Making Every Videogamer An Insider

SILICON

MAGAZINE

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TAKE ONE

May 2000 • Episode 21



Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX

Target Acquired: Codename Dreamcast

Legend of the Blade Masters

An Epic Begins

Nightmare Creatures 2

Pray for daylight

Evolution 2

Randomized dungeons? Nope

Polaris Snocross

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•SILICON MAGAZINE

21 of 100,000 • 5.00

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Silicon Magazine is printed by Western Press on a high gloss 45#.

EleMental uses the following products to design •SM:

Software:
Quark Xpress 4.1, Adobe Photoshop 4.01, Microsoft Office 98 Gold Edition, Apple Works 5.03, Eudora Pro 4.22, Netscape Navigator 4.7, Norton Utilities 4.03, Norton Antivirus 5.03, Adaptec Toast 3.57, Mac OS 8.5.1

Hardware:
Apple Power Macintosh 8600/300, Apple Studio Display 17, Tektronix Phaser 740N, Smart and Friendly 426 CD Rewritable, Iomega 100 MB Zip, Epson Expression 636 flatbed scanner, Nikon Coolscan II film scanner, Asante Friendlynet Ethernet Hubs

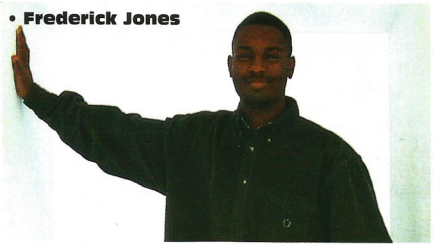
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Accessing: the state of the game

And G.O.D. said, "Let there be games"

In an effort to dig a little deeper into the games industry, SM will be conducting an ongoing series of interviews with the people behind the games. Our first interview is with Frederick Jones, head of console marketing at Gathering Of Developers (G.O.D.). Until recently G.O.D. had been a PC publisher, but they are expanding their horizons and making a very serious commitment to the console gaming market starting with Dreamcast.



• Frederick Jones

***•SM-** G.O.D. formed in 1998 to help independent game developers get a fair a shake in the Video Game market. Do you feel it has been a success?*

Absolutely! We have been excited to see our games receive critical praise from both the industry and from our fans. Being new to the company I can say that I am constantly amazed at how our product mix succeeds despite being so diverse and original. In an industry where established brands and genres command so much attention, the Gathering has been very successful at introducing new ideas to the marketplace. On one hand you have a title like Railroad Tycoon 2, a railroad simulation-based game and on the other you have something like KISS Psycho Circus: the Nightmare Child, a hardcore action first person shooter. Both are great examples of the quality of G.O.D. games. If you look at Railroad Tycoon 2, here is a strategy title that through excellent design and very addictive gameplay, the PC version has done exceptionally well at retail and is going to be enhanced tremendously with all new 3D graphics as our launch console title. And like all of our games it will support Internet play right out of the box. For console this year, we have an additional hot title called 4x4 Evolution which is also coming to Dreamcast.

***•SM-** Does G.O.D. have any plans to expand into the handheld market? KISS for GBC?*

I can assure you that we are committed to bringing both original and existing G.O.D. content to all viable hardware platforms. I mean, we are all gamers here and you can bet that we are interested in playing our games on all formats. We are seriously investigating the handheld market. I'm not sure where the KISS Game Boy rumor started, but that is interesting. (Smiles.)

***•SM-** G.O.D.'s Mardi Gras party has reached legendary status! Can we expect you guys to top yourselves at E3?*

Definitely! We are some crazy guys here at the Gathering. We're all gamers and love to have fun so expect our booth to reflect that. If I told you anymore I would have to kill you. (Laughs.) I can also promise that we will have some incredible games on display there- both for PC and our new efforts directed at the Console market.

