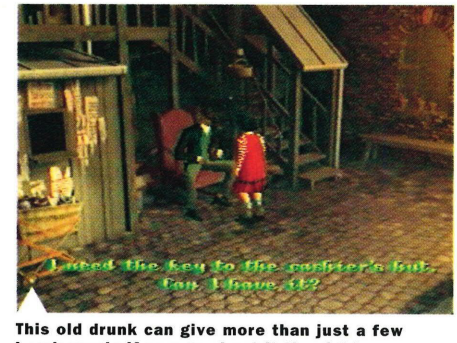
A lot of the locations (as well elements of the story) are reminiscent of Oliver Twist



Dark alleys make for excellent hiding places when the heat's on. Just like in real life, er... I'd imagine!



Fine words of advice, and ones that should be heeded by young girls the world over on most occasions come to think of it



This old drunk can give more than just a few harsh words if you go about it the right way. Perhaps if he were to fall asleep...

break into the cashier's hut and steal the money inside.

Just to give you some idea of how everything works, the game is played out using a Resident Evil/Alone in the Dark engine – it has to be said though, this is a massive leap forward in terms of graphical excellence over both those games. All the characters have been fully motion captured (yes, even Pieuvre, an effect which was apparently achieved by tying two actresses together at the waist!) for extra realism and they blend seamlessly into the incredible backdrops the artists have created to set the scene. These have obviously been inspired by the mood and look of the film and provide the perfect setting for a game of this type.

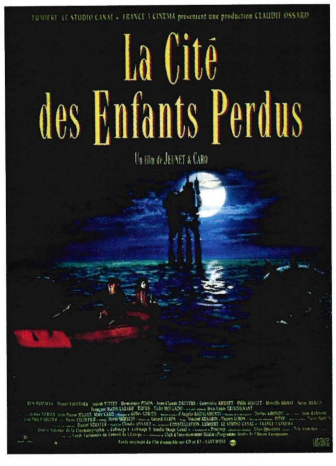
As you move around the locations, the camera angle switches to give you the best possible view of the on-screen action. In some locations the programmers have actually provided up to three different views of the same location (your attention is drawn to this by a little flashing camera icon in the top right hand corner where appropriate) allowing you to choose the best one for whatever you're trying to do by pressing one of the left shoulder buttons. Not only a nice touch, but also useful when you're wandering around searching for a particular object. A different angle often makes it much easier to get to a certain part of the screen.

Back to the story. Breaking into the cashiers hut will not exactly be straightforward for a couple of reasons. Firstly there's a watchman guarding it and if you hang around too long and get on his nerves he'll lock you up in the warehouse for a while, so you need to come up with some way of getting rid of him. Secondly it's locked, so you need to get a key from somewhere. Manage to get inside and the game immediately throws up another problem in that the cupboard the cash box is kept in is electrified and will give you a nasty shock if you touch it without somehow making it safe first.

Most of the game's problems are in a similar vein (although progressively harder of course) and you're never left wondering what you're supposed to be doing. Instead you find yourself wondering how to do something and the puzzles always have a logical solution.

So far so good but unfortunately there ▶

And Why Not?

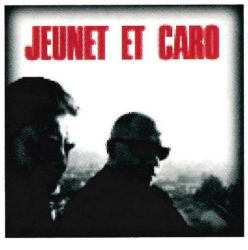


Seeing as no one here has seen the film (what with us not being arty farty ludicrously pretentious types) we trawled the Internet looking for someone who had and, as usual, the Information Superhighway didn't let us down!

Here's what one person thought of La Cité Des Enfants Perdus, or, as it's more commonly known in this country, The City of the Lost Children.

"The long-awaited follow-up to Delicatessen is another surrealist adventure into the questionably sane minds of French creators Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro. It's been four years since that film and their new picture, The City of the Lost Children, is twice as strange and almost as good.

A twist on the typical fairy tale, The City of the Lost Children is the story of an evil genius named Krank (Daniel Emilfork) and his henchmen of mechanically-enhanced Cyclops', six identical Clones (all played by Dominique Pinon), the tiny and bossy Miss Bismuth (Mireille Mosse) and a disembodied brain (voiced by Jean-Louis Trintignant) which provides the philosophical foundation for the group. The band of genetically-engineered characters live on a man-made island off the shores of a coastal city, and it is from this city that Krank's thugs kidnap children. Why? Because Krank is unable to dream, he attempts to steal them from the innocent children's minds.



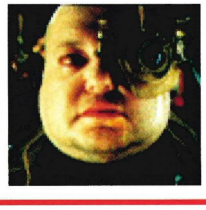
When the adopted brother (Joseph Lucien) of a circus strongman, named One (Ron Perlman), is stolen, One goes on a crusade to save him. On his way, he hooks up with a nine-year-old ingenue/street punk named Miette (Judith Vittet), and they develop a symbiotic bond in their virtuous quest to destroy Krank's plot.



If you saw Delicatessen, you'll know what I mean when I say it gets much stranger than this. Full of vibrant imagery and elaborate sets that seem half from the 1700's and half from the 2100's, The City of the Lost Children pushes style to the limit, while occasionally causing substance to lag behind. While the movie sometimes gets so convoluted it's impossible to tell exactly what's going on, it's always great fun to watch.

Be sure you know what's on the menu if you decide you want to see this film. Expect some incredible effects, especially Pinon's unprecedented six-fold presence, plus one of the best serendipitous-chain-of-events sequences ever filmed. Angelo Badalamenti (who scored Twin Peaks) provides appropriately haunting music as well. You might not 'get' this film when you leave the theatre, but you'll be sure to have had a terrific time."

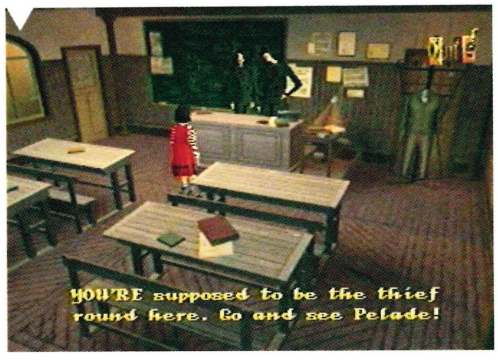






The City of the Lost Children

Pieuvre always has something she wants you to steal, and can get pretty stroppy if you don't cooperate



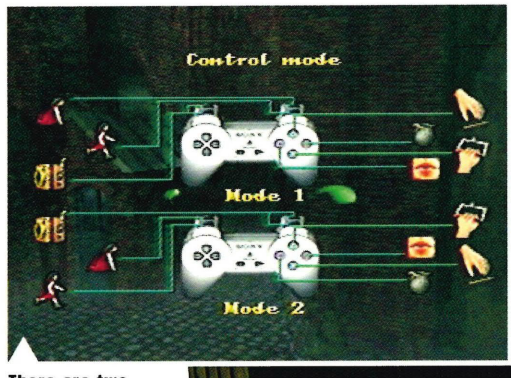


Make sure you search all of the screen, especially areas that look like they may contain objects

▶ are a couple of quite serious flaws that drag the mark down a bit and sadly they are all to do with programming rather than bad game design or plot.

The nature of games like this means that, to perform an action, you have to be standing in the right place, but I did feel that The City of the Lost Children could have been a little more forgiving at times. For instance, you may be trying to climb up onto a box (which you know full well you can and need to do), you're pressing the correct button and standing in what you think is the correct place, but are met by one of Miette's standard phrases for when she doesn't know what you're trying to do. However, move a fraction of an inch and press the button again and she's more than happy to clamber up, which is annoying.

Also, objects that you can, and need, to pick up do not appear on the background at all. The first time you know they're there is when you accidentally walk past them and a window



There are two different button configurations but they're both much of a muchness to be honest

appears in the top right hand corner allowing you to pick the object up if you wish. This makes it very easy to miss vital objects unless you walk every square inch of every screen searching for things to take. Very often when you do get stuck it's because you've missed such an object which gets irritating.

The last negative point I'm going to make concerns Miette's standard "I don't know what you're on about' phrases. What you need to understand, and you will if you've played many adventure games, is that you resort to trial and error a lot when you're not exactly sure what the solution to a particular problem is.

This leads to you trying a lot of things that won't work. Frustrating in itself, but when each instance is met by one of only three phrases time and time again you get the feeling that if Miette was real you'd be in serious danger of landing yourself in hot water with the NSPCC. More comments would have been nice, or what about a little silent shrug of the shoulders? Surely that would have been better! My advice is to turn the volume down whenever you get stuck or you really will start to get wound up by her.

Apart from these niggling faults, The City of the Lost Children is a joy to play. The plot is involving, the characters weird and wonderful and the whole thing rests just about on the right side of bizarre for my tastes.

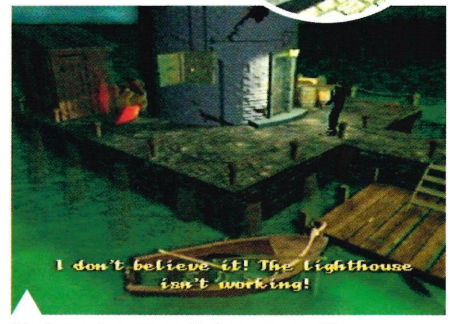
It's far more than just a novelty though, it's one of the best adventures I've seen in a long time as well as one of the most sizeable and challenging. I doubt you'll finish this one in a hurry (I couldn't) and if you're looking for something a little more sedate than zombie-fest Resident Evil but have already completed Broken Sword then The City of the Lost Children should immediately leap frog its way right up to the top of your shopping list!

GENRE COMPARISON

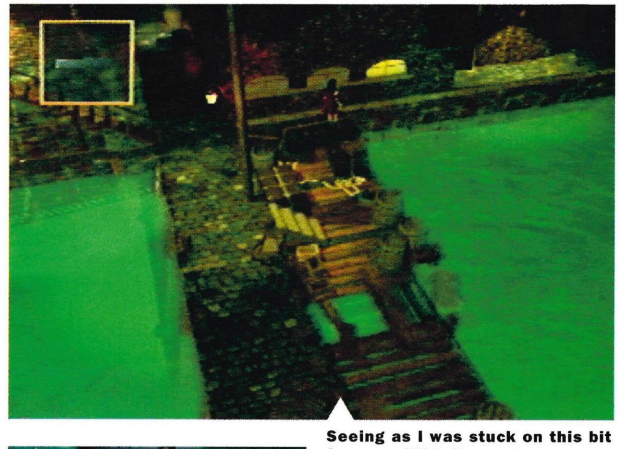
Game **Resident Evil**
Software House **Virgin**

The closest thing to a video game version of classic gore fest Night of the Living Dead, Capcom's stunning adventure was undoubtedly made more attractive by the horror factor. Not to mention some pretty scary (and bloody) set pieces, including booting a zombie's head off to stop it gnawing at your ankle! Much more up tempo than Lost Children and probably, for that reason only, a marginally better option

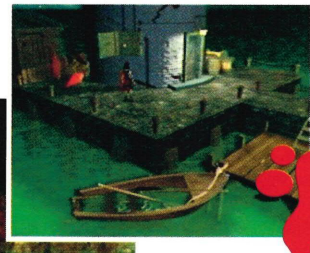




Oh damn. I suppose that means you'll have to fix it and leave the cashier's hut unguarded. What a shame!



Seeing as I was stuck on this bit for ages I'll tell you that you find a metal bar here if you look carefully enough





You'll excuse me if I don't get my swimming trunks out just yet, but that water doesn't really look inviting now does it?

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PRO SCORE

GAME **The City of the Lost Children**
GENRE **Adventure**
SOFTWARE HOUSE **Psygnosis**
CONTACT **0151 282 3000**
RELEASE DATE **Out Now**
PRICE **£44.99**

PLAYSTATION APPROVED **It's incredibly difficult not to lose yourself in this tale of theft and kidnap. It is undoubtedly one of the most gripping adventures I've played in a long time. Suitably far enough 'off the wall' to satisfy any fans of the film yet retaining enough of a grip on reality not to get on the nerves of those who dislike the surreal, The City of the Lost Children sets standards for others to reach. And unusually it does so without having to resort to the needless, excessive violence games like Resident Evil have used as a lever to gain massive success. Genuinely disturbing at times, always engrossing and fantastic to look at, this will not disappoint many people at all.**

GRAPHICS 9
SOUND 7
GAMEPLAY 8
LASTABILITY 8

8½

DAN **An off-beat offering, based on a less than obvious film license, which is none the worse for its unique origins. A bit too frustrating for me, but a satisfying chunk of puzzle solving fun all the same**

JAY **If you like a good looking game with its fair share of tricky puzzles, then this should suit you, sir. Not so much a semi-Resident Evil without the blood, but more like a virtual Agatha Christie novel, starring little kids**

ALEX **I hope for Psygnosis' sake that this doesn't flop as badly as the movie. Then again, an 8.5 in PlayStation Pro should ensure it gets stocked in all the major retailers if nothing else**

ANDY **The whole thing looks stunning, plays well and is undoubtedly a tough one to complete. It's carefully planned and executed and for once T.C.O.T.L.C is a game which lives up to initial expectations**

BY DAN WHITEHEAD

2xtreme

After Cool Boarders, Sony continues its rugged obsession with danger sports with this 'bumper' sequel bundle of baggy shorted escapades

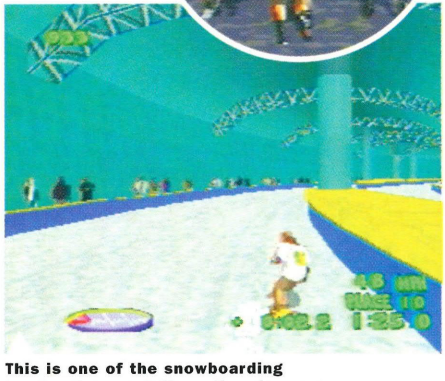


Upon hearing the news that 2xtreme is in the works, even the sprites leg it in the opposite direction

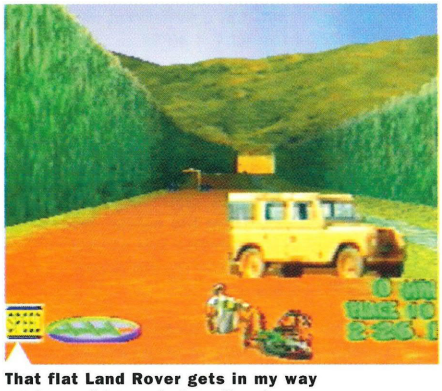




On the rollerblading, or possibly skateboarding, level my racer has broken down and had a tantrum. Oh, I'm arsed



This is one of the snowboarding tracks. You can tell, as there's some snow and a board



That flat Land Rover gets in my way again, so I try and stare it out

Hey, look at me! I'm such a cool dude on my skateboard. No, I really am





My chances of mountain bike victory are cruelly dashed by this cardboard cut-out of a Land Rover

As I lie alone and shivering in my hut at night, my mind often wanders, contemplating the burning issues of the day. For instance, the other night I got to pondering just what criteria a sport has to fulfill to be officially recognised as 'extreme'. Does it have to be dangerous? Probably. So why isn't boxing considered 'extreme'? Does it have to involve a high level of physical exertion? More than likely. Does that mean the marathon is 'extreme'? Or does it just need you to dress in stupid baggy pants? And if that's the case, why isn't golf included in this sequel to Extreme Sports?

No it seems, in Sonyland at least, that to be 'extreme' a sport needs only to be one thing. Utterly pointless and obsessed with fashion rather than 'proper' sporting achievement. Hence skateboarding, inline skating, mountain biking and bloody snowboarding are the events lined up for you here.

Now let's get one thing straight. Extreme is a very emotive word. You don't go calling a game 'extreme' and then deliver a soggy salad. And you certainly don't claim to be 'too extreme', or even 2xtreme, and then deliver a stale egg sandwich. Which is, unfortunately, exactly what's happened here. The game equivalent of a stale egg sandwich.

The idea is, I'll admit, quite promising. Four fast and hazardous sports, all crammed into one CD. Sounds like a laugh, right? The adrenaline rush of snowboarding, the acrobatics of skateboarding, the endurance of mountain bikes and er, the rolliness of rollerblading. All those different sports? Sign me up, it'll be grrreat!

And it would be, were it not for the fact that Sony is labouring under the illusion that all these diverse activities are in fact exactly the same. There's apparently no difference between, say, mountain bikes and snowboards. This is obviously complete guff, so what's gone wrong? Laziness, that's what. Rather than attempt to create four varied events, capturing the unique feel of the sports, it has lumped them altogether as a sub-standard race game. Oh cheers. Let's backtrack and revisit my first game, on one of our special Biggles days, to give you an idea of how this affected me personally.

"Hey chaps" enthused Jay, fresh from a stint in the big city, "I've just got a spiffing wodge of games from Sony. Who wants to review 2xtreme?" Alex looked glum. "I'd love to, old boy, but it's this damn war. I've got to fight the Jerry in the morning. You'll have to count me out on this one." "Me too", apologised Steve, "I'm stuck in this beastly King's Field for the next few days at least. Frightfully sorry".

Andy looked up from stroking his ladies haircut, wiped the tears from his cheeks and mumbled something about a Dark Forces players guide. And so it fell to Dan, foolishly wasting time buffing his helmet, to save the day.

Seated at the PlayStation, he awaited the game impatiently. It loaded and off he went, racing on skateboards through Los Angeles. "Crikey", he thought as he juddered around the course, "This is a bit jerky and dull. Maybe mountain biking will be better". Moments later, the mountain bikes were on their way.

"Crikey", he thought once again, "This looks suspiciously like skateboarding, but with slightly different graphics". And he was right. Skating and snowboarding were the bally same as well. And so the top notch Pro team climbed aboard their day-glo Lancaster bomber, blew the crap out of Sony for being so bloody cheeky and



Head through that archway for a power up. This one will give you a burst of speed, if you're bothered

Aah, the rolling green hills and orange roads of Africa. Unmistakable



Yet more gripping skateboard action, as I roll along a street with someone else



This visually stimulating screen allows you to tinker with your racers skill levels. For what it's worth

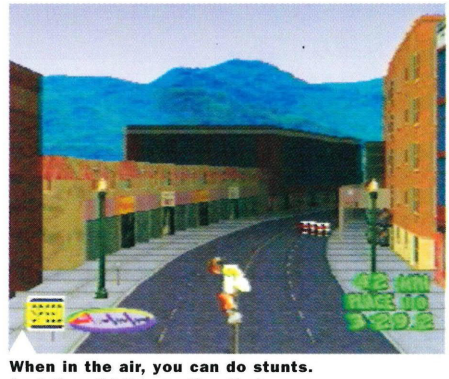
were back in time for home-made ginger beer and teacakes. Super.

Got that? Every event is the same, but with different graphics. The handling, the controls and the races are all the same. It doesn't matter if you're racing on snow, mud or tarmac. It doesn't matter what mode of transport you're using. It's a sloppy racing game pretending to be four exciting sports games. It's a complete, bare faced rip off in other words. And I'm not going to stand for it.

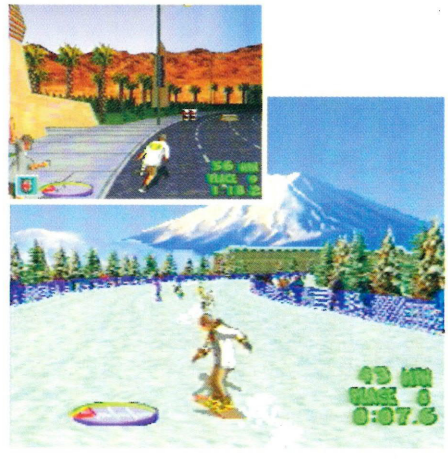
The graphics are hardly fantastic and the animation is rudimentary at best. The races aren't terribly gripping and the courses are uninspired. Just so you don't think that my only gripe is the continued similarity of the events, trust me when I say that it's a shocking example of 'can't be bothered' programming.

The potential for a great value-for-money package is obviously there, the PlayStation can easily handle the challenge so why have we been lumbered with this 16bit looking effort? Like I said, laziness. This is, you see, little more than a rewrite of the original ESPN Extreme Sports with graphical alterations, which is a bit pointless.

There has been no discernible progression in game style and the opportunity to try something new with the sports is completely ignored. Actually, this is lacking several features from the original. The shop where you could upgrade your transport is replaced with a static screen of bar charts and the number of racers has dropped from 16 to 10. Maybe this has saved memory, but it hasn't been used anywhere else. If you've got the original you don't need this, and if you haven't got the original, you're not missing anything special.



When in the air, you can do stunts. Just thought I'd mention that, even though it's still dull as ditchwater



PRO SCORE

GAME 2xtreme
GENRE Racing
SOFTWARE HOUSE Sony
CONTACT 0171 447 1600
RELEASE DATE Out Now
PRICE £44.99

Despite the chance to create a varied and addictive collection of unusual sport games, thus offering entertainment and value for money, this crazy notion flies out of the window where 2xtreme is involved. Instead you get another low rent version of Road Rash, with no innovations or unique features to speak of. Normally a split screen two player mode adds a modicum of laughs, but my attempts to test this theory were scuppered by an inability to find anyone else who wanted to play it for more than 30 seconds. Don't be fooled by the inevitable 'rad' packaging, this is an absolute joke and undeserving of the Sony name. I bet Nintendo is really cacking itself after seeing this.

GRAPHICS 6
SOUND 6
GAMEPLAY 4
LASTABILITY 4

4½

STEVE It all seems reasonably promising until you realise that all the events are pretty much identical. There may well be a 'hidden' event which saves the day, but I really couldn't face playing long enough to find out

JAY In a nutshell: Road Rash meets those nibbers from the Pepsi Max advert. All the varying 'rad' sports have been executed so badly, that I can assure you that you won't feel the need to get 2xtreme more than once

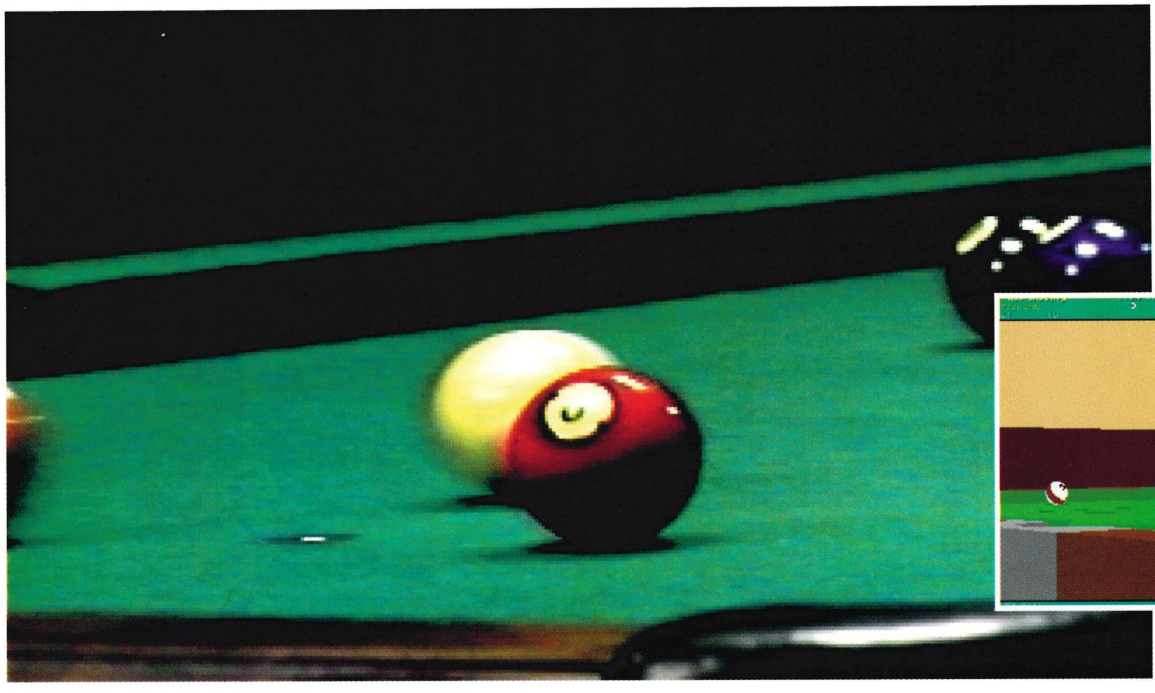
ALEX 2xtreme makes out that it contains four different games. It does and it doesn't. They're all called different things, but the gameplay is identical for all of them and it's pretty ordinary throughout

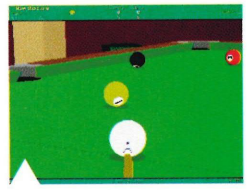
ANDY Skateboarding eh? Interesting. Nobody can say skateboarding isn't the finest pastime ever. Apart from rollerblading. Snowboarding has been bettered in Cool Boarders and to be frank – this is dull!

BY STEVE MCNALLY

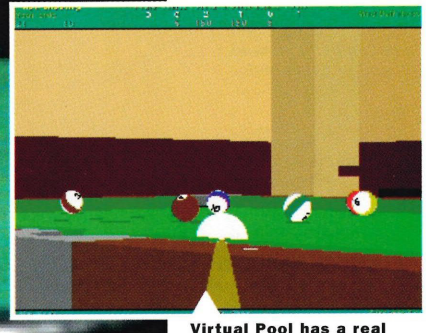
Virtual Pool

So virtually pool in fact that I couldn't help but wonder whether it's so close you may as well save a good few quid and go and play for real down the pub



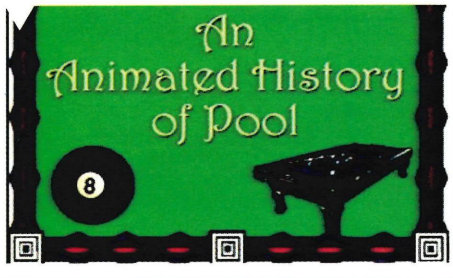


The 3-D engine allows you zoom in or out as far as you like, giving complete control over the view



Virtual Pool has a real feel of actually being there and playing

The game features a host of FMV sequences, including an interesting Animated History of Pool



I wouldn't have thought that a game could be too realistic for its own good until I'd played Interplay's Virtual Pool. I would have said that the closer it is to the real thing the better. But it's not always going to be true. Every rule has its exceptions and this, I'm afraid, is one of them.

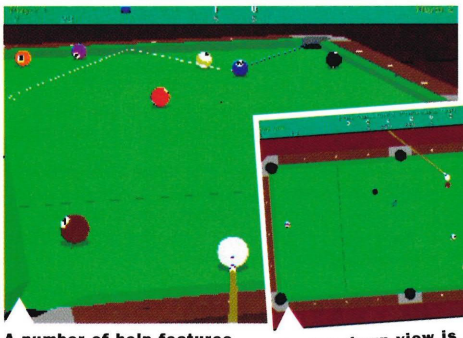
The thing is, we hanker after realism in our flight sims and war games because, although they may be as close to the real thing as is technologically possible at the moment, it's still escapism for the player. How many of us are going to pilot a multi million pound jet fighter in a bombing raid over Baghdad? Very few. So therefore playing a video game simulation is the closest we'll ever get.

Virtual Pool's biggest problem lies in the fact that just about everyone will have picked up a pool cue at some point in their life and had a bash. This leaves the game open to comparison with the real thing and, as a result, any flaws in the way you have to play become greatly magnified.

You find yourself thinking how unusual it feels to push down on the D-pad to draw your cue back and push up to strike the ball (the length you pull back deciding how hard you will hit the white). At first it's very difficult to judge the power of your shots, and while you'll eventually learn to gauge it, it still feels horribly unnatural, even to an accomplished player.

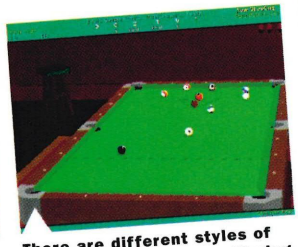
You find yourself thinking how long it takes to move round the table and how difficult it is to line up your shot exactly how you'd like to (prepare yourself for lots of fiddly little presses of the left and right dpad buttons if you want to get it just right), but most importantly you find yourself thinking that everything's just a bit too slow when compared to real life.

I admit it's harsh because these flaws wouldn't have been so

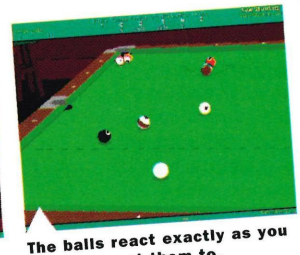


A number of help features have been incorporated to make learning easier

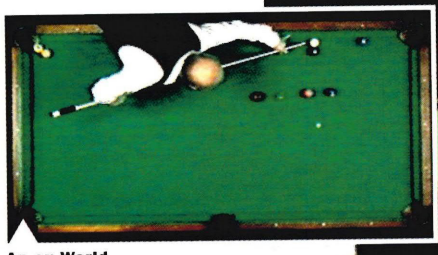
The top down view is exceptionally handy when it comes to shot planning



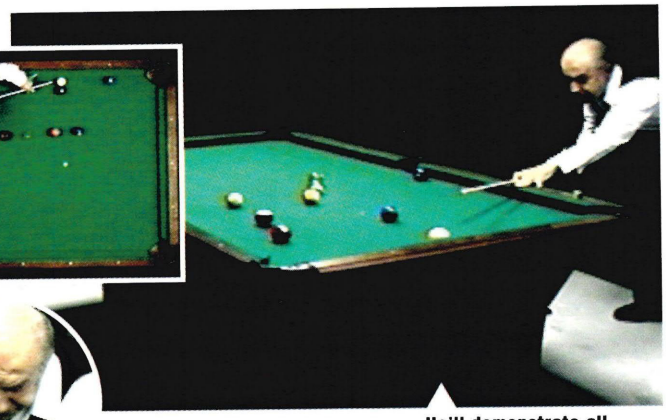
There are different styles of pool available to play, offering something for everyone



The balls react exactly as you would expect them to, bouncing off in all directions!



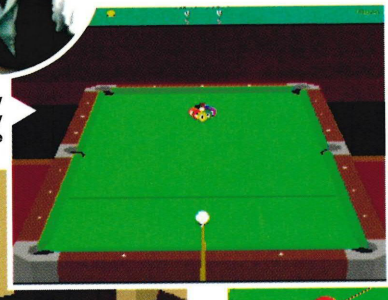
An ex-World Pool Champion is on hand to show you the ropes

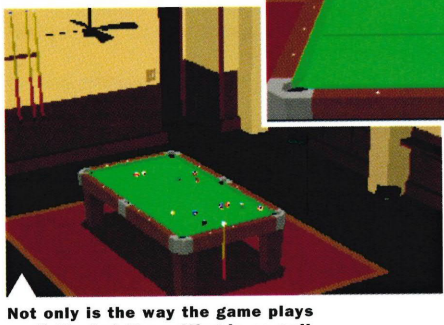


He'll demonstrate all manner of techniques and trick shots, and he never gets bored!

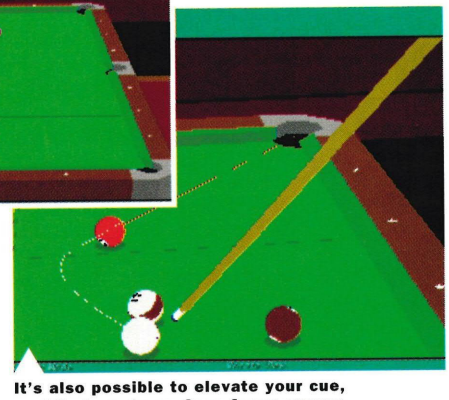


You can't help but wonder how he got so good. Especially with that dicky eye





Not only is the way the game plays realistic, but the setting is as well. Attention to detail is most impressive



It's also possible to elevate your cue, enabling you to perform fancy swerve shots and such like

glaringly apparent (actually, they probably wouldn't even have merited a mention) had the game mechanics not been so precisely like real pool. Everything moves exactly as you would expect it to, the balls ricochet off each other at what seem to be precisely the right angles and the dimensions of the table seem to be just about spot on.

There are enough variations of the game (8 Ball, 9 Ball, Rotation and Straight Pool) to allow just about everyone to find something at least close to the one they're used to playing. On top of that there's the chance to practise either free play or one of a number of trick shots which will be demonstrated to you in glorious FMV by an ex-world pool champion. You can even, should you get bored of playing, watch a reasonably entertaining 'Animated History of Pool' or have some of the more complicated techniques explained and demonstrated for you by the aforementioned ex-world champ.

On the visual side, apart from the balls not always looking perfectly round and the setting being a little too bright to give you a real feeling of being there, there's little to complain about. Okay, the pool hall may look a little bit blocky but it is quirky and reasonably detailed (there's a rack of cues on the wall, and if you fiddle about with the viewing angle, a ceiling fan amongst other things). In fact, all that's missing is a haze of smoke hanging in the air around the lights.

Musically the game's also a bit of a treat, especially if you happen to like jazz because thankfully the awful 'rock' soundtrack of the preview version has been replaced (as was suggested by the ever astute Andy), with something altogether more relaxed and far more suitable. There are plenty of tunes as well so you don't get bored, plus a handy CD player type option letting you skip forward if one track's not particularly to your taste, or back if one really gets your toes tapping.

At the end of the day though it's just not as much fun as playing the real thing. Regular players will probably find it all too frustrating, not being able to do all they can when standing around a real table.

With it being so realistic you know exactly what you're getting right from the off, the game obviously throws up no surprises and therefore there's little fun to be had while you're playing this. Add to that the fact that the PlayStation control pad makes the whole thing seem slow and cumbersome meaning you'll need to invest in a mouse if you haven't already done so (which does improve things a great deal admittedly), and you'll need to seriously question whether you like pool enough to make the outlay worthwhile.

One only for complete novices wanting to learn the basics before going out into the big wide world and playing in a public place, or perhaps for people who don't have access to a pool table. Personally, I'll be sticking to the real thing thank you very much.

PRO SCORE

GAME Virtual Pool
GENRE Sports Sim
SOFTWARE HOUSE Interplay
CONTACT 01235 812666
RELEASE DATE Out Now
PRICE £44.99

This is amazing technically but it's all a bit too dry for my liking. I didn't find it enjoyable to play (surely any game's main attraction?) and it seemed totally devoid of any fun element (again, surely a major factor in attracting players?). It's highly accurate from a physics point of view and should be applauded for that, but then you'd have to applaud an Open University television programme for students of Higher Mathematics on its accuracy, it doesn't mean I'd want to watch it! Should you buy it? Depends on how desperate you are to play pool really – you won't get anything better on the PlayStation. But then, if you're prepared to spend 40 quid or so for the privilege, surely you'd be prepared to pick up a real cue?

GRAPHICS 6
SOUND 7
GAMEPLAY 7
LASTABILITY 6

6

DAN Just like Tilt last issue, this is an accurate and diverting PlayStation version of a game that's best played in real life. If you can't get to a pool hall, maybe you're an otter for instance, then this'll do nicely

JAY It's 'one-of-a-kind' on the PSX, but I can't see many hardened pool hustlers (who, let's face it, are the game's target audience) actually forking out their beer money for it. What's next? Virtual Darts? Cyber Cribbage?

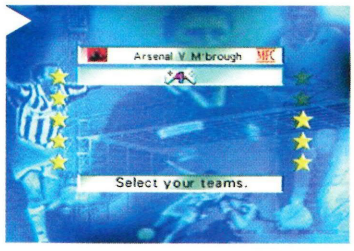
ANDY Definitely one for the person who simply prefers to stay at home drinking but still enjoys a competitive game of pool. And there aren't too many people like that around. It's accurate, playable and a bit dull

ALEX Looks fabulous simulation-wise, but the inertia of the control system ultimately ruins what is otherwise an accurate, varied pool game. Nowhere near as good as the real thing and considerably more expensive

BY JAY SHARPLES

Soccer '97

Fed up with your mate always choosing Brazil when playing Olympic Soccer? Now you can watch him select Man United every time instead, thanks to this UK update of the EIDOS classic



Teams now have five star ratings, making your team selection a vital part of the game

We all know that football games are ten-a-penny nowadays. Each year a tidal wave of soccer-related mayhem floods the market and to be frank, the trend doesn't look like it's letting up. This month alone sees two new titles attempting to knock FIFA '97 from the top of the charts and at least another three or four are lined-up for the coming months. Ho hum. Good old bandwagons, eh?

For die hard fans of the sport who own a PlayStation, this could mean endless hours of thumb-blistering fun as they excitedly check out the latest in soccer computer game technology. For us game testing type blokes though, it can mean endless hours of ploughing through pile upon pile of crap, naff and shite soccer simulations that numb the mind and dull the senses. The current trend for 1997 though, isn't simply knocking up a 'ground-breaking' new footie game to thrill the fans, no, the latest trend is to rework old stuff. By this I don't mean we're gonna see the likes of Kick Off, Match Day and a VR Subbuteo hitting the PlayStation either.



A fierce shot thunders goalward, but thankfully Leeds United's agile keeper slaps it into the crowd



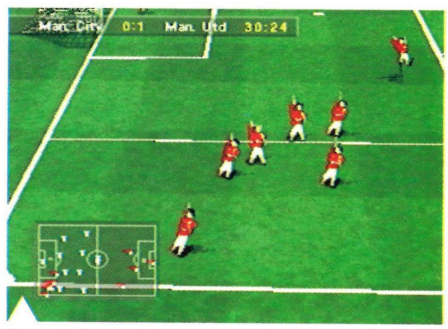
Now that game developers have milked genres to near-death and explored more interactive entertainment avenues than a group of wide-eyed kids on a school trip to Amsterdam, things are going retro – again. Not as far back as when Bucks Fizz ruled the charts and Spurs won the FA Cup mind. No, this time the footy bandwagon time lords and are plotting a course for a period not all that far away. Last summer, to be precise. Hardly the sort of space/time continuum nightmare to worry Marty McFly's Levis now, is it?

The idea is simple: Release a game that was released once before, tweak it a bit, throw a couple of new bits in there and bang it out again at full price. Job's a good 'un. Make loads of cash, thrill the kids, do it again next year. Sounds fairly reasonable I suppose, especially if you're out to make money, but is it fair to the punters? Let's face it, EA has been doing it for years and no-one seems to mind, so why not let someone else have a crack?

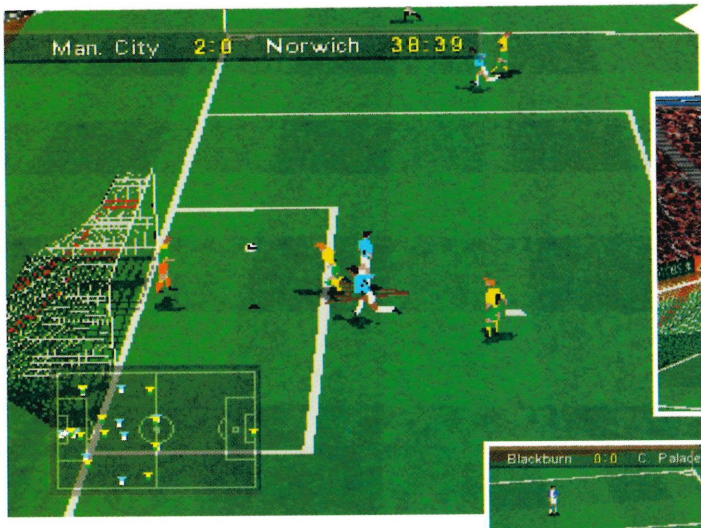
All three of the main soccer titles for the coming months are reworked affairs. Adidas International Power Sports Soccer from Psygnosis (reviewed this issue) joins Konami's International Superstar Soccer Pro, with the third being, obviously, EIDOS Interactive's Soccer '97. So what's the story?

The main argument from the developers is that many people now own PlayStations, thanks to Father Christmas, and therefore didn't own one when the original versions of these games were released. All now claim to have startling new features and slightly reworking innards, but basically they're the same game.

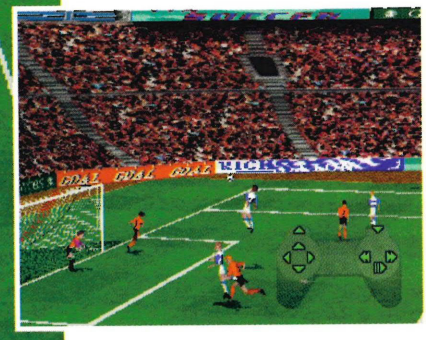
The main gripe however, is whether people who own the original versions will appreciate being sold the same product once again, despite it being equally as ream. It's a tricky one, I know. I personally wouldn't bother with



Comedy knee-slides ahoy as the Dirty Reds celebrate another victory in our Mancunian derby

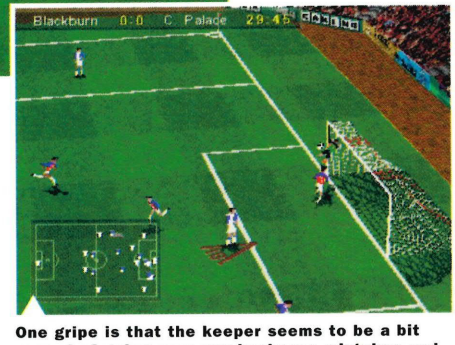


Despite their two-nil lead, City once again stand around looking idle as Norwich head for goal

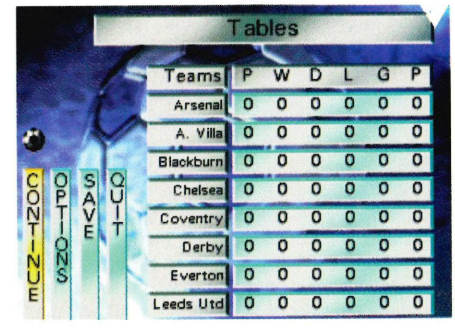




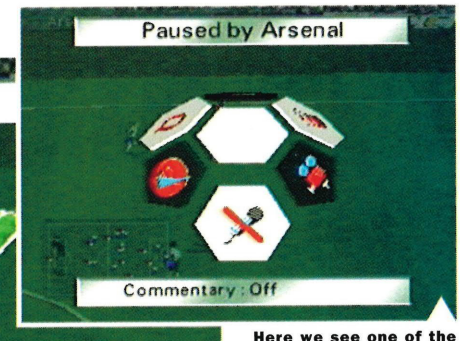
Create your very own super league using all your favourite squads from the Premier League



One gripe is that the keeper seems to be a bit scared of going near any backpass mistakes and, more often than not, they lead to own goals







Here we see one of the best options in the game: Getting that bloody Alan Green to shut up and go home

442? 253? 532? 424? Oh yes, every conceivable soccer attack formation option is just a finger tip away in Soccer '97

laying out near-on fifty quid on something I've already got. However, I must review this product with an open mind. Just because a good game has already been out under another guise doesn't mean it has turned into a crap game overnight, now does it? No, of course not. And one such case is Soccer '97.