***•SM-** With the power of Rock Gods KISS and the genius of Todd McFarlane behind KISS Psycho Circus, it seems destined to be a hit. What can we expect from the Dreamcast version of this game?*

That's right, we do expect KISS Psycho Circus to be a great success. Third Law is creating the game and it's being ported to DC by Tremor Entertainment. We are very excited over the type of game we are crafting for the console. This is not a "port" as are traditionally created; instead this version is being re-created literally with a new engine. Expect KISS to take advantage of several unique Dreamcast-only features. I think gamers expecting a standard FPS will be pleasantly surprised as we have so many amazing looking environments and enemy characters. Our villains are really out there. The enemy character "The Strongman" can pound the ground and unleash a shockwave ripple at you while the ghastly "Ballbuster" will throw your attacks back at you. KPC also uses a sophisticated AI path that allows wild variations in character actions and personalities. Enemies will attack each other and gang up on you. Over 30 enemies can attack at one time. Oh, and did I mention Net play?

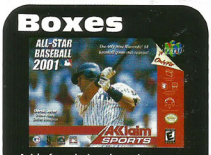
KISS Psycho Circus will support multiple players and is on track to be the 1st FPS to do that for the Dreamcast. In fact, all of our titles will be net compatible for Dreamcast. We are working hard to make this experience incredible and more than just a simple peer to peer feature (one DC player vs. another). Instead we are attempting to do things with the modem that transforms the gameplay of our titles in new and completely original ways. For Kiss I think gamers will be happy at what they are able to accomplish with this multiplayer experience.

***•SM-** With G.O.D. developer Pop Top being based in Missouri and Silicon Magazine based in St. Louis, how long will it be before G.O.D. moves to this new Mecca of videogaming, Missouri?*

(Laughs.) No, I'm afraid we're happy with Dallas for the time being, but hey- you never know. It's not my decision, to make but, you know if you are curious about other places that are huge developer areas- there is Human Head (co-makers with Epic of upcoming G.O.D. game Rune) in Wisconsin and North Carolina (my birth-state) is actually becoming a hotbed of talent.

•SM

Boxes



Aside from being the only new baseball title to hit the 64 this year, ASB 2001's got Yankee strongman Derek Jeter on the box. *Very* cool.

Noticed: the details that matter



Sunsoft is giving away glossy, 18X24 posters from their upcoming PSX title Blaster Master: Blasting Again. Whether or not you are familiar with the series, SM highly recommends you get one of these ***free*** posters by sending a piece of paper with your name, mailing address, e-mail address (if you have one), and one dollar (so they can mail the poster to you) to:

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• PS gives a amazing sensation of height, as this screen shows

Polaris Snocross

Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Vatical • **Release Date:** August • **Stage:** 60%

Silicon Magazine's commitment to digging for info gamers can't get anywhere else recently took us to Albany, New York. What's in Albany besides cold rain and a few nice sushi bars, you ask? It's the home of ambitious publisher Vatical Entertainment, and its partner in development Vicarious Visions. Both companies employ some of the most passionate people the industry has to offer and their work speaks for itself.

Snowmobile racing is an interesting genre in that it seems it should be a niche category, but it has gained mass appeal. In order to capitalize on this new market, Vatical and VV have snagged the Polaris license and slapped it on an incredibly addictive racing game that combines edge-of-your-seat arcade action and just the right amount of real life physics. Bryan Shutt, the project's Senior Game Artist, is as energetic as they come, and his knowledge of the sport and impeccable sense of what gamers want really comes through when the game boots up.

The first thing we noticed was the authenticity of the snowmobiles, riders, and even track signage, which is a credit to the game's 20+ sponsors. Track design and racing physics also add to the realism, but this won't be a simulation by any stretch. PS is all adrenaline. The extensive trick list includes many logic-defying maneuvers including full flips and corkscrews. Performing tricks involves holding a shoulder button or two while inputting simple combinations with the other buttons. The more complex moves will require precise timing and more practice.