Olympic Soccer oozed gameplay, addiction and competitive spirit – features every half-decent football game should possess. Its '97 remix features all the good bits we drooled over last time and a handful of new additions. No longer are the players named after various employees of EIDOS as the '97 version boasts full Premier League teams, all the correct player names and even the right hair colours and flesh tones have been added.

EIDOS claims the statistics are as up to date as possible, with each team now possessing anything up to a five star rating in order for players to differentiate between the kings of the league and the donkeys of the Sunday morning knockabout. These star ratings have been made optional in Exhibition matches, as no-one really likes to play with a team of losers, and you can now up your rating to match, or indeed better, your opponent's.

However, one thing we noticed was that certain teams seem to stay decidedly dodgy, despite being manually boosted in the star stakes. A minor teething problem no doubt. However, playing this new version does require some kind of knowledge of the Premier League and its teams. You don't have to be Saint & Greavsie, but some basic knowledge of 'the great game' would be helpful.

Team selection when playing an Olympic Soccer match basically boiled down to a handful of well-known favourites (Brazil, Germany, Italy... England even) with a sure-fire guarantee that the team you picked would be pretty nifty on the pitch. In Soccer '97 though, you need to select a team who are good, no matter what. Having some novice picking Man City when squaring up against Newcastle is going to lead to a goal mouth pummelling of epic proportions. So, in brief; don't pick a team of donkeys if you want to win, and if you do, up their star rating as much as possible.

Other new additions to this great game include a speed-up button to be used when not in possession of the ball and a nifty little knock on button when you do. If applied correctly, the knock on button instructs the player to punt the ball forwards, hopefully avoiding the oncoming thrashing of the defender's legs as he goes. All the usual scissor kicks, chests, headers and pixel-perfect crosses remain, but the volley move, which caused many a frustrated rant in the original when your opponent whacked one in from the halfway line, has thankfully been decreased somewhat.

The artificial intelligence of all the CPU players has been boosted dramatically, resulting in much tougher matches, especially in Tournament and Arcade modes. The League option is another ▶

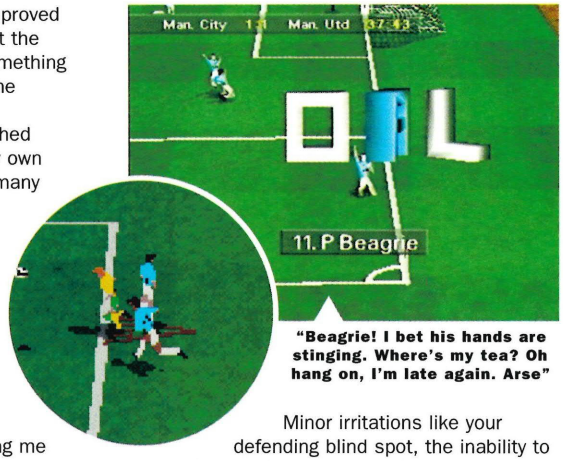


City's defenders decided to just stand around a watch United bang in a couple more goals. Andy Dibble and Eric Cantona simply fall about giggling

Soccer '97

standard features that takes on an improved feel. Players can set up a league without the inclusion of the CPU teams, which is something that wasn't immediately available with the original, or indeed many other football simulations. Having a gang of pals hunched around the TV, all appearing in your very own Premier League knockout is one of the many strong points of Soccer '97 and it can only add to its mounting pile of 'nice touch' comments and praises.

On the admittedly smaller pile of gripes though, some things that irritated us with Olympic Soccer still remain in Soccer '97 to test our patience once more. Alan Green for one. Having some half-wit tell me that my defender "...took the man, not the ball" every two seconds and then winding me up even more by informing me my keeper made a save, a good 30 seconds after the incident as I'm halfway down the pitch on the attack. His commentary is virtually identical to the original game's – obviously the players names etc have been changed – but generally speaking, old Alan still assaults your eardrums with the same old mundane chat about his ill-fitting teeth and the location of his half-time brew.

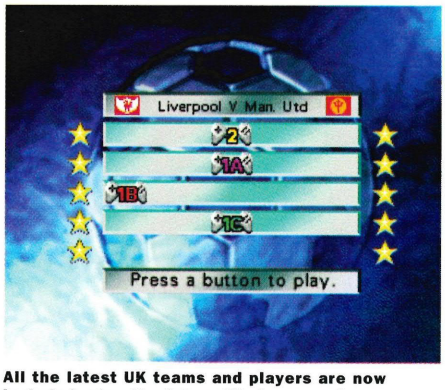


"Beagrie! I bet his hands are stinging. Where's my tea? Oh hang on, I'm late again. Arse"

Minor irritations like your defending blind spot, the inability to choose who you want to bring on as a substitute, regular fouling without being punished and your keeper's fear of backpass mistakes unfortunately remain and can piss you off at times, but overall Soccer '97 is the business as far as top-notch football games go on the PlayStation.

It's certainly an office favourite – we've been playing this for weeks and still find it thrilling – and I feel that Psygnosis and Konami should have gone back to the drawing board before even attempting to tackle the burly centre-half of a game that is Soccer '97.

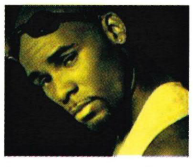
Buy a copy of this and you won't be disappointed, you won't be bored within hours and you won't need to look for another football game for months to come. Just buy it, join the EIDOS Barmy Army and make time for irrelevant things like food, water and sunlight whenever you can. It is indeed, quite remarkable.

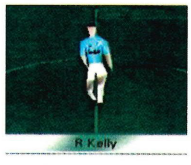


All the latest UK teams and players are now included, plus the fab multi-player mode

Hidden Talent?

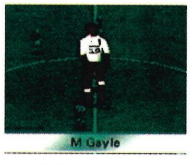
At a first glance, Soccer 97 may look like an accurate simulation of the nation's favourite sport, but we've discovered something odd about certain members of its various UK teams. It seems as though a handful of popstars have infiltrated the ranks of a couple of the Premier League squads, perhaps with some kind of wacky music festival idea inside their drug-fuelled minds. Who knows? Who cares? But see if you can spot any others that we've missed.





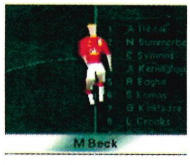
Swingbeat king R.Kelly or midfield dynamo?





Pop girlie Michelle Gayle or Wimbledon star?





Mad folky funkster Beck or perhaps not?

GENRE COMPARISON

Game ***Olympic Soccer***
Software House ***EIDOS Interactive***

This original version wiped the floor with all the other football titles available at the time of its release. It's so great in fact, that we were still playing it up until the remix turned up in the office for review. Both versions are ace and now you've got two to choose from. Hurrah!

PRO SCORE

GAME **Soccer '97**
GENRE **Sports**
SOFTWARE HOUSE **EIDOS Interactive**
CONTACT **0181 780 2222**
RELEASE DATE **March**
PRICE **£49.99**

PLAYSTATION APPROVED **Still the best football game around in my opinion, and this revised edition can only add to its legendary status among soccer-loving PSX owners. It might not be a must-have purchase for those who already have the original, but the new features – such as the correct player names and UK teams, the 'knock-on' move and speed-up options – will all be well received by the ever-growing horde of PlayStation virgins nation-wide. Alan Green's comments are still a tad repetitive and ultimately tiresome, and there are some minor niggles that still annoy, but Soccer '97 sees an old favourite confirming its position on top of the PlayStation Premier League.**

GRAPHICS **7**
SOUND **8**
GAMEPLAY **9**
LASTABILITY **9**

9

DAN **I'm no great fan of football, in real life or on-screen, but this is the first soccer game I've felt vaguely tempted to have a go at. I didn't, as it happens, but the thought was there. Very probably the best footy game yet**

STEVE **I gave it a 9 when I reviewed it originally and there's nothing here to change that opinion for better or for worse. Still the best PlayStation footy game by a long way, and looking like it will be for quite some time**

ALEX **I have to agree with the above comment. It may not look as stunning as Actua, but outplays it by a long way. The addition of the real players' names, the league option and club sides make it a winner**

ANDY **Just as playable as Olympic Soccer and arguably the most playable footie game around. Its fast paced action and all-round excellence makes this a Premier League champion in every department. Buy it now!**

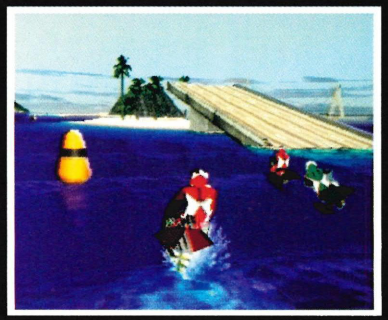
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BY DAN WHITEHEAD

Excalibur

2555AD

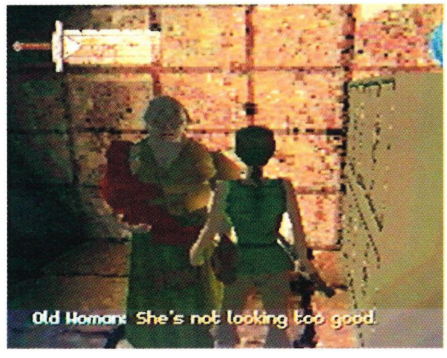
What do you call a pub full of reformed Liverpudlian criminals? An Ex-Scally Bar of course. Thank you, thank you. Take my wife, please...



OK, so she's not quite got the looks of Lara, but her chopper control is much more impressive



As the city collapses, you'll find your way blocked. Time to figure out another route





Tomb Raider. There, I've said it, and saved you the bother. Yes, as anyone who ever sees this game will doubtless comment, Excalibur has more than a few similarities to Eidos Interactive's soaraway success. It is, however, a mind numbingly obvious and tedious observation to make. Don't think that's going to stop me though. It's unavoidable. But first, let's have a little bit of background story.

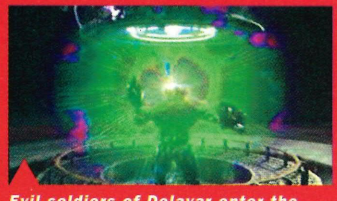
Our story opens in the distant future. A meteorite impact has rendered the surface of the Earth uninhabitable and the remnants of the human race live in vast underground cities. One such city is Salto, in South America. Here, within the crumbling walls, society has separated into three distinct social strata.

The Orts are the poor and destitute, restricted to the highest levels of the city. Crime is rife and chaos reigns. The next level down houses the Fabians. These are hard working people, desperate for better times. Many of them are members of the Fabian Freedom Fighters, struggling to overthrow the apartheid that riddles their society. At the lowest level of the city, furthest away from the meteor's impact, live the wealthy and corrupt Elysians. Their dictatorial leader, Delavar, is hell-bent on crushing the Fabians and waging war on the neighbouring cities – a lot like Macclesfield really.

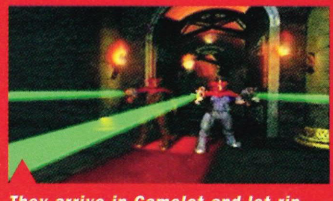
In order to cement his cruel hierarchy, Delavar devised the Eden Project. Using vast amounts of the city's scarce power supply, this device allows him to open temporary gateways to the past. The potential for temporal disaster is huge, but Delavar has only one goal. He wants the mythical sword Excalibur, the magical powers of which will allow him to conquer all who stand in his way.

Sending his elite troops, the Kala, back to the time of King Arthur he steals the sword and massacres the Knights Of The Round Table, their shields and armour no match for futuristic laser cannons. Merlin, the legendary sorcerer, is livid. He has to retrieve Excalibur to prevent the course of time being corrupted forever, and to protect the innocent inhabitants of Salto. Using every ounce of his magic power he propels the one person brave enough to fulfill

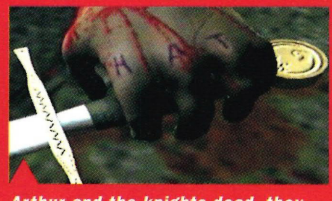
Chronicle Of The Sword



Evil soldiers of Delavar enter the time-stream to do his bidding. Ooooh!



They arrive in Camelot and let rip with lasers. Lost on the Lottery, obviously



Arthur and the knights dead, they steal Excalibur. Cool tats though, eh kids?



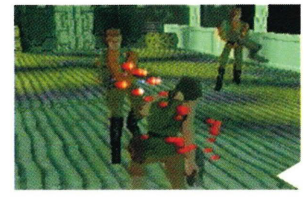
Merlin, right pissed off by this, does a bit of magic and opens a time gate. The adventure begins...

Considering she's from medieval Britain, Beth doesn't bat an eyelid when faced with homicidal robots

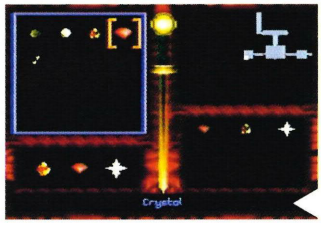




Now that's magic! Beth uses her magic powers to free a man trapped by rubble. Wouldn't that burn though?



They've got laser guns, and they still need to gang up on me. Yer great softies

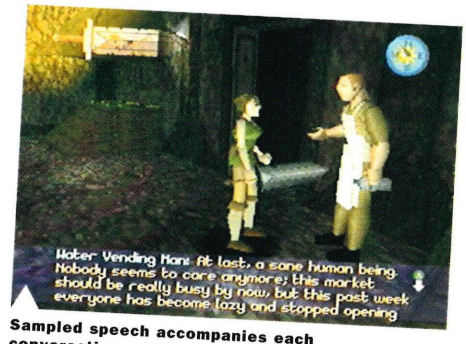


The inventory screen lets you manipulate objects, check the map and prepare spells

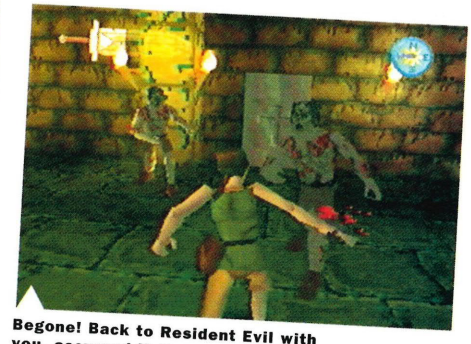
this mission into the future. The person in question is his niece, Beth. And so she arrives at the top of this decaying underground nightmare, determined to fight her way to the bottom and find Excalibur.

It's at this point that Beth steps into her Lara Croft costume and gets on with the job. With you pulling her strings, naturally. So, yeh, it's a bit Tomb Raidery so let's get the comparisons out of the way. Negative points first, Excalibur doesn't have Raider's acrobatic manoeuvres. Beth can only run and walk, she can't jump, swim, climb or dive. Excalibur doesn't have true 3-D levels. You can't move up or down inside a level, only backwards, forwards, left and right. Excalibur doesn't have the massive open plan maps of Tomb Raider. The game takes place in a series of rooms and corridors. In short, all the graphical trickery that made Tomb Raider such an eye-catcher is absent.

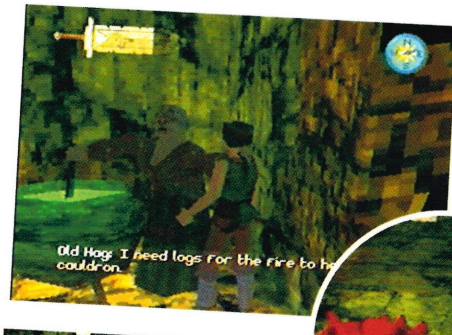
However, there are many areas where Excalibur outshines its more famous cousin. The chance to talk to other characters, for instance. There are 80 other people in the game, some will try and kill you, others ▶

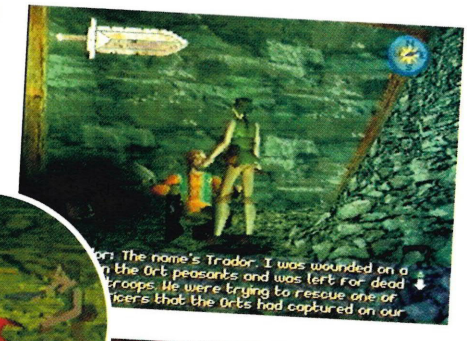


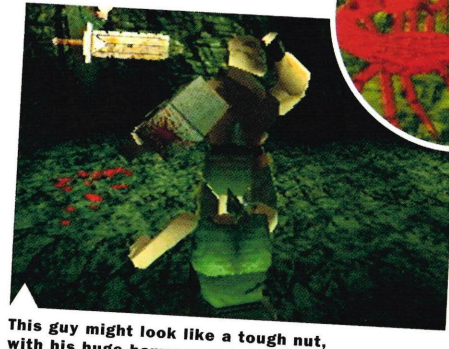
Sampled speech accompanies each conversation, and it's lip synched as well. You never had it so good



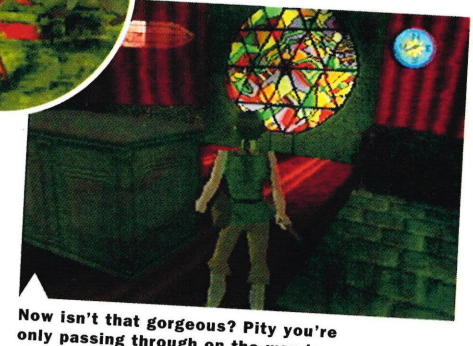
Begone! Back to Resident Evil with you, accursed Hellspawn! And take your stinky mate with you!







This guy might look like a tough nut, with his huge hammer and all, but one firm slice to the bonce finishes him off



Now isn't that gorgeous? Pity you're only passing through on the way to the monster infested crypt

GENRE COMPARISON

Game Tomb Raider
Software House Eidos Interactive

I know I keep harping on about this, but I can't help it. Excalibur looks like it, plays a bit like it, but lacks the freedom of movement that made Tomb Raider so special. In its favour it's got more varied characters, better combat, spells and a leaner, faster game style.

Excalibur 2555AD

▶ will need your help or offer information. Compared to this, Tomb Raider seems like a pretty lonely and sparse experience. Another improvement is the speed of the game. Beth moves faster than Lara, and there's none of the lengthy running about that made Tomb Raider a bit flabby in places.

Excalibur allows you to find and use objects intelligently. Two objects can be used together to create new items or even cast projectile magic spells. Another plus point, in my book. And finally, Excalibur offers slightly more brain teasing puzzles. Nothing too mind bending, usually along the lines of 'find me this object and I'll give you this', but it's more adventurous than Tomb Raider in this aspect as well.

Now, I know what you're thinking, and you're probably right. It is unfair to review Excalibur solely in relation to another game, particularly one as successful as Raider. But in a way, it's asking for it. The similarities in the game design are too glaring to pass over. What is surprising is that it stands up so well against its kissing cousin.

Upon seeing the first screenshots it was difficult to suppress thoughts of 'Here they come, the first of the cheap rip-offs'. But Excalibur wisely avoids trying to take on Tomb Raider on home turf, and moves into a more traditional adventure mould straight away. And it works. There's more to do, the rooms are more detailed and the characters do more than just attack you. With an intuitive hand-to-hand fighting engine, the combat is more varied than constant fire button slugging. All in all, it's a cracking adventure game well suited to novices or semi-competent players. It's a hefty size too, with a nicely scaled challenge. The fact that it borrows a few clothes from Lara Croft's wardrobe shouldn't, and doesn't, count against it.

The camera angles are intelligent and only on a few occasions obscure the way ahead. The animation is smooth and realistic. The collision detection is sometimes a tad hit and miss, as you can get stuck behind an object even though it looks like it's not touching you. You get these minor hassles in most 3-D games though, and Excalibur is by no means the worst offender. The feeling of progress is rewarding, each level is noticeably different and there's just no denying that this is a robust challenge that will squeeze value from every last penny of the asking price.



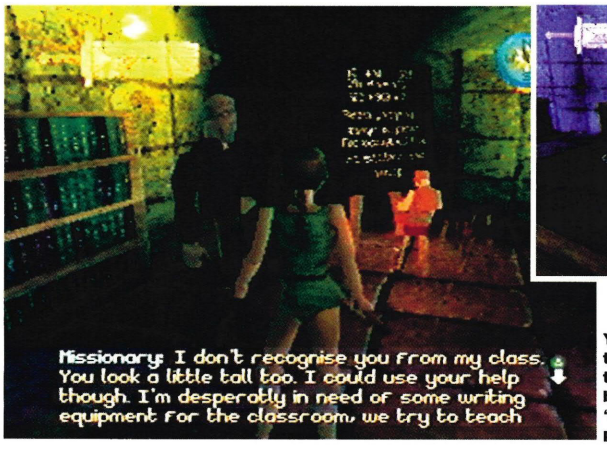
Unsavoury types loiter around the Ort underworld. Their help can be bought if you have the right item



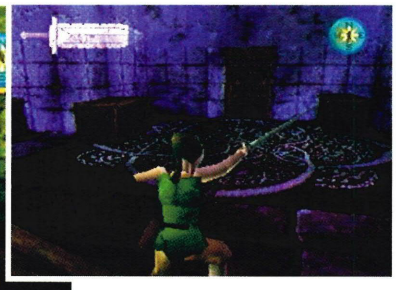
Sometimes, a hefty broadsword just doesn't seem the right tool for the job. Still, you've got to make do, eh?



Deep in the crypt, you'll have to defeat the Grim Reaper to obtain an essential item



You'd think, with this gut being a teacher, that he'd be able to spell 'desperately' properly...



PRO SCORE

GAME **Excalibur 2555AD**
GENRE **Adventure**
SOFTWARE HOUSE **Telstar**
CONTACT **01932 222232**
RELEASE DATE **Out Now**
PRICE **£44.99**

PLAYSTATION APPROVED **Experienced adventurers will probably feel a bit let down by the fairly linear puzzles, but at least they're there and there are loads of them. With three huge city areas to work your way through, packed with bloodthirsty bandits, soldiers and monsters, it won't be an overnight job either. It's only because of the occasionally glitches in the controls that this doesn't score higher, but if you can overlook that then investigate by all means. If you've got Tomb Raider you might think twice about this, but if you're searching for a similar look but with more meat on its bones, this will do the trick. Stylish, captivating and a thoroughly absorbing adventure all round.**

GRAPHICS **8**
SOUND **8**
GAMEPLAY **8**
LASTABILITY **9**

8½

STEVE **If I hadn't seen the screenshots months ago I'd have thought this was a blatant Tomb Raider rip off, but it isn't, it's just not as good. Not a bad little effort in its own right though and worth considering**

JAY **It may not be on par with Lara in the looks department, but the action can get every bit as hot as the aforementioned Miss Croft's pants. If you romped through Tomb Raider with ease, try Excalibur out for size**

ALEX **Emphatically Telstar's best-ever PlayStation release, Excalibur 2555 AD is a well-designed 3-D puzzle solving adventure. Any comparison with Tomb Raider is unfair – this is solid enough in its own right**

ANDY **I was pleasantly surprised by this one. It's got more depth than you may at first realise with all the levels and puzzles involved. It's not in the same league as Tomb Raider, but then it never claimed to be**

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WORLD TOUR
AND GET IT SOON"
Play Magazine

"THE BEST 2 PLAYER ACTION GAME OF ALL TIME"
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THE POWER
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BY DAN WHITEHEAD

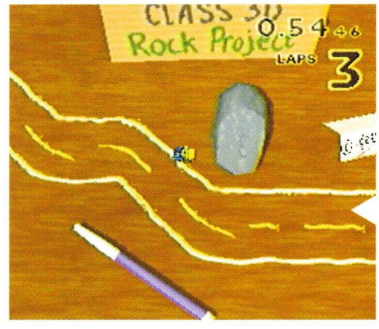
Micro Machines v3

They're Micro! They're Machines! And they're v3! Whatever that means! The greatest ever top-down racer is here at last and by golly, it's good!

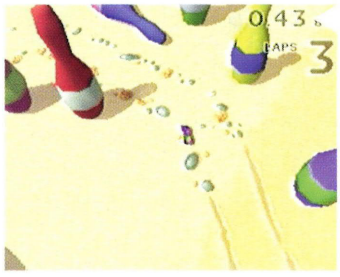




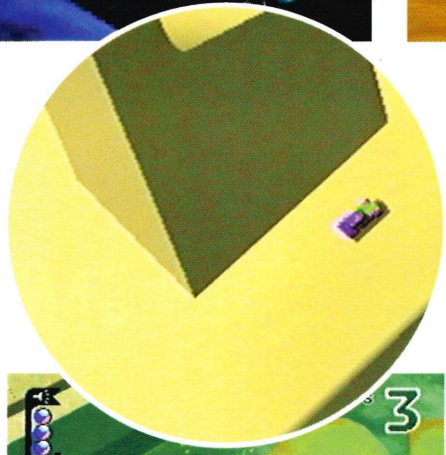
Racing around a dinner party, you can always hear the background chatter of diners



Class 3D Rock Project? Geddit? It's in 3-D innit? You wacky Codemasters, you



We all fall down. Dodge the skittles on the highly skid-inducing beach tracks to take the lead and the bonus





Chen's obviously left his opponent miles behind, and so another light changes to his colour



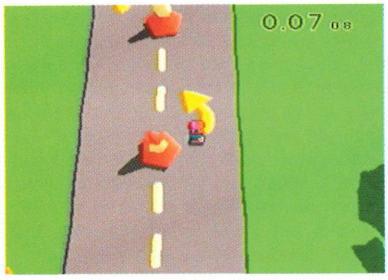
Our blue racer is tragically distracted by a giant toad during a critical bend. That'll cost him

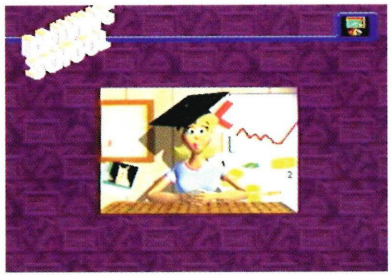
The invention of Micro Machines will probably go down in history as one of the greatest marketing scams of modern times. In case you've never had the pleasure, they're toy cars, right? But here's the twist. They're really small. Tiny. Minuscule even. The sort of small that positively invites standings on, fallings down the back of the sofa and eatings by the dog. So small, in fact, that their usefulness as toys is highly debatable. And yet they sell like hot cakes. Not that I've ever seen anyone actually enter a shop and demand 'hot cakes'. Except in Amsterdam possibly.

Either way, Micro Machines are big money spinners, and not just for the amusingly named Galoob Toys who produces them. No, our own boy wonders at Codemasters have been supping milk and honey for six years now on the back of the lucrative Micro Machines licence. They've probably had some hot cakes as well.

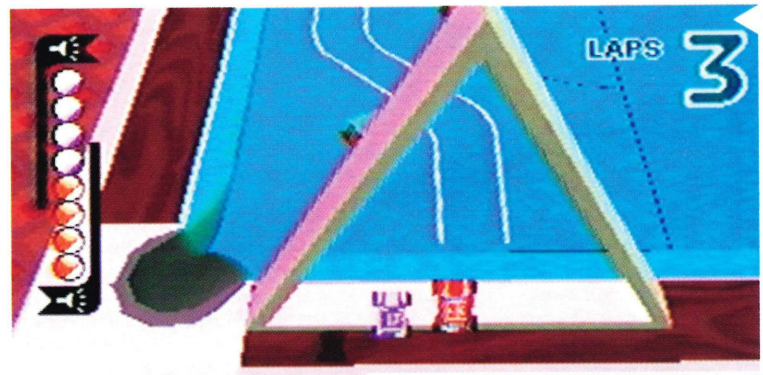
When originally released, shortly after the end of World War 2 on one of those computers the size of a room, Micro Machines instantly captured the attention of passing children and clergy. It was a top-down racer, but one that had immediate playability and the chance to race around over-sized breakfast tables and gardens. It was a big hit and so earned itself the right to be released for every game format to follow. There was even a

When I Tap The Dashboard...





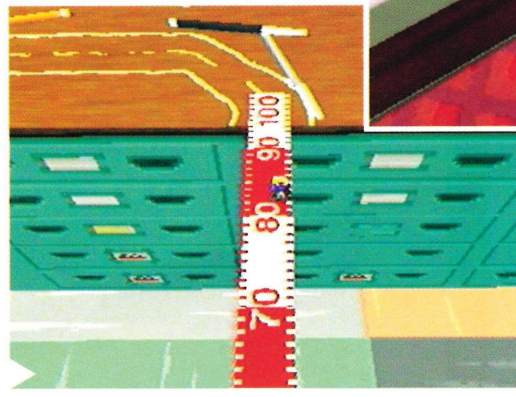
If you're new to the Micro Machines 'universe', let the sultry Cherry talk you through the basics of game control in the special Driving School section. Oh, she's so sexy it hurts



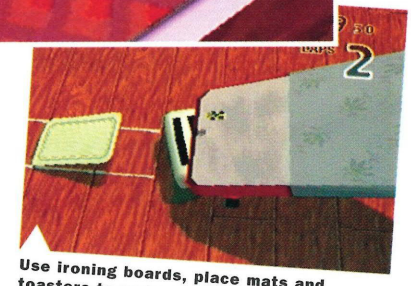
Make the leap of death through the snooker triangle. There's a power up in there somewhere too

Leaping from table to table is a common stunt when you play in the snooker hall. Time it right or you'll drop





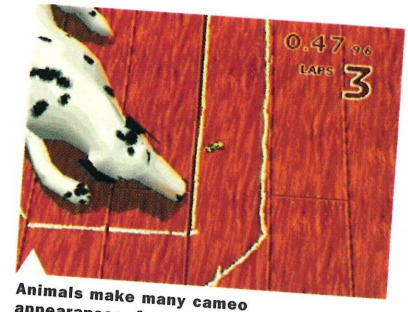
A wise and gentle ruler provides the bridge between cluttered desks in the schoolroom races



Use ironing boards, place mats and toasters to make your way around the Micro Machines house



Most tracks are on top of tables, and one bad corner can send you crashing to the ground below



Animals make many cameo appearances, from dogs and cats to toads and dragonflys

live action role-playing version in Sussex which made the local news, where people dressed up as little cars and ran around in a wood for six hours.

And so, finally, it's the turn of PlayStation Town to open its very own mini-motor motorway. You won't find any scruffy protesters up trees over this development, believe me. It's been a long time coming, so what are the innovations? Primarily, it's the graphics. Gone are the flat courses of yesteryear, in their place tower full-on 3-D rendered entertainment palaces.

You can drive behind, over and under huge realistic objects. And they do look gorgeous. It's often tempting to just pootle round a course so you can fully appreciate the comedy items littering the track. But then you'd lose. The camera follows the action unobtrusively, tracking past huge wine glasses, toasters, flowers and buckets. Each track offers at least one classic moment of enlarged object amusement and with 48 tracks to play, that's a whole heap of fun, daddy.

The other new feature, if you can call it that, is the huge number of play modes. I believe the correct phrase is a 'google of play modes'. You can play alone, against one CPU car, against four CPU cars, against another player or any number of friends, up to eight.

Yep, you can have eight player simultaneous play, with no need for messy link up cables or cramped split screens. You'll need a wallet busting two multitaps and eight joypads, but the option is there. If you've only got two joypads and loads of friends wanting to play, you can play in teams or have everyone taking turns in a knockout tournament.

There are loads of options and I could waste another paragraph listing them all, but I won't. Suffice to say that no matter what style of play you prefer, MMv3 will be able to accommodate you. The new feature that impressed me the most however, is the chance to play 'keepsies'. The better you do in one player mode, the more 'prize cars' you earn. You can then save your character to memory card and these prize cars are saved with it.

Take your memory card round to a mates house, who also has MMv3, and you can play a special mode where you race each other in your saved prize cars. Lose, and your so-called mate takes your prize car from you. Erased, like a smutty doodle, from your card. Win, and you steal their prize car. It's in this mode that the game, for the first time in the series, comes closest to truly tying in with the toys. The idea of swapping and collecting cars is central to the Micro Machines fan mentality and it's nice to ▶

Micro Machines v3

▶ see this recognised at last. A very clever addition.

Also making its debut on the PSX version is a rather pleasing weapons power up system. Pick up the bouncy Rubik cubes on the track and you'll be blessed with some outlandish weapon. A giant mallet might appear on your car, ready to crush the other racers or you might get some pincers which shoot out from your car and pull the leader to the back of the race. Certainly more individual than a measly laser gun or something similarly obvious.

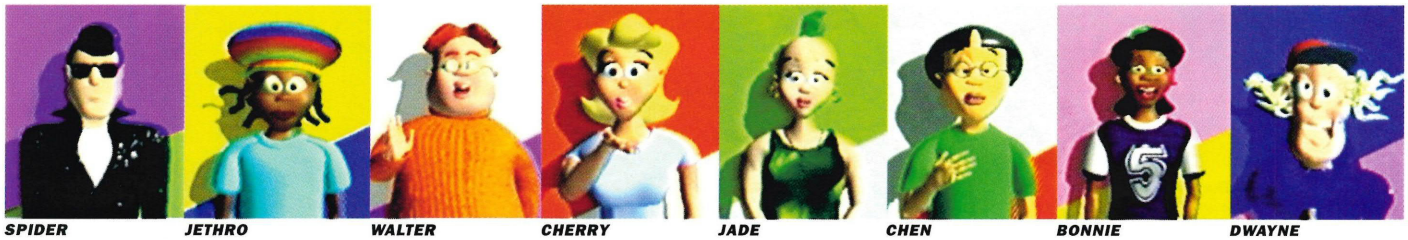
So, at last, we reach the races themselves. Those familiar with earlier versions will find no changes here. The rules and style of play are still the same. While you can have a straight race in one player mode, the majority of the races use Codemasters' specially brewed bonus system.

The idea is to get at least one screen length away from the other racer(s). Every time you do this, one of your lights is lit. Illuminate all your lights to win or be the one with the most lights at the end of the allotted laps. Once the bonus has been won, all the cars are reset at the point of victory and the race starts again.

If you have never played previous Micro Machines games, this stop-start gameplay takes some getting used to and can be very off-putting. Especially when you have four or more human players, where cries of "What happened then?" and "Which one is me, did I win?" are fairly common. A couple of plays soon sorts out this confusion though and at least this system allows you to have eight players at once without messing around with cables and all that rubbish.

Once you've got your brain around the scoring system, you really start to enjoy yourself – in a big way. It would seem that the same special fun juice that coursed through the veins of Micro Machines six years ago is still being pumped out. This is, put simply, an absolute riot. Shunt friends off snooker tables, whack them with giant hammers, outfox them on the bends – any of these activities is essential to victory and,

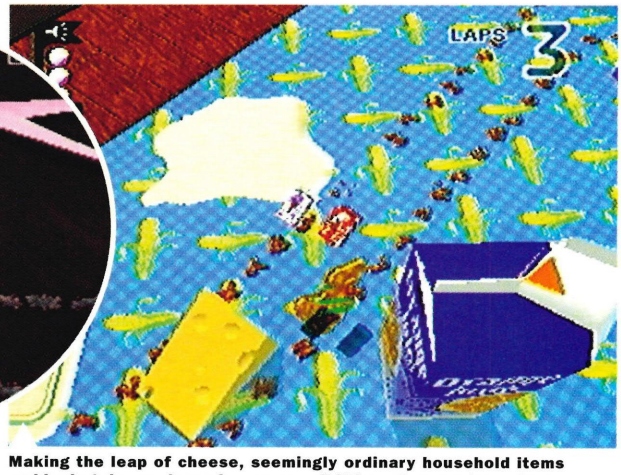
Get Yer Motors Runnin'



SPIDER JETHRO WALTER CHERRY JADE CHEN BONNIE DWAYNE

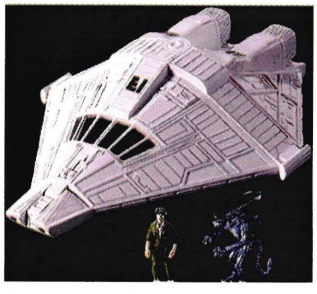


The ice cream van is a pleasant novelty vehicle. Hold down the horn for added nostalgic laughs



Making the leap of cheese, seemingly ordinary household items suddenly take on dynamic new possibilties when you're only wee

Honey, I Shrunk The Famous Movie Vehicles



In addition to producing teeny versions of normal cars and that, Galoob has got a nice sideline in movie miniatures. As well as arse like Star Trek and Babylon 5, it produces Micro Machines based on Alien, Predator and, be still my retro heart, Star Wars. Out of the entire range, these are the ones most likely to earn our pathetic, 20-something, childhood-obsessed cash. Because we're cool like that.





GENRE COMPARISON

Game Supersonic Racers
Software House Mindscape

Released to fill the void in the market left by MMv3's prolonged development, Supersonic was passable entertainment, but it lacks the crisp controls and variety of Codemasters' wonder baby. It's still a good game, but it's going to have to take a back seat now the real deal's here

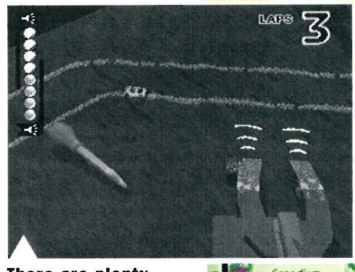
when playing in a large group, can result in extreme giddiness. It's a pity the locations haven't changed, we're still stuck with the breakfast table, school desk and the rest. Having said that, the track layouts are all-new and the new 3-D incarnations are inventive enough to help prevent deja vu.

It's also annoying that you can't always see as much of the track ahead of you as you'd like. This is especially annoying when you're in the lead and fly off a table because you didn't see the bend in time.

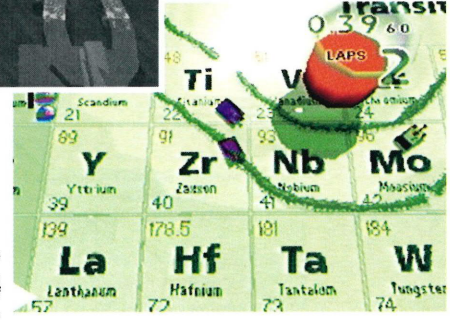
These are about the only lasting problems with the game though, and in a year that's seen some absolute bollocks hit the shelves, it's as close as you're going to get to true gaming greatness. It's daft, childish and unashamedly silly but also polished, well thought out and smooth as a snake's armpit. We suspected that the Micro Machines franchise would come up trumps on the PSX, and it hasn't let us down. Only the most miserable bastard in the world could fail to be seduced by this.



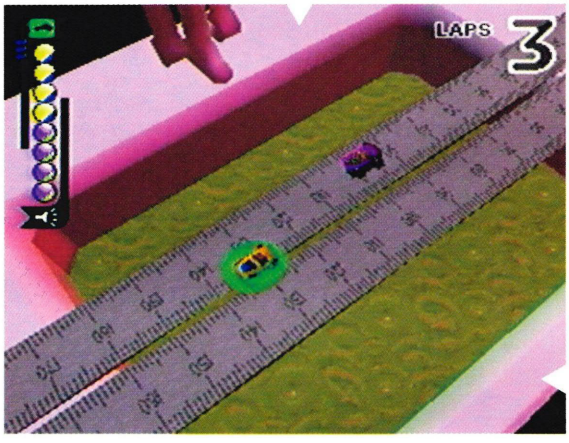
Options, options. Drive a tiny car/cursor around the Micro Machines town to make your gaming choices



There are plenty of strange hazards, like this magnet. But aren't these cars made of plastic?



Pelt across the Periodic Table. Funny, I'd never heard of Eggsarnium before...



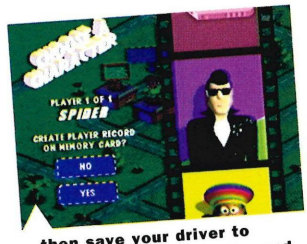
That green glow will repel the other car, hopefully shunting them into the murky sink for good



It's tricky to see the car here, but this picnic offers loads of huge 3-D objects with no slowdown. Hurrah!



Win Prize Cars in one player mode by doing, really, really well. There are loads to get...



...then save your driver to memory card and take it round to a mate's house...



...where you can race Prize Cars against each other, and steal them off your 'mate'

PRO SCORE

GAME Micro Machines v3
GENRE Racing
SOFTWARE HOUSE Codemasters
CONTACT 01926 814132
RELEASE DATE Out Now
PRICE £49.99

PLAYSTATION APPROVED Teething troubles with the bonus system aside, this is an instantly accessible and addictive treat. Like all games of this ilk, it gets even better out of single player mode, so the chance to race with up to seven other friends earns this much respect. A classic multiplayer game and one you'll return to over and over again, that's for certain. Originally, I was thinking of about 8.5 for a final score but, taking into account the multitude of gameplay options and the number of ingenious track designs, a big fat 9 is the only fair and just conclusion. Indecently good fun that looks fantastic as well. What more could you ask for? Apart from a hot cake, naturally.

GRAPHICS 9
SOUND 8
GAMEPLAY 9
LASTABILITY 9

9

ANDY It's got everything anybody could want from a game, unless you're Alex. It plays well, looks fantastic and offers hours of enjoyment for up to eight players. An absolute corker, to be frank

JAY A bit tiresome in single player mode, but invite a few boozy pals over for some multi player action and you've got yourself one hell of a thumb-blistering and giggle-packed night of mini car mayhem. It rocks and you know it

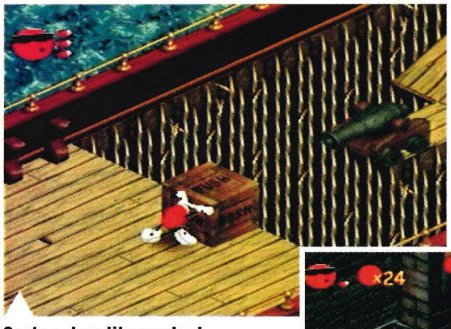
ALEX Having played a multiplayer game and losing in a big way, I couldn't help but sulk and watch as everyone else enjoyed themselves. I prefer proper boys games with sports and things. Hrrrumph

STEVE Despite being possibly the worst license in world history I'll have to concede that this is an incredibly playable, mightily enjoyable racing romp that urinates on the likes of Ridge Racer from a great height!