The sensation of speed and inherent weightiness of the machines makes racing a blast and a challenge. Tracks are detailed and contain lots of hidden areas, some of which are beneficial towards winning the race (some aren't). Learning the ins and outs of each of the ten tracks should provide added replay incentive. The sharp, colorful graphics, slick animation, and challenging AI seem to be taxing the hardware, and as a result the draw distance seems relatively short. However, Shutt assured us that his team is working hard to stretch it a bit and SM thinks they'll succeed. Be aware that the fault lies in system limitations and that the trade-off is well worth it. We often found ourselves gawking at special effects like realistic snow trails and awesome light sourcing caused by headlamps in some intense night races.

Gameplay will be centered around two major modes. Cross-Country tracks provide open racing with huge jumps and natural obstacles, while SnoCross tracks give gamers a chance to compete in stadiums complete with roaring crowds. All of the courses were designed in such a way that there is nary a time when you'll notice an invisible wall. (They are one of the most annoying things about the majority of racing games, and thankfully the developers at VV have kept this in mind.) A simple yet rewarding system for upgrading sleds will keep the replay value high.

Since most snowmobiles don't have a reverse gear, it's cool to see your rider hop off and yank the weighty machine out of a rough. It's attention to such details that should put this game at the top of the genre. Four-player multitap compatibility and an easy-to-use replay system top this puppy off.

From A to Z, this title is as solid as any racer gets and it is easily the best snowmobiling game we've yet played. This is just the beginning of a great franchise, and we know of a 64 version that is in the works and expect a DC version to be announced once PSX and N64 renditions sell a ton of copies.

•SM

COVERage:

the cutting edge of videogaming



• We're in first place, not another sled in sight! Oh, never mind... we're in last place





• The night races are really well done, note the subtle lighting effects

DID SOMEONE MENTION MONSTERS?

What's the matter? Seen a few monsters lately? When you play Monster Rancher Battle Card you can turn your fears into fun. Explore mysterious worlds with your monsters. Gather stone disks, and take them to the shrine to unleash the monster madness. Collect all of the cards and put your monster's skills to the test as you fight fiercely against your opponent. Do you have what it takes to reach the highest level of Master Class or are you still afraid of little monsters?

Monster Rancher Battle Card



EVERYONE E
Animated Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GAME BOY COLOR

PlayStation

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TECMO
www.tecmoinc.com

Wanted: From Japan

Stepping Selection

Platform: Playstation 2 • **Publisher:** Jaleco • **Release Date:** Now • **Stage:** 100%

Mission:
To fill you in on some great games that will not see domestic release.
Amount of Japanese required to Play:
None.
Amount of Japanese needed to enjoy fully:
Minimal. While some screens are in Japanese, they usually only require a button press to continue.
Reason the U.S. will probably never see this game:
The amount of licensing and effort to actually get the rights to the included songs is very expensive.
Best hope for an U.S. release:
The revolution finally comes and the lawyers are the first up against the wall.
Closest U.S. relation(s):
Bust A Groove, Umjammer Lammy

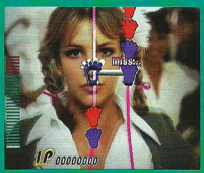
A few years ago, the music-based game burst on to the scene. It quickly splintered into sub-genres and the "dancing game" began a meteoric rise to popularity (in Japan, at least).

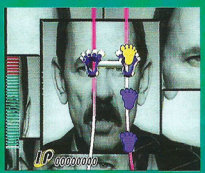
With the arrival of the PS2, consoles now have the power to render the high quality full.motion video required to recreate the arcade experience at home. Of course, if you are seeking a true arcade experience, you need to get the SS pad. This dance pad varies from others because it does not recreate the Playstation controller layout, but instead has 6 large dance buttons surrounding the player (who stands in the middle). These buttons are red, blue, and yellow and form a circle around the player with each color represented for both the left and right feet.

As the songs begin, a pair of marker feet descend from the top of the screen while the required dance steps ascend from the bottom of the screen. As they meet, you must step on the color and foot required. Doing so bumps the marker feet up a bit, allowing time to prepare for the next combination. Missing a step allows the feet to continue down, and if they reach the bottom of the screen, it's game over. Song difficulty varies and we found ourselves doing some moves that looked more like a cockroach-smashing contest than dancing. Anyone who ever said that videogames do not provide exercise needs to take in a few rounds of SS.

As mentioned earlier, FMV runs in the background while playing the game. These videos are sometimes, in the case of the Backstreet Boys and Brittany Spears, the same ones as on MTV. Others are "custom videos" made for the collection that usually feature hordes of bikini clad dancers.

Almost every song in this collection is instantly recognizable, even to an American audience. Ghostbusters, Footloose, My Sharona, and Girls Just Wanna Have Fun are just a few of the included tracks. Stepping Selection is a lawyer's dream and a product manager's worse nightmare. -SM




• Recognize any of these videos? We thought you would

Rare: And Expensive

Panzer Dragoon Saga

Platform: Saturn • **Publisher:** Sega • **Release Date:** Now • **Stage:** 100%

Mission:
To fill you in on some of the hardest to find releases in videogame history.
Amount of effort to find this title:
Some. While rare, you may still find it used at some stores and E-bay almost always has a copy for auction.
Current market rate:
$75 to $100 used, $100 and up for an unopened copy.
Reason(s) behind the rarity of this game:
Sega produced a limited amount of copies of their last 3 games (rumored to be only 10,000 copies of each title), and Panzer Dragoon Saga is the most popular of these.
Closest and easier to find relation(s):
Nothing plays like Panzer Dragoon Saga, but check out the first two Panzer Dragoon games for the Saturn.

The last few months of the Saturn's existence were very odd. It saw the release of three of the best games ever to grace the system. All were from Sega, and all assured the Saturn went out with a bang and not a whimper. Those three games were Shining Force 3-Scenario One, Burning Rangers, and Panzer Dragoon Saga.

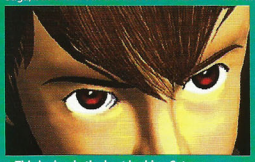
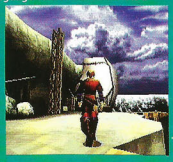
Panzer Dragoon Saga arrived on 4 discs, but even with this huge number of discs, gameplay lasted scarcely over 20 hours. On the other hand, those 20 hours rank as possibly some of the highest quality hours available on the Saturn. Unlike the first 2 Panzer Dragoon titles, PDS is a serious RPG.

The story is told in a unique way. The language contained within it is a fictitious language that is a mix of Japanese and nonsense. Sega of America chose to leave it just as it was and just subtitle it for its U.S. release, much to the delight of raving Otaku everywhere. You were put in control of the character of Edge (no word on what happened to Bono and Larry Mullen Jr.) and assigned to protect an ancient ruin on the fringe of the world. After a turn of events, you soon find yourself in control of an ever-evolving dragon.

The graphics in PDS showed exactly what the Saturn was capable of. Similar to how Gran Turismo stretched the Playstation to its limits, PDS taxed the Saturn's 3D power.

Combat in PDS is done in real time, similar to the last couple of Final Fantasy titles. Maybe it is the relative shortness of the title, but combat feels more like a pleasure than a distraction and random encounters never get tedious. Of note is that you receive a ranking based on your performance after each battle (a feature usually reserved for strategy titles). The rankings range from Narrow Escape to Excellent and your ranking determines how much experience and money you receive. However, sometimes this system failed to reflect how well we actually did in battle.

While Panzer Dragoon Saga's rarity can partially be explained by its short manufacturing run, its high quality production and engrossing gameplay is what makes it one of the most highly sought after titles on any system in the last few years. -SM



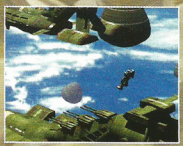

• This is simply the best looking Saturn game ever

IT'S A WORLD OF INTENSE ACCURACY, RICH GRAPHICS AND UNBELIEVABLE DETAILS. NOW GET OUT THERE AND DESTROY IT.