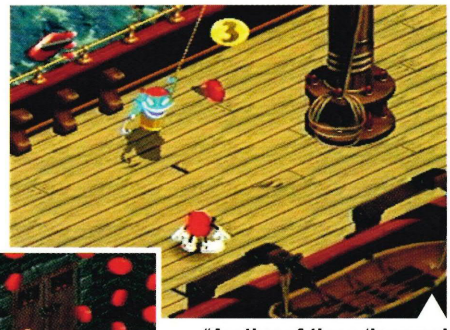
BY DAN WHITEHEAD

Spot Goes to Hollywood

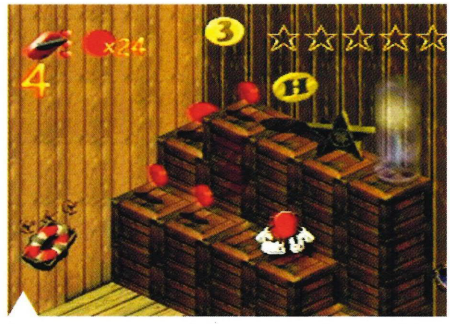
No talking. No smoking. No eating in a noisy manner. No fidgeting. No petting. No ducking. No bombing. No littering. Thank you. Enjoy the film



Crates, handily marked 'Push', can be pushed around to access new areas



"Another of those 'harassed by a swinging fish in a bucket' days", sighed Spot



A secret room, containing some spots, a health refill, one of the fabled stars and a teleport back to the main game. Got that?



Cool Spot. Little red Smartie fella. Do you remember the days when having 16 'bits' to play with seemed like a crazy man's dream? If so, you probably saw Spot's gaming debut. He starred in a fairly uneventful platformer that babies, vicars and old people liked, and thus sold shed loads.

He was, originally, the red dot on cans of 7Up fizzy pop drink (a glorified lemonade by all accounts) but in a marketing move that would make Ronald McDonald emit noxious gas from his chin slot, he moved into the video game arena and made a fortune. So, true to the laws of supply and demand, he returned for a sequel. But there are times when a teeny Sega just isn't big enough and you have to move on. To the PlayStation, perchance? Why, yes. And here he is.

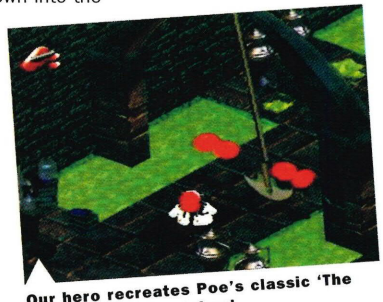
The game opens with, honestly, one of the best intro sequences I've ever seen. In a mock Spielberg manner, we follow a bubble as it floats through Hollywood, into a cinema, up the stairs and pops on a 7Up machine. Out comes Spot, and before he can even blink, he's been whisked into a projector and splurged into the screen. That's where his adventure begins. And it's an isometric 3-D adventure that'll take him through all his favourite movie genres, such as Pirates, Indiana Jones adventures, Horror and Science Fiction. The levels and baddies are all plucked from the classics of the silver screen, adding to the amusement and 'ooh, look it's a face hugger' recognition chuckles.

So, basically, it's a pseudo 3-D platformer. You leap about, shoot numerous enemies and collect spots for extra lives. Spot defends himself from the baying hordes by chucking grey things about. I'm informed they're stones, but I like to pretend that they're actually tiny little flying elephants. And if you've ever been hit by a tiny little flying elephant, you'll know what I mean.

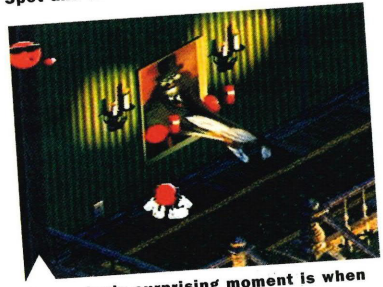
Weapon power ups are thrown into the soup to add flavour, including Freeze blasts, Triple shots and Timebombs. Teleports scoot you away to hidden areas, and there are plenty of other little tricks and vaguely puzzlish elements to vary the gameplay.

The aim, apart from getting through the whole caboodle unscathed, is to collect five Hollywood stars per level. Not stars like Mel Gibson, Sharon Stone or even Emilio Estevez. No, stars like those ones that are on the pavement over in Hollywood. Those dead famous ones. Whatever they're called. You can complete a level without all the stars, but then you'll miss out on most of the game.

I'm going to jump in at the deep end and mention Spot's biggest problem, apart from having no discernible groin area, straight away. It's the viewpoint. It looks really good, and allows for some good arcadey shooting levels, but makes platform jumping a real pain at first. Especially on levels where you can fall off the edge and lose a life, the frustration of missing an easy platform thanks to the off-putting perspective is immense. Firo and Klawd (reviewed in issue three) used a similar viewpoint and had the same problem. Practice does ease the problem, but it's one you shouldn't have to cope with in the first place and it drove me mad for my first few days of play.



Our hero recreates Poe's classic 'The Spot and The Pendulum'



A genuinely surprising moment is when this hand lunges out from a painting

Apart from that though, and it is only a temporary problem, Spot's Tinseltown spree is a cracking wee game. At first I thought it was ridiculously small, as the game finished after the third world, Horror. Then I realised that I'd sped through most of the levels and missed most of the stars and the secrets. Put a bit more time and effort in and you'll uncover levels based on Star Wars, Alien, Kung Fu and Jurassic Park.

It's not all platform based either, there are plenty of shoot 'em-up stages as well as a



Astride a broomstick, Spot makes his way through a scary shooty-kinda level



These charging crabs are easily avoided if you can get inbetween them. If not, keep shooting and hope they're soft shelled

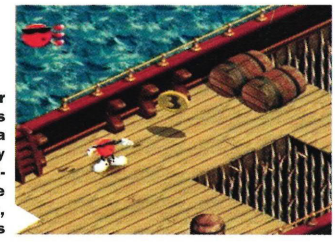


The first big boss is this huge octopus. He's not so tough, but the bombs he drops are



Temple Of Doom mine cart race and some white water rafting. The design of the levels varies nicely too. From the linear left to right Pirate ship, to the sprawling Haunted House full of secret passages, no two levels are the same. And each world is introduced by a slice of FMV of the same high quality as the intro. It is, to be blunt, a visual feast.

Having played and completed the Megadrive version I had fears that this might be lazy rehash. These fears soon disappeared and it soon became clear that the only thing this has in common with it's ancestor is the game-in-a-movie concept. All the levels are different, the power ups are unique to the PSX, the baddies are all new and there are oodles of bonus stages and secret worlds that wouldn't fit into a Megadrive's feeble pouch. From it's humble beginnings, it's been overhauled and buffed up into a perfectly acceptable example of PlayStation platformery. I doubt Pandemonium and Mr. Bandicoot are worried too much, as this still has an unmistakably old fashioned vibe surrounding it, but there's no denying that Spot Goes To Hollywood is a polished, pert and playable entry into the genre. Not one to put at the top of your shopping list, but a good time is guaranteed for those who splash out.



No, older readers, it's not a thrupenny bit. It's a 3-way fire power up, you old gits



He's a happy chap. And I have a 'hunch' he'll be 'back' very soon. My sides! Nurse! Help me!

PRO SCORE

GAME Spot Goes To Hollywood
GENRE Platform
SOFTWARE HOUSE Virgin
CONTACT 0171 368 2255
RELEASE DATE Out Now
PRICE £44.99

PLAYSTATION APPROVED Despite initial irritation caused by the perspective and seemingly vindictive collision detection, Spot soon made up for his shortcomings and grew on me like a satanic fungus. Each level boasts new features, the desire to see what awaits in the next world is strong and the film atmosphere is captured as well as can be expected. It's easy to finish, but tricky to finish properly, so while you may reach one ending in a few days, you'll spend weeks hunting for those missing stars and secret levels. With multiple end game sequences, healthy dollops of decent FMV and a surplus of gameplay, this is a sturdy game that deserves your attention. Kids will love it, but so will 'grown ups'.

GRAPHICS 8
SOUND 7
GAMEPLAY 7
LASTABILITY 8

8

STEVE **Not a bad effort, but we're used to things a tad more spectacular these days so Spot is left lagging behind. Shame really because not that long ago this would have caused major ripples on the PlayStation pond**

ANDY **Spot is a character who pops up on every console at some stage so it's no surprise to see him on the PlayStation. This is a relatively enjoyable romp which pushes no boundaries but makes up for it in other ways**

JAY **It's not Crash or Pandemonium, but it still manages to offer a fairly enjoyable and somewhat semi-nostalgic, quirky platform experience. Older gamers may grow tired, but the kids will love it right to the end. Probably**

ALEX **After a hard day playing football, you can't beat a good platformer. This is by no means a ground breaker... *Actually Dan, that's not true. And don't think I didn't see 'my' MMv3 comment either***

BY DAN WHITEHEAD

Blood Omen
Legacy Of Kain

Things get mighty spooky as we enter the gothic, blood soaked world of Kain. A man for whom the phrase 'going out for a bite to eat' has a whole new meaning

When we first meet Kain, he's the lazy and cruel aristocratic son of a wealthy family. Ignoring the plight of the peasants, he stuffs his bloated face with roast boar, jelly and strong ale. A bit like Anthea Turner. Not surprisingly, nobody likes him. So when he finds himself in the pox ridden village of Ziegstruhl after dark, a gang of brigands set about him and hack him to bits. Kain awakes in torment, deep in the bowels of Hell. The Necromancer Mortanious offers him the chance to return to life for revenge and Kain accepts instantly, unaware of the cost – his mortal soul.

He awakens in a crypt, his body transformed. Sunlight weakens him, water burns and people flee when he approaches. He locates his murderers in the forest where he died and, filled with an unholy bloodlust, rips the ne'er-do-wells to shreds. As he gulps down the last pint of blood, he realises that this isn't exactly normal behaviour. Possibly, he thinks to himself, that Mortanious bloke has swindled him.



Aah! That hit the spot. Kain drains another helpless victim to keep his own energy up

A booming voice echoes around the forest. It's Mortanious again. "Well you'd better go and consult the Pillars Of Nosgoth then, you ungrateful get" he bellows. Or something similar. The Pillars being the magical heart of the land, each representing one of nine powers that keeps Nosgoth together. Each pillar has a mortal representative who is linked to their pillar via a magic artefact and these representatives are known as the Circle. Arriving at the Pillars, Kain finds them crumbling and the ghost of Arial.

Arial represented the Pillar Of Balance, until she was slain by person or persons unknown. Her lover, Nupraptor, is the Pillar Of Mind and her death drives him insane. Convinced that only another of the Circle could have killed his beloved, he infects all the Pillars with his madness. The spiritual heart of Nosgoth is corrupted and the land swept with blight. Kain's only chance to earn his mortality back is to destroy the Circle, restore the Pillars to order and discover who's dark magic is behind this twisted deceit. Serves him right for being so bloody selfish really.

So that, in a gothic nutshell, is the storyline that introduces us to the Legacy Of Kain. And a right gloomy tale it is too. Just like the game. It's essentially a hybrid between top-down perspective arcade explorers like Gauntlet and those sprawling RPG things that bearded people like. It's too involved to be a straight forward hack and slasher, but it's also not quite in depth enough to be classed as an RPG. So for the sake of a quiet life, we'll call it an adventure game.

You control Kain as he makes his way through the land of Nosgoth in his quest to be human again. Along the way you'll clash swords with bandits, warlocks, gypsies, knights and a host of undead creatures. In fact, 190 different character types are loitering in and around the scenery, and most of them will take a swipe at you if you come too close.

However, as a vampire, Kain isn't exactly without defence. He starts his quest with a sword, some armour and a couple of basic spells. As you progress you'll pick up bigger and better versions



These giant altars act as save points. They crop up just before any tricky sections, so use them!



Deep underground, the way ahead is blocked. If only you could find a way to increase your strength...

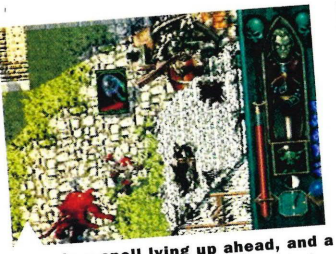


Even scarecrows are aggresive in this land. Set it alight with the Flame Sword. That should do it



The inventory screen. Here we see Kain modelling a lovely Chaos Armour and Axes outfit

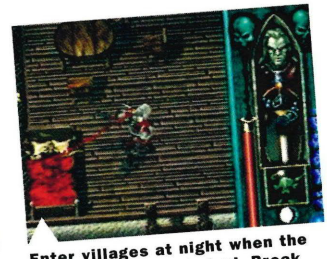




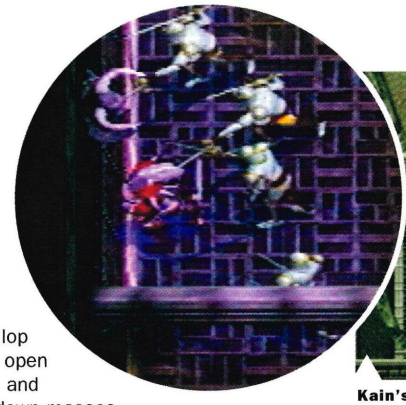
There's a spell lying up ahead, and a huge demon on my tail. Which do I deal with first?



Listen to them. Children of the night. What music they make! It's just a pity they've trapped me



Enter villages at night when the townsfolk will be in bed. Break into their homes and drink away!





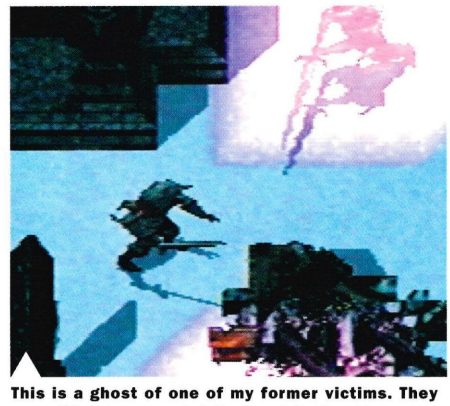
Kain's wearing the ghostly Wraith Armour here, hence his faded appearance. The other person is a member of the Circle, so get hacking

of all of them. The axes, for instance, can lop down trees to open new pathways and brutally mow down masses of enemies. He also has spells with pleasant titles like Flay, Implode and Blood Shower, none of which are particularly pleasant.

This brings us nicely to the question of gore. Make no mistake, this is a gruesome game. Each slash of Kain's weapon brings forth a gush of blood, each spell pulls bodies apart in a graphic manner and the screens are littered with dead bodies in advanced states of decay. Casper it isn't.

Best of all is the way Kain drinks blood. Eschewing the traditional fang and throat method, Kain slices throats with his sword and then the blood leaps to his mouth in a bright red stream. The gurgling slurps as this happens will probably be enough to turn weaker stomachs. And it's not like you can avoid such nastiness, as the salty red stuff acts as your energy bar. Run out of blood, and even vampires can die.

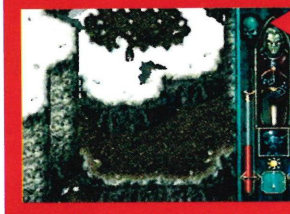
With a plethora of spells, weapons and ▶



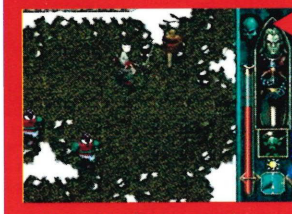
This is a ghost of one of my former victims. They can still harm you, but their spirit blood replenishes your magic powers

The Kain's They Are A-Changin'

Kain can take on many forms during his blood stained journey. Each has its own uses and disadvantages, and each manages, in some way, to wear a hat marked 'cool'. You still have to find and earn them though.



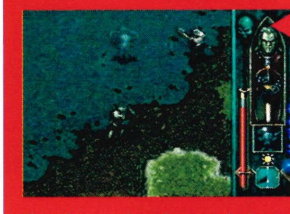
BAT
You don't actually control Kain in this mode. It's his way of crossing huge distances across the map. You have to activate 'bat beacons' which allow him to navigate the skies, but it's the fastest form of travel for any self respecting vampire



WOLF
The grooviest animal form in the game. You can't use magic or weapons, but you can leap onto ledges allowing access to essential areas. You can also unleash a ferocious swipe, which is ultra-destructive during a full moon



MIST
As water burns his tender flesh, Kain needs to transform into a sort of eerie fog to cross lakes and such like. In this form he's invulnerable to physical attacks, but magic can still inflict harm. He can't fight back, but he can float through grilles and some doors



DISGUISE
It gets tiresome when everyone tries to kill you because of your fangs and pale complexion. For times when he needs to sneak through guarded areas unharmed, Kain can dress up as a peasant. In this guise, people will actually talk to you and give clues



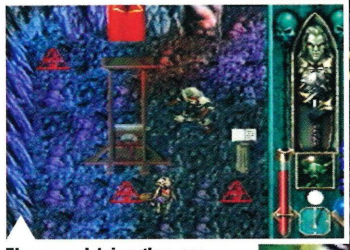
BEGUILE
A more powerful variation on the Disguise. This uses magic to make people believe you are a human nobleman once again. People are even more accommodating under this illusion and go out of their way to be nice. If you attack though, the spell is broken

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain





Welcome to the Pillars Of Nosgoth. Repeated visits here are essential to uncovering the plot



Those red triangles are 'vistas'. Standing on them activates a descriptive narration or FMV scene



▶ projectile attacks you'd think that the whole game would descend into a confusing mess. And certainly, at first, the number of tasks you have to master can be daunting. The game goes easy on you to begin with though, allowing you time to suss out the way things work without slaughtering you straight away. Simple pop up menus allow quick and easy access to all your collected power ups, and an inventory screen let's you mix and match armour and weapons for the best effect. Once you've got used to this system, it's second nature.

It's taken two years to create this epic game, and it shows. Atmosphere drips from every screen, lanterns flicker, lightning crashes as day turns to night and snowfalls blow across mountain tops. It's gorgeous, quite frankly. With over an hour of narration from the grumpy Kain and nearly half an hour of FMV inserts, this is one game that truly makes the most of the PlayStation's vast memory cupboard.

The software company people reckons there are over 100 hours of play hiding in the folds of Kain's cloak and, having been compelled to play through to the bitter end, I'd have to agree. It took me about five days solid playing, 9 to 5, to reach the end with the official help book at hand, and I still only found about twenty of the hundred or so secret areas. It's huge so this is one game that should justify its price, although as with all games of this ilk it's unlikely you'll want to return once completed. That's the nature of the adventure game beast though, and shouldn't be held against it.

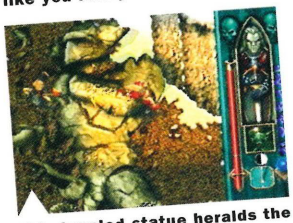
There are some things that should be held against it though, and I'm not talking about a badger. The disc accessing is a pain, probably due to the sheer size of the map (100,000 screens, fact fans). Every time you enter a new area, be it huge forest or tiny house, there are a few seconds of loading which tends to break up the action. It's not a crippling problem, but it interrupts the flow of the story more than once and also makes swapping spells and weapons more cumbersome than it should be.

The other problem is due to the fancy lighting effects. While conjuring a spooky atmosphere, the presence of too many lit objects causes the animation to slow down considerably. This doesn't happen too often, and even then only briefly, but it does bear mentioning.

Apart from those technical grumbles, both of which are excusable as side effects of having such a large, graphically rich game environment, I'm having trouble finding any other faults with Kain. Maybe the combat system could have been more detailed than just pressing the square



The King's daughter is bewitched. Can a nightcrawler like you really help her?



This toppled statue heralds the success of Kain's strangest challenge - time travel!



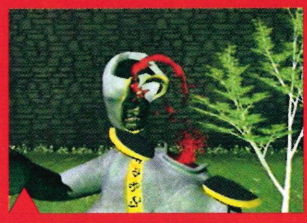
Another member of the Circle destroyed, as shown by the body parts lying at my feet

Bloody Hell!

Legacy Of Kain is, it has to be said, a very, very gruesome game. Blood and bits everywhere. These are the best gory moments from the game that makes you go 'Uuuurgh'.



The Flay spell launches ninja stars that strip the flesh from your enemies. Blood flies everywhere leaving a skeleton to crumble to the floor. Great!



At one point in the game, Kain gets all stroppy with one of the major characters. With a crafty sweep of his blade he lops his head off in glorious FMV. Yeah!



These bizarre Jabba beasts are a bit sick anyway, but when you kill them they split open and dump their guts on the ground with a sploshing noise. Brilliant!



The most powerful weapon in the game, the Soul Reaver drains magic energy with each attack. However, one hit is enough to rip enemies to pieces. Boo-yakka!

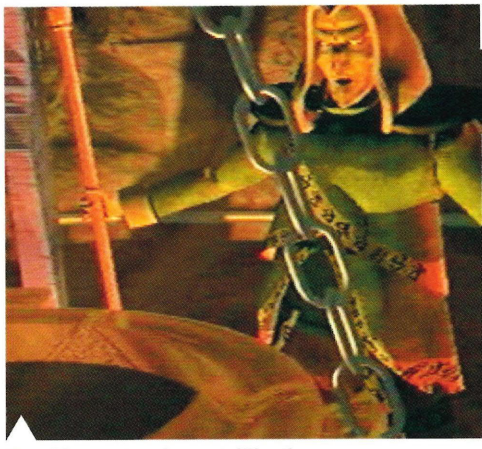
GENRE COMPARISON

Game Swagman
Software House Core Design

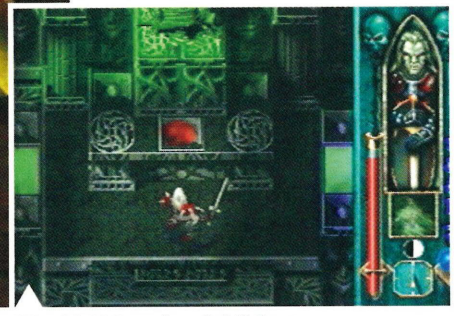
We haven't seen a game of this style for ages now, but Eidos has got Swagman in the pipeline and that's similar. Favouring cartoony action over Kain's darker blood letting, it still looks promising. Whether it has Kain's sheer size is another matter.



Blimey! And this is just in the intro! If this is a bit too much for you, then steer clear of this game. It gets much gorier



The video segments are brilliantly rendered and genuinely spooky. And often incredibly gruesome



This, fright fans, is a Spirit Forge. Sacrifice your own blood and the spirits will grant you extra powers



The aftermath of the Great Battle. And no, I won't tell you who wins. It'd spoil the ending...

button to lash out with your chosen weapon. Maybe he could stop yelling 'Vae Victus' every time he swings his sword, thus driving nearby colleagues to join in with cries of 'Hey Victor!' and 'Cough Linctus!'. Maybe Kain could lose his plummy English accent which makes him sound a bit like a gruff Hugh Grant. Maybe the story sometimes wanders dangerously close to Hobbit-style whimsy. Maybe I could stop trying to find fault and admit that Legacy Of Kain is the first game in months that's captured my full interest and kept me glued to the PlayStation until the end. Yes, I think that's the answer.

Kain is a vast, accessible and involving experience that manages to pull off the tricky feat of being atmospheric, playable and engrossing. In a word, brilliant.

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PRO SCORE

GAME Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
GENRE Adventure
SOFTWARE HOUSE BMG Interactive
CONTACT 0171 384 7500
RELEASE DATE April
PRICE £44.99

PLAYSTATION APPROVED Who could resist the chance to step into the boots of an arrogant and immoral vampire? Sneaking into houses in the dead of night, drinking innocent blood? Eating your way through entire towns, just because you can? Yes, it's sick. Yes, it sets a bad example. Yes, it's irresponsible. And yes, it's great fun. At least the addition of a proper plot, with twists, surprises and that sort of grown up nonsense, goes some way to justifying the gallons of blood on display. A throwback to the olden days of sprawling adventure games that were designed to keep you up all night, this is one massive game and it'll take ages to tire of its brutal challenge. Excellent.

GRAPHICS 9
SOUND 8
GAMEPLAY 9
LASTABILITY 9

9

STEVE This ludicrously gory slash 'em-up is a bit too light on proper puzzles to be classed as either an adventure or RPG if you ask me, and as a result I prefer Suikoden. I wouldn't say it's worth nine, but it's not that far off

JAY Part RPG, part hack 'em-up, this may excite a few gamers with its insight into the life and times of a hapless vampire. Though you'll find that it's a bit like a more indepth version of ReLoaded, with fake dracula teeth

ANDY Kain is deceptive in its depth and magnitude. On first play you don't seem to understand what it's all about but in time you come to realise exactly how huge and demanding it all is. Top vampire action

ALEX No-one could get near this one because Dan was so addicted to it, so it can't have been that bad, judging by his generally harsh review scoring. It looked okay, if a little over-the-top with the bloodshed

BY DAN WHITEHEAD

Jet Rider

Just when you think we've exhausted every possible variation on the driving theme, some smart arse has to come up with another. Like a motor bike/rocket/jet ski combination, for instance



Gripping 'glow pole' action as I attempt to use this blue energy thing to perk up my corner taking skills



Pleasingly, you choose to have your trophy delivered by a bloke or a bird, depending on which way you 'swing'



For me, personally, jet skis will always be intrinsically linked to Bounty bars. You know how it goes. Tanned Chippendale bloke arrives on desert island, clad only in a bit of old cow skin and with some shells around his neck, on his jet ski. Upon arrival he finds that he shares the island with a proto-Baywatch beauty who is wearing even less old cow skin.

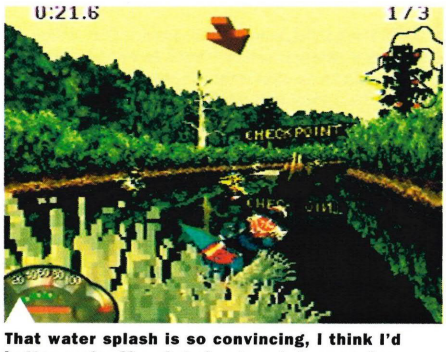
She leads him a seductive chase through the palm trees, before finally handing him some sickly coconut wrapped up in chocolate, gently resting on a big leaf. He enjoys the Bounty while she slices a coconut in half with a machete and pours the milk all over herself in slow motion. This seems to satisfy him and their Blue Lagoon lifestyle continues happily ever after. Until Biscuit Boost arrives and shatters their twisted dream of world domination via coconut confections.

That's what jet skis mean to me, and it's not a situation I'm particularly proud of. So, as you can imagine, I was hoping that Jet Rider would sweep the Bounty images from my mind and replace them with pulsating 32bit racing action on and around the waves.

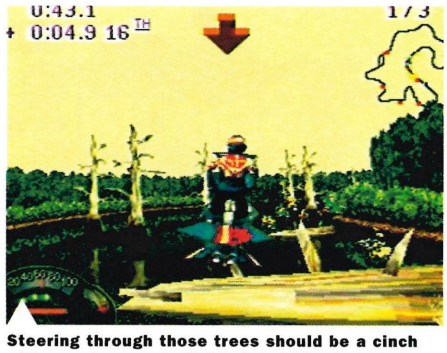
What with it coming from the same fair hands that crafted the indecently entertaining Twisted Metal 2, I had hoped for similar chuckles from Mr. Jet Rider. Notice the use of the past tense there – I *had* hoped. Then I played it and my hopes were cruelly dashed on the rocks of disappointment, just as if the Chippendale bloke had driven head on into a cliff and died, brains and bits of teeth spattered everywhere. Grim.

To be brief, it's a racing game with watery nobs on and, as you'll know from last issue's Car Wars feature, we're not exactly short of entries in the racing genre at the moment. The idea with this entry seems to be to combine traditional road race thrills with wave-based sections.

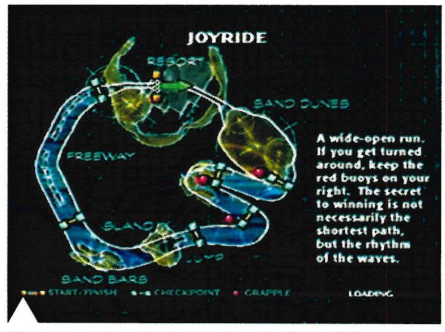
Your vehicle, to accommodate these different notions, is a bizarre hovering bike thing that acts



That water splash is so convincing, I think I'd better rush off and grab a towel. I mean, for Christ's sake, what is that meant to look like?



Steering through those trees should be a cinch with my oh-so-controllable jet ski/rocket/motor bike combo vehicle

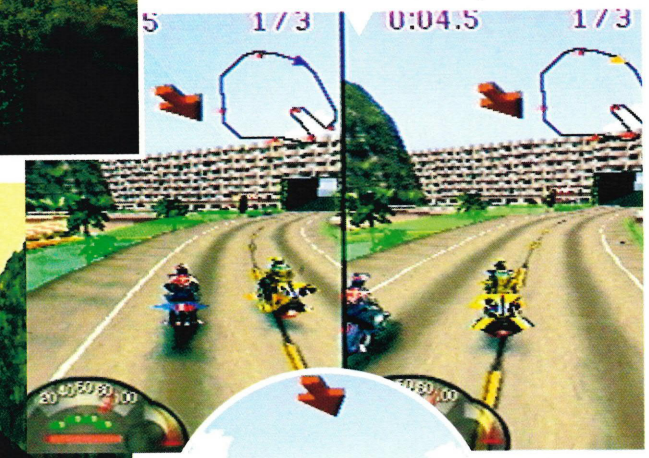


The secret to winning is the rhythm of the waves? No, the secret to winning is to avoid putting out toss like this under the Sony banner



This sheer drop is one of the few exciting moments in the game. Says it all really, don't you think?

The two player mode defaults to this awful vertical split screen. You'll have to call up a menu to change it





Hurtle off dirt ramps, but do please do be careful. You don't want to hit those terribly realistic trees next to you, do you?

as a motor bike on land and a jet ski on the water. You can choose from 20 such chuggers, with varying attributes. Some are fast and wobbly, some slower but more stable. You know the drill.

To generate some feeling of camaraderie there are four teams of riders, with five riders in each team. I've yet to figure out just how this affects the game, as in the races it still seems to be every man for himself. Oh, and your jet ski has a magnetic grapple which can be used to snag special 'glow poles' and whip you round sharp corners. Sometimes this works, saving you precious time on cornering. Sometimes you just end up flying round and not knowing which way you're facing. Maybe there's a knack here that you need to learn, but the game as a whole is so average that it's a waste of time to bother.

The major complaint with Jet Rider, from this corner of the office at least, is that it falls somewhere between the crisply defined tracks of yer traditional racer and the freedom of movement offered by Twisted Metal or Monster Trucks. This means that you'll often find yourself speeding along, only to discover that you're headed for the side of the course rather than straight ahead.

The programmers even seem to have noticed this design flaw as there's an arrow at the top of the screen which shows you which way is forward, as well as colour coded balloons to distinguish the left hand side from the right. If you've got yellow markers to your left then you're going in the general direction required. Of course, it would have been easier to build some half decent levels, but I guess it's a bit too late to mention that.

Now might be a prudent time to mention the fact that the control of the titular 'riders' isn't quite as tight as you'd like. Even if you pick one with superb handling, you can expect to spend an inordinate amount of time clipping the scenery and generally hitting things. This isn't as bad as it sounds, as the crashes are the best bit of the game. If you try hard, you can pull off some spectacular tumbles, especially while in mid air. OK, so it's not much to recommend the game, but it was the only bit that roused me from my vague coma-like state while playing.



Hit the trees mid-air for the best bit of the game. A crash



Even with close races like this, it's hard to get excited



Follow the arrow or fall foul of the confusing track designs

And that, like a bolt from the blue, is pretty much what's wrong with this game as a whole. It's uninvolving. At no point, other than when I was deliberately trying to decapitate my rider, was I at all bothered about winning or losing. Having seen so many better race games, I couldn't bring myself to care whether I won or lost. All things said and done, this is a token release with no real justification for its existence. Ropey graphics, dubious gameplay and tunes that sound like Jools Holland playing the theme from The Munsters on a kazoo. Must try harder.

PRO SCORE

GAME Jet Rider
GENRE Racing
SOFTWARE HOUSE Sony
CONTACT 0171 447 1600
RELEASE DATE April
PRICE £44.99

A loose collection of vague ideas pinned to the racing game donkey, Jet Rider tries so very hard to be the PlayStation's answer to the N64's Wave Race. However, rather than sweeping across the ocean like a majestic speed demon, it sort of goes for a paddle, trips on some seaweed and falls face first into a rock pool and ends up with a mouthful of dead crab. The courses are confusing and badly thought out, the bike/ski things handle like slippery bricks and the whole affair has a disconcertingly scrappy feel that makes you feel a bit ill. There are loads of great race games out there, so there's absolutely no reason to even consider this half arsed mish mash of a game. Another waste of a good idea. Ho hum

GRAPHICS 6
SOUND 6
GAMEPLAY 4
LASTABILITY 5

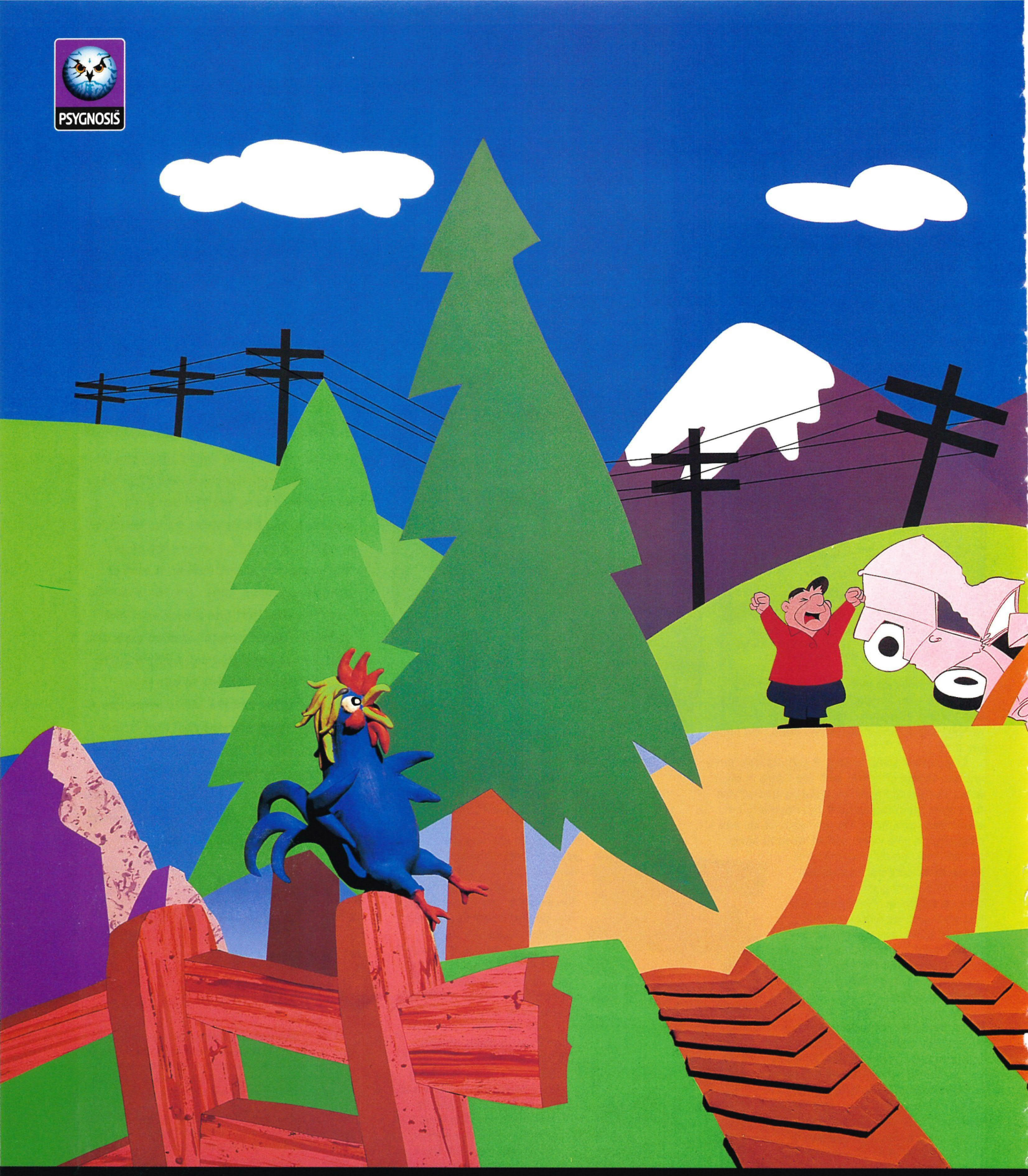
5

STEVE **The weirdest thing is happening at the moment. I've seen (and read) a couple of people not only not saying Jet Rider is dire, but actually saying it's 'good'! Have they all gone mad? Knock three off for my score!**

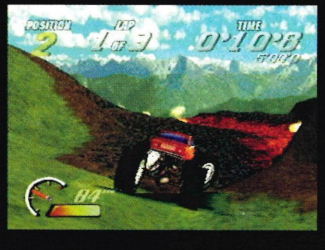
JAY **It's one of those 'love it or hate it' kinda games this one and I'm sorry Sony, but I'm not too keen. I know game genres are getting stale and new ideas *are* needed, but rocket powered jet ski mopeds?!! Are you on glue?**

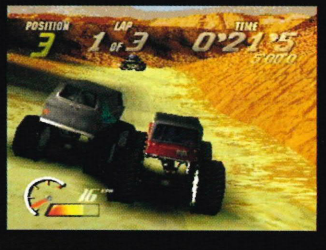
ANDY **Coming from the same stable as the rather excellent Twisted Metal 2 you'd expect something relatively enjoyable. Unfortunately it's not and anyone who thinks otherwise should be certified.**

ALEX **Somewhere in here is a sound idea for a game. The problem is that it simulates the bobbing and rolling of a real jet ski too much. You can't control it! The yanks loved this, but I can't see it working over here**

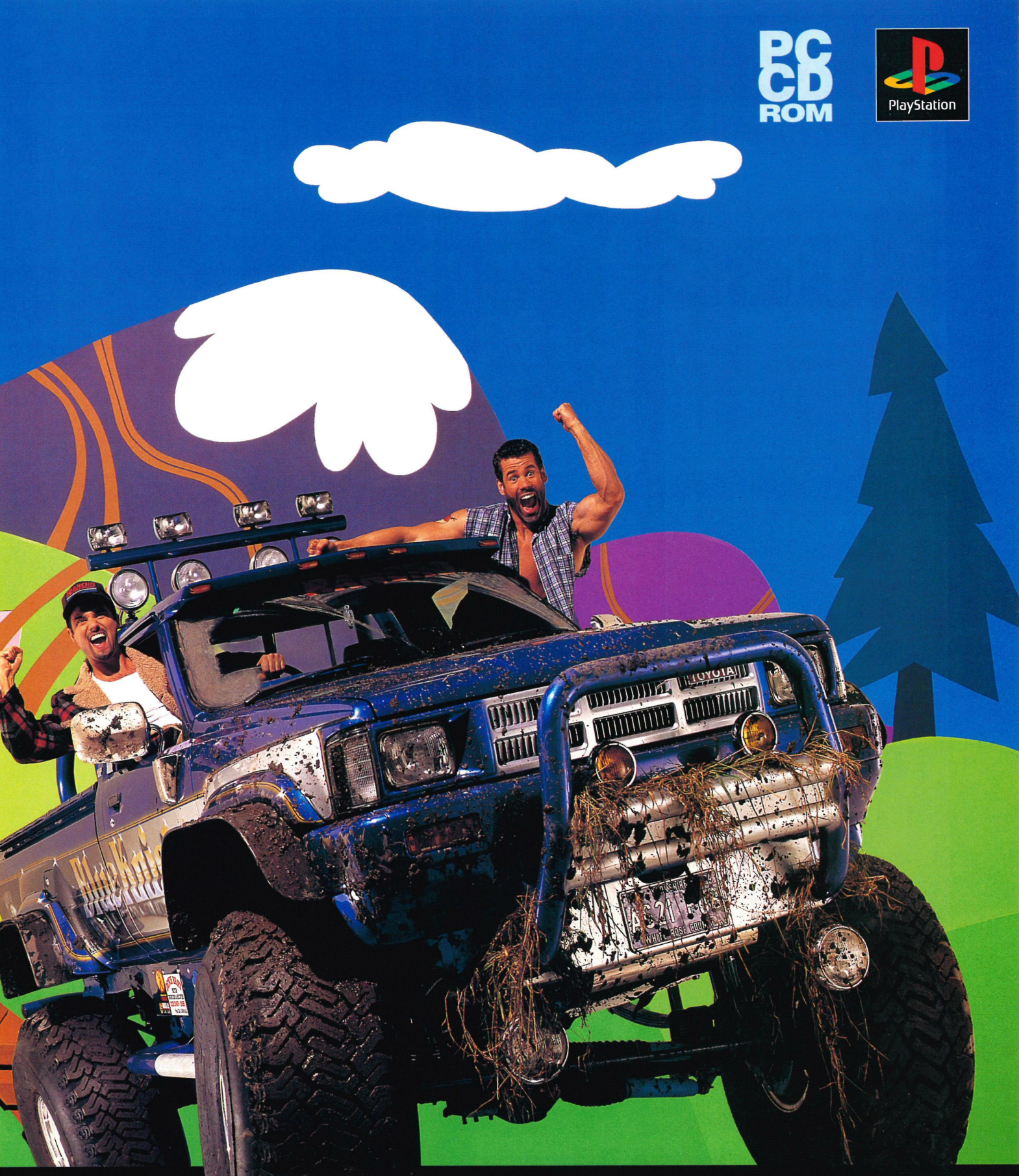


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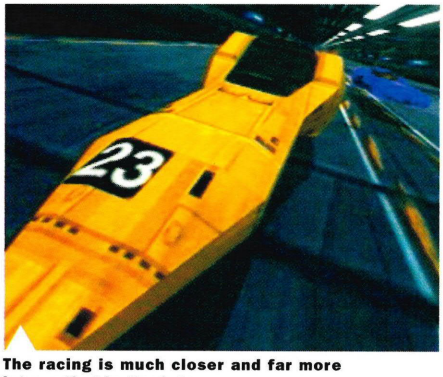
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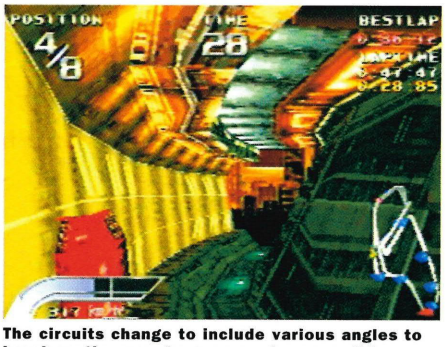
BY ANDY SHARP

Road Rage

Konami prepares to take on the world of racing games with quite possibly the fastest, best looking and downright playable game ever. Welcome to dreamland!



The racing is much closer and far more interesting in the intro



The circuits change to include various angles to break up the monotony as much as possible

Racing games come and go. Some remain popular while numerous others suffer blow outs along the way. F1 for example, although flawed, was a dream. At the other end of the scale there is Penny Racers. If these are the good and the bad, Road Rage is a hot contender for the ugly.

It bears more than a passing resemblance to a well known Psygnosis game beginning with W, in terms of what's required of you. Yes it's another racing game in much the same vain as that W game. You take control of a state-of-the-art hovercraft with top speeds never seen before. At least that's what they'll have you believe.

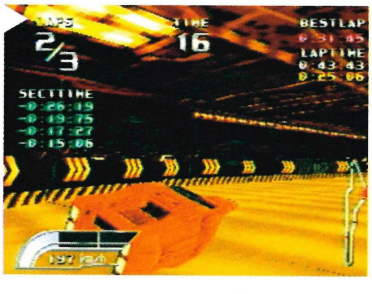
In reality, Road Rage is aptly named because actually forking out the money and suffering the consequences will leave you in a fuming rage for numerous reasons. Firstly, it plays like you are in control of an particularly large and heavy brick where, at full speed, the brakes have little or no effect. This would have been excusable if the circuits weren't so narrow and the corners easier to handle. It's safer to hammer into a wall and steer as much as humanly possible and hope you at least get round without too much damage to your overall race position.

Secondly, the whole thing just doesn't demand your attention for more than a couple of seconds. The main reason for this is that it strikes you as a poor game from the outset. There is nothing to make this stand out from the crowd – it's just downright dull in every department.

The shoulder buttons steer your ship in much the same way as that W game previously mentioned, but wipEout it isn't. It is the closest thing I can compare it to but wipEout wins, hands down, on every count. Road Rage is a very slack attempt at bringing the player the same adrenaline rush the Psygnosis classic has. Unfortunately it fails miserably due to the unashamed similarities and far inferior gameplay. To be fair however, Road Rage is a little more bearable than the truly terrible Penny Racers and is more on a par with Ayrton Senna Kart Duel.

Graphically it's poor – not only uninspired but ultimately extremely tedious and samey. You would expect sparks and shards of metal to fly from the frame as you plough into opponents or walls at high speeds but no, you actually do a rather pathetic spin. The main difference between this and wipEout is that there are no weapons involved. It's a straight and fair race for the line. The fastest driver wins, simple as that. And it's as uninteresting as that.

You may choose from a number of racing machines which seem to vary only in colour. Their performances all seem to be identical and, to be honest, after only a few minutes playing this you won't bother attempting to



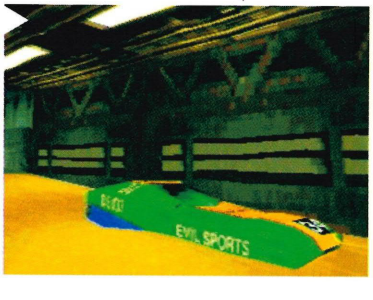
It's all looking a little too familiar at the moment. It doesn't change from here on in either



The 'build' is a big problem in Road Rage as the background comes into view

The beginners tracks are wider than the later circuits but corners are still a task to get round

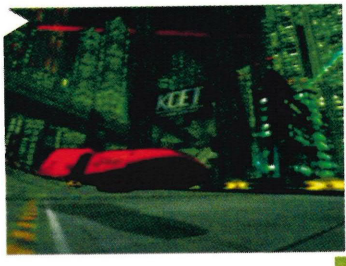




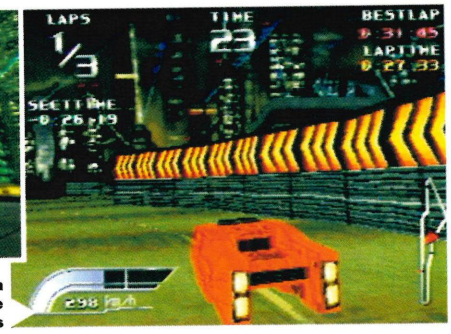
Evil sports eh? Oh yes indeed. Spawned from the devil himself, Road Rage will rip your soul apart



Just one of the speedy machines you can use in the races. Looks great doesn't it? A real winner



Some parts of the intro look like a scene from Blade Runner. It's just a shame the rest of the game doesn't live up to that standard



Lego pieces seem to have played a very big part in the all the vehicle designs

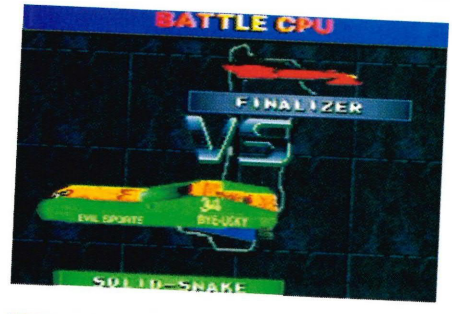
use the other vehicles, in fact, you may well have nodded off. The circuits themselves are fairly varied – from beginners courses through to the twisting terrors for the true pro. Once again, it takes a brave player or a plain masochist to delve this far into this game.

It is possible, if you're interested, to choose a time trial, a free run to gain better lap times and a full race against computer opponents. These don't offer much in beginner circuits, only the blind will struggle to complete these all too simple challenges. A racing game should, as we all know, give the impression you are blasting around the circuit at ludicrous speeds. Yet despite the speed gauge claiming you're travelling at well over 200kph, you actually feel as if you are driving around a busy multi storey car park.

The lack of originality and the very slack programming will leave any poor soul who buys this pig sick. The prospect of forking out forty odd quid is actually too much to bear. Nobody should give this the time of day unless they have never played a computer game before. In which case they won't know anything about this and won't be forking out their money.

Road Rage is probably one of those games Japanese players have lapped up and so it warranted a speculative release throughout Europe. And Europe would be far better off without it to be honest.





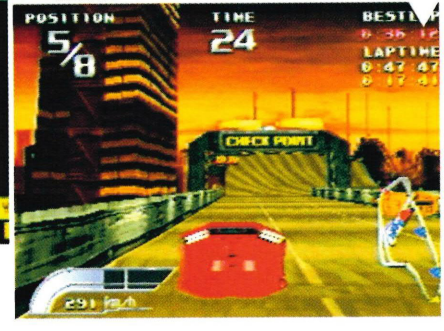


The simplest course of the game. Fail on this and you really are the world's worst



Check out the streamlined design of your vehicle. Doesn't it look impressive? This one's called the doorstop

During the races you are pitted against the clock, as well as the other drivers



PRO SCORE

GAME Road Rage
GENRE Racing
SOFTWARE HOUSE Konami
CONTACT 01895 853000
RELEASE DATE April
PRICE £44.99

If you have read the review, there's nothing else to say on the matter. Why bother elaborating on a subject as pointless as Road Rage? Konami has been responsible for one classic game thus far on the PlayStation – the awesome International Track & Field. Since then there have been many hit and miss releases such as Suikoden, Contra and Crypt Killer (see review this issue). It's difficult to believe that since then the quality has gone and we're left with this. Maybe some day soon Konami will get its ball rolling and bring out some more quality games. Until then however, you are best looking elsewhere. Perhaps towards the wipEout game that this is so desparately trying to be.

GRAPHICS 5
SOUND 4
GAMEPLAY 4
LASTABILITY 4

4½

DAN **Psygnosis really should sue the balls of Konami for this bare-faced rip-off. Once it has finished laughing itself to death, of course. There's no excuse for this level of shoddiness. Two out of ten, max**

JAY **A half-baked wipEout rip-off that looks and plays like a plie of cyber-dog's doings. Steering a futuristic Lego brick around several crap and altogether 'dodgy' tracks isn't classed as entertainment in my book**

ALEX **I'll avoid the cliched dog excreta comparison and say that when a game's released into a genre that's packed with quality games, it just has to have more to offer than this**

STEVE **Difficult to give an opinion on this without swearing, I'll restrain myself and go no further than to say that it's an absolute steaming pile of dirt. And one that you certainly don't want to step in by accident!**

BY ANDY SHARP

Nanotek Warrior

Hold on to your seats for Virgin's latest venture into outer space inside a high powered space blaster. It's sure to take everyone by surprise



These green ships are quick, accurate and difficult to destroy. It may be advisable to employ some avoidance tactics



Look out! These sections are incredibly tricky



Each time you take a hit this shield appears around your ship



This scorpion guardian has three guardians of its own for you to tackle before you can challenge it. Make good use of the power up weapons



The enemies fly at you at an alarming rate, sometimes covering most of the screen as they burst into the foreground



Each stage has a mid level craft for you to duel with. Some are trickier than others and having the correct power ups could make things easier

Tempest X had most people awestruck as far as inside tube shoot 'em-ups went. It looked a little bit like the old Doctor Who starting credits if you ask me. This was the arcade classic everybody knew and it used only a limited number of colours, as did most games of the time. Interplay recently released it into the stores in a retro release in its true arcade form of old.

Now Virgin has updated it with this full-on sensory attack in which quick thinking and nimble fingers will be more important than breathing. Now the colours are clear and this improves massively on Tempest X.

The main appeal of Nanotek Warrior is that it's unpretentious in every way. The idea is so simple and well executed – its main gain. Many programmers try just a little too hard to make something as detailed as possible and forget about the gameplay. The programmers here have kept things as basic as possible and made the gameplay incredibly user friendly.

The whole game seems to take place on the inside or outside of a toilet roll tube crammed with numerous obstacles and space nasties. You have no control over the speed of your ship, other than a slight accelerate or decelerate when avoiding a barrage of enemy gunfire.

Just when you think you have the measure of things, you may hit an accelerator pad which you can't avoid. From here you have a few seconds to avoid the obstacles ahead at breakneck speed. This is made a little tricky initially as the controls are ultra responsive. These controls are a necessity however, as without them things would be damn near impossible. It's difficult enough as it is on the normal mode and to be hindered by the controls just wouldn't do.

The controls consist of use of the D pad and the buttons – one button fires your normal lasers, another fires special weapons you collect along the way and one jumps over static obstacles. The shoulder buttons make you steer the front of your ship at a more acute angle allowing you to blast the trickier enemies in your path.

The enemies will appear thick and fast and it's not of paramount importance to shoot them all, avoidance tactics should be employed also. Blasting more enemies gains you extra points but can also leave you in big trouble for later enemy barrages when you collect damage points.

If you do get in a little trouble along the way, there are numerous pick ups you can use. Most plentiful are the energy boosts which are yellow coins, for want of a better description. Other coins are usually red and contain different symbols. These are weapon power ups and range from a napalm type weapon which follows the shape of the tube until reaching an obstacle, to single missiles with plenty of power. These are all limited so are best used in an emergency or against the occasional mid-level nasty which requires a hefty pummelling. Occasionally you will come across a green coin, it's pretty damn important you collect this as it will give you an extra life.

Completion of a level will result in the next stage being tougher, sometimes appearing

Power To The People



These are shield icons and are the most common throughout



The weapon icons are in red. This is a three way shooter



Only available on bonus stages to gain extra lives and points



This is a mortar firing weapon and is a difficult one to put to use



This is a good weapon to have as it fires in numerous directions



Hugs the area and clears every enemy in it's path

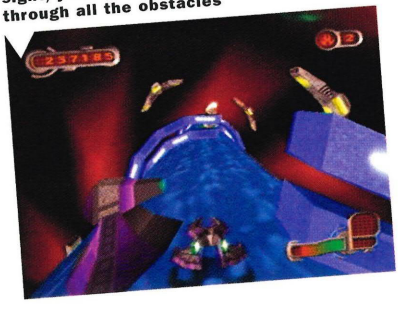


A rare sight this one. An extra life is available if you head this way

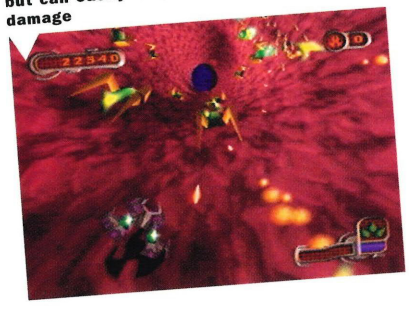


Fires a jagged shot in a straight line, but your aim must be true

It's not just about blasting everything in sight, you must also find a safe path through all the obstacles



These critters may look a little daunting, but can easily be passed, causing little damage



These balls roll from left to right inside the tube and can be very awkward to pass as it proves difficult to shoot them all



Some guardians are a waste of time and this one of them. Just treat it as simple target practice



impossible to guide your ship through safely but after a few games you will learn a safer path through the stages.

Thankfully there are three skill levels to choose from which can make things a little simpler for you. Normal is the middle skill level and even this poses plenty of problems for novice players so it's probably best to have the first few plays on easy level to get to grips with the handling of your ship.

Each level is generally broken up in sub-sections which in turn are broken up by continue points. The continue points are important, having to trudge through enemies and obstacles a second time from the start of a level would become a pain and new mistakes may be made.

After the completion of any level you are given an end of level guardian to tackle. These start off as simple shooting practice but as progress is made, become a much greater nuisance and difficult to defeat.

Thankfully, after each stage is completed, you are awarded a password. Without these, the ▶



The mines can't be destroyed and must be avoided if you're to progress. Take care of other enemy attacks if you can

Nanotek Warrior

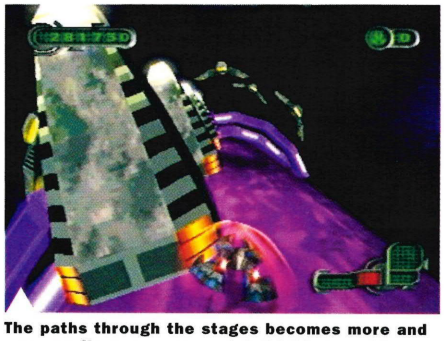
▶whole thing would be a pointless exercise as it's so difficult to progress. Unfortunately however, these passwords only become of use if you have a few lives in the can, otherwise you'll begin in an impossible situation and fail quite miserably indeed.

Bonus stages are also included where you collect as many coins as possible in the time provided. The results of this are bonus points and more importantly the chance to gain extra lives for the levels ahead.

Graphically the game has been kept looking as basic as possible. Not so basic that it looks like a rush job – there are plenty of little touches and enough on screen at any one time to keep any player occupied. The emphasis in Nanotek Warrior seems to have been on gameplay. The graphics won't break any new ground but in terms of the explosions and numerous enemies offered it has more than enough variation.

The sound effects are also functional rather than exceptional and have a range of different weapon sounds as well as the usual explosion sounds you would expect.

Once all these points have been put together they form one of the most instantly appealing games to arrive in a while. Nanotek Warrior is a must for anybody who thinks they have nerves of steel, can keep a cool head under pressure and has the reactions of a cat. How it will measure up against the bigger, more hyped releases is another matter, but let's hope it doesn't get lost on the shelves behind the Tomb Raiders and DD2s of this world.



The paths through the stages becomes more and more perilous so some quick thinking, rapid finger work and improvisation may do the job

GENRE COMPARISON

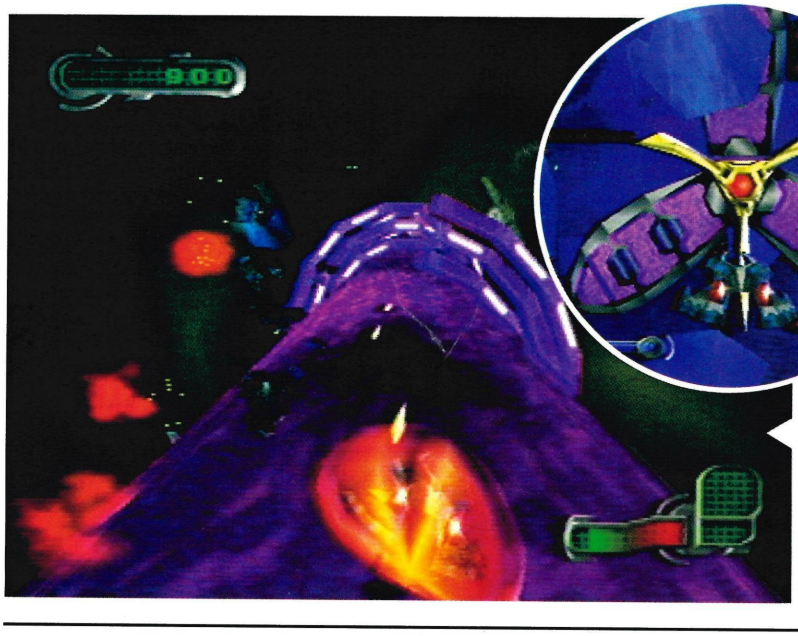
Game Tempest X
Software House Interplay

This was a conversion of the old arcade classic, and while it plays and looks exactly as the arcade machine, it doesn't stand up against Nanotek Warrior. In comparison it looks as you'd expect – inferior. Tempest X isn't terrible, but Nanotek Warrior is tons better



As you fire along the playing area the shots will follow the contours. This is good to know





Some areas look impossible to pass. There's always a way however, where a tight squeeze or jumping may be involved

PRO SCORE

GAME Nanotek Warrior
GENRE Shoot 'em-up
SOFTWARE HOUSE Virgin
CONTACT 0171 368 2255
RELEASE DATE April
PRICE £44.99

PLAYSTATION APPROVED **This appears to have come from nowhere. There's been no jumped-up hype and, as such, no interest from any quarter. For this reason it came as a great surprise when it was actually one of the most frantic, frustrating and strangely enjoyable games I've played in quite some time. The emphasis is firmly on the gameplay and while the graphics are impressive enough, they're not going to set the world alight. It's going to appeal to many due to the simplistic gameplay and gripping action. The password option is a bit ropy as you must tap in the code each time you play, but if this is its major fault, you can't complain too much. Recommended for those who fancy a bit of a change.**

GRAPHICS 8
SOUND 7
GAMEPLAY 9
LASTABILITY 8

8

DAN **Much like Grid Run last issue, also by Virgin, this is a pleasingly simple and highly addictive romp. Also like Grid Run, for a full price game, there is not much to it, so the longevity is questionable**

JAY **For those who thought my Tempest X review seemed a bit harsh – now you know why! Nanotek Warrior is everything Tempest should have been, and it's a great deal more 'inviting' and fun to play**

ALEX **Usually Virgin games are excellent, but this is an exception to the rule. It's a tired, old concept tarted up with some 'next generation' graphics that failed to keep my attention for more than five minutes**

STEVE **It's a bit different so deserves respect for that. In some ways it reminds me of an old-style game with the gameplay being more important than fancy graphics. Still not overly enamoured with it though**

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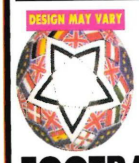
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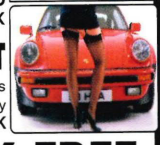
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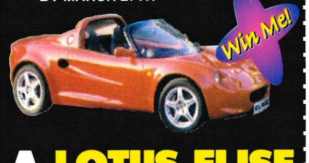
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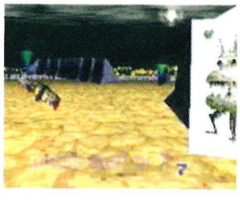
BY STEVE MCNALLY

Slamscape

Along similar lines to Disney 'classic' Tron, Slamscape sees you fighting for your life inside a computer. At times however, it feels as though it's the game that is battling to get out rather than you



It doesn't look all that bad really does it? Well, don't be fooled. Slamscape is one of the worst games to get a British release!



Some of the enemies that you battle are inventive. You've got to give them that I suppose



See that badly defined red thing in the bottom left? Apparently that's Shreddy Bear



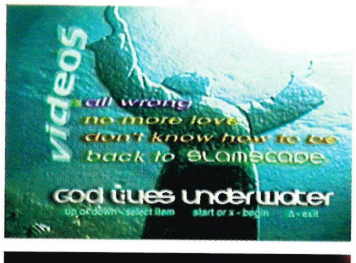
I can get into the idea of ramming your vehicle into something. If only there was an off license or two around

You can't knock this for originality. At least I don't think you can. Somewhere, lurking at the back of my mind is the notion that I've played something very similar before, but I'm buggered if I can remember what it was so I'm forced to concede full marks for originality. Which is a very good thing for the publishers because this is going to be another of those unbalanced reviews where there are far more bad parts than good I'm afraid.

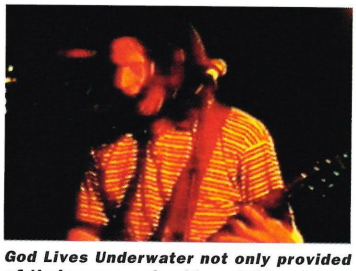
No matter how hard I tried to like Slamscape, no matter how much I tried to convince myself that it would all click into place soon and the cracking little game that was obviously hiding away behind the awkward control would show itself, I didn't like it and it never appeared. It may well be in there, but even after several hours play I was no nearer anything even close to fun, let alone enjoyment.

It's always worrying for a games reviewer when the first playable PlayStation version you get to see is a boxed copy. You can generally tell if a game's going to much cop or not in this way. If it's bobbins the software house has little to shout about and the first thing you know about it is when you get the finished copy. Yes, it does prejudice your judgement to a certain degree, although there are, as always, exceptions to that rule and if a game's good enough your first impression can always be

God Help Us!

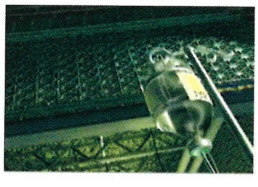








***God Lives Underwater* not only provided the in-game music but also have three of their own music videos taking up space on the CD. They're all, without fail, terrible American dirges which just go to prove why they're reasonably popular in the States, but no one's heard of them over here I suppose**







The landscapes get very 'cyber-punky' later on, not that you'll ever get to see them unless you have amazing patience



The intro sequence is well done but surprisingly short

changed – King's Field is a case in point. This happened with Slamscape, but sadly it never quite recovered from this handicap despite my best efforts at giving it a fair crack of the whip.

It's essentially a strange little offering which places you in the role of a victim of a harrowing accident (a horrific car crash in this case). You've been hauled off, on the brink of death, to a mysterious lab where you have been hooked up to what is known as the Slamscape Virtual Simulator, without so much as a by your leave. A previous experiment has gone horribly wrong trapping 16 other participants in a twisted simulated nightmare and, unsurprisingly you are the only one who can rescue them.

You do this by careering through four very different regions within five very different levels in a lightening fast vehicle engaged in a quest to free the four orbs (one in each region). To survive you'll need to shoot and slam into all manner of twisted adversaries and devices, all the while fighting off numerous enemies with the incredibly single minded goal of stopping you dead in your tracks.

Danger and destruction comes at you from all angles and one of Slamscape's better features is that you have to make good use of your ears as well as your eyes as you can actually hear attackers approaching before you can see them in many cases. Another nice feature is that the music accompanying the action (provided by 'up and coming' alternative band God Lives Underwater) reacts to and is governed by your actions.

As you play you need to quickly determine which characters are enemies or allies (difficult enough in itself!) or you'll be quickly destroyed. Once you've done this you need to figure out the best way to destroy or manipulate them in order to best suit your needs and assist you in freeing the all important orbs. Most of the characters are derived from the programmer's childhood memories, and if Shreddy Bear, Dumpster Longlegs and Danger Ranger (just some of the enemies you'll encounter) are an example of the twisted reality in which these guys exist, then let's just say I'm not exactly mad keen to meet them in person.

The most irritating aspect of Slamscape has got to be the difficulty. It's wholly unforgiving right from the off and gives the novice player no chance whatsoever of having an easy ride until they get to grips with the controls. Initially I started to play without reading the manual (after all, how hard can it be?) but soon realised that I didn't have a clue what was going on or what I was supposed to do. So naturally I sat down and read through the little booklet carefully.

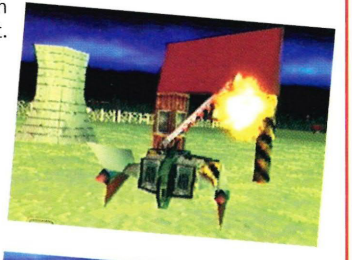
Unfortunately I returned to the game still without a clue what was going on or what I was supposed to do. You see, the manual is appalling, in fact I'd go as far as to say they may as well not have bothered to waste the money printing it for all the use it is. About as much of a waste as me writing this entire review when we could have just printed 'do not buy it' in massive letters across the page.

It's rubbish, no one on the team comes even close to liking it, and frankly, as I toss it to one side never to look at it again, I feel sad that I've wasted so much of my time on it.

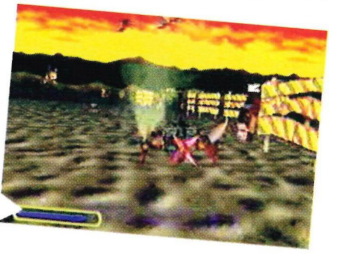


The scenarios are more than a little twisted, the carnival level being a prime example









You have to collect power crystals if you want to survive for more than a few seconds. These build up your power bar

PRO SCORE

GAME **Slamscape**
GENRE **Shoot 'em-up**
SOFTWARE HOUSE **Virgin**
CONTACT **0171 368 2255**
RELEASE DATE **Out Now**
PRICE **£44.99**

I don't care if the PlayStation has '200 games' as the ads claim, when you're counting dross like this in as one of them, the claim becomes that little bit less impressive. I thought I'd disliked games on this machine before but nothing even comes close to the distaste I feel for this sorry product. If I scrape around for something positive to say, the only thing that springs to mind is that it's at least pseudo original, but there's not much else. It reminds me in some ways of a poor man's Tunnel B1 for some reason, and seeing as I now feel that I was very generous in awarding that a seven you should get some idea of how I feel about Slamscape. Let me put it another way, if I never play this again it'll be too soon.

GRAPHICS 7
SOUND 8
GAMEPLAY 3
LASTABILITY 4

3

DAN **Cack. This really isn't very good**

JAY **Arse. Avoid this game at all costs**

ALEX **Bish. And not bosh**

ANDY **Naff. The worst game ever**

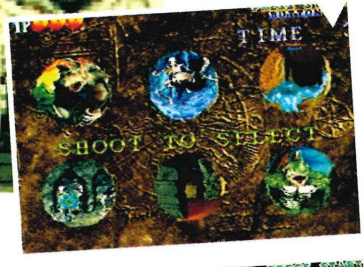
BY DAN WHITEHEAD

Crypt Killer

Imagine Tomb Raider with no arms or legs, just lots of big guns and hoards of monsters. Well done. You've just imagined Crypt Killer. Have a gold star or something



Run for your life! Shiver in fear! It's the attack of the mutant pixelated mummy people. From Mars



Six worlds, packed with danger, derring-do and variety. And that's no lie, kids



Green gobbets of flesh and some red square things flying all over the shop

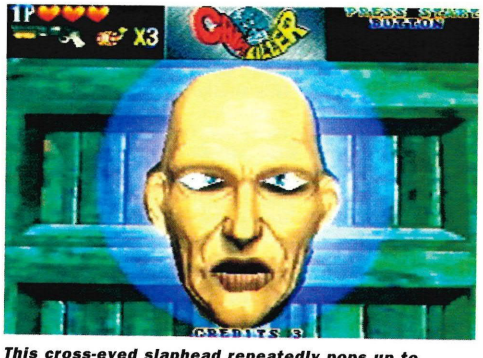


You might well skulk in the distance, slimy sea-men. I'll still shoot your scaly chins off with my boomstick

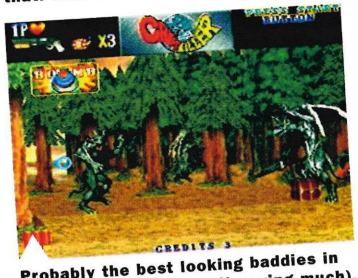


Oi you! Piss off back to Jason and the Argonauts. At least you were scary in that. Like that lizard thing

The Ghostly Host



This cross-eyed slaphead repeatedly pops up to gibber doom-laden rubbish at you. You'd think that if you were going to go to all the trouble of creating an animated bloke to talk at you through the game, you'd at least give him eyes that point in the same direction. Tsk.



Probably the best looking baddies in the game (and that ain't saying much), are these gargoyle fellas

That Lara Croft's got a lot to answer for. What with her runaway success legging it around in dusty old caverns, she's set something of a precedent. It would seem that tombs, crypts, ancient Egypt and all that malarkey is the latest feeding ground for herds of software houses. What with Exhumed and this here Crypt Killer, we could be seeing the start of what we in the business call a 'bandwagon'. Or we might not be. Either way, it's provided the perfect excuse for this rather vague opening paragraph which is alright by me.

So, getting on with the task in hand, here's Crypt Killer. There's treasure in them thar crypts, and you're the one who's going to find it. But, yikes, there's also a veritable monster mash in those musty caverns, so it's a good thing you've brought a gun. In fact, that's the only thing you needed to bring, as Crypt Killer involves nothing more and nothing less than shooting. And then some more shooting. It's the shoot 'em-up in its purest form – the shooting gallery.

OK, so it's in 'exciting' 3-D this time, with the camera panning and scrolling through polygon mazes, but basically this is Operation Wolf dressed up like a tart. There's not much more to be said about the mechanics of the game. One button shoots, one reloads and the other two fire off smart bombs. Alternatively, you can use Konami's light gun, the Justifier, which is officially endorsed by Sony and compatible with all the other light gun games – apart from Time Crisis which will selfishly only work with Namco's gun. Regardless of which controller you use, you still have no control over which direction you take, just keep hitting the trigger. Which, as you can imagine, really makes this sound enticing.

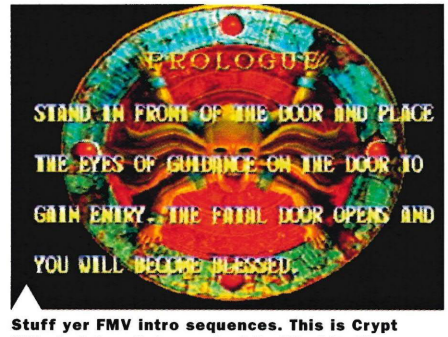
This style of game has had something of a resurgence recently, with Die Hard Trilogy's light gun antics and the forthcoming Time Crisis and Horned Owl offering simple thrills. And therein lies Crypt Killer's downfall. It's crap compared to any of the competition. Casting aside the monotony of the action for the time being (though we will return to it, trust me) you've got the fact that while the levels are made up of polygons, with the viewpoint sweeping around to shoot baddies above, behind and below you, the enemies are made up of yer common or garden sprites. This means that as they get nearer, they get blockier. Really blocky, and the stilted animation only makes this worse. When the likes of Die Hard and Time Crisis are offering smooth polygons and interactive backgrounds, this sort of look just won't do.

There are six levels in all, but the same five or six enemies appear in all of them, making it

Behind The Green Door



There are, would you believe, multiple paths through Crypt Killer. At the end of each stage you reach two doors. Which door you choose affects the outcome of the game, and takes you through a different section. In theory. What I found was that there are a set number of such sections and the game chooses one at random. Hence I got the same section in the middle of two different worlds. The effect that this has on the game is that, depending on which worlds you tackle and in which order, you get a different reward sequence. I've seen two such endings and they're not really worth waiting for to be honest. Multiple paths, my arse.



Stuff yer FMV intro sequences. This is Crypt Killer's intro. Not a part of it. All of it. Wow



I have a phobia about being attacked by blue Play-Doh people, so this bit really terrified me



Another monster gets too close and turns into a Cubist masterpiece in the process



Who could have ever guessed that some mummys would come jerking out of those coffins?

difficult to distinguish one section from the next. It's not even as if they're scary. One of them is a big fluffy yellow spider thing that looks like a glove puppet. Another of my 'favourites' is the blue blob that throws purple blobs at you. Boy, that one really gave me nightmares. With a title like Crypt Killer you expect at least some attempt at atmosphere, but there isn't any. The title music even sounds like Tears For Fears, for God's sake.

But Crypt Killer's biggest problem is that it's just so sodding dull. Shoot. Shoot. Keep shooting. Shoot some more. Maybe fire off a smart bomb to liven things up. Admittedly, this genre doesn't offer much room for innovation but Time Crisis offers the chance to duck behind cover and Die Hard's shooty bit was only one third of a bumper package. This is just bland by comparison.



While playing I kept trying to figure out what it was that Crypt Killer reminded me of. I just couldn't put my finger on it. Then it hit me. A crap Ghost Train at a crap funfair. "I bet a moth eaten zombie pops out of that door" I'd think to myself. Lo and behold, moth eaten zombies pop through the door. And they come from the same positions every game, so predicting what's next is never an issue.

The whole thing looks, sounds and plays like a SNES game. There's even a two player mode which adds nothing bar another gun sight on the screen and a few more baddies. With bigger and better variations on the theme coming out soon, there's absolutely no reason to buy this average effort.

PRO SCORE

GAME Crypt Killer
GENRE Shoot 'Em-Up
SOFTWARE HOUSE Konami
CONTACT 01895 853000
RELEASE DATE March
PRICE £39.99

It's not that there's anything disastrously wrong with Crypt Killer, it's just that there's nothing terribly right about it either. Even the in game speech pleading "It's dangerous!" at random intervals does nothing to convince you that this is in anyway exciting. As well as the prehistoric graphics, a lack of atmosphere, repetitive gameplay and a serious lack of long term challenge are enough to relegate this to the bottom of the pile. As I've said in the review, with the superior Time Crisis and Horned Owl on the horizon this will probably get forgotten fairly quickly and you'll feel daft later if you buy it. Grab a Konami light gun by all means, it's £24.99 and officially endorsed by Sony, but wait for a decent game to use it with, eh?

GRAPHICS 7
SOUND 5
GAMEPLAY 5
LASTABILITY 4

5½

ANDY **I must agree with Dan on this one. It's just a disappointing blast fest which should have been so much better. If it was trying to get you gripped, Konami should have taken a closer look at Die Hard Trilogy**

JAY **A step backwards in terms of technology and gameplay, I don't think today's sophisticated gamers will take too kindly to this. A good cure for insomnia though, as it's played in bland-o-rama**

ALEX **Nothing wildly up with this one except the gun sight often gets lost – maybe that's because I'm colour blind, though. It's no worse than any of the Virtua Cop-style arcade games – definitely one for the kids**

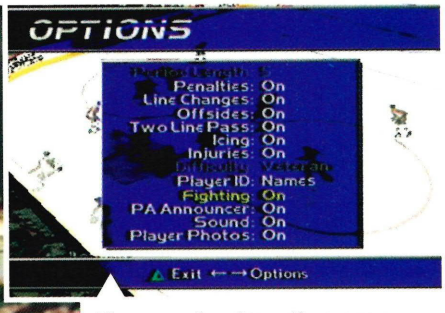
STEVE **Played with the control pad this is fairly poor stuff, but it does liven up a bit with the addition of one of those light gun things. I've seen it all before and, for the same money, you really consider Die Hard**

BY STEVE MCNALLY

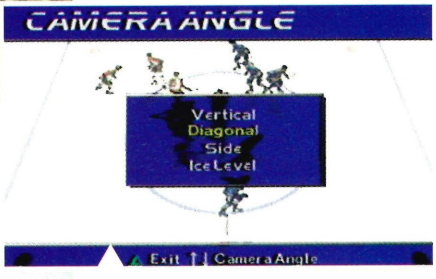
NHL Faceoff '97

Ignore the fact that the players' uniforms look like they've been boil washed just a little bit too long and you're left with Faceoff '97, a playable little arcade hockey game

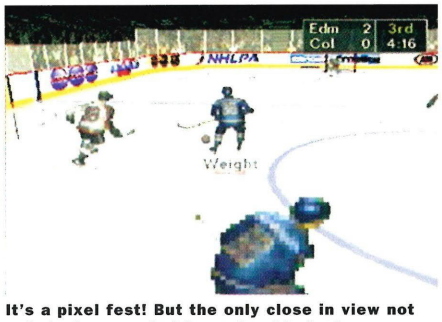




The comprehensive options menu allows you to customise most things in Faceoff '97



A measly four different viewpoints is all that's on offer. Not many when compared with the competition



It's a pixel fest! But the only close in view not only looks poor, but is unplayable too!



As you can see, it looks like the players' uniforms have faded after one wash too many

I must say I was surprised how little depth Faceoff had, considering some of the kind words I'd read about the previous one. I didn't really spend much time with the original, only playing a couple of exhibition matches against other members of the team and left Andy to get into it as he was reviewing it at the time. Even then I wasn't convinced that I'd like it anywhere near as much as he seemed to. Having played the '97 version (which is essentially the same game with a few cosmetic changes), I now know that, for me at least, my initial instinct was correct.

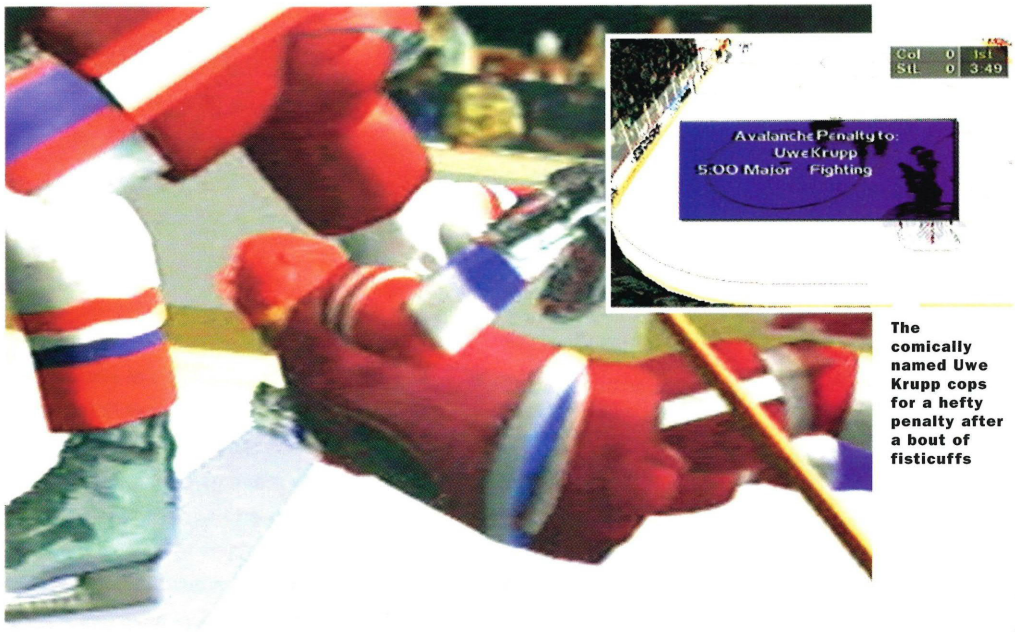
It's not that I don't like Ice Hockey games. EA's NHL Hockey ranks up there with my all time favourite PlayStation games, so I can't be accused of being the wrong person to review this. I should point out however, that were another member of the team to have written this (namely good old Andy) you would see an extra one, maybe even one and a half on the score at the end. Why don't I like it all that much then? Well, there are a number of reasons which I'll go into after I've softened you up with the game's good points (of which there are also quite a few).

All the NHL's proper teams and players are incorporated along with as many methods of game set-up as you can shake a hockey stick at. There are practice, exhibition, full season and play offs (variable in length from one to seven matches in each round) to have a crack at, and in any one of them you can fully customise which rules to have turned on and which to turn off.

This is a useful feature to have (but admittedly nothing new) because until you get to grips with Ice Hockey's basics (like passing the puck, successfully tackling with out fouling and even skating), you don't want to be worrying about the finer points such as when are you offside, what's a two line pass and how the hell do you avoid being pulled up for 'icing' every time you advance up the rink?

Possibly my favourite part of Faceoff '97 though is the excitable announcer who, at times, sounds more like that bloke who does the boxing than the usual drab and functional bloke off the street that software companies usually rope in to do the job. He actually does a better job of bringing the game to life than the on-screen action itself. If only every aspect was as well put together.

That negative statement leads me rather neatly into the somewhat longer 'why I don't like it' part of the review. Well for one, it's too 'arcadey', which in itself isn't a problem, it's just that it doesn't put itself across in this way.



The comically named Uwe Krupp cops for a hefty penalty after a bout of fisticuffs



Before each game team skills are compared. Here you can clearly see that Edmonton are outclassed



Trade players between teams to compile the ultimate NHL dream team line up to play with



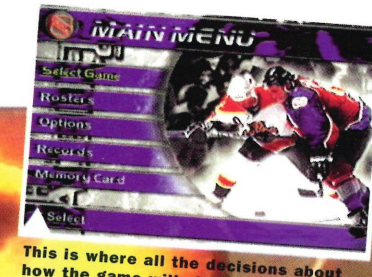
This is my own particular angle of preference, although there's little to choose between them



There's not enough cheesey Hammond organ bits for my liking either. A cruelly missed opportunity



Each round of the playoff series is variable in length, from one to seven matches in each!

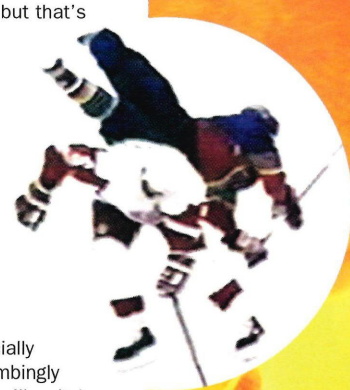


This is where all the decisions about how the game will play are made, along with saving games etc.