GUNDAM
SIDE STORY 0079

It's Gundam Side Story 0079, Rise from the Ashes with 3D battle simulation, movie-quality sound track and Gundam – quality mass destruction. Electronic Gaming Monthly™ called it, "... some of the richest graphics yet on Dreamcast. Each of the mechs are cut with so much detail, they look like FMV at a glance." And a glance is all the insidious Zaku forces will get, before your jump jet action and zoom-in weapon features blow them into another dimension.







WATCH GUNDAM WING ONLY ON

Toonami™
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Sega Dreamcast.

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T TEEN ESRB Animated Violence

BANDAI®

Buzz: for the insider

From The X-Box Rumors That Are A Little More Than Rumors Department:
Maximum Charisma Studios Inc. is working on a top secret online game of epic proportions under the code name "TROG". This is a big deal for two reasons: #1. It'll start out on the PC and has an excellent chance of hitting the X-Box. #2. Unlike Ultima Online, this title is meant for hardcore gamers who are into Anime style graphics, and animation. The site debuts May 11 and is at www.mcszone.com (they're offering some freebies for just going to the site). This should be *very* cool.

From The It's The Two, Two, Two Systems In One Department:
Rockstar and Bungie Entertainment are planning on bringing Oni to the Playstation 2. Oni (which is Japanese for ghosts) follows the story of Konoko, a female agent as deadly as Solid Snake. Expect to see this 3D action title before the end of 2000.

Agetec has stepped up to the PS2 plate and announced they will be releasing 3 From Software titles in the U.S. Armored Core 2 is definite and Eternal Ring (this one has a chance of not making it) and Evergrace are the other 2. Agetec plans to have them on the streets by years end.

Konami is working on a PS2 title named "Ring Of Red" and it looks to be similar to the Square "Front Mission" series. Someone peel Wade off the ceiling and tell him its still a few months away.

Speaking of Konami, here is some more PS2 news, mainly the title called Z.O.E. The brains behind the game are none other than Hideo Kojima (Metal Gear Solid, Snatcher, Policenauts), Yoji Shinkawa (who did character design for Metal Gear Solid and will handle mech design in Z.O.E). Z.O.E. will be an action/adventure RPG that hope follows in the footsteps of Zelda on the 64 in terms of gameplay and standard setting.

The results of the software sales for the first weeks of the PS2 are out and Ridge Racer V and Koei's Kessen hold the top two spots.

Interplay announced Baldur's Gate II, Star Trek: New Worlds and Giants: Citizen Kabuto will all be ready for the PS2 launch in North America.

Acclaim has announced 3 PS2 games are in the works: All-Star Baseball 2002, A Ferrari formula one racing title, and one based on the 360 challenge series.

What has the Playstation 2 done for the DVD market in Japan? With its launch, it effectively doubled the number of DVD owners. Does this sound like hype to you? Then we guess the fact that the DVD movie sales have also doubled in Japan since the PS2's release is just a coincidence.

The new DVD drivers that Sony has released in Japan with the latest run of PS2's will remove the ability to play American DVDs by inputting a code. It seems that Hollywood was none to happy to learn about the territorial bypass. The question is, WHY? Sony has even gone so far as to issue a recall of the utility disc with the 1.0 drivers on them so they can be replaced with the new 1.1 drivers.

Naughty Dog is working on a Crash Bandicoot game for the PS2 American launch.

Jaleco of Japan will release their latest arcade karaoke style music game, Dream Audition, to Playstation 2. In addition to audition they will bring Rock n' Mega Session and Dream Audition to the PS2.

The second batch of Playstation 2 memory cards have shipped and Sony assures us that any "issues" from the first batch (IE: corrupt data) have been rectified.

Atlus revealed an unnamed Playstation 2 RPG at the Tokyo Game Show that will support up to 4 players via a network.

From The Something is rotten at Famitsu Department:
The much-maligned Tekken Tag Tournament received ratings of 9, 9, 10, 10 while the incredible Tony Hawk Pro Skater got 7, 6, 7, 7.