I fully expected an attempt at simulating the real thing (as Electronic Arts NHL did) but got nothing like it. The action is, well, just that I suppose, and not much more. There's a distinct lack of subtlety to the gameplay and very little too learn once you've mastered the basic controls. Okay, there are a couple of strategies you can employ in defence (ie different ways to take the puck off the opposition), and if you turn line changes and injuries on, rotation of your players and team management aspects come into play, but that's about it as far as complexities go.

Then there is the look of the game. The players are small (but at least in proportion to the equally small rink) and there's a distinct lack of close-in camera angles (even in the replay mode) which leave you yearning for EA's Virtual Stadium. In fact, the only time you get in really close is when a fight breaks out and, to my mind, this is a missed opportunity as a result of being no fun whatsoever. This bit should have been a good laugh (especially in two player mode) but is so mind numbingly tedious that it is almost guaranteed you'll switch it off in the options menu in next to no time.

The biggest flaw though is one which for me



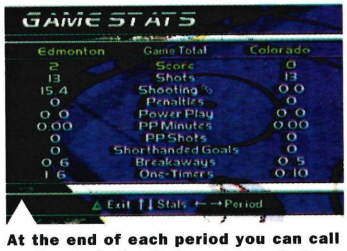
NHL Faceoff '97

▶comes close to ruining the game. After just a couple of matches you'll start to realise that there's a guaranteed way to score every time if you get into a certain position (a flaw which is, to a certain extent Soccer 97's downfall in my opinion). I won't tell you where it is in case you buy it, but take it from me that it exists. At first I thought it was just because I was playing on the easiest of the three difficulty levels so I knocked it up one, and while it was more difficult to get into the right place (because the opposing teams defence was vastly improved), sure enough when I did get there my shot flew into the back of the net.

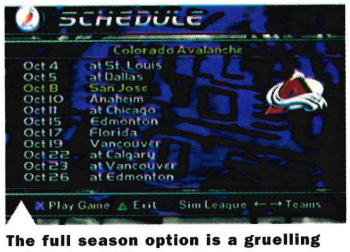
This actually ruins the two player game more than the one (because the computer doesn't do it all the time) as it degenerates into nothing more than both players fighting to either get to that position or stop their opponent doing so. Not much fun, and certainly nowhere near as enjoyable as the vast majority of sports games in two player mode.

Having said all that, NHL Faceoff '97 is far from being a bad game. What I'm saying is that if you own either NHL Hockey or indeed last year's Faceoff, buying this really would be a chronic waste of money. It's always difficult to be fair to a new game when it is so obviously inferior to something that is already out and you can end up sounding like you hate it, when in reality you think it's not all that bad.

That's certainly the case here because, even though I enjoyed playing it myself, I can only recommend NHL Faceoff '97 to Hockey fanatics desperate to own every title that hits the shelves. If you've got one already and are happy with it, I'd recommend sticking with that until something better comes along. However, if you're a newcomer to the sport in its simulated form, I have to advise you that EA's offering is a much better game in just about every department. Let's hope that the inevitable '98 edition rights a few wrongs of its predecessor.



At the end of each period you can call up the stats for that passage of play



The full season option is a gruelling schedule of 80 or so games!



This is where you get to swing a hefty wooden club at your opponent's ankles. Nice one

Calgary reign supreme following a tight 1-0 win over the New York Rangers

GENRE COMPARISON

Game **NHL Hockey**
Software House **EA Sports**

The undisputed king of the hockey sims still reigns supreme despite Sony's best efforts. Terrific visuals coupled with fast, exciting and complex gameplay make for a game that's going to be hard to beat for quite some time. Add to that the most impressive use of EA's Virtual Stadium technology (allowing you to view the action from just about any perceivable angle) and you've got yourself one very nice game indeed!



PRO SCORE

GAME **NHL Faceoff '97**
GENRE **Sports**
SOFTWARE HOUSE **Sony**
CONTACT **0171 447 1600**
RELEASE DATE **Out Now**
PRICE **£44.99**

I know Andy disagrees, but I'm standing by my guns with this one. Faceoff '97 offers absolutely nothing new and is vastly inferior to other games already on the market. That's not to say it's a horrendously bad game in its own right, because it isn't. It's a good little arcadey Ice Hockey sim that could have been salvaged by its two player mode, had that not been spoilt by an irritating aspect (see main review for full details). I've tried to score it on its merits rather than on how it compares to other games, but even then it doesn't fare all that well. Ah well, there's always next year's to look forward to I suppose. And by then hopefully Sony will have come up with some new ideas that will at least make this competitive.

GRAPHICS **7**
SOUND **8**
GAMEPLAY **7**
LASTABILITY **7**

7

DAN **Does anyone actually buy games like this? If you're a big fan of the sport then this might appeal, but there are better adaptations available. For everyone else, this might as well be invisible**

JAY **I'm not a big fan of ice hockey, so another interactive version turning up for review didn't exactly get my juices flowing. It's alright I suppose, if you like this kinda thing, but it's not as good as EA's NHL 97**

ALEX **This is the first Ice Hockey game I've actually liked, and there've been quite a few, so it can't be bad. I particularly like the 'hold the button down for beards to power up the shot' option. Decent in single and two player**

ANDY **For the full experience you should ignore the Veteran and Rookie levels and plough head first into an All-Star game where the keepers are second to none and the action is much more realistic**



This is a city with a secret. The children that used to crowd its streets are vanishing one by one, and no one knows where or why they've gone.

Perhaps Miette, a streetwise kid with a knack for petty theft could be the one with the skill and cunning to solve the mystery. But can a child survive in such a strange and fantastical city, full of dangerous characters? Is she up to such a bizarre mission?

Or, more to the point, are you?

The City of Lost Children

PSYGNOSIS

UGC D.A. INTERNATIONAL

PlayStation

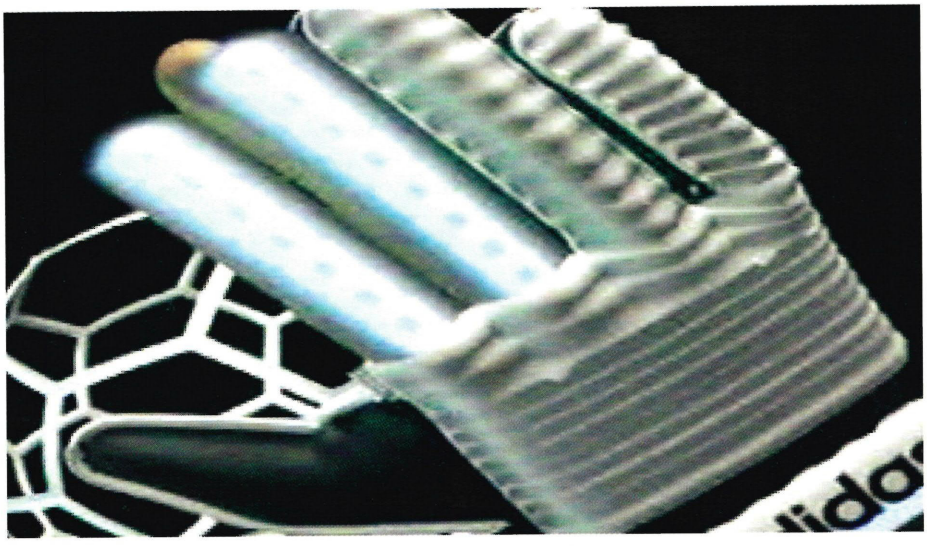
PC CD ROM

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BY ALEX LEE

Adidas Power Soccer 97

Psygnosis proves that football games on the PlayStation aren't a matter of life or death – they're much less important than that



It has a front end more impressive than Geri out of the Spice Girls and to say Adidas Power Soccer 97 (APS 97) kicks off with a bang would be doing it an injustice. A smooth, enthralling opening pre-rendered sequence depicts an imaginary footy match with all manner of mad goings-on.

Tricky inside forwards leap over two-footed tackles, strikers leather sweet volleys goalward and the goalkeeper is carried into the back of the net by the force of the ball. This all gives the impression of a Roy Of The Rovers comic springing to life, Toy Story style.

Once the pre-rendered sequence fades away, an echoing ribbit from a self-deprecating frog (APS 97 was programmed and developed entirely in France) heralds the start of another entry into the all-comers PlayStation footy championship.

The thing is, do we really want it? Reviewed elsewhere in this issue is another 'enhanced' version of a football game less than a year old. And, I'll have to be blunt, Eidos' Soccer 97 is



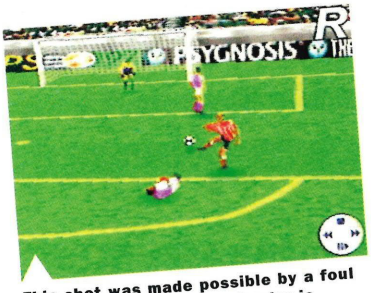
One of the many tournament options. This one's a rather minimalist cup competition



The statistics say it all – Sunderland dominated the game, creating far more chances



The replay option allows you to see the action again frame-by-frame at whatever speed you like



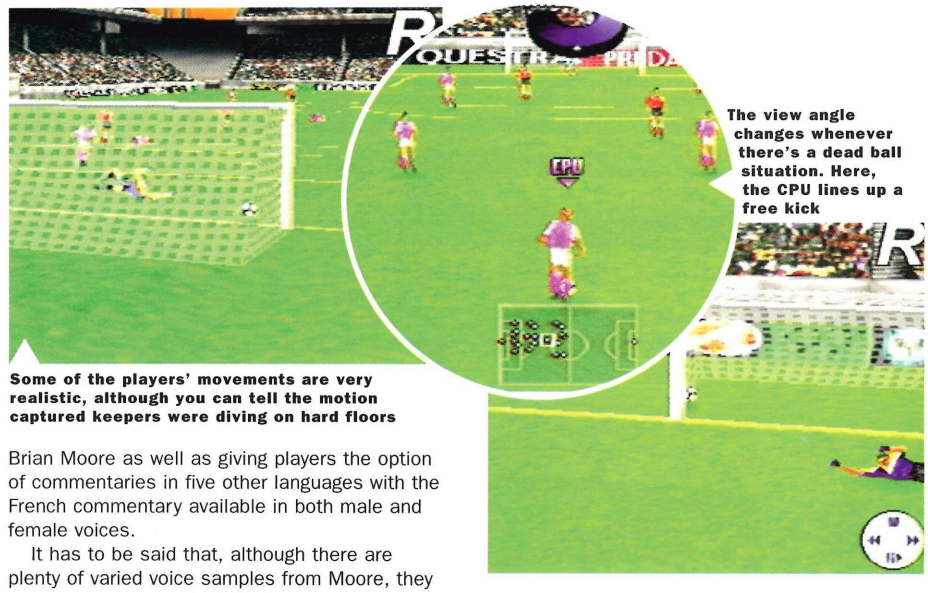
This shot was made possible by a foul – as you can see, the defender is grounded, clutching his ankles



If Predator Kick goal-bound shots are struck straight at the 'keeper, they'll often knock him into the net



To give Actua its due, the replay option is the best of all the football games. You can view the action from all angles for days on end if you wish



Some of the players' movements are very realistic, although you can tell the motion captured keepers were diving on hard floors

The view angle changes whenever there's a dead ball situation. Here, the CPU lines up a free kick

unanimously preferred over APS 97 in the PlayStation Pro office. That's not to say however, APS 97 doesn't score the odd goal on the break.

APS 97 eclipses FIFA in the same way as Actua Soccer, because it uses motion captured footballers rather than 16-bit sprites. In this sense, APS 97 proves, like its original, to be a worthy opponent to Actua. Using similar motion capture technology found in Actua (except this time on French professionals), APS very much looks and plays the part. Maybe it's true what the commentators say about European footballers being more technically gifted than our lot – the APS 97 players certainly look and act more like real footballers than their Actua counterparts.

What the commentators say is often taken with a large pinch of salt, so the choice of voice-over victim shouldn't really be too important in the game's final analysis. Psygnosis, however, keeps pace with its rivals by recruiting ITV's Brian Moore as well as giving players the option of commentaries in five other languages with the French commentary available in both male and female voices.

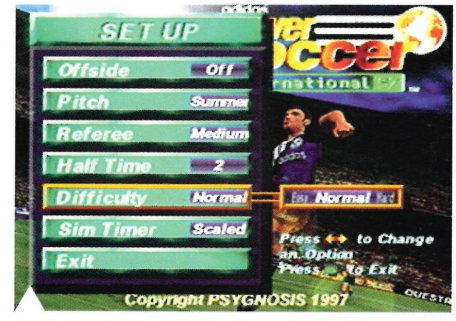
It has to be said that, although there are plenty of varied voice samples from Moore, they just don't come over as heart-felt as those of Actua's Barry Davies or as excited as those of FIFA's John Motson. He's obviously not as good an actor as the other two.

An oft-argued point about console footy games has been whether real player and team names should be used. The first APS fell down in this respect in terms of the English and German leagues, although all the French teams open to selection were named entirely correctly. APS 97 addresses this, offering 25 squads from the English, French, German, Italian and Spanish leagues, 56 international squads, 20 further top European squads and five hidden teams – a grand total of 206! Each squad consists of ▶

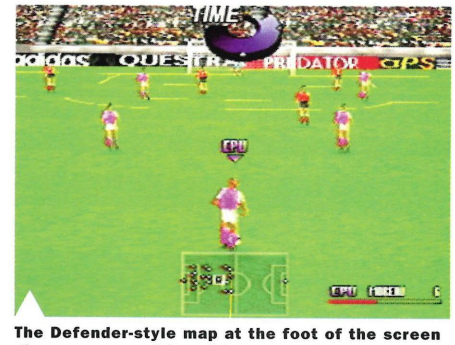
Smooth Gameplay



The original logo has been 'enhanced' by a rather ropey add-on beneath it

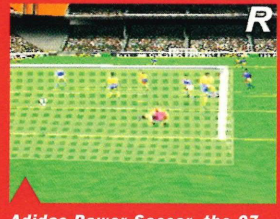


Just one of the set-up screens. The summer pitch is the best to play on as it's lush and green, without any sign of mud



The Defender-style map at the foot of the screen gives you some idea of how your chosen formation works in practice

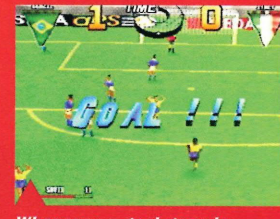
That was then, this is now



Adidas Power Soccer, the 97 version, is pretty damn similar to the original



The goalkeeper spectacularly spills the ball here, resulting in a farcical own-goal



Whenever a goal goes in, everyone knows about it due to the arcade-style display



As you can see, it's a little darker here, but this original replay was in winter



The keepers had short sleeves in the original version seen here – they still do now



Not surprisingly, the arcade display is pretty much the same 97-style

Adidas Power Soccer 97

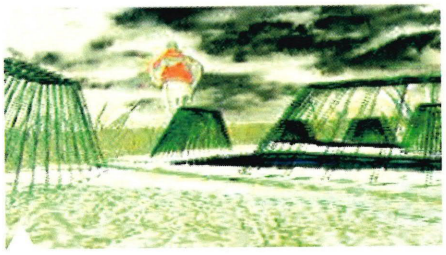
▶16 real players, although the fast-moving transfer markets of today have dictated that some of them are already out of date.

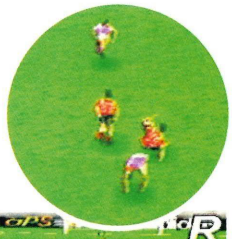
Moving further into the options and set-ups, there are plenty of configurable components such as offsides, pitch types (governed by the four seasons) and strictness of referees. All the recognised formations are available – from the all-out attack of 4-2-4 to the more conservative 5-4-1 – matches can be as short as two minutes each way or as long as 15 minutes and there are two joypad and button control methods. This may seem a bit stingy, but because of the many *special moves* contained within arcade mode which require hitting two buttons simultaneously, it would be too darn confusing to have any more.

In terms of picking up the joypad and playing APS 97, there are stark differences between the simulation and arcade modes. Simulation mode looks and plays similarly to Actua, whereas the arcade setting not only allows players to commit disgraceful fouls, kung fu kicks and the Maradona-inspired *Hand of God*, they often go unpunished. Each *special move* is highlighted by a trail of sparks or a cartoonesque cloud of smoke billowing from beneath the feet of the guilty party.

Arcade mode is my personal preference, especially when you're playing someone who hasn't quite sussed out how to cheat properly, but the simulation option is popular among the cynical realism-mongers (like Steve). Having said that, even in arcade mode, it's the player who adds *proper* football tactics to his repertoire of off-the ball shenanigans who will ultimately win the most matches.

APS 97 proves a more than viable alternative to the likes of Actua Soccer (although Gremlin is about to carry out its threat of releasing Actua Soccer Premier League Edition very soon) and FIFA, it still doesn't hang on for a draw with Warner's Striker '96 and Eidos' Soccer '97. My review of the original APS ended with the sampled words of wisdom from Brian Moore – *They really have to step up a gear now and do it all again.* I'm now beginning to wish they'd left well alone.





The half-time and intro sequences give you an insight into the game's development



Towards the end of a match, players tire and become increasingly injury-prone. Here's a couple of corpses

APS – 97 style

APS 97 features the following enhancements:
206 squads (including European, international & hidden teams)
More difference between skill levels of teams
Star players
Donkey players
Improved artificial intelligence
Improved after touch
2-D & 3-D radar
3-D texts
90 minute timer
Cup stats
Sudden death mode



It's nil-nil as the French 'keeper nervously takes the goal-kick. I sense a Sunderland victory here

GENRE COMPARISON

Game Soccer '97
Software House Eidos

Psygnosis won't thank me for comparing this with APS 97, but the fact of the matter is they're both football games pitched at gamers who are both knowledgeable about footy and love a good two player PlayStation contest. Soccer '97 wins hands down

PRO SCORE

GAME Adidas Power Soccer 97
GENRE Sports sim
SOFTWARE HOUSE Psygnosis
CONTACT 0151 282 3000
RELEASE DATE April
PRICE £44.99

In some ways, this is a commendable effort on Psygnosis' part, taking on board criticisms of the original, addressing them and releasing what should be a massively-enhanced product that should finally meet the needs of all football game fans. The inclusion of the golden goal, the updated real names and massive choice of sides improve make APS 97 a better product than last year's. The trouble is, under close inspection, APS's gameplay just wasn't up to scratch and nor is APS 97's. It's a little quicker and the CPU artificial intelligence has been improved slightly, but that's just not enough to catapult it into contention for major honours. A brave attempt, but something Psygnosis may live to regret.

GRAPHICS 8
SOUND 7
GAMEPLAY 7
LASTABILITY 7

7½

DAN **As I said in my comment for Soccer '97, I don't much care for these things. Having said that, even I can see that this is nowhere near as good as Eidos' kickabout. And that's coming from an untrained chimp**

JAY **No sir, I don't like it. And 'spicing things up' by giving your striker the power to score from the halfway line and knock the keeper into the back of the net to boot is just bloody stupid. This sucks, buy Soccer '97 instead**

STEVE **A marginal improvement over what was, a very poor original. There's nothing to recommend that you buy this over Soccer '97, and certainly not if you like a bit of realism. Still overrated at seven and a half I reckon**

ANDY **The reviews of the original Power Soccer were a little too enthusiastic and so this time around it gets the mark which the original should have got. It's so forgettable Alex almost forgot to do his captions**

The Future Is About To Become History

EXCALIBUR 2555 AD

A totally unique and ground-breaking adventure, combining the best graphical elements of *Tomb Raider* and the atmosphere, depth and playability of *The Legend of Zelda*.

Plus, massive panoramic 3D environments and intricate consuming puzzles make Excalibur 2555AD an absolute epic.

Featuring: over 200 massive locations, 80 fully talking characters, incredible realistic light-sourcing, intriguing puzzles and hand-to-hand combat.

"...could well do for 3D action adventures what *Tomb Raider* did for 3D platformers" EDGE

"...has atmosphere in spades" PlayStation plus









PlayStation

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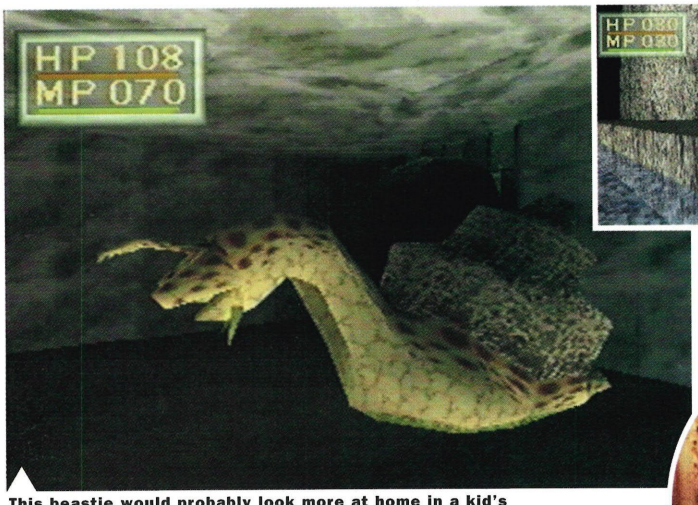
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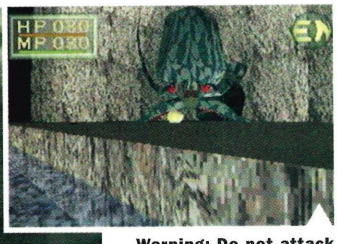
TELSTAR Electronic Studios

BY STEVE MCNALLY

King's Field

Billed as Doom meets Dungeon Master, this has two massive reputations to live up to. Initial impressions suggested it had no chance, but there's more to this than meets the eye





Warning: Do not attack this 'Kracken' when you first start to play. It'll wipe you out in one hit!

This beastie would probably look more at home in a kid's telly programme, but don't be fooled, he packs a punch!



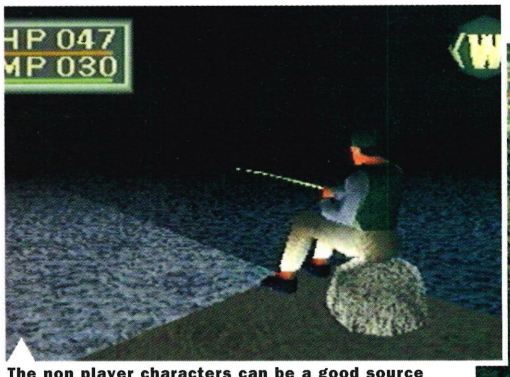


Most of the King's Field NPC's will help you out if you'll help them









The non player characters can be a good source of information about where you are, what you should be doing and so on

King's Field is a strange beast. Hideously unappealing at first, both graphically and in the gameplay, it somehow sneaks up on you very quietly and convinces you that you are highly impressed with both these aspects.

It does this like a good card player by not showing its full hand right from the off. To begin with you just get the basics (bland locations, not really a great deal to do other than explore a bit), but ever so slowly new bits are introduced and gradually it all gets better and better. If you like RPGs that is.

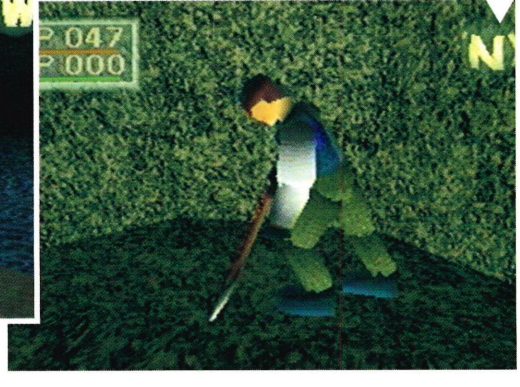
I'd suggest that it's not a good idea to get drawn in by the Doom comparison if you're a fan because, to be honest, the similarities really begin and end with the 3-D engine. The plot (and indeed style of play) is where the Dungeon Master influence is most apparent, with loads of monsters to slay, traps to avoid and spells to cast, albeit in a more gamer friendly manner than we usually see.

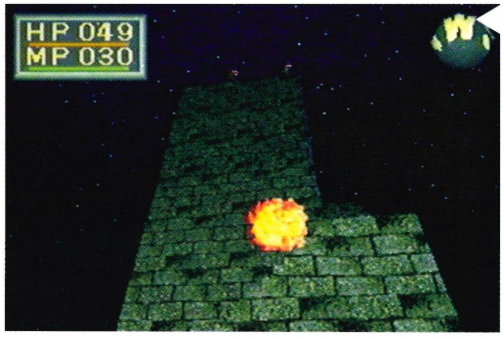
The game has a long and complex storyline, one that I'm not going to go into in this review for a couple of (very valid) reasons. One is that it would be difficult to do so in such a limited space with any great success (especially when I've already got too much to say) and the other is that it's all background information anyway. To begin with, King's Field doesn't have a story, or at least not one that you are as yet aware of.

Like everything else in this remarkable game, you know very little about what is going to happen as you progress. You are thrown straight in at the deep end, shipwrecked on a mysterious island and that's it. If you want to know more, you're going to have to do some hard work to find it out.

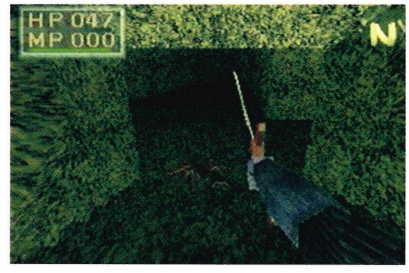
In a similar way to Myst (another game which

This miner is deep within the area known as the small mine. Finding him brings invaluable info





At the top of this massive tower you will find a very handy spell to attack your enemies with



really has to be played properly to be appreciated) this conveys an extra sense of realism that most games just don't have, mostly due to their eagerness to shout from the rooftops about the tiniest little plus point in the game's favour. You feel alone and like you're actually achieving something yourself rather than being pushed along to the next flashy bit by some smug programmer desperate for you to see how good he is at rendering.

The impressive parts are most certainly in there (and in plentiful supply, I might add) but actually getting to see them is down to you. And it won't be easy. King's Field starts off tough and quickly moves to very hard. You don't know what you can and can't fight successfully at a given moment and which areas are reasonably safe to explore and which aren't.

That's not to say there's a set path through the game, there certainly isn't, just an easier route. Trial and error is only way to find out what creatures you should treat as cannon fodder to boost your experience points and character level and which you should tip toe quietly around (or if the worst comes to the worst, run away from).

To begin with, at the initial strength and health points settings, some monsters can kill you with a single blow should you stray too close to them and you will die many times in the first few hours, but strangely you don't become discouraged. You just load up your last saved game and retrace your steps, even more determined and knowing a little more this time around.

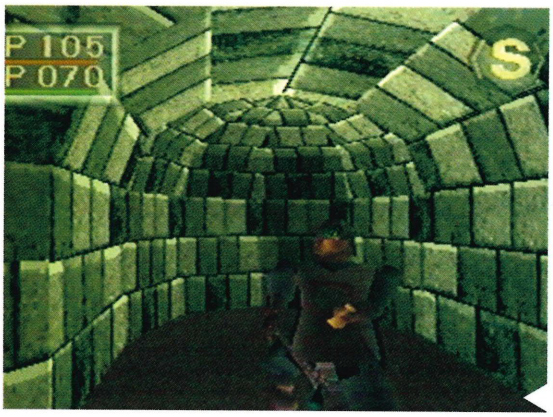
Even saving your game feels like an achievement. At this point I should point out that worrying reports that a King's Field save game takes up a massive 15 blocks on your memory card would appear to be greatly exaggerated. I've got five games saved on a single card (with my character at level 10 with loads of stuff) and it still says I can save a new game onto it.

Anyway, saved games. You can only save at certain locations throughout the game and when you find one it's a real bonus. If you can secure a safe-ish route between one and a health restoring fountain, you'll feel like you're in something close to heaven. It means you can explore the surrounding areas with renewed vigour, safe in the knowledge that if you start to take a bit of a beating you can quickly duck out, have a healing drink and fill up your flasks with the stuff (yes, you can even cart it around with you and heal yourself in mid battle), before returning to finish the job.

I'm not ashamed to admit, in this review, I've barely scratched the surface of what the game has to offer. In fact I'm quite relieved, because to give away the game's secrets would do it a disservice and spoil one of the most attractive features.

OK, it's an RPG and most people's image of roleplayers is big, bearded middle aged men or annoying adolescents, but I assure you I fall into neither category (honest) and I enjoyed it all tremendously. And in case you were wondering, the combat is in real time so there's even a bit of action thrown in for good measure.

Were I to own a PlayStation and have to pay for my own games, this would be one of the only ones I'd spend my hard earned money on. Well, perhaps I'd pay someone to go and buy it for me to save the embarrassment, but in terms of value for money then this can't be faulted. It's an absolutely enormous game and one that somehow manages to keep you plugging away for a very long time indeed. I'll probably get slated by the other reviewers for saying so, but this comes highly recommended by me.



These knights are tricky buggers, so areas where they lurk should be avoided by the inexperienced



Here's that spell I mentioned elsewhere. Pick it up, use it and it will be learned forever

PRO SCORE

GAME King's Field
GENRE RPG
SOFTWARE HOUSE Sony
CONTACT 0171 447 1600
RELEASE DATE Out Now
PRICE £44.99

PLAYSTATION APPROVED **A huge, sprawling quest that is initially disappointing, but slowly wins you over with its many undoubted charms. Admittedly the fact that it's an RPG will alienate much of the PlayStation ownership, but those who like games to be a little more mentally challenging are in for a treat, the like of which has been all too rare on the machine so far. It's the only game of its type to date (Suikoden not being an RPG in the truest sense of the word) and is so big that I'd imagine very few people will get to the end. I can't recommend it enough to be honest and if it weren't for the fact that it's aimed squarely at a niche market, I'd have had no hesitation in giving it a nine.**

GRAPHICS 8
SOUND 7
GAMEPLAY 9
LASTABILITY 9

8½

DAN **They say 'don't judge a book by its cover'. Now they can say 'don't judge Kings Field just because it looks a bit crap'. Beneath the bizarre graphical style pumps the heart of an RPG beast**

JAY **Not really my scene this, but I'm led to believe it's quite treat. The RPG lovers will no doubt buy it by the bucket load and who knows, a few stray gamers with lives outside their bedrooms might even pick it up too**

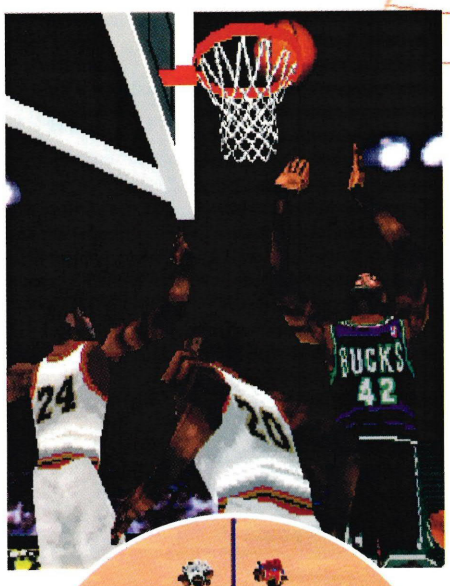
ANDY **King's Field has failed to impress me in the slightest. It's slow and tedious but the challenge is immense and although I'm not a big fan of this sort of thing people like Steve (God help them) may warm to it**

ALEX **If I had anything to do with King's Field, I'd re-title it something like Pauper's Lawn, Beggar's Grassy Knoll or Tramp's Sod Of Turf. I don't like it, you see, nor do I like any role-playing games**

Winter 1995 – a revolutionary new basketball game slam-dunks its way onto the PlayStation and goes straight to the top of the charts. March 1997 – its creators are about to do it all over again. And boy, are they pleased...

King of the T

By Jay Sharples



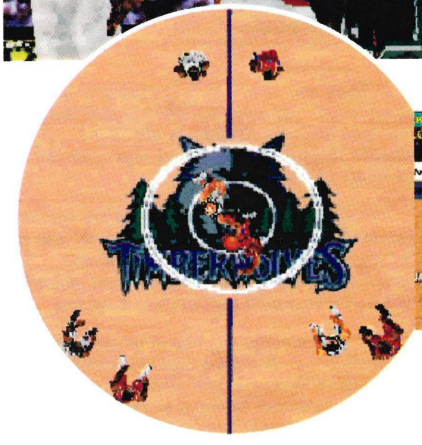
Chris Emsen sits back in his chair in a darkened corner of Sony's offices, smiles confidently and then eases himself forwards, rubbing his hands in a gleeful fashion. This guy is excited. He's acting as if he knows this week's winning lottery numbers, the whereabouts of Lord Lucan and how to cure cancer with sticky-back plastic. He's got a secret and he knows that when he finally reveals it jaws are gonna drop floorwards in a fashion normally reserved for the Queen Mum lighting her farts in public. Worst of all though, he knows that I'm gonna be among the amazed.

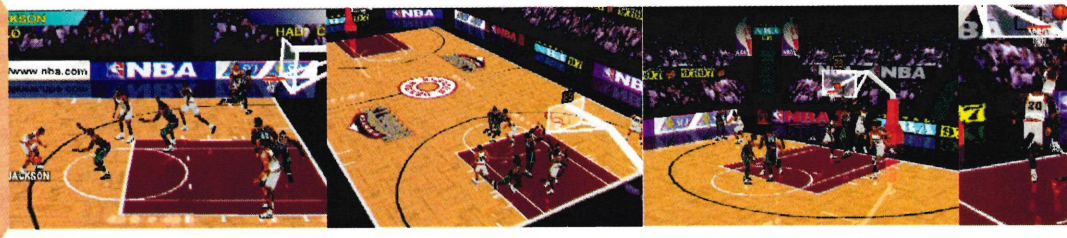
Chris works for Sony internal development down at its offices in Great Malborough Street, London and he and his work mates were responsible for Total NBA '96 and, surprisingly enough, they're sorting out the '97 remix too. And that's why I'm here, in his office, anxiously waiting for him to stop looking so happy and show me the game. He knows his onions and he knows that the product he and his pals have sweated blood on over the past 12 months is gonna blow my socks off. He's happy alright, bordering on smug, and I just wish he'd stop grinning and show me the damn game. Patience has never been one of my strong points.

I know you've heard it all before, what with all the half-baked chat about updated games and all that and I know it may sound bollocks, but this time it's true: Total NBA '97 is more than just a sequel or a poxy remix! No, seriously, it is. Honest. They haven't just added a new year's worth of statistics and plonked a big '97 on the end of it. Oh no. Chris and his fellow programming wizards have rejigged, reworked, redone and revised the complete Total NBA formula, tuned it to perfection and then plonked a big '97 on the end of it. Oh yes.

The major graphical improvements include complete live motion capture using Pro NBA star Latrell Spreewell – which according to Chris, gives the on-screen players a much more fluid set of moves than last year's version. There's also a brand-new player model featuring pixel-perfect team strips (the player's team numbers no longer look like small blob from a distance now), much better gourad shaded body textures and stunning photo-realistic faces, so good you'd recognise any of the players at forty paces with your eyes half-closed.

The photo image normally used in-game for players to select which NBA AllStar they wish to play with has been used as a image source for







TOTAL NBA 97

in



The impressive introduction sequence shows some bad-ass hoop slapper going through his paces, accompanied as ever by some storming big beat tune



the in-game character's boat race, leading to some cool on-screen visuals during play. Each one of the 348 NBA players has been scanned into Sony's graphics development kit, resulting in realistic looking players that don't lose any of their picture quality, no matter how close you zoom in using the in-game camera replay option. It's looks good and, as Chris spouts with glee, "It's graphically superior to any of its competitors, with significantly better looking players and courts!". Indeed it is Christopher.

Speaking of courts. All the playing stadiums have been overhauled too, just like their real-life counterparts. Most professional basketball squads change the look of their courts with each playing season, mostly to take advantage of the lucrative sponsorship deals, and therefore all the courts you'll play on in the game are as near as can be to the real thing.

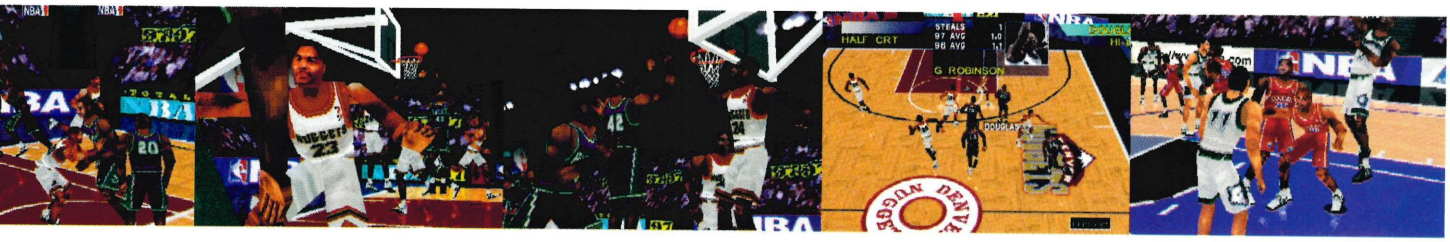
Each crowd in the varying playing arenas have been given artificial intelligence as well as the guys on the court, giving them the ability to cheer in time to the action on screen, plus you'll find most of the crowds are about 99 per cent behind the home team. So any visiting team will no doubt have varying abuse and hapless boos thrown in their direction during play.

The basketball Statos amongst you will be glad to hear that all the usual up-to-date facts and statistics are in the game, should you care to do your homework on your selected teams and players. Management wannabes now get the option to not only doctor players to their liking, but also poach players from the other NBA teams available. For example, you could do a multiple trade throughout the league, trading Scottie Pippen from the Chicago Bulls for Shawn Kemp and Gary Payton from the Seattle Supersonics. Once done, you can release Payton, trade Pippen for Kemp and finally sign Payton for Chicago. It sounds confusing, I know, but it works a lot better when you've got the pad and the manual in front of you.

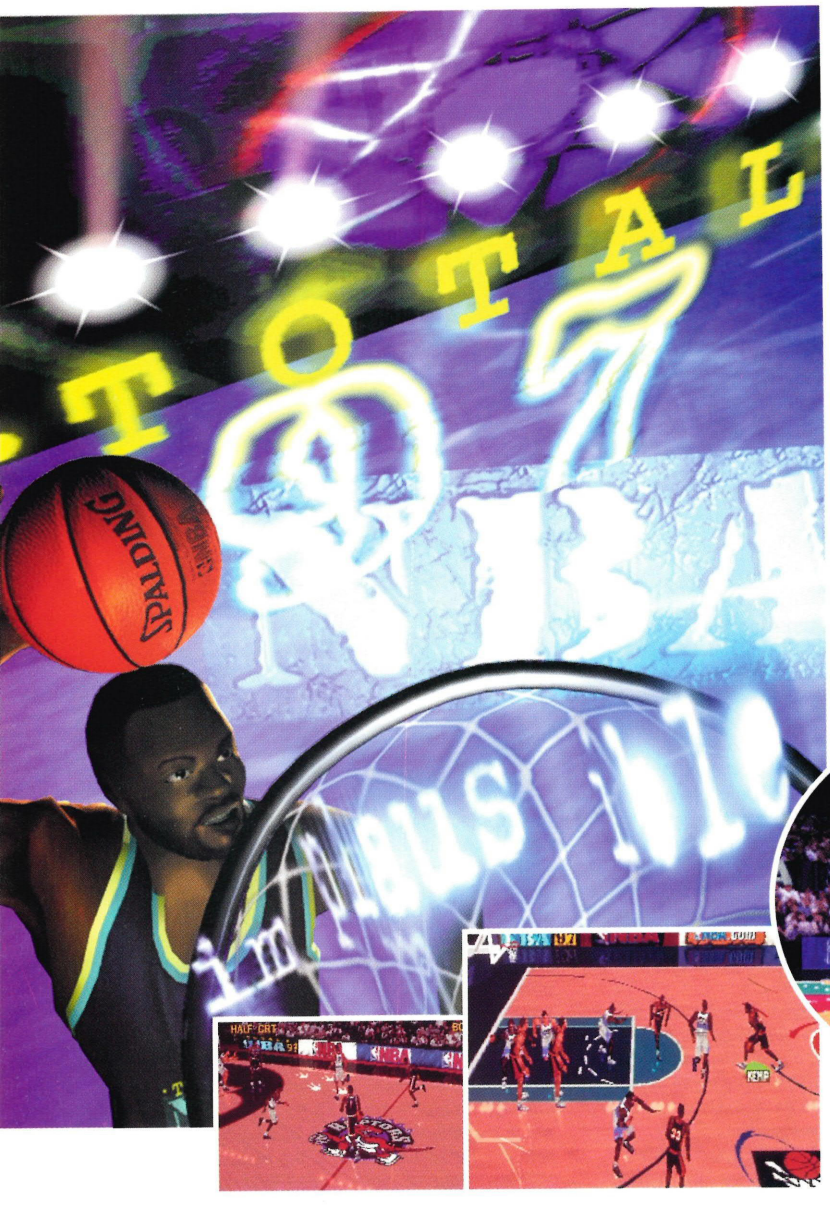
Creating players is equally fun and is one new option that myself and the still-smug Chris found most enjoyable. To create a new player you must sacrifice one of your current team players and, in effect, take him into the garage. Here you can alter both his height and weight for comedy effect and then fiddle with his on-court agility and hoop prowess. When you've finished, simply send him back on court. The new feature also gives the in-game commentator (supplied once again by an over enthusiastic yank) all your new player's facts and figures, should he feel the urge to comment on your performance.

Comedy four-foot-tall fat Chicago Bulls defenders aside though, there are plenty more options and new technical features to play around with, but for now we'll concentrate on the important bit – gameplay. Each in-game player, as before, has numerous strengths and weaknesses. Problems arose in the original when, for example, a player had attempted a three-point shot and scored, therefore according to his stats he had a 100 per cent chance of scoring three-pointers. This no longer happens as all the players in the '97 version have been rated in 19 different skill categories, giving each and every one of them varying individual strengths, weaknesses and playing styles.

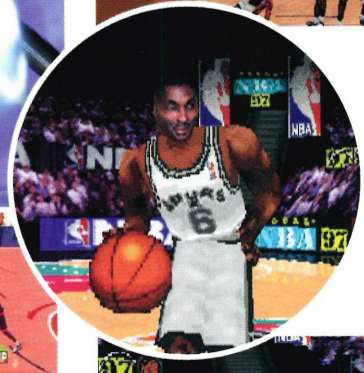
The control configuration has also been tweaked slightly allowing newcomers a long ▶

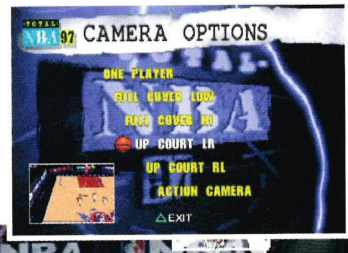


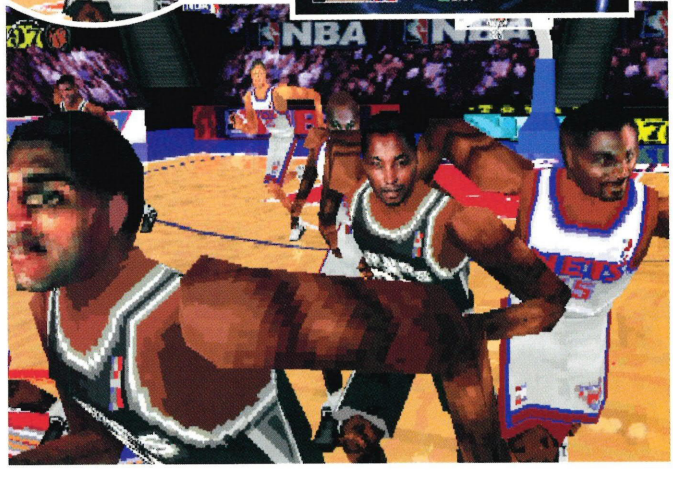






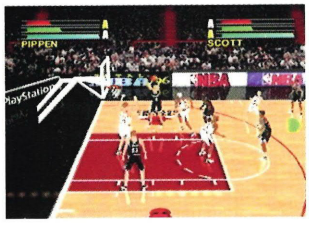


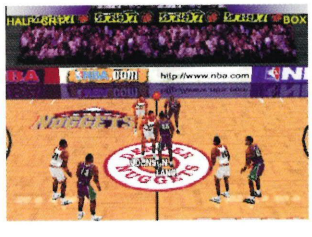




In the beginning...

Total NBA '97 is of course different to the original in many ways. Just check out the shots and see for yourself







King of the rim

▶ list of various new playing features that should ensure you to quickly become the king of the rim and, as Chris points out, "just watching the action for a few moments makes you realise it's a stunning NBA simulation, as well as a great game". Indeed it does.

Not only do certain team players have a wealth of special dunk moves to perform during play, but a new cut-to-basket button has been introduced, which basically tells one of your quicker players to drive for the rim, ploughing through defenders as he goes.

Other additions include the wonderful on-screen help option (which tells you which button to press whatever the on-court circumstances), the improved artificial intelligence (the CPU will now improve his playing technique if you're thrashing him and he'll work out which of his tactics aren't working and change them accordingly – adding to the thrill of the game) plus the fabulous and very-handy-indeed-thank-you-very-much feature, icon passing. Icon passing? What the f...?

Icon passing, as Chris explained, is a new feature which lets you control everybody on court at any time. "The new AI in the game means that the CPU strings together beautiful sequences of passes, producing devastating attacks. This achieves levels of realism that will make you believe you're on court for real". So, no more of this 'pass the ball to the nearest lanky bloke business', you now have the option to pass a pixel-perfect pass to anyone you like, anywhere on the court – just like in real life!

This gives you complete control. It may not sound like much and you probably think you get complete control in all of your other sports games, but you don't. Not really. But now you do, thanks to Sony. Let's hope that this feature gets picked up by all those software houses out there currently working on a sports title due for a summer launch, eh?.

Playtime over and Chris is still smiling. He's still as smug as he was when we started out and to make things even worse, he was right. Total NBA '97 did blow me away and it is indeed something to be proud of. He proved his game is truly great and was indeed worthy of my anticipation – alas, his initial smugness was justified. Damn these programming geniuses!

To be honest though, I've only just skimmed the surface here. There's so much more going on in the game and I simply haven't got the time or the space in the mag to tell you about them all right now. One promise though; if you come back next month I'll guarantee you a full official review with all the trimmings. How's that? I can't say fairer than that now, can I? Eh? Good, I'm glad you've seen it my way.

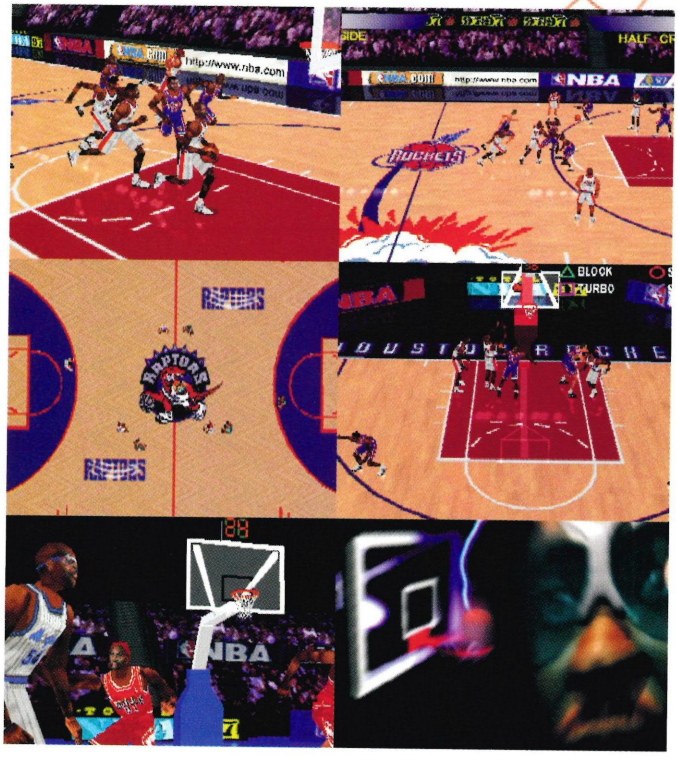
So until next issue, why don't you just while away the hours drooling over the superb squeaky-sneakered, hoop-slapping, rim-punishing screenshots I've secured on your behalf. I'll leave you to enjoy them, I'm off to sort out a massive official Total NBA '97 competition for all you lot, so tune in at the same time next month and get ready for a huge giveaway and an even

Dunkin' Goodview

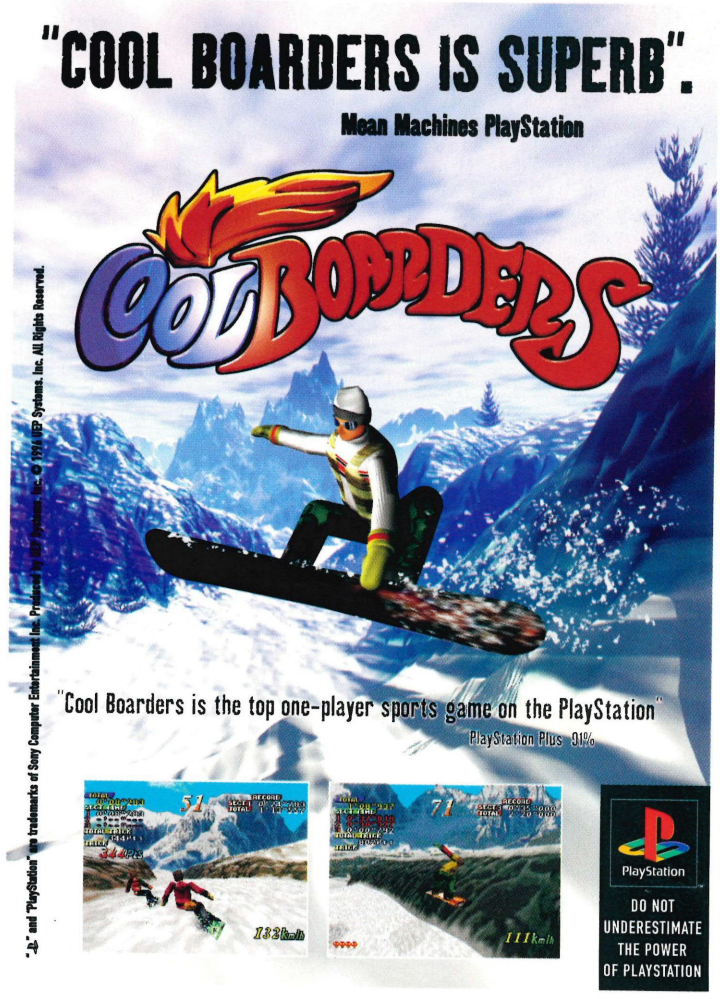
If you're wondering why the graphics look so darn good in Total NBA '97 it's because the boys at Sony have made use of many varying design techniques to create on-screen players with a much more realistic feel to them.

Nearly 350 real-life NBA basketball stars have been digitised and texture mapped for the game, all in true gourad-shaded 3-D, and placed onto the motion captured image skeleton.

For this, they used NBA hero Lattrell Spreewell, allowing the finished players to not only look, but move just as they should do when on court in real life. Virtually every aspect of the players' movements and on-screen graphical appearance has been improved, from techniques used in the original game right down to the fluidity of the players' fancy dribbling stunts and squeaky pumps. Very nice, I'm sure you'll agree.







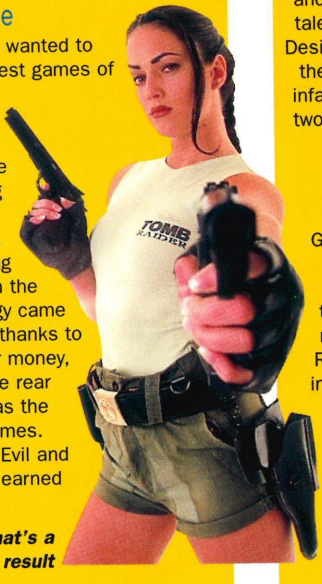
THE GLITTERING

good evening, ladeeez and gentlemen. Four score and seven issues ago, still bleary eyed from New Year, we asked you, the fragrant Pro reader, to tell us what you'd made of '96. What was good, what was arse, who was sexy and what your lucky pants were like. And, obligingly, you've told us. In quite alarming graphic detail. And so now, ride with us in our stretch limo as we slide into rented tuxedos and clip-on bow ties for the glamourous awards ceremony they're already calling a 'mildly diverting waste of two pages'. It's the Pro Awards '97, voted for by you rabble out there. Magic

Games Without Front Ears

Best Game

First things first, we wanted to know what were the best games of the year. No real surprises here, as everyone seems to agree that there were only three deserving contenders. Tomb Raider won by a mile, its praises being sung from every rooftop in the nation. Die Hard Trilogy came a very close second, thanks to its excellent value for money, and F1 brought up the rear securing its crown as the King Of Driving Games. Tekken 2, Resident Evil and Wipeout 2097 also earned your approval.



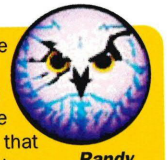
Well that's a shock result

Worst Game

The battle for the worst game was less easy to predict. Many of you, quite wisely, only buy games that we've approved, and so weren't in a position to pass judgement on the real stinkers. However, utter balls like Batman Forever, WWF In Your House and FIFA '97 cropped up frequently. Dishonourable mentions also went to Aquanauts Holiday, Lone Soldier and Ridge Racer Revolution. Some surprises came in the shape of numerous slaggings for Crash Bandicoot, Resident Evil and the divine Worms. You daft bunch of gibbons.

Best Software House

Another easy victory here. Psygnosis swept the board, outnumbering other companies totals by, ooh, let's say 3 to 1. It is now officially 'cock o' the school'. Following on the cheeky scousers' heels were arcade giants like Capcom and Namco, and homegrown talents like Gremlin and Core Design can officially annouce that they're second toughest in the infants. Acclaim, responsible for two of the three worst games of the year, garnered one vote. Hmm.



Randy scouse gits

Most Eagerly Awaited Game

Good news for Virgin and Eidos Interactive. The two games that were repeatedly scrawled in crayon were both sequels to their juiciest hits. Resident Evil 2 wins by a nose in the anticipation stakes, with Tomb Raider 2 not far behind. Rage Racer slinks into third place, with Syndicate Wars, Dark Forces and Soul Blade also reserving places in your wallets.

Patience, patience



Other Intriguing Results

Interplay takes the gong for Most Eyecatching Ad for its infamous 'dead teddy' Disruptor campaign. That Jo Guest football one also made you sit up and pay attention for some reason. Nintendo won't be too happy when it learns that only two of our respondents said they were going to jump ship for the N64, so it'll have to hope that there's an opening for an unemployed plumber in Tokyo. Most of you rent games before buying, with a fair few exchanging games. Some of you even claim to steal them, and you'll be getting a visit from the Sun Hill officers in the near future. And, worryingly, it seems that the Best Add-On is the Aura Interactor 'vibrating backpack'. There's nowt as queer as folk, as Steve says when he's been on the gin.

Here We Are, Now Entertain Us

Best Album

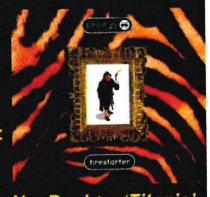


Ooh, you broad-minded lot

This category really split the pack, revealing a wealth of musical preferences among you. Oasis garnered a predictable chunk of the votes, so we'll begrudgingly say they're the winners even though 'Morning Glory' came out in 1995. Other Brit-poppers who kept reappearing were Pulp and Cast. Alanis Morrisette trudged in there quite often too, in an angsty manner. In a dancey vein, Underworld, Orbital and the Wipeout soundtrack were big hits. Also earning respect were less high profile groovemeisters like Zion Train, Rocket From The Crypt, Celine bloody Dion and, er, The Spice Girls. Several of you even had the gall to suggest that Kula Shaker were actually good, which is quite obviously wrong.

Single That Sums Up The Year

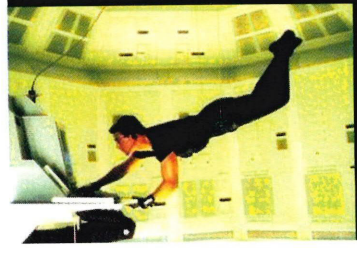
There could only be one winner. Naturally, The Prodigy's titanic 'Firestarter' is the only tune that sums up an entire year, and the vast majority of you agree. The Prodge also take second place for 'Breathe', and had they released a third single they'd probably have squeezed everyone else out of the running. As it is, the Spice Girls zig-a-zig-ah their merry way into third place. For 'Wannabe', not those other singles which weren't nearly as good in our opinion.



Ver Prodge: 'Titanic'

Best Film

In a vague attempt to see if any of you have lives away from flickering screens and joypads, we wanted to see if you could give Barry Norman a run for his baggy-eyed money. And in a surprising turn of events, the shock winner of Best Film was subtitled Italian Oscar winner, Il Postino. Oops. No it wasn't. It was Tom Cruise's baffling Mission: Impossible.



Cruise control

Pro Awards '97

Obviously the Scooby Doo-style rubber masks impressed you. Box office behemoth Independence Day only managed second place, despite having big bangs and that. Star Trek: First Contact made third place, suggesting a scarily high nerd ratio in our readership. Sort it out. Trainspotting would have made fourth, if we weren't only doing the top three, and big bucks wind flick Twister scraped in there as well.



Best TV Show

Two main contenders led the pack for this almost coveted title. The X Files won by a nose, proving that our readers are not swayed by the popular opinion that it's 'not as good as it used to be'. More stupid monster stories, less tedious conspiracy guff say we. Unjustly pipped at the post was Shooting Stars, which gave us a perfectly good reason to stay in on Friday nights. Or set the video. Red Dwarf just about makes third place, despite the considerable handicap of not being remotely funny anymore. Friends, The Simpsons and 3rd Rock From The Sun are good too, apparently. And, quelle surprise, sodding Star Trek is in there all too often.

Eranu and so on

Social Life Stuff

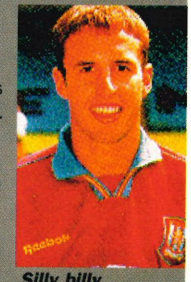
Xmas and New Year topped the Best Night Out category, obviously. Many of you managed to cop off as well. Nice one. The Phoenix Festival was also a big treat for most of you. Dance types gave a 'shout out' to Cream and Pure, and quite right too. Favourite drinks varied from reader to reader, although they mostly involved dangerously high levels of booze. Meanwhile, in the baby pool, our fledgling readers dig Coke and Mountain Dew fizzy pop drinks. Chocolate bars are still essential munchie material, with Cadbury's Fuse doing well. Kenny Fowler and Dougie Bell from West Lothian earn our admiration for admitting their fondness for an ancient Scots tradition – deep fried Mars Bars. Our readers were, on average, more attractive this year and you wear various designer casual gear when on the pull. You smoothies. And you all enjoyed your holidays, with most reaching ten out of ten on the 'bangin' scale. Apart from Chris Skeggs' jaunt to France which only warranted three points. Poor lad.

General Bits Of Old Tat

Most Enduring Memory

Some obvious ones here, and some startling surprises. Euro '96 lingers in the minds of many, with that penalty business still leaving open wounds. Lots of you will remember '96 only as the year you got a PlayStation, which is good news for Sony but bad news for those who have lives. Passing exams also made an impression on our more intelligent readers. In the bizarre stakes, there were plenty of entries, some too graphic and offensive to print here. A young stud from Norwich spent Xmas Eve up a tree 'with' a lady. Someone else 'copped for three birds on New Years Eve'. And one young tyke from Cambridgeshire managed a double whammy by 'getting off with a horny bird' and 'beating the crap out of this arse at school'.

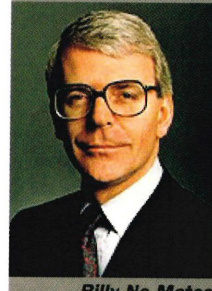
Needless to say, PlayStation Pro does not condone this tedious 'youth-style' behaviour. It's not big, and it's not clever. We were much more impressed with Sue Thompson, who gave birth to a bouncing baby, er, something. She didn't specify gender. But congratulations anyway.



Silly billy

The 'Just Sod Off' Award

The award for 'Person or Thing We'd Like To See Less Of' was won by a landslide by a Mr. J. Major of London. Hey, John! The kids hate you! Little bit of politics creeping into the world of PlayStations, eh? Eamon Holmes, the Royal Family, the bloody Lottery and Oasis were also invited to sod right off. We're awaiting their responses.



Billy No Mates

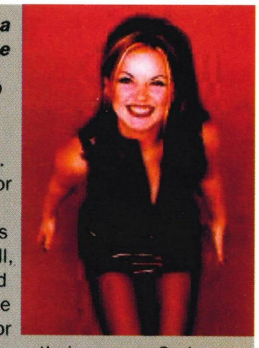
The 'Sad To See You Go' Award

While many were honest and nominated pets, relatives and friends, the vast majority of you were, it has to be said, a major let down in this department. The winner, it pains us to say, is Chris Evans. It seems his departure from Radio 1 has left a scar on the nation's psyche that just won't heal. Who would have thought that a smug, ginger arsewit would arouse such anguish?

Sexiest Spice Girl/Bloke Out Of Boyzone

Certainly a hotly contested category, and one that had us debating for literally minutes. Bad news for cheesy chaps Boyzone, as even our

Now there's a surprise



female readership prefer the Spice Girls to your castrated mewling. Not a single vote for the 'Zone. In the Spice stakes it was a toss up, if you will, between Mel B and Geri. Or Scary Spice and Ginger Spice for those who don't know their names. Geri won in the end, probably due to her increasingly frequent 'glamour' revelations. Baby Spice (the blond one) and Posh Spice (the, er, posh one) appealed to a more selective number. Poor old Sporty Spice was all but shunned in favour of the others. Maybe she could do a duet with Andrew Ridgley.

Worst Gag In The 'Sex' Box

It's a sad state of affairs when, as we approach a new millenium, people still think it's funny to put 'Yes please' when asked to state their sex. Please remember that this joke officially ceased to be funny in 1954. At least 80 per cent of our survey's returned with variations on this 'gag', so it's only fitting to include an award for the worst. And the winner is James Darcy, of London NW1. Describing himself as having 'Jamie Redknapp hair and looks', cheeky Jimbo wrote 'five times a night' next to the innocent 'sex' enquiry. And we believe you James. We really do. There's a crap Tarzan video in the post right now. You've earned it.

...And Goodnight

So, what have we learned? We've learned that you've all got great taste in games, but as Pro readers, we knew that already. We've learned that you like big, beefy games with long lasting appeal. We've learned that vibrating backpacks are the future of peripherals. We now know that you have pretty damn groovy taste in music, and that The Prodigy are the greatest thing on the planet. We also know that some of you like Kula Shaker, and we'll be doing our best to rectify this in later issues. You've got an eye for the Hollywood blockbuster, but an appreciation for the lower budget cinema fare. You like British comedy and American science fiction. You like going out, having a bevvy and then some chocolate. You dress to kill, and are a devastatingly tempting proposition to the opposite sex. And you have bangin' holidays in Europe and the States. You've already broken your New Year's resolutions. You are, let's face it, fantastically hip creatures of leisure. And that's why you read The Pro. Obviously.

Game Title **Rebel Assault 2**
Software House **LucasArts** *Step into the bright orange pants of a Rebel soldier in this,*

The Return Of The Space Cowboys

By Jay Sharples

REBEL ASSAULT 2 WAS, AS MOST of you will know, originally produced for the PC many moons ago, and like the other Star Wars-based LucasArts blaster, Dark Forces, it went on to sell well over a million copies worldwide. Next month sees its conversion to the PlayStation and LucasArts is certain it is going to be just as big a hit – especially with all the movie hype floating about at the moment.

The game's storyline is based around the antics of two rookie Rebel soldiers who – surprise, surprise – get themselves involved in the desperate struggle to overthrow the dark side of the force and end up getting into all kinds of Imperialistic scrapes and intergalactic rucks. The visual aspect of the title relies heavily on live action video and the combined 3-D graphics that flood each section of the game. And LucasArts confidently boasts that this footage is the first new Star Wars film work to be done since the release of Return Of The Jedi.

Players must master a series of differing tasks in order to defeat the looming Imperial threat. This can involve anything from piloting various modes of transport from the Star Wars galaxy to running around enemy space stations, blowing hell out of Stormtroopers and the like. The cockpit action sees players hopping on board speeder bikes, X Wings, Star Fighters and even Han Solo's rust bucket, the Millennium Falcon and ranges from simple obstacle courses to deep space laser-pumping trigger action.

Flying these different craft means you need to get to grips with the handling difficulties almost instantly. Obviously, you'll be knocked around all over the place to begin with, but this adds to the game's longevity. Exotic landscapes and maze-like internal locations will push your navigation skills to the limit, as you attempt to get through the course ahead as well as avoiding such obstacles as asteroid showers, space debris and numerous TIE Fighters and Star Destroyers from Vader's airborne army.

Back on the ground, you get to raid an Imperial base in order to hot wire the Millennium Falcon and a large section of the game involves you using your blaster prowess to pick off Stormtroopers and other members of Darth Vader's security elite. A keen eye and ultra-fast reflexes are required here as target Stormtroopers pop up all over the place and you need to use the available cover to hide behind so you can counter-attack their hot laser action.

It may not be ideally suited for the PlayStation in everyone's eyes, but I think this could turn a few heads and romp its way up the charts with relative ease. And with the re-rendered real-time video sequences, the 16bit stereo surround sound and its broadcast quality 24bit true colour, this is looking more like a special Star Wars TV movie than an actual game. Either way, all the wannabe Jedi warriors around the world will no doubt be drooling in fine Jabba The Hutt fashion when it finally gets released. The force is indeed strong with this one.

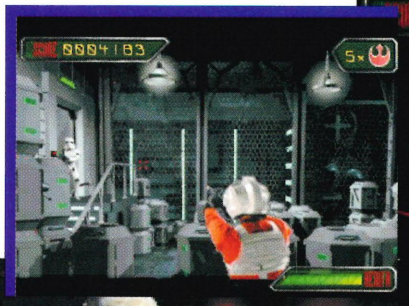
Release Date: April



Han Solo and Chewbacca are obviously having a lock-in back at the Cantina Bar, so you'll be taking control in the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon. Your first task, once you've slipped behind the wheel, is to guide your way through the crazy underground tunnels of the Imperial base. Floating bits of metal, enemy craft and lots and lots of twists and turns are the order of the day here, so you'll need plenty of concentration and a feather-light touch on the old joypad

the second Star Wars release in as many months

The action on each story chapter varies quite often, so you won't become bored within minutes. Rebel assault 2 comes on two CDs, so you can imagine how much variation goes on during your fight with the Empire. During idle moments though, you can ruin Darth Vader's woodchip wallpaper with a couple of laser blasts, and if you're feeling particularly artistic, even write your name









You need to blast the Stormtroopers from their hidey holes with a volley of precise and well-timed trigger flashiness. The shoulder buttons act as swing manoeuvres, enabling you to pop out from behind the scenery and introduce the enemy to a large portion of Jedi plasma. On the later stages, a well-timed shot will blow the Stormtroopers onto the electric cables below which, of course, is great

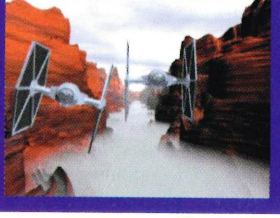


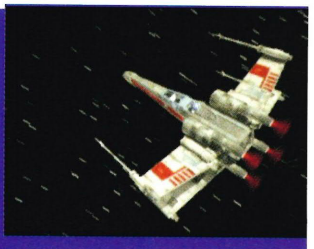




The screenshots do look mighty impressive, but seeing this baby move is a totally different experience. All the game's FMV is silky smooth and the story telling cut sequences really get you in the mood for kicking some space butt. The game is split into various story chapters and as you plough through the game you'll get the option to save your progress

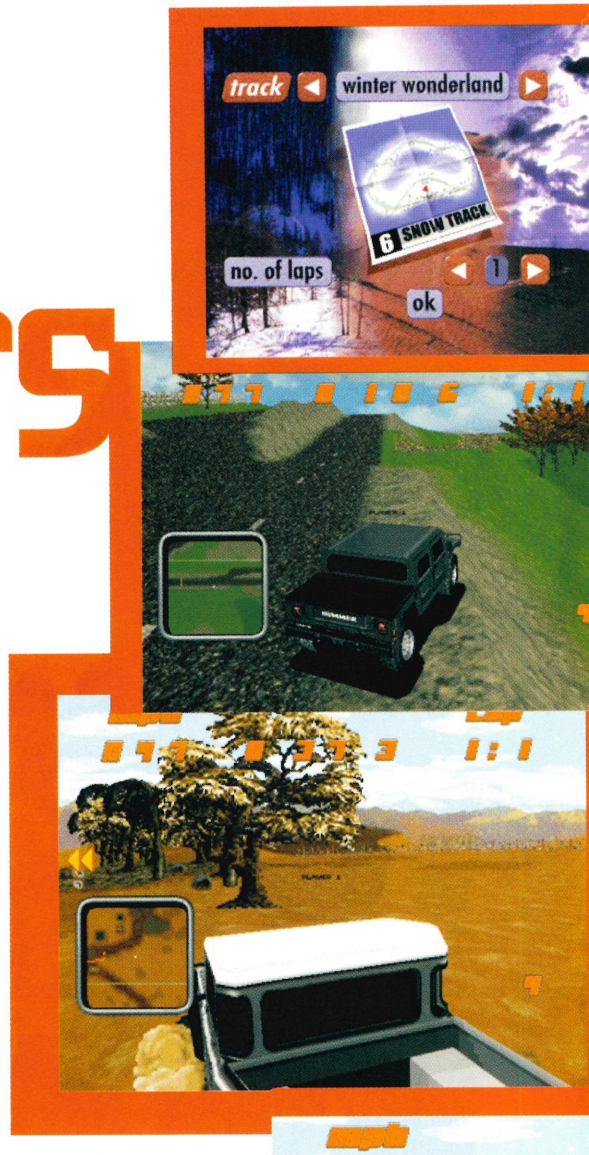






Game Title **Test Drive: Off Road**
Software House **Eidos** *We've had Hardcore 4X4, Monster Trucks and now here is Eidos*

Rambling Racers



By Andy Sharp

THE RECENT SPATE OF OFF ROAD RACING games have, for the most part, had a lukewarm reception and Eidos is obviously hoping to take the crown with its Off Road effort. This in itself shouldn't prove too much of a problem as no attempt so far has captured the true atmosphere and rugged racing required to make them classics. There are a few reasons why this offering should fare quite well, the most important of which is the fact that the courses aren't as pre-defined as in the slightly above average Hardcore from Gremlin. At the same time however, there are a few reasons why this may fail.

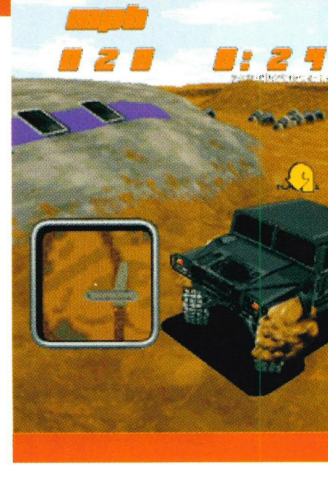
If you look for something a little bit different in your games this may appeal to you, but if you already have either Hardcore or Monster Trucks there's nothing particularly outstanding to separate this from them. In this respect, Eidos is hoping to lure people who haven't yet dived into this pool so to speak.

As you'd expect, there are a few different vehicles to choose from which all fare quite well in the ultra bouncy terrain provided. There's a Land Rover, Chevrolet, Jeep and a Hummer. The paint work can be changed to your liking within reason and the handling is helped, or hindered, by the changing weather conditions. Each vehicle seems to have an environment, whether it be snow, sand, dirt or rocks, where it performs better than the others.

Thankfully there's a split screen two player game included which should stand this in good stead when we give it the full treatment in the near future.

After the release of two 4X4 games in the last few months Eidos may have left it at little late with this one, but you never know, it may be the one to beat the rest once it's fully operational and dressed to the nines.

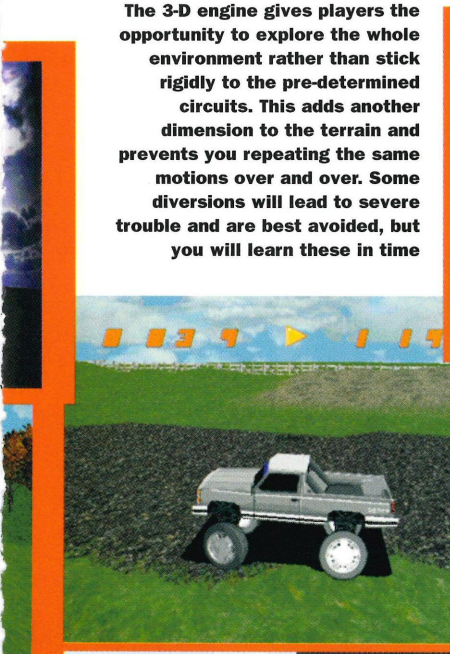
Release Date: April

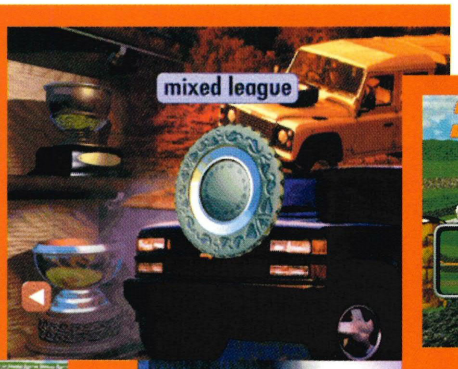


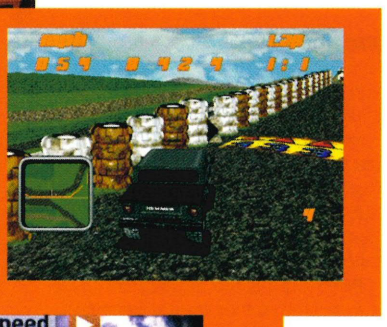
There are 12 tracks to race around. They can be explored to gain knowledge of sneaky shortcuts without missing checkpoints. Missing these can leave your race hopes well and truly scuppered. Thankfully there's an arrow on the screen from time to time to tell you the direction you should be heading. However, this doesn't mean mistakes can't be made

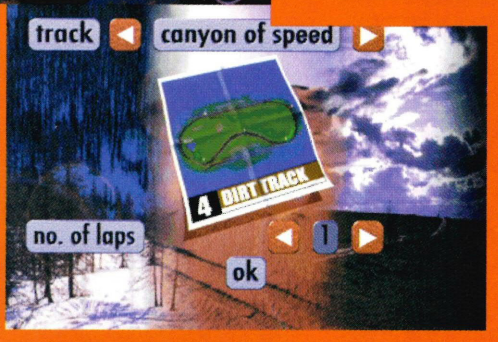
with Test Drive: Off Road. Where will it all end?

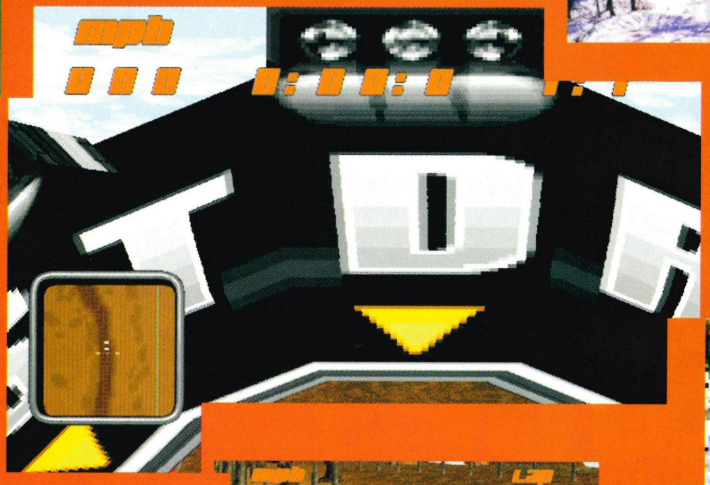
The 3-D engine gives players the opportunity to explore the whole environment rather than stick rigidly to the pre-determined circuits. This adds another dimension to the terrain and prevents you repeating the same motions over and over. Some diversions will lead to severe trouble and are best avoided, but you will learn these in time



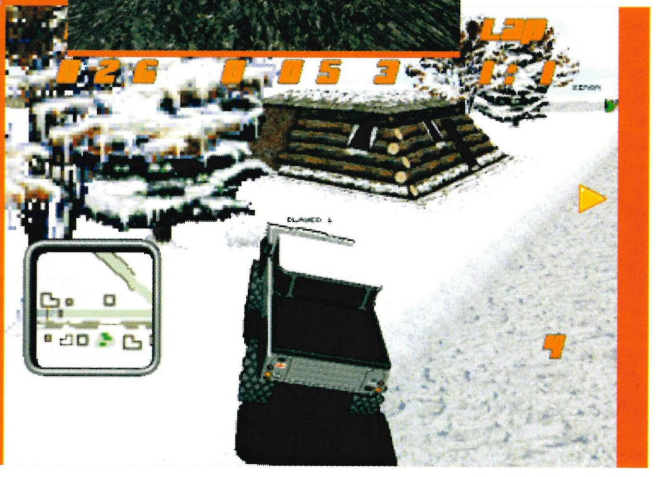


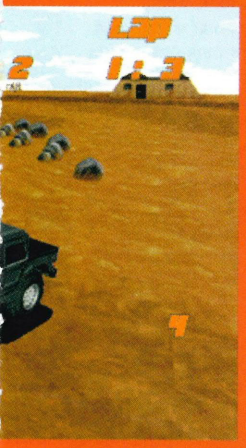


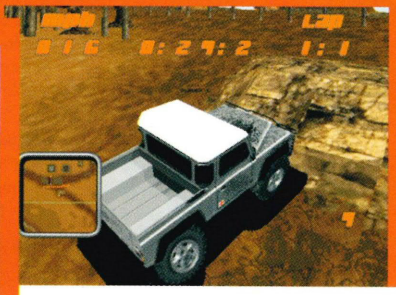












There are several racing modes to choose from, depending on your particular preference. These are the usual single races, tournaments or full seasons where points are awarded for your finishing positions and a leader table is the order of the day. If you fail to finish in the top three, your challenge is inevitably over

Test Drive features accurate driving physics to keep things ticking along so your vehicle responds to the scenery as realistically as possible. Attempting cliff walls will more than likely leave you on your roof after a nasty fall from grace

To reach the later stages you must prove yourself worthy of such rewards by out-driving either your human opponent or the computer drivers on the first circuits. Only then will the twists and turns of the tougher circuits be revealed. Otherwise you'll just have to practice until you earn your reward

Game Title **Pro Pinball: Timeshock!**
Software House **Empire** *Now's your chance to travel in time via a virtual pinball table*

Tardis Pinball

By Alex Lee

PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! IS THE follow-up to last year's Pro Pinball: The Web. It has taken over a year for Empire's Oxford-based development team to produce Timeshock! The game has been created as if it were a real pinball table – in fact, a real game could actually be built from the blueprints.

Timeshock! pushes the standard of pinball sims even further than that of The Web, bringing the excitement and action of a real pinball table onto the PlayStation. Based on the modern wide-body pinball design, it offers multiple viewing angles, a detailed dot-matrix display and up to six balls in play at a time. Playing the game involves travelling between four time zones in search of four crystal fragments, which are needed to save the Universe from the awesome Timeshock! You must undertake daring feats such as scaling Mount Rushmore, chariot racing, escaping from dinosaur stampedes and battling robots in the distant future. All these adventures (and more) are displayed on an improved dot-matrix display, with twice the frame rate and four times the resolution of the last one.

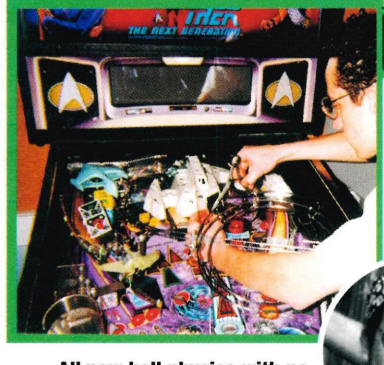
There are many different modes of gameplay with dozens of hidden features. On your travels through time you can collect different souvenirs. Who knows what can happen if you combine a dinosaur egg from the past with an anti-matter battery from the future?

Timeshock! offers four different basic styles of play: Novice, Regular, Challenge and Tournament. Novice gives the player only one ball but guarantees at least two minutes of play time and makes some of the harder features easier to reach. Challenge is a special mode to make multi-player games even more exciting than usual – if one player manages to get two balls locked, say, and then loses his ball, the next player continues with the table in the same state as the last player left it. He now only needs one more ball to be locked to open up the multi-ball feature and accrue millions of points. Tournament mode is for people who think they've mastered the game and the lack of random awards or extra balls make for a game that should push experts to the limit. A full operators menu gives the player access to the heart of the game. Full detailed statistics on every aspect of the game can be viewed. How many Super Jackpots have been scored? What's my average game time? When did I get my top score? All these questions can be answered. Fed up that you have to shoot the left ramp five times to light the extra ball feature? Then you can change it, along with just about every other aspect of the game, to your own taste. You'll have to earn the right first, only when you've proven your skill with the basic game can you change the most exciting features. The operators menu also gives you full manual control over the table hardware, flash the lights, fire the solenoids, test the flashers – if you can do it on a real table, you can do it here!

Timeshock! pushes the graphics potential of the PlayStation to the limits. It uses the highest resolution of 640x512 in 32,000 colours with animation of 50 frames per second. It is more than just a visual experience, however. Again, the music (30-odd digital audio tracks) is by Stiff Little Fingers stars, Bruce Foxton (ex-Jam) and Jake Burns. Speech too, is recorded specially for the game by voice actors. It all sounds mightily impressive, but there's no disguising the fact that there's still only one table. Next month's exclusive review will reveal whether or not a single brilliant table is going to be good enough for the British PlayStation player.

Release Date: End of April

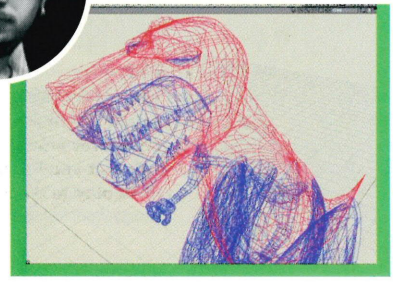




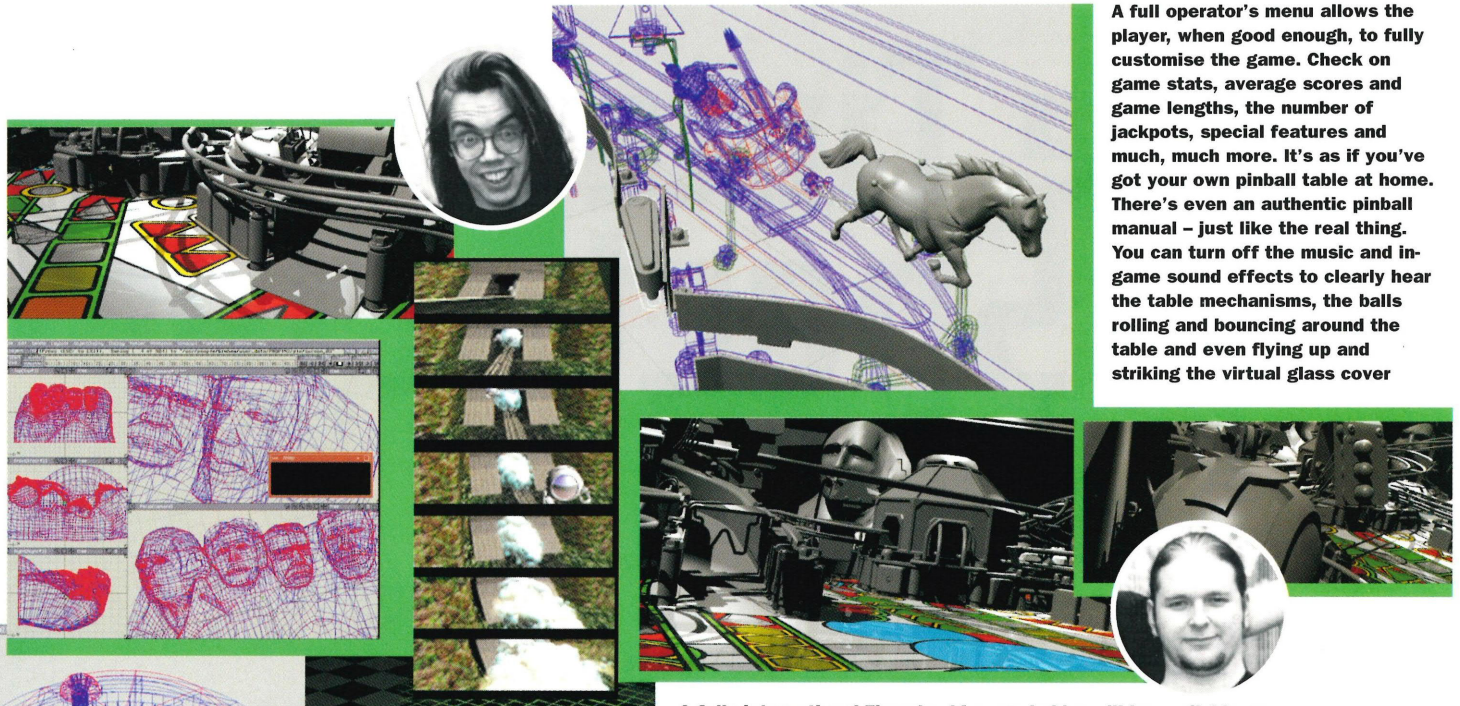
All-new ball physics with no random element, the detail of the simulation ensures that the same thing never happens twice. Even the balls affect the actions of the flippers – something never properly simulated on a computer pinball game before. A 'dead-catch' is at last possible – flippers simply don't get more realistic, apart from real ones



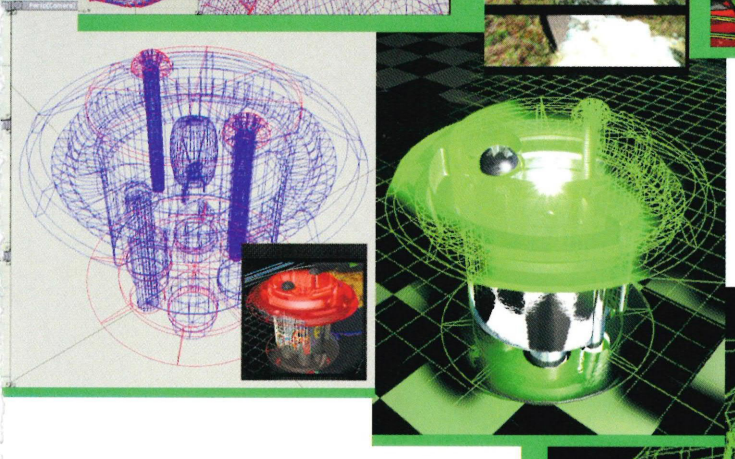
One extra feature is the ability to scroll around a rendered version of the table which accurately shows minuscule details. You'll be able to read the text, even examine screw tops, electrical wiring and filaments in the bulbs. The new dot matrix display has twice the frame rate and four times the resolution of The Web. The number of animations has also been greatly increased, compared to the original



almost as daft as via a Police box



A full operator's menu allows the player, when good enough, to fully customise the game. Check on game stats, average scores and game lengths, the number of jackpots, special features and much, much more. It's as if you've got your own pinball table at home. There's even an authentic pinball manual – just like the real thing. You can turn off the music and in-game sound effects to clearly hear the table mechanisms, the balls rolling and bouncing around the table and even flying up and striking the virtual glass cover



A fully international Timeshock! score ladder will be available on Empire's World Wide Web pages. Players will be able to play games over the Internet, competing with one another or simply watching to learn tricks from the pros. The Internet support will be available after release as a free upgrade. The time crystal rotates around to divert the ball to special areas on the table. Plus 'Magno-Lock' magnetically picks up balls and stores them for later use – you can see the balls stack up on-screen



Lead programmer and game designer Ade Barritt commented, "Once you've played Timeshock! there is no going back. I can't play The Web any more, it just doesn't feel right. The bottom line is that playing Timeshock! will make you better at the real thing – it honestly is that good". Four all-new play modes are featured – Novice, Challenge, Regular and Tournament Mode. There are huge variations in gameplay as Timeshock! is set in four different time zones each requiring subtle changes in tactics. There are also many, many secret modes and hidden features that you'll simply have to play to discover

Game Title **Atari Arcade's Greatest Hits**
Software House **GT Interactive** *After Williams Arcade's Greatest Hits, GT Interactive is*

Rose Tinted Spectacles

Atari Arcade's Greatest Hits

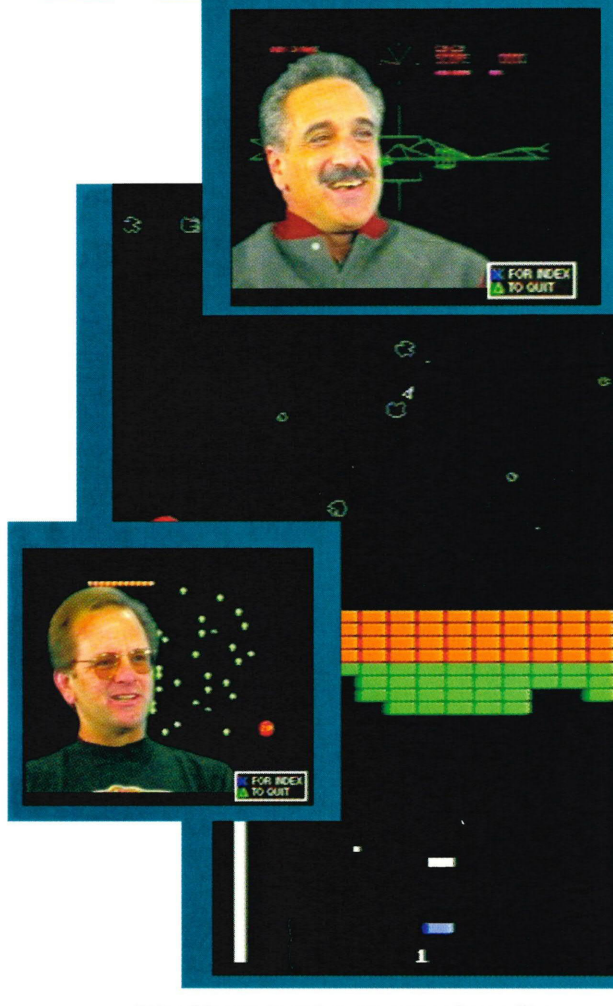
By Alex Lee

THE PROBLEM WITH PREVIEWS such as this is that the compilation is pretty much complete, barring the odd tweak to the front end and loading times. You see, Atari Arcade's Greatest Hits is a compilation of six arcade 'classics' from yesteryear. The games featured are exact simulations of their arcade counterparts from 16 years ago.

It's difficult, therefore, to avoid having an opinion on games that were actually completed (and died out) well over a decade ago. The only reason why this is a preview and not a review is that one of our mates at GT has sent us an early pre-production copy. As I said earlier however, all the games on the compilation are complete so all I can do here is whet your appetite by reminding you about the six titles.

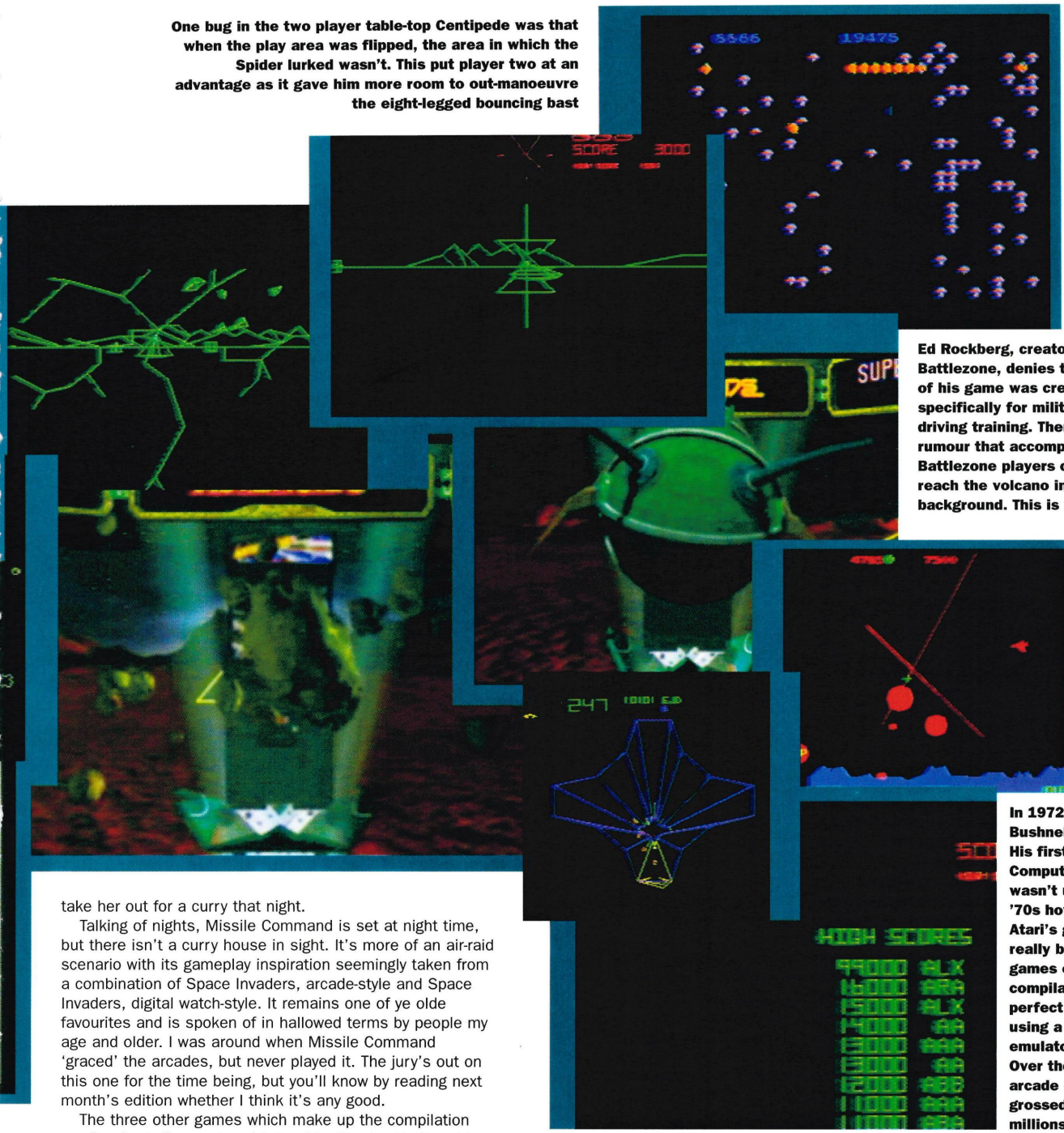
My personal favourite (oops, shouldn't have really said that) is Battlezone. Looking back, the reason why I liked it so much in the arcades was entirely down to the shape of the unit in which it came. There was a small visor unit for you to rest your head against and peer through and the controls were two massive joysticks which you always felt like wrenching out when you lost your last tank. Set in a '3-D' wire-frame environment, the game soon got incredibly difficult with ridiculously nippy 'supertanks' suddenly appearing out of nowhere, easily out-pacing the sluggish tank you were controlling. Is it the same on the PlayStation today? Find out next month.

Centipede, an altogether less ambitious shoot 'em-up – for its time, that is – re-appeared in the arcades about five years ago with a cash prize option. I can now shamefully admit to a secret I'd hitherto kept – when on a 'dirty' weekend in Stratford with my wife-to-be I spent more time on the Centipede machine in the pub than in the guest house with my then girlfriend. Still, at least I won enough money to



Asteroids was based on pre-cursor Space War, except with drifting rocks rather than spaceships. It was programmed to run on an XY monitor (vector – with straight lines from point to point) so the game could run at a much higher resolution than that of a television

set to follow up the success of its mid-priced compilation with one from Atari



One bug in the two player table-top Centipede was that when the play area was flipped, the area in which the Spider lurked wasn't. This put player two at an advantage as it gave him more room to out-manoeuvre the eight-legged bouncing bast

Ed Rockberg, creator of Battlezone, denies that a version of his game was created specifically for military tank driving training. There was also a rumour that accomplished Battlezone players could actually reach the volcano in the background. This is also false

In 1972, Nolan Bushnell founded Atari. His first coin-op was Computer Space. It wasn't until the late '70s however, that the Atari's golden age really began. All six games on the compilation are arcade-perfect simulations, using a special emulator program. Over the years, Atari's arcade classics have grossed thousands of millions of dollars

Dave Theurer (pronounced Toyrer) created Tempest, the abstract shoot 'em-up which featured a unique control system, colour vector graphics and lightning fast gameplay. The project originated as a first-person Space Invaders, but this idea was then honed to that of an alien invasion from the centre of the Earth

take her out for a curry that night.

Talking of nights, Missile Command is set at night time, but there isn't a curry house in sight. It's more of an air-raid scenario with its gameplay inspiration seemingly taken from a combination of Space Invaders, arcade-style and Space Invaders, digital watch-style. It remains one of ye olde favourites and is spoken of in hallowed terms by people my age and older. I was around when Missile Command 'graced' the arcades, but never played it. The jury's out on this one for the time being, but you'll know by reading next month's edition whether I think it's any good.

The three other games which make up the compilation are Breakout, Tempest and Asteroids. Breakout's the old smash the wall by angling the ball away from your bat at the foot of the screen, Tempest is the spin around the vortex job that Interplay 'updated' recently and Asteroids is the simplistic yet addictive float around in an asteroid field, shooting the 'roids until they disintegrate. Check the captions next to the screenshots and indeed next month's shocking, revelatory review for further details.

Release Date: April

Game Title **Tiger Shark**
Software House **GT** *If bizarre flight sim cum shoot'em-ups are your cup of tea then GT*

The success of blockbuster films such as The Hunt for Red October and Crimson Tide have meant that the public's interest in submarines has risen, but so far any attempted simulations (of which there have been none on the PlayStation, unless you count In the Hunt, which I'd rather not because it was rubbish) have all been a bit 'serious'. Tigershark will hopefully put an element of fun and accessibility



What no-one knows is that the entire disaster has actually been engineered by one slightly mad Russian commander, Admiral Dmitri Konstantin. His goal was to learn to use the energy produced as a weapon. He succeeded, and the destruction of Japan is all the proof he needs. Now he must be stopped before his evil plans can progress any further

The one US ship which has survived in the area is an experimental sub carrier on a dual research mission near Hawaii. It carries the US's newest, most advanced, sub surface fighter, the Tigershark, out on its very first test mission. In addition to the Tigershark, the sub carries a full compliment of undersea surveying and analysis equipment and scientists



What he doesn't know is that the effect he created has not stopped where he assumed it would. Unless the Russian taps are destroyed and the Japanese devices are reprogrammed, the tectonic instability will continue to spread threatening the entire world through devastating earthquakes and super-hurricanes. This is where you come in, and it's your job to destroy these devices

The plan is to use the Tigershark to penetrate each of the taps, destroying some and reprogramming others in the proper sequence to stop the spread of the effect. The mission will eventually include the destruction of the Russian Admiral's base as a way of making sure this never happens again

have just the thing for you

You're a tiger

By Steve McNally



While running the test missions for the Tigershark, the sub was supposed to have been mapping the bottom with an eye towards establishing undersea bases. The sub has been ordered into the area around Japan to see what is going on. Using its advanced sensors, the geologists discover that the effect is spreading and that unless something is done, the Earth will witness a disaster on a scale never seen before

TIGERSHARK WILL APPARENTLY BE a breakthrough action game for the PlayStation that promises to bring a new level of visual and gameplay excitement to the genre of submarine combat games. At least, according to publisher GT interactive it will anyway. Players will be immersed in high-speed fighter-style combat both above and below the ocean surface. You must use all your arsenal of weaponry and cunning to save the world from disaster brought on largely by Japanese technology and more than a bit of Russian subterfuge. Ultimately, the Tigershark (the craft you pilot) must manoeuvre through the ruins of a sunken Japanese Archipelago to seek out and destroy the enemy's central command post in the heart of sunken Tokyo.

In the near future, the nations of the world have increasingly turned toward the world's oceans as a source of land, food, raw materials and energy. The two leading powers in undersea exploitation are the Federated States of Russia and the Japanese Economic Collective.

The United States has lagged far behind in this area and is only now beginning to catch up. In the year 2060, the Japanese Government, desperate for new sources of power to accommodate their rising population, approved the use of a radical new 'Geothermal Tap' in the fault lines that ring Japan's coast. This network of energy taps would serve the dual purpose of providing tremendous amounts of energy while at the same time stabilizing the fault complex that had threatened Japan for millennia.

Initially all was well, but it soon became apparent that something had gone terribly wrong. A series of violent earthquakes shook the Japanese Archipelago and on 21 August, 2064 large sections of the Japanese Islands fell into the sea as the weakened tectonic plate they rested on collapsed.

The upswelling of heat caused massive storms which effectively destroyed what little remained of the navies stationed in the area. Nearly 60 per cent of the local population died in minutes. The government was completely destroyed along with all of the island's armed forces.

The collapse of Japan was seen as an opportunity by the Russians. In a series of lightning strikes, they have secured what remains of Japan. These strikes have been totally unopposed and largely successful in only a matter of days. The US is sending forces to dispute the situation, but due to funding cuts, has no major force immediately available in the Pacific.

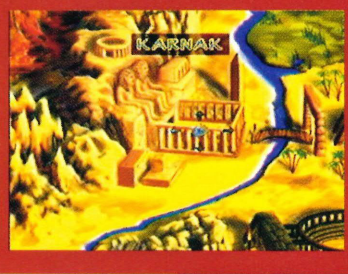
Release date: April 97

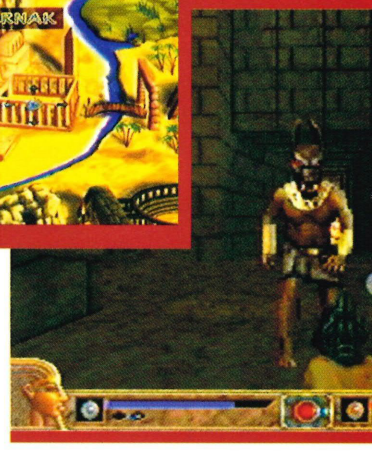
Game Title Exhume
Software House BMG *As ever, the first person perspective shoot 'em-up wagon trundles*

Waiting To Exhume









By Andy Sharp

TO SOME PEOPLE THESE SHOOT 'EM-UPS are as crucial to life as water and sunlight. To others, they're all much the same; lacking in depth and imagination. Whichever way you look at Exhumed, it has a little more to it than the Dooms and Dark Forces seen before. But only a little. The essence is still on the gun toting action and creepy corridors crammed with a whole manner of freaky beings.

As with most games of this ilk, Exhumed has been transformed from the PC onto the PlayStation. This time, BMG is responsible for the release of this conversion which is not surprisingly true to the original, known as Power Slave.

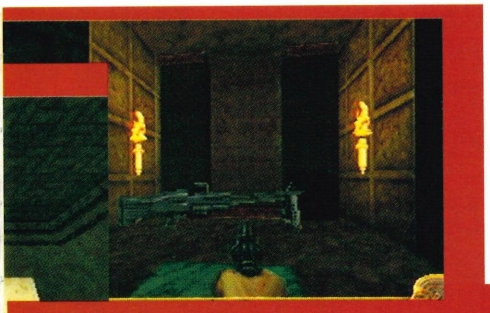
BMG promises a fully interactive world in which you can crouch, jump, walk, look up and down as well as swim in the water to collect useful items. These items include weapons, weapon power, health and all important keys for progress.

The game takes place in the ancient Egyptian city of Karnak which has been seized by great unknown powers. Chaos and terror are now spreading into neighbouring lands. After unsuccessful missions by global military operations in the area it is decided that a lone soldier is the ideal candidate for the job and this is where you come in. Obviously one person is a far more daunting prospect than an entire army of the best trained and fiercest soldiers known to man. The task you are given is to return the mummified corpse of Ramses back to its resting place and dispel all evil from the land to secure the future of mankind.

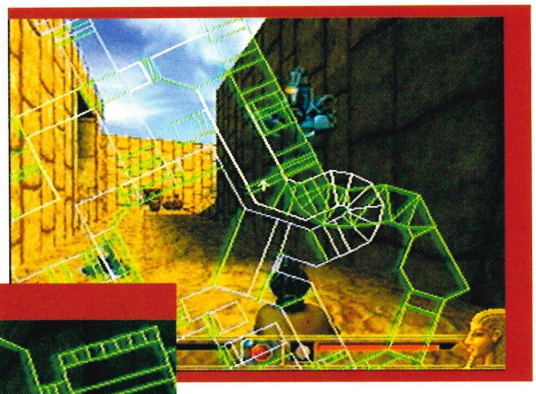
The game is due to be released in March, and Doom fans may have to look no further for their gib spilling requirements, only this time around there's a little more to think about. But only a bit. Remember this and you could be in for a treat.

Exhumed is the first game by developers Lobotomy to be published by BMG and, if first impressions are anything to go by, there could be some classics to come in the future. This crazy take on Doom should appeal to many although the argument will always remain that if you own one or more of any Doom clone why would you want to fork out another forty odd quid? Still, you may be foolish not to

on with yet another addition to its already overloaded cargo space



The weapons available to you in the game are a machete, a .357 (no less) Magnum, an M60 machine gun, grenades, flame thrower, a magical cobra staff and the all powerful Eye Of Ra and all have their uses from time to time. Killing enemies or breaking open pots will reveal power ups which can be picked up at any time



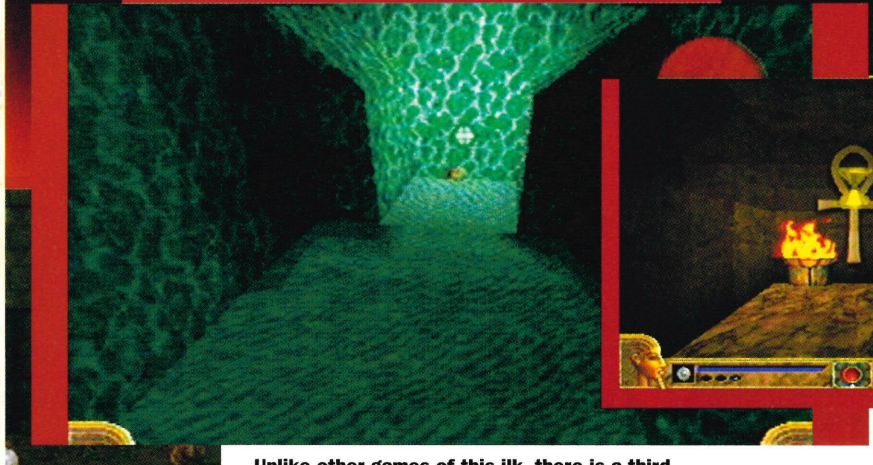




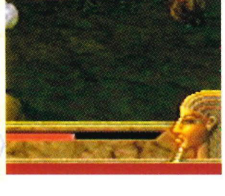
The dead Egyptian King, Ramses, guides you through the numerous levels which will take you through the entire kingdom from the canyons to the mountains, to palaces and tombs. Where Exhumed differs from Doom and its buddies however, is that you can travel back and forth between the stages How? Wait for it, on a camel. Fantastic







Items can be collected along the way such as maps (which can be brought up over the playing screen as you wander the corridors), a Sobek Power mask for underwater exploration as well as some nifty boots which put an extra spring in your step. There are numerous other objects you can find and these can be stored in your inventory until you feel they need to be used



Unlike other games of this ilk, there is a third person perspective which does seem to be a bit of a waste of time, but if you fancy a change you can get a greater view of the surroundings by using this particular option

Game Title **Wing Over**

Software House **JVC** *Flight simulations on the PlayStation are few and far between. Thankfully,*

An enormous hangar's worth of aircraft is up for play in the curiously-titled Wing Over, such as the F/A18 A Hornet, the Fokker DR1, the A-10 Thunder Bolt, the Macch 1202, the Saab Draken, the G0229A Horten, the Spitfire MK1 and the Mirage III



As well as having several different types of aeroplane to choose from, there are five different modes of play. These are as follows – tournament, scenario, free game, survival (in which you must live to tell the tale) and versus (where you can link up to another PlayStation and battle your chums). Tally-ho!

Although the evidence given by some of the screenshots on these preview pages may cause your hand to inexplicably rise and scratch your chin, Wing Over incorporates state-of-the-art, fully texture-mapped polygon graphics with super-smooth gameplay

JVC has sensibly avoided any great attention to realism in this dog-fighting spectacular

Dog Fight





Three views are available to the pilot – first person, third person and a more elevated third person style angle. The first person is by far the most exciting, realistic and easiest to use. The other two view angles seem to be included for cosmetic reasons only



Although Wing Over isn't a flight sim per se – the controls are far too simple and user-friendly for it to be classed as such – buffs of warring aircraft will be pleasantly surprised to see the attention to detail applied to the various crafts

By Alex Lee

NOT ONLY HAS COVENT GARDEN-BASED publisher JVC opted for a non-flight sim aeroplane flying game, it has also avoided creating too much political upset by making up some rather odd 21st Century scenario. Apparently, only a few short years into the future, humans have finally translated their greatest dream into reality – world peace. Hello? Since when? However, it's obvious lasting world peace stands on frail ground – now that sounds more familiar.

The United World Government (UWG – formerly the acronym for the Union of Women Gorillas) has come to the conclusion that the desire to fight is inherent in human nature – of course it bloody is – and it must be fulfilled harmlessly before it erupts in military dispute. The solution is an international athletics pageant, a simulated air battle under strict rules.

Teams consisting of four members of both mechanics and pilots travel through eight different countries each year to fight air battles and compete for an overall total score. It isn't JVC's fault the game is called Wing Over, by the way, it's a daft Japanese name inherited from the development team, Pack In Video. Perhaps it should 'pack in' thinking up titles for its games...

Wing Over (snigger) puts you in the cockpit of any of a large hangar's worth of flying machines, including the Spitfire MK1, Fokker DR1, F/A-18A Hornet, Saab Draken and A-10 Thunder Bolt. Five different types of gameplay should challenge mid-air combat and shoot 'em-up fans of all ages and IQs – from the arcade style set-up Free Game Mode to the altogether more in-depth perils of Scenario Game Mode.

The battles take place over a range of locations, from the grey skies of England, to the altogether more tropical Egypt. Wing Over's aforementioned five gameplay modes means that teamwork and careful planning are the order of the day. Individual heroics aren't necessarily enough, you need to watch each other's backs in four-on-four airborne dogfighting. Winners are awarded upgrades for their flying machines, but as all the in-game text is currently undergoing translation from Japanese it's a bit difficult to tell what they are exactly.

With the likes of Core's Thunderhawk 2, Sony's Air Combat and Virgin's Agile Warrior already available, Wing Over has some strong competition, but the flying genre isn't exactly crowded as yet so it may just find its niche. The fact that, although it is set in the future, it features 'real' planes might just give it enough of a USP to nudge itself into the lower reaches of a chart currently bursting with beat 'em-ups, sports sims and adventure titles. Next month's PlayStation Pro will reveal whether JVC's latest Japanese capture 'wings' us 'over', and promises to bring you a much higher standard of journalism.

Release Date: April

Game Title **Apocalipse, Pitfall 3D, Heavy Gear**
Software House **Activision** *More Mech madness, an Atari relic bursts into gorgeous*

Vision On

Apocalypse

By Dan Whitehead

WHAT'S BRUCE WILLIS FAMOUS FOR? Running around skyscrapers, shoeless, gunning down terrorists? Yes. Smiling with only one side of his mouth, always ready with a snappy quip should the bad guys get cocky? Naturally. Alternating between good and crap films with baffling regularity? I'm afraid so. Well now you can add a new claim to fame to Brucie's list. He's the first major Hollywood star to have an original video game designed especially for his unique movie persona. And that video game, boys and girls, is Apocalypse.

The story involves the Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse walking the Earth in human form, spreading chaos and loads of badness. Only you, for some reason, can halt their antics. But you won't be alone. Because fighting alongside you is an artificially intelligent partner, who bears a strange resemblance to that balding bloke from Moonlighting.

Yep, Brucie's been motion captured, texture mapped and digitised and plunged, Tron-style, into your PlayStation. So it's not some lazy FMV Bruce on screen, it's a rendered polygon sprite based on Bruce's actions and mannerisms, with Bruce's face pasted on and Bruce's voice quipping away. And it looks pretty smart, all things considered.

It's a 3-D shoot 'em-up, but it's categorically not going to be another Doom clone. The game engine, which has taken Activision's team of Californian boffins nearly a year to create, promises smooth, fluid animation. You'll have complete freedom of movement when it comes to shooting, so you can shoot left and run right or shoot behind you while running forward.

Test reels of a very early version show Activision has got the atmosphere spot on, and once the graphics get a final polish, it should look a treat. It's also highly amusing to see Bruce Willis running around in an empty studio, dressed in a black leotard to be motion captured.

Bruce has been involved in the project from day one and has apparently loved every minute of it. As well he might – he now earns a slice of Activision's profits. He has already asked when they can start the sequel and they haven't finished this one yet. In a typically restrained, and suspiciously contrived, press quote the tubby action bloke had this to say "There is nothing on the market like it. All other games immediately become obsolete". Sounds like fighting talk to me.

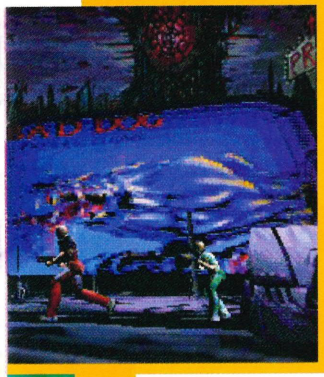
Release Date: August '97



Apocalypse breaks new ground in the link between films and games. It's an original title, not based on an existing film, where Bruce actually plays an active role in the action. Unlike some PC adventures which have included FMV footage of actors like Dennis Hopper and Christopher Walken, Bruce will interact with the player and the enemies in an intelligent and non-linear manner. If Activision can pull it off, it should pave the way for similar crossovers. Demi Moore in Tomb Raider 2 anyone?

3-D and some bald actor arses about with guns and monsters









New features in Heavy Gear include the ability to duck behind cover, call up air strikes on selected targets and lob grenades over walls for sneak attacks. The Gears have legs for walking, but can also activate tank tracks to roll over terrain faster. And gone are MW2's flat environments, replaced by gently sloping dunes, hills and mountains. It certainly looks a lot nicer than MW2, but that's judging by the PC version



The smaller size of the Heavy Gears means their movements will be more human-like. They'll carry guns in their hands, rather than mounting them on their arms and will have to reload like any normal soldier. Do well as a raw recruit and you could end up commanding an entire squadron of Heavy Gears, engaging in a civil war on the colonised world of Terra Nova

Heavy Gear

UNLESS YOU MAKE A HABIT of hanging around Games Workshop, discussing the glaring omissions in Warhammer's new rule book, you might not have heard of Heavy Gear. It's apparently the fourth largest role playing game in the world. But don't let that scare you. Because this is role playing with big fighting robots. Not goblins and felt hats.

Yes, it's a return to Mechwarrior 2 territory, but there's one slight difference. Heavy Gears are smaller and more human looking than MW2's hulking beasts. So in theory the game should be faster, punchier and less flight sim oriented.

There's little hard news on a PlayStation release at the moment, apart from the fact that one is being put together. The PC version is closest to completion, so that's where these screenshots come from. If the PSX can retain the intricate detail of the PC graphics and add it's own particular forte, blazing action, this could well be a winner. Is it too similar to Mechwarrior 2? Very possibly, but Activision has licensed the RPG for an entire decade, so no doubt it is hoping we'll like it.

Release Date: Q4 '97

Pitfall 3D

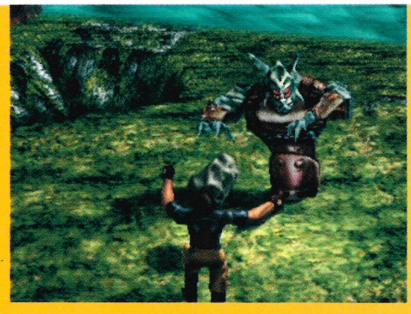
MANY, MANY YEARS AGO ON a prototype games system called the Atari 2600 there appeared a game called Pitfall. In it, you controlled a tiny pixel character called Harry as he swung over traps and crocodiles. Shamelessly based on Indiana Jones, it was nonetheless a smart laugh. And so it receded into history, fondly remembered by a rapidly ageing school of games players.

Until those players reached an age where they could get proper jobs as programmers and decided to resurrect Pitfall for the new generation of players, that is. And so it came to pass that Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure was released for something called Windows 95. Kids loved it, and grown ups burst their happy ducts with nostalgic glee. It was a pretty cool game as well, which obviously helped somewhat. Now it's the PlayStation's turn. As with everything these days, Pitfall has pumped up into 3-D, earning itself the cryptic title of Pitfall 3D into the bargain.

Unlike Crash and Pandemonium, P3D hopes to provide the first truly three dimensional platform experience. The story involves some sort of alternate dimension thing, but the upshot is that Pitfall Harry, now fully fleshed out, must swing fight and run through 24 enemy packed levels to save the Earth and get home.

A multitude of bizarre polygon baddies stand in his way, making use of new morphing techniques to transform into seemingly innocent objects until Harry's right on top of them. The aim of the programmers is to create a game where the player is in constant peril. Unlike, say, Crash where you could hang around for ages to get your bearings, Pitfall 3D won't let you stand still for a second. With such a legendary video game heritage behind it, and a solid 3-D engine, this should be well worth looking out for.

Release Date: Q4 '97

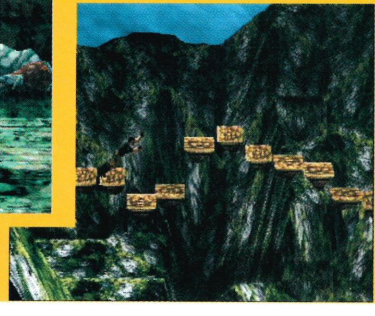


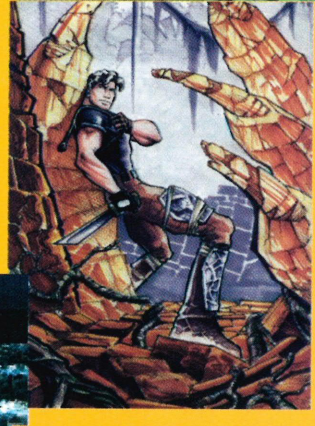
One feature present in the early version we played was the 3-D vine swinging. Rather than just swinging left to right, you can adjust Harry's direction mid-swing allowing you to swing into and out of the screen to find secret areas. There are plans to use this neat trick to greater effect in the finished game, so look forward to a motion-sickness inducing swing-fest



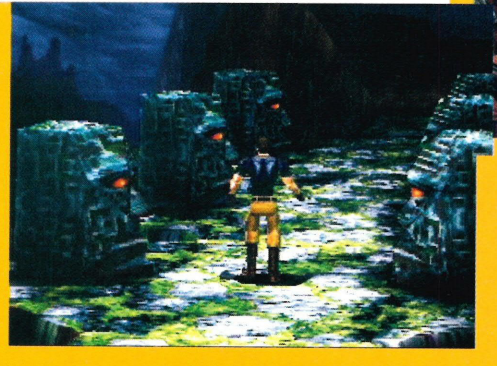


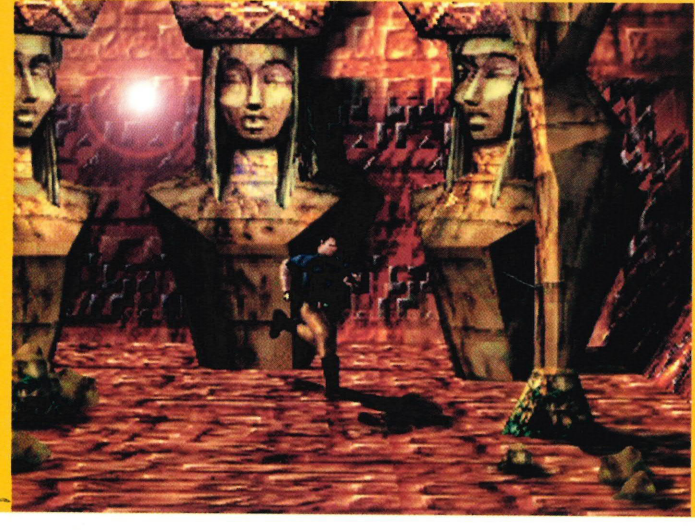






The morphing monsters of Pitfall 3D are likely to raise a few eyebrows, and not just because of their morphing tricks. Creature design for the game has been aided by one of the conceptual artists working on the new Star Wars movies. Not the re-issued originals, but the all-new opening trilogy. So if Harry bears any resemblance to a teenage Luke Skywalker, you'll know why





Pitfall 3D's producer was very excited about a new programming feat he called inverse kinematics. But then he is from California. What this seems to mean is that rather than Harry affecting objects, objects can affect Harry. For instance, a man trap can snare his leg and thrash him about from side to side. Or a monster can pick him up and hurl him onto the ground. Whatever they call it, it means that the baddies are going to be mean and merciless

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Level Codes:
Die Hard Trilogy

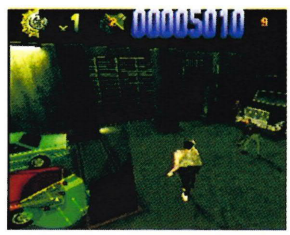
As this three-way action romp is still riding high in the charts, we thought you lot out there might appreciate some fancy level passwords and handfuls of cheat codes to enhance your performance. Read the list carefully, select what you wanna do or where you want to go within the game and get ready to rock! Yippie-Kai-Ai indeed, muddy funsters!

➡ = Right Arrow
⬅ = Left Arrow
⬇ = Down Arrow
⬆ = Right Arrow
X = X Button
● = Circle
□ = Square
▲ = Triangle

Right, to activate any of the following cheat codes, simply pause the game, hold the R2 button and then enter the codes via the following button gymnastics. When you've entered the cheat, the game should unpause itself.

DIE HARD

➡ ⬆ ⬇ □ = God mode
➡ □ ⬇ ● = 50 grenades and 5 new bullets
⬇ ● ⬅ □ ⬆ □ ⬅ = Unknown
➡ □ □ ⬇ = Fat mode
⬇ □ ▲ ⬇ = Villains float up
➡ □ ▲ ➡ = Forward is now backward and vic versa
● ● □ □ ➡ = Unknown
⬅ ● ⬇ □ = Co-ordinates (?)
10 ▲'s 4 ➡'s = Skeleton mode
⬇ ● ● ⬇ ▲ ⬇ = Silly mode
⬇ □ □ ➡ = 15 Bullets
➡ ⬆ ⬇ ⬇ □ ➡ = Unlimited shotgun bullets



DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE

➡ ⬆ ⬇ □ = Unknown
⬅ ▲ ➡ ⬇ = Fat mode
⬇ ● ⬇ ● = Unknown
● ⬇ ⬇ ▲ X □ = Fergus mode
➡ □ ⬅ ▲ X □ ⬇ = Car floats
⬇ ⬆ ⬅ ⬅ ⬇ ⬆ ⬅ ⬅ ⬇ ⬆ ⬅ ⬅ = Flat mode
⬅ ⬆ ⬅ ⬅ □ ⬇ = Slow motion
⬅ □ ▲ ⬇ □ ➡ = Unknown
● ➡ ⬇ □ ▲ ⬅ = Sky cam
➡ ● ⬅ ⬅ □ ⬇ = Unknown
● ⬇ ⬇ □ ➡ = Very slow motion
● ● □ □ ⬇ ⬇ X X = 999 turbos
⬇ □ ▲ ➡ ⬇ □ ▲ ➡ = Eh?
➡ □ ▲ ⬇ X X X = Unknown
⬅ ● ⬆ ⬇ □ ➡ = Infinite lives

DIE HARDER

➡ ⬆ ⬇ □ = Map editor (select this option for God mode)
⬇ ▲ ➡ □ = Unknown
⬅ ▲ ➡ ⬇ = Unknown
⬇ □ ▲ ⬇ = Skeleton mode
➡ □ ⬅ ● ▲ ⬇ = Ammo
● ⬇ ⬇ □ X □ = Fergus mode (everyone looks alike)





LEVEL CODES:

Now for the level passwords. You must enter these codes to the very last digit, even if it's prefilled. Failure to do so will mean the codes won't work. Once you've entered them, press the X button and if done correctly, it should say "OFFICIAL GAME CODE" at the top of the screen. Once it does, hit the triangle button to start.

Note: $ = Means leave a blank

DIE HARD

Level 2: Reception

ZN1!6HTWZJ!HF
GK5N5W7CX7JZR
V!CYHPZRV!CXH
KZRV!CYHPZRVJ



Level 3: Construction

T41X$3$4TD1DP
5B9W974MM6DT7
4XMLG9T74XMMG
FT74XMLG9T74J



Level 4: Office

Q$1WSX3WQK!CD
!6FSS!M1FFPQ2
SC1D5JQ2SC1F5
NQ2SC1D5JQ2$



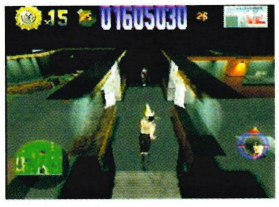
Level 5: Maintenance 2

Y41!ZDT3YJMZZ
Y!BPYY6MW7DY7
NZMVH9Y7NZMWH
FY7NZMVH9Y7NJ



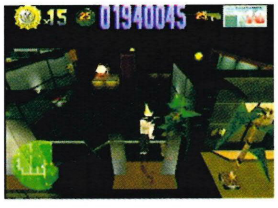
Level 6: Computers 1

F8279HY3FLM6X
15K1!TGNWWHF9
P6NVMBF9P6NWM
GF9P6NVMBF9P$



Level 7: Executive 1

74225VHK7WVMW
H7GRVLCLH1X74
XMLG9T74XMLH9
Y74XMLG9T74XJ



Level 8: Construction 2

TN1ZN9JCSJ$XL
7X5R9N4WL68TR
6XWMGFTR6XWLG
9TR6XWMGFTR6J



Level 9: Office 2

H425H75XGGVRV
BXK479!L!3XH5
XRLZCTH5XRL!C
YH5XRLZCTH5XJ



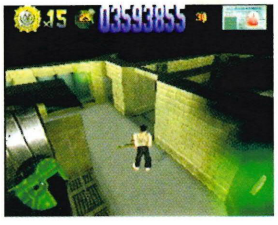
Level 10: Ballroom

3D231ZZ!23CK!
8BS$QV9Q7JZ3D
FKQ6SW3DFKQ7S
!3DFKQ6SW3DFJ



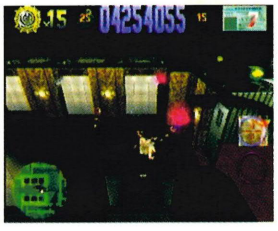
Level 11: Maintenance 2

W82GN88TVSCFX
WCM79Q5PRZ!WC
FFPQQVWCFFPRQ
ZWCFFPQQVWCF$



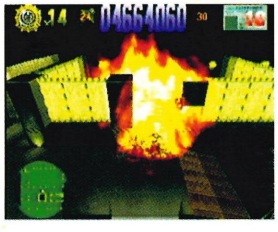
Level 12: Office 3

942RCHX88Z14N
RL3WL4XLM2D95
4NLLB9954NLMB
F954NLLB9954J



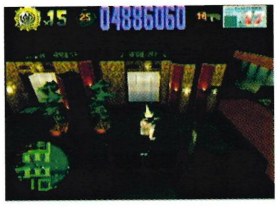
Level 13: Construction 3

TJ2HGH$DSD1DP
Z$VN45NTLG9TM
6DTM6DTM6DTL6
8TM6DTM6DTM6$



Level 14: Vault

DX22HW5SGZPQ7
$Z5NGQZGSM2DY
MQGTW7DYMQGSW
3DYMQGTW7DYMJ



Level 15: Computers 2

BX21PND98VGP$
4ZB1QDYGNLLBY
CPGPVRBYCPGNV
MBYCPGPVRBYCJ



Level 16: Executive 2

XJ2BXT9SZXPG5
DJ6S$Z69SH1XM
LG9T74XMLG9S7
$XMLG9T74XML$



Level 17: Office 4

RS2GX9C5P9SCJ
S3X65LMYGYWRV
!CYHPZRV!CYGP
VRV!CYHPZRV!$



Level 18: Maintenance 3

FS237Z5NHGKQR
871JV7ZXVWCFT
R6XWMGFTR6XVM
BFTR6XWMGFTR$



Level 19: Computers 3

B42$RJ498VGPC

Level Codes: Die Hard Trilogy

7S8DVXY2P2NB5
8P2NBKB58P2PB
PB58P2NBKB58J



DIE HARDER

Level 2: New Wing

14$JJ2JB144JL
289144JB$$F1$
4JLKT3GS9$L38
F144JL289144J



Level 3: Tunnel

SS$XHKG5SW3DF
KQ6SW3F!QQ1SM
3DDQRNCCVDFJQ
2SW3DFKQ6SW3$



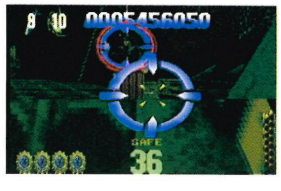
Level 4: Runway

F416QVMBF5NQL
VC9F5NNSLCHF9
NQM1W6TDP6LWC
FF5NQLVC9F5NJ



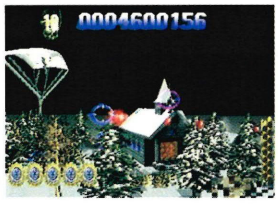
Level 5: Plane Interior

N$$V38Y3N2JB1
85$N2J955Y1NL
JB$1L4Q7TV195
4N2JB185$N2J$



Level 6: Church

8N$N8KL68P2NB
KB58P2RQ!L581
2NB698681NBJB
18P2NBKB58P2J



Level 7: Snowmobile Chase

8D142J2$8F1N6
JV38F1JJ3B$8P
1N7BGCBSV46KV
78F1N6JV38F1J



Level 8: Plane Intercept

N$1B58Y3N2JB1
85$N2JHHXP2NZ
JB$76LXXNV195
4N2JB185$N2J$



DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE

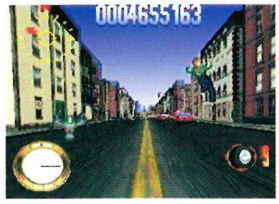
Central Park 1:

XJ1GFT!7XMLG9
T74XMLD3K72X!
LG82RC8VMZKSH
HXWQZWM7GVHSJ



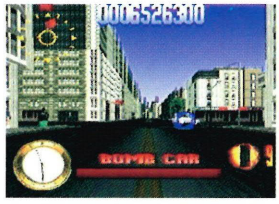
Chinatown 1:

T81XMLG9TC5DP
LQBTC5G!VQDT7
5DN965F24Y7QQ
7TW1X6CK5JV6J



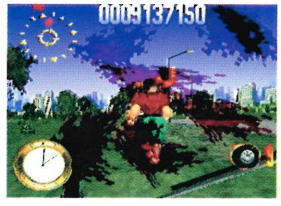
Downtown 1:

ZS1!CYHPZWWHF
YRQZWWF7PRJZR
WHD67TBLVY7QR
TZ3!!!BK!$2BJ



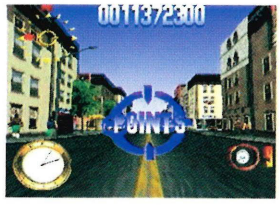
Central Park 2:

KS28P3DFKV78Y
3NGKV7BRCN8KQ
78XS415M6VCC4
$K63SGSJDFD2J



Chinatown 2:

Z41!5XRLZ7S!3
XHKZ7SY9NHRZC
S!27!ZBGTD7LR
J!7XHK!CVWFG$



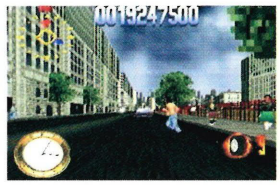
Urban 2:

!81!MZHT!CYHP
ZRV!CYF!QRX!7
YHN57PC2XX9MH
TZ3T!7VPFC4H$



Downtown 2:

5422VBKB54NLL
B9954NJS29H58
NLMKT6KFP6VT1
C48J2198NRN6J



Aquaduct 1:

S82DFJG1SC1D5
JQ2SC1GHSQ4S7
1D4C6FD2SM6
7TW5XQ4QGC62$



Wharf:

7N23LHKZ7NZMV
H9Y7NZKJ79W7S
ZMWNTLMY!6ST9
T6$V38MH9T9RJ



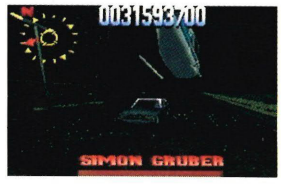
Aquaduct 2:

8J24$KV78K248
K248K262T228Y
249BLCXS3K66L
3996NV535LHKJ



Simon Gruber:

9N24LMLG9P6NV
MBF9P6QJWBC9T
6NW8V2YX72L82
C89248C9MQZN$



Cheat, Drink and Be Merry

Not much room for mini-cheats this month, thanks to Bruce Willis hogging the tips space with his die harding. So without further ado, here come the cheats, like crazy locusts swarming over a fertile crop of PlayStation corn

SUIKODEN

Become the richest Manga role player in the whole world with this cunning cheat. Once your character has collected 10,000 bits, go to the town called Rockland. There you will find a woman who will ask you to participate in a contest. Play the cup game and when asked how much to bet, bet the maximum of 10,000. To win, always pick the cup on the right. Do this over and over again until you're as rich as Noel Edmonds. And then buy a helicopter to fight the evil cake drug lords.

TEN PIN ALLEY

This teeth-grindingly pointless game has an 'amusing' insult mode. Although the biggest insult is playing the thing. It only works in team mode, when your opponent is making their approach. Press L1+L2+R1+R2 at the same time then any one of the buttons for the desired insult.

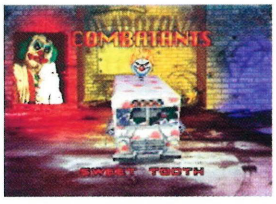
■ = Loser
● = Miss
▲ = Choke
X = You Suck

TWISTED METAL 2

There are loads of hidden features in this ker-azy driving shooty game, and no doubt this isn't a complete list. The secret two player level codes are courtesy of Jonathan Traynor, from Leicester, who believes himself to be the son of Heihachi from Tekken 2. Hope the pills make a difference, mate.

Minions weapon
During play press: ⬆ ⬇ ⬆ ⬆ + machine gun button. This will activate Minion's gun for any car. (Note: you must have full life for the gun to work)

Secret Tracks
Jet Rider: At two player track selection screen select: ⬆ ⬇ ➡ R1.
Rooftops: At two player track selection screen select: ⬆ ⬅ R1 ⬇.
Cyburbia: At two player track selection screen select: ⬇ ⬆ L1 R1.



Special Attacks
These attacks are pulled off by pressing the direction sequences while in the game. Do them fast enough and you won't affect your steering. The mine is especially handy to remember on levels with narrow streets.
⬅ ➡ ⬆ = Freeze Blast
➡ ⬅ ⬆ = Napalm
⬆ ⬆ ⬅ = Jump
⬆ ⬆ ➡ = Shield
⬅ ➡ ⬇ = Rear Attack
➡ ⬅ ⬇ = Mine Drop
➡ ⬇ ⬅ ⬆ = Cloaking Device

Trade Weapons For Health
To instantly trade your weapons in for health, during play press: ⬇ ⬆ ➡ ⬅ ⬆ ⬆ ⬇ ⬇

Level Codes
Moscow: ● ▲ X X ▲ Space
Paris: Space ▲ ■ ● ● X
Amazon: ● X ▲ ■ ▲ X
New York: ▲ ▲ X ▲ X X
Antarctica: ▲ X ▲ ● X ■
Holland: ▲ ■ ■ X ■ Space
Hong Kong: ● ▲ ● ■ ■ ▲

RELOADED

Pause the game, press and hold L1 + L2 for 10 seconds. With these buttons held, press ⬅ ▲ X ➡ ● ▲ ⬇. Pause the game. Press and hold L1 + L2 for 10 seconds. With these buttons held, press ⬇ ➡ ⬅ ▲ ➡ ⬇. Pause the game, press and hold L1 + L2 for 10 seconds. With these buttons held, press ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ● ▲ ⬇. You can now access the pause menu and refill your health and ammo or even skip the level entirely. Whoop! Whoop! I'm happy now!



CRUSADER: NO REMORSE

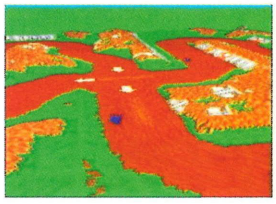
Level codes for this game? Right here, squire. They're for the easy levels, so hardnuts like Steve won't be impressed, but who cares? Not me!
FWQP
PLRQ
SZNF
TD5S
J1BT
K2CV
N3DW
M4FX
X5GZ
C6HO
D7J1
F8K2
FGL3
JFM4

SOVIET STRIKE

You've already had the level codes, as well as a guide to the location of some juicy goodies. To round off our more than generous help for this chopper chappie here's how you get infinite lives. Just type this code in as the password and you're ready to rock:
ELVISLIVES

STREET RACER

Enter these codes on the options screen, at the cup password feature:
TRAFIK: Silver Cup
NEJATI: Gold Cup
DOUGAL: Platinum Cup
TURGAY: Advanced



STAR GLADIATOR

To play in a weird floaty type weightless environment,

during the match load screen, press and hold ⬆.

GRID RUN

Not so much a cheat as a word of advice. Instead of avoiding your opponent and taking twice as long to collect the flags, try allowing yourself to be 'it' and chasing him down. Your opponent will stay near flags and after you tag him you'll have time to run around and collect a couple more.

JET RIDER

Stupidly hard as this game is, it's doubly irritating that the codes only work once you've won a full season at professional level. Once you've done that, a bubble will appear on the title screen that says 'Codes Enabled'.

Super Agility:
⬇ ● ⬅ L1 ⬅ ➡ ⬅ ➡

Zero Resistance:
□ L1 ▲ ➡ L1 ⬇ R2 ▲

Double Stunt Points:
➡ ⬆ ● L2 ▲ ● R1 R2

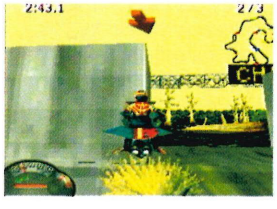
Show Off Camera Enabled:
▲ ⬇ □ ▲ L1 L1 R1 R1

Air Brakes:
R1 R2 ➡ L2 ⬆ ● ⬆

Rocket Racer:
▲ ⬆ ⬆ L2 L2 ⬆ ⬆ ⬆

Unlimited Turbos:
▲ ● ➡ R2 ⬆ □ ⬆ ▲

Ice Racing:
⬆ R2 R1 ➡ L1 □ ➡ ➡



SOUL BLADE

If you want to fight as Soul Edge, you must finish the game with all the players and you'll have him. Another extra character is available when you finish the Time Attack Mode twice, first with a normal weapon and the second with a special weapon.

SPACE JAM

At the title press ■ ▲ ● Left Right and L1 for unlimited power. And then nail your tongue to a door as punishment for buying this sack of pants.

WWF IN YOUR HOUSE

If, for some reason, you need two more characters in this dire beato thing, then here's the answer to yer prayers. At character select screen press ⬆ ⬇ R1 R2 L1 L2 and ⬅ within 15 seconds. Diesel and Razor Ramon will pop up and let you play with them.

WONG CHONG CHOP

And here's our token 'possibly fictional Japanese game cheat'. Not quite as good a title as Buttmonkey Mania, but Wong Chong Chop tickles our funny glands all the same. Apparently, to get in the warehouse, jump off the block and swim in the pool and go through the tunnel. There you will find three knives. Which is probably a huge help.

VICTORY BOXING

Extra boxers are on offer as a reward for succeeding in different classes. But did you know you can get more characters by defending your title? Well you can, and here's how.

OpenStyle: fight your way up to champ to obtain a JACK IN THE BOX bloke. Defend your title 5 times and get SNAKE.

Peek-A-Boo: fight your way up to champ to obtain KIKI & MIMI. Defend your title five times and get EDWARD KING your promoter.

SOUP OF THE DAY: LEGACY OF KAIN

It's big and bloody, and we gave you the cheat codes last issue. Staying alive is only half the challenge though, so here's a brief walkthrough direct from the game's creators. This should show you how to find and kill the first member of the Circle. After that, you should be confident enough to get stuck in yourself and sort the rest of the buggers out.

The first cave Kain finds on the journey from Ziegsturhl to Nachtholm is the Wolf Form Dungeon. Kain must pick up the Wolf Form Icon and use this form to jump over the spiked pits. The switch to unlock the first door is on the west side of the room. Once outside the cave use the wolf form to jump up onto higher ledges and across water and enter the cave to the north. In this cave the locked door is opened after activating the second floor switches, one on each side of the first room. Enter the teleporter and exit the wolf cave.

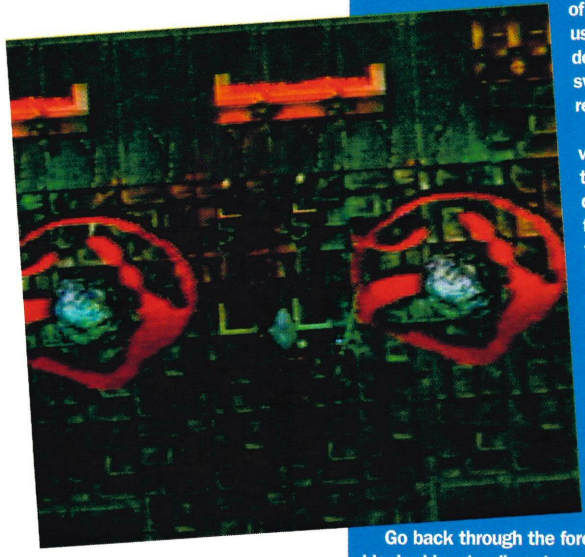
The Energy Bolt Dungeon is in the large crypt between the Wolf Form dungeon and Nachtholm. Once in the dungeon, take the right passageway to find the Energy Bolt Icon and use this spell to destroy the Red Liches throughout the level. Use the Energy Bolt spell to activate switches across spikes. In the room with three switches activate the outer two with the energy bolt spell to open the locked door to the south. One more wall switch in the next room and then exit the dungeon.

The Blood Fountain cave for increased strength is west and north of the Energy Bolt Dungeon on the way to Nachtholm. Kain must use wolf form to jump onto a higher platform on the west side of the path. This fountain will allow Kain to push small rocks.

To reach Nupraptor's Retreat, head south from the western point of Vasserbunde and Kain will find a locked gate. To unlock the gate, go into the house east of the gate and activate the switch found there. North from the gate is the cave entrance to Nupraptors Retreat. The Wolf form is useful in the beginning to jump over brown water and avoid fireballs.

Hit red lit switches to extend bridges across brown water. The first locked door will be activated by pulling the two outer switches of the group of three pull switches in the room east and north of the locked door. The other locked doors will be opened by switches on walls or use the Energy Bolt spell to hit switches over spikes. Once Kain reaches the room with the big brain on the floor there are four puzzle rooms to active the door at the top of the room.

In the upper left room, touch all statues to activate switches. In the upper right room, run past or kill all the zombies. In the lower left room, hit floor switches to trigger bridges and use wolf form to jump over spikes. In the lower right room, hit the switch on the wall in the painting, then follow the lit path activating hidden switches at the end of each path to get to the teleporter. Do not use the Light Spell in this room. Take the top door in the brain room and continue hitting switches and entering teleporters until reaching Nupraptor's chamber.



To defeat Nupraptor, move Kain vertically across the chamber walking through the pink spheres of magic as they disappear. Hit Nupraptor with the sword four times as he transports himself from the top of the chamber to the bottom of the chamber. Nupraptor will then appear in the centre of the room.

Wait until the skulls spinning around him stop moving and shoot outwards, then move Kain close enough to hit Nupraptor, then move away. Repeat this last step and pick up Nupraptors head. Kain will receive the Spiked Mace after beating Nupraptor. Use this to smash through the standing stones that block your path.

Go back through the forests and smash open the areas previously blocked by standing stones. That should have got you started into the game. If you get stuck anywhere after this, then write in and we'll consider doing a full guide.

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RE LOADED	**29.99**
Road Rash	34.99
SCORCHER	**29.99**
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SEGA RALLY	**29.99**
Shell Shock	32.99
SHINING WISDOM	**29.99**
Shockwave Assault	34.99
SKELETON WARRIORS	**34.99**
SLAM N JAM '96	**32.99**
SONIC 3D FLICKIES ISLAND	**34.99**
SPACE HULK VTOBA	**34.99**
SPACE JAM	**34.99**
SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD	**26.99**
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Tunnel B1	33.99
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ULTIMATE MORTAL KOMBAT 3	**29.99**
VIRTUA COP 2	**38.99**
VIRTUA COP 2 + GUN	**52.99**
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2	**29.99**
Virtual Golf	37.99
Virtual Open Tennis	33.99
Wild Animalympics	27.99
World Cup Golf	29.99
World Series Baseball	29.99
WWF In Your House	34.99
X2 PROJECT	**33.99**
X-Men Children Of The Atom	37.99
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Eclipse Pad SV461	18.99
Super Pad SV460	9.99
Logic 3 Explorer Pad JT482	9.99
LOGIC 3 PREDATOR GUN	**27.99**
Logic 3 Terminator Pad JT483	10.99
Logic 3 Voyager Pad JT481	11.99
MEMORY CARD 1 MEG	**14.99**
Multiplayer Adaptor	28.99
QUANTUM PAD	**12.99**
Sega Control Pad	17.99

You can place an advance order for future releases - credit cards are not charged until day of despatch so reserve your copy today

'Your definitive Tomb R

Put more competi



Dear PlayStation Pro
Yes, I buy your mag (I wouldn't be writing in if I didn't) and yes, it is bloody good. This letter, which will probably be the first and last I ever write to any mag, concerns your February issue: Number four. With joy, I saw Destruction Derby 2 headlining the booklet of unpublished cheats. I immediately grabbed the said mag and tossed the cash at the checkout girl, jumped in my car (well limped, bad leg, you see) and tear-arsed it home, slapped in my DD2 and booted in the cheats, nothing, absolutely bugger all happened. No invulnerability or extra track. I expect the said cheats were for the first DD which I, sadly, no longer own?

Please help me access the tracks in DD2 before my thumbs are stubs and the wife's left me with the damn dog! PS. The F1 tips worked (great!).
Marcus, Blackpool

PRO *The DD2 mix-up occurred when we had to finish the cover of the booklet before the contents were completed. At the time, we were confident we'd have some tips for it but the deadline came and went and we couldn't get hold of any in time. Hopefully you'll have bought last month's issue by now with every hint, tip, cheat and trick you'll ever need for Destruction Derby 2. If you missed it, write in and we'll send you one through the post.*

Dear PlayStation Pro
First I would like to say that your magazine is the only one I buy from the vast choice of PlayStation mags available in Australia. I only have one question for you: Do you know if there is a cricket game out, or in production, and if so, can you tell me when it comes out?

I buy my games from England, because they are cheaper than buying them here, so I was wondering whether you could reply to my letter as soon as possible? Thanks guys.
Brett Kleemann, South Australia

PRO *As far as we're aware, Brett, the only PlayStation cricket game currently in production is Ian Botham Cricket from Electronic Arts, but it's way off completion at the time of writing. We're hoping Codemasters will turn its hand to one as Brian Lara was a fine game on the SNES and that Rage might develop one as it's the team behind the superb Striker 96 and Jonah Lomu Rugby – both on PlayStation, the latter coincidentally published by Codemasters.*

Dear PlayStation Pro
First of all, congratulations on the great mag, it's probably the best available and your definitive Tomb Raider guide is fantastic! I couldn't have completed the game without it. Now I need you to answer some questions:
1) Do you know of any cheats for FIFA 97 or Command & Conquer – the latter is driving me insane?
2) Will there be new peripherals, such as a modem, for network games playing on the PlayStation?
3) Is there any truth in the rumour that game prices are being lowered?
4) I have heard of a substance called Crystal Disc which can repair CDs that have been scratched. Do you know of any similar substance and if so, which would you recommend?
5) Is Datel's Action Replay worth the money and what kind of cheats can you create for newer titles such as Tomb Raider, Resident Evil, Formula 1, FIFA 97 and Command & Conquer?
6) I know it's possible to collect a Super Shotgun in Resident Evil but where exactly is the fifth zombie, how do you get the key from him and where do you use this key?
Thanks for reading my letter and keep up the good work!
David Murdoch, Clydebank

PRO *Last month's mag featured plenty of Command & Conquer cheats – as for FIFA 97, expect to see some for that next issue.*

As expected, Sony has made plans to release a modem, with the future possibility of Internet connection. The most obvious rewards for PlayStation owners who decide to switch over to the modem, is the opportunity to play games live over the modem in serial mode or even via the Net. No pricing on the hardware is confirmed, don't be surprised if it retails at anything less than £100. A number of innovative plans are currently afoot, one of which is of particular interest to us – to incorporate a master list of registered PlayStation owners that you can e-mail on the Net via your PlayStation. Other plans include the opportunity to design games and post them direct to Sony for possible rewards.

There's a company called OK Industries UK Ltd. Contact Linda Charmin at Unit 1, Barton Farm Industrial Estate, Chickenhall Lane Eastleigh, Hants, SO5 5RR. Tel 01703 650055,

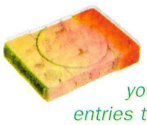
Raider guide's fantastic tions in your mag

fax 01703 643279. Try it out. Its new multi-purpose solution is a major advancement in disc care technology. Rather than attempt to remove scratches, ACL Staticide's Compact Disc Scratch Repair Kit #8062 actually resurfaces discs with each use. Discs are cleaned and polished and scratches are easily repaired in a simple one-step process! Its formula combines safe and effective cleaners with specially developed polymers. These polymers bond to a disc's surface, not only repairing the toughest scratches, but also form an optical clear protective shield that resists scratches. Regular use on discs (new and old) actually makes them more durable! Apparently.

Yes, game prices are being reduced. As reported in last month's mag, games that have been out for a year are going down to £19.99, whereas new games are set to retail at a bargain £34.99. Datel's Action Replay is worth the money as far as we're concerned. As for creating cheats in Tomb Raider, Resident Evil, Formula 1, FIFA 97 and Command & Conquer, it's entirely up to you.

The bazooka and magnum are the most powerful weapons in Resident Evil – there's no super shotgun. As for the fifth zombie, we're not entirely sure what you mean. Wesker gets killed by the Tyrant, you then need to kill the Tyrant before you can safely take the key from Wesker's corpse. He's the only person in the game holding a key.

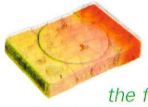
Dear PlayStation Pro
If I win first prize in the 'Conkers' competition, give me the Command & Conquer game instead because the trip is inaccessible to me.
Tommy Woolmington, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow



PRO *You may have stood a chance of winning Tommy, had you not cheekily sent in multiple entries to the competition. Multiple entries are not allowed, therefore yours are going straight into the bin. Let this be a lesson to you and all readers who think they can pull the wool over our eyes.*

Dear Alex Lee
Greetings o holy one master of the editorial world (sorry for sucking up, I know it stinks). Alex, I hope you will see this letter personally because I know you will know the feeling of always wanting to go to the next level. All I want is for you to send me all the details on the Yarouze PlayStation.

This is because I have been saving up for a PC, even though I have got a PlayStation, and I just want all the memory I can get my hands on. But with this new PlayStation I will not have to go against my sacred religious denomination, because of the disgusting graphics of the PC and will get all that I want in the ultimate all nation PlayStation. So all I ask is for you to send me all the gossip on the holy black Yarouze PlayStation.
R Barks, Blackpool



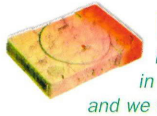
PRO *Just in case you, or anyone else, missed last month's news announcement, the price for the full Yarouze development kit is £549 plus postage and packing. The number to call at Net Yarouze Registrations is 0171 447 1616, the information line is 07000 927693. Yarouze was released over here on 28 February.*

Dear PlayStation Pro
I have recently heard that a sequel to the excellent Resident Evil is coming out soon. If so, could you please send me some information on it. And I just want to say that your Tomb Raider and Crash Bandicoot guides were excellent.
K Rose, Huddersfield



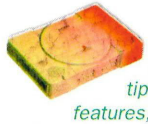
PRO *We can't reply to individual letters K, as we'd never get round to doing the mag. Keep on buying PlayStation Pro however, and you'll find everything you'll ever need to know about Resident Evil 2, to be published this summer by Virgin over here.*

Dear PlayStation Pro
I read Allison Mensforth's letter and I, like her, am stuck on Discworld. So I am begging you to help me in the same way as you did Allison. I will gladly pay for the back issues and I hope that I would also get the Discworld II solution book. So please help me complete Discworld for, although I love it, it is driving me crazy.
Simon James, Exeter



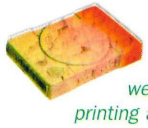
PRO *You've got a cheek, haven't you? When Allison wrote in it was coming up to Christmas and we were all feeling charitable. It's chucking it down with rain now and the office is freezing so don't expect anything from us, sonny. No seriously, send a SAE and we'll send you a photocopy of the guide. We don't have another solution to give away, nor do we have any spare back issues.*

Dear PlayStation Pro and gang
I think that a new way to improve your magazine is to put more competitions in it so people buy more of your magazines to win prizes. The people that write letters to you and your gang should receive prizes. I have bought every single magazine of yours and I have entered competitions to win PlayStation games. I usually spend all my money on buying magazines instead of buying games. Can you please send me a couple of games? Thank you.
Sukhminder, Queensland, Australia



PRO *Our mag is packed so full of reviews, guides, hints, tips, cheats, previews, news and features, that it's a struggle to squeeze more competitions in. As for sending you a couple of games – no chance.*

Dear Alex Lee, Editor
As a rule I don't buy PlayStation mags because there are so many and they are quite expensive, but if a mag advertises on the cover a game we have I do buy them. I was very impressed with the Crash Bandicoot guide. Then I read in the preview section of next month's issue you have the guide to Pandemonium. But guess what, I got the issue and no Pandemonium guide. Why?
Mrs D Harrison, Peterborough



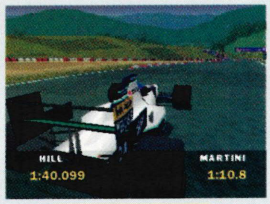
PRO *Pandemonium didn't chart as highly as we expected, so we didn't think it would be worth printing a guide to a game that didn't sell so well. It has since sold a lot more in bundle deals, so we may print the guide in the future. In other cases, we simply don't have time or room*

PLAYSTATION PRO

RECOMMENDS

At the end of the day you only buy magazines so you don't waste money on one of the many sub-standard games already available on the PlayStation. And this is the part of PlayStation Pro that's guaranteed to steer you in the right direction. Every game available in every genre has been assessed and placed in rank order so you know exactly what's the best example of each game style

RACING



1 F1 APPROVED

Comes out just about on top of a very tough category. As realistic as they come, this is as close as most of us will get to a Formula One car without having our personalities surgically removed first.



2 wipEout2097

Fast enough to satisfy the speed junkies and colourful enough to please the acid casualties. It's more sexy than the original in every aspect – especially speed. Fun, fast, frantic and full of space cadets.



3 Motor Toon Grand Prix 2

Much more bizarre than many race games, this official Sony release is unmatched in the sheer exhilaration stakes. Outrageous courses and a cast of comedy characters make this a winner in anyone's book.

4 wipEout

Futuristic race game with the difficulty level turned right up to maximum. Fantastic graphics, speed and soundtrack plus an amazing feeling of satisfaction when you succeed, make the effort well worthwhile. One of the best early PlayStation releases – a must buy now it's been reduced.

5 Burning Road

This surprise offering from Funsoft shocked everyone by being (marginally) better than the much-hyped Ridge Racer. It moves as fast as most of its competitors, looks a treat and even has an air freshener that swings about realistically.

Also recommended

Destruction Derby
Ridge Racer Revolution
Need For Speed
Ridge Racer
Monster Trucks
Andretti
Destruction Derby 2

SHOOT'EM-UP



1 Alien Trilogy APPROVED

Acclaim managed to out-Doom Doom and released Alien Trilogy to thunderous praise from just about every magazine around. One of the eeriest, most atmospheric games you'll ever play, and top of the sizeable shoot'em-up pile by quite some distance.



2 Doom

Still an all-time classic game, despite the somewhat dated graphics engine having been surpassed by other companies. As far as level construction and excitement go, it's still difficult to come close to beating iD's effort.

3 Shellshock

Core's stylish tank-based shoot'em-up scored well on just about all counts. Utilising the same superb game engine as the almost equally impressive Thunderhawk 2, Shellshock provides a long lasting and varied challenge.

4 Krazy Ivan

There's far more to this than cheesy FMV sequences. Krazy Ivan is an office favourite and out of the early batch of releases this one probably still gets more play than any of the others.



5 MechWarrior 2

A simplistic-looking outdoor 3-D shoot'em-up that is actually far more involved than you'd believe possible, MechWarrior 2 is the first real rival to Krazy Ivan. Not the most instant game, but one you'll come back to again and again.

Also recommended

Soviet Strike
Descent
Final Doom
Disruptor
Dark Forces
Black Dawn
Agile Warrior

BEAT'EM-UP



1 Tekken 2 APPROVED

A bit predictable, admittedly, but there's no denying this game's addictive qualities, amazing graphics and just about perfect gameplay. The acid test is to get someone who hates fighting games, get them to play this for a bit and watch them be converted.



2 Star Gladiator

Quirky characters, awesome background scenery, amazing special moves and some of the most complex combo configurations known to man. It should send excitement shivers down the spines of all who play it.

3 Tekken

Namco's domination of this market is almost total, and you have to wonder, when you've got one of the Tekken games, why bother with anything else?

4 Mortal Kombat III

If we had a goriest beat'em-up category this would head the list. A more traditional style of game with some distinctly untraditional special moves. Tearing heads off with your bare hands isn't uncommon in MKIII, so don't say you weren't warned!



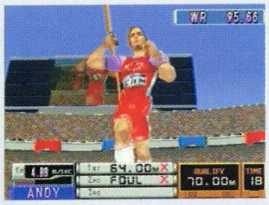
5 Battle Arena Toshinden 2

The pretender to the crown is basically a poor man's version of Tekken. Very similar to play, all Toshinden is lacking is a bit of spit and polish on the gameplay front. It's still great fun, however, although not quite the best in its genre.

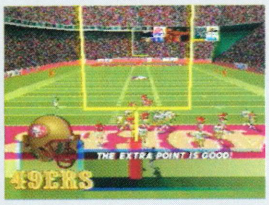
Also recommended

Zero Divide
Street Fighter Alpha
Rise 2: Resurrection
Criticom
Primal Rage
JVC Victory Boxing
Darkstalkers
WWF Wrestlemania
Street Fighter Alpha 2

SPORTS



1 International Track & Field
APPROVED
Possibly the most essential purchase to be released on the PlayStation so far. Fantastic multi-player fun, especially with the multi-tap, and an intriguing challenge for the solo player as you go all out for record times and distances.



2 Madden NFL '97
Without a doubt the best American Football game ever, on any gaming system. Stat levels are high but don't intrude on the excellent action that the game offers. Play it either seriously for a full season or just for a laugh in an exhibition game.

3 Olympic Soccer
It may not have the flashy motion capture of say, Actua Soccer, but US Gold's Olympic licence is certainly the easiest footy game to play and get to grips with. In no time at all you'll be scoring goals just like the pros.

4 NFL Gameday
Runs Madden NFL '97 a close second, and really shouldn't be discounted if you're looking to buy a game of this type. There's just about everything you could want in there and it's only second best due to poor presentation.



5 Smash Court Tennis
Judging by the screenshot above, you'd probably think this entry was a mistake. But no, although in looks it's more a 16bitter than a 32er, in sets it wins 6-0, 6-0, 6-0 every time. Particularly good fun in four player mode.

Also recommended
NHL Faceoff
NBA Jam Extreme
Total NBA '96
NHL '97
NBA Live '97
Actua Soccer

STRATEGY



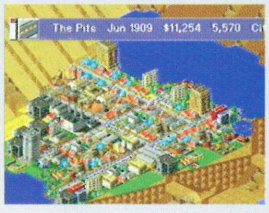
1 Worms APPROVED
Does wonders for the reputation of this much maligned genre by proving that strategy games can be fun. Guide your team of hermaphrodites to ultimate victory using missiles, grenades and land mines!

2= X-COM: Terror from the Deep
One of the best video game sequels ever sees you battling with an underwater alien invasion. The most involved challenge yet from the king of strategy, MicroProse.

2= Command & Conquer
In Steve's opinion, it's probably the best all-round PlayStation game so far. It offers frantic action, mind bending strategy and incredible value for money. It should be bought, played and cherished by everyone who loves a good game.



4 X-COM
This perfect conversion of the popular PC smash hit caught the imagination of PlayStation owners not through its next generation looks, but through its compelling storyline and thoughtful yet tense and exciting brand of action. Like its sequel, it needs a PlayStation mouse for bitch-slapping the alien forces.



5 Sim City 2000
It would be nice to see an original PlayStation strategy game, because so far all the best ones have been conversions from other formats. This is another, and once again it proves that this type of thing can not only be produced on the PC, but on the PlayStation too.

Also recommended
Theme Park
AIV Evolution Global
Panzer General
Space Hulk

ADVENTURE



1 Resident Evil
APPROVED
If an all-out gore fest is your type of thing, look no further than Capcom's incredible Resident Evil for your regular fix of zombie mayhem and puzzle solving. A genuinely enthralling adventure that you'll come back to time and again.

2 Tomb Raider
This tests both the PlayStation and the player to the limit. It's big, bold, scary and taxing. An all-round winner, from the graphics to the gameplay to the sound and back again.

3 Broken Sword
Adventure fans will absolutely cream over this. It's got just about everything you could ever want from a game of thie type in plentiful amounts. Superb graphics, excellent soundtrack, plenty of humour and a great script.

4 Fade to Black
The only fault any of us could find with Electronic Arts' French developed adventure was that it's possibly too hard for some inexperienced players. If you're man enough to see it through, the rewards are well worthwhile.

5 Alone in the Dark: Jack is Back
In the mould of Resident Evil, but this isn't as good because it's a conversion of a PC game and doesn't make use of the PlayStation's technology as well as it should. A few niggles aside, it's got one of the best storylines around.

Also recommended
D
Cyberia
Myst
Time Commando
Discworld

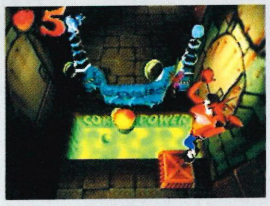
FLIGHT SIM

1 Gunship APPROVED
MicroProse rightfully leads the field with this helicopter-based flight sim/strategy affair. Not the best-looking game on the PlayStation, but one of the most gripping and difficult.

2 Thunderhawk 2
Not technically as good as Gunship, but it's a little more exciting due to the all-out blasting action.

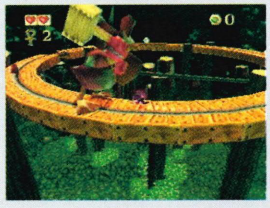
Also recommended
Top Gun
Air Combat
Warhawk

PLATFORM



1 Crash Bandicoot
APPROVED
Each level requires thought, skill and plenty of patience, whereas the main bulk of levels swing wildly from one viewpoint to another throwing overhead, first-person, side-on and other crazy angles into your face stunning you into submission.

2 Pandemonium
Perfect for platform fans who have seen everything else that's on offer and a game that will keep most players interested for at least a few weeks. Pandemonium is quite simply one of the best platform games of all time.



3 Rayman
With the exception of this game, the standard of platformers is poor at the moment. Plenty of people are busy trying to put this to rights, but for now UbiSoft's classic will fill the gap nicely.

4 Jumping Flash 2
Great fun to play, but still a little too easy and not all that much of an improvement over the original, really. Easily wins the award for most bizarre platform game, but doesn't really offer the experienced player a great deal more than they've already seen.

Also recommended
Johnny Bazookatone
Mickey Mania
Jumping Flash
Earthworm Jim
Floating Runner
Gex

PUZZLE

3D Lemmings
There aren't all that many puzzlers around, so although this isn't great, it's still the best option for fans of more cerebral pursuits. It's testing enough, not only because of the puzzles, but because it's true 3D, and moving around can be confusing

Also recommended
Bust A Move 2
Chessmaster 3D
Hebereke Poppoitto

MISCELLANEOUS



1 Die Hard Trilogy
APPROVED
It doesn't do Fox Interactive's debut justice to stick it here with the pinball games, but it genuinely doesn't fit into any one category. A perfect blend of shooting (both Virtua Cop and Fade to Black styles) and driving make this a brilliant game all round!

2 Pro Pinball
The best of the pinball offerings so far. Empire's effort can be justifiably criticised for only having one table, but when it looks as good as this, and is packed with so many features, it can be just about forgiven.

Also recommended
True Pinball
Time Shock

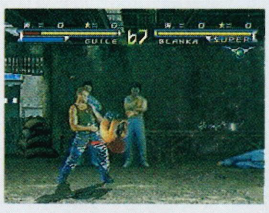
RETRO



2 Namco Museum Volume 1
APPROVED
The better of the two Namco offerings so far, this one features some real classic arcade games. This retro stuff isn't to everyone's taste, but it does bring back some very happy memories for anyone old enough to remember these halcyon days of gaming.

Also recommended
Williams Arcade Greatest
Namco Museum Volume 2

GAMES TO AVOID



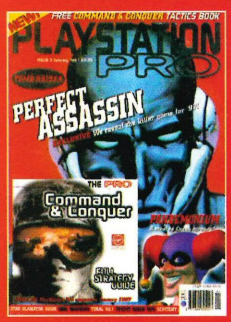
Aquanaut's Holiday
Extreme Pinball
Street Fighter: The Movie
Lone Soldier
Galaxian 3
Cyberspeed
Novastorm
Off World Interceptor
In the Hunt
Any import you haven't seen reviewed in PlayStation Pro

Back Issues...

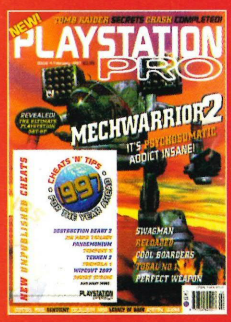
Misplaced one of your old issues of the mag? Lent a copy to your mate and he won't give it back? Mmm, it's a familiar tale, but thankfully help is at hand. For just £3.00 per issue you can obtain a brand spanking new one almost immediately. Perhaps you've only just joined our ever-growing army of PlayStation Pros and fancy beefing up your mag collection so you've got the full set? If that's the case, go ahead and take advantage of this incredible offer! The mags are limited in numbers, so it's a first-come first-served basis and, unfortunately, issues one and two are sold out. So to avoid missing out, send off the form below straight away. Here's what's on offer...



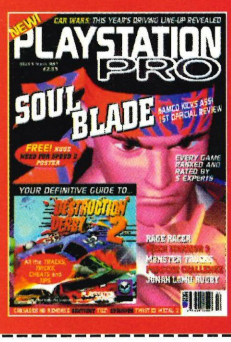
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The Need For Speed 2

The driving flavour continues as we put Electronic Arts' split-screen tyre squealer under the review microscope

Porsche Challenge

No, really. Honest. A full review of Sony's sports car bonanza will be here for you next month. We promise

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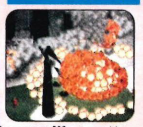
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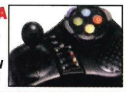

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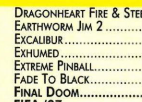

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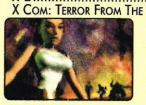
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