From The Plain Ol' Playstation Department:
Sony's Chase the Express (which we have reported on in Buzz a few months ago) will be brought to the U.S via Activision. It will now carry the title, Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn.

Macross Plus Game Edition for the Playstation will feature 3 game modes: Story, Freeplay and Dog Fight. It will be set during the Macross Plus anime and will allow two people to play via a split screen.

Bandai Japan has just released Space Ship Yamato (Star Blazers)- Soldiers of Love for Playstation. Spanning over 3 discs, the story will take place two years after the ending of the original anime series. A Limited Edition of the game features a Yamato Pocket book, a Red Scarf, a 68-page material collection book and a Collector's Video. Wow, that's almost enough to make Working Designs jealous. Speaking of...

Not to be outdone, Working Designs announced their packaging for Lunar 2: Eternal Blue. Three Game CDs, one soundtrack CD featuring arranged music, one "Making of Lunar 2" video CD, one hardcover Lunar 2 manual and art book, one Paper map with game stats on the back, one full-sized gold metallic Lucia's Pendant, and four mini character standees. Still not enough? Pre-order the game at select locations and place a down payment and you will receive a pre-order bonus of a Ghaleon puppet!

More Final Fantasy IX info is trickling in. The main characters will be a 16-year-old thief, Jitan Tribaul and Bibi Alnitia, a 9 year old black mage. Other characters include Edward Steiner a 33 year old knight of the kingdom Alexandria. The large flying ship seen in screen shots is actually a flying theater that tours the countryside and has been taken over by Jitan and his crew. It will also include number of new mini games. Due to overwhelming gamer input, the length of the summon and magic spells will be shortened and the crystals from the earlier games will return.

So, Frogger for the PSX sold a few bazillion copies (actually, 3 million). Surprisingly, Hasbro is working a sequel!

Square announced they would release a "Millennium Collection" this June in Japan. It will include Saga Frontier, Saga Frontier 2, Final Fantasy Tactics, and Brave Fencer Musashiden in one package for about $40.

From The Haven't We Met Somewhere Before Department:
Capcom and Psikyo's new Naomi 3D action game will be called Gun Spike and will feature Charlie and Cammy from the Street Fighter series. Before long there will be a Gun Spike Champion edition, the a Hyper Edition, then... The Dreamcast Castlevania game, Castlevania Resurrection, has been more or less killed. That makes the name kind of ironic, huh?

From The I Have a Dream (Cast) Department:
Whoa! Sega seems to be planning a worldwide release for its network RPG title Phantasy Star Online this summer! Imagine we could be playing our friends in Japan as early as this July.

Sega announced that it signed an exclusive agreement with the San Francisco Giants to construct an interactive gaming complex inside of the Giant's new home, Pacific Bell Park. Situated right behind centerfield, it will include five 7- to 15-foot gaming towers, which will house 20 Dreamcasts. "Sega Sports at Centerfield" will be up and running beginning April 28, and be open during all home games at no cost to visitors.

Rockstar is taking a run at the Rally Racing genre with none other that Austin Powers, with a title called Austin Powers Mojo Rally. Everyone from Mini Me to Fat Bastard will be racing over 15 courses from both of the Austin Powers movies. Mojo Rally is being developed for Rockstar by Climax U.K.

Interplay will bring Super Runabout in US this fall.

Climax Graphics, the developer of Blue Stinger have announced a new title called "Project JET BS". Said to be similar to Blue Stinger, it will be coming to the DC soon.

Sega Of Japan announced they would be releasing a new Tetris game, aptly titled "Sega Tetris", in the upcoming months.

Rumor has it that Jellyvision, the twisted minds behind You Don't Know Jack, will be writing the dialogue for the U.S. release of Seaman: The Forbidden Pet. God help us all.

Capcom Japan has released more info on their bi-monthly RPG series. Originally slated for release on the Saturn, the first episode will be titled, "El Dorado Gate." It will consist of 7 episodes (the full series is rumored to be 24 episodes long). At a low $27 price point, the series hopes to create a captive audience.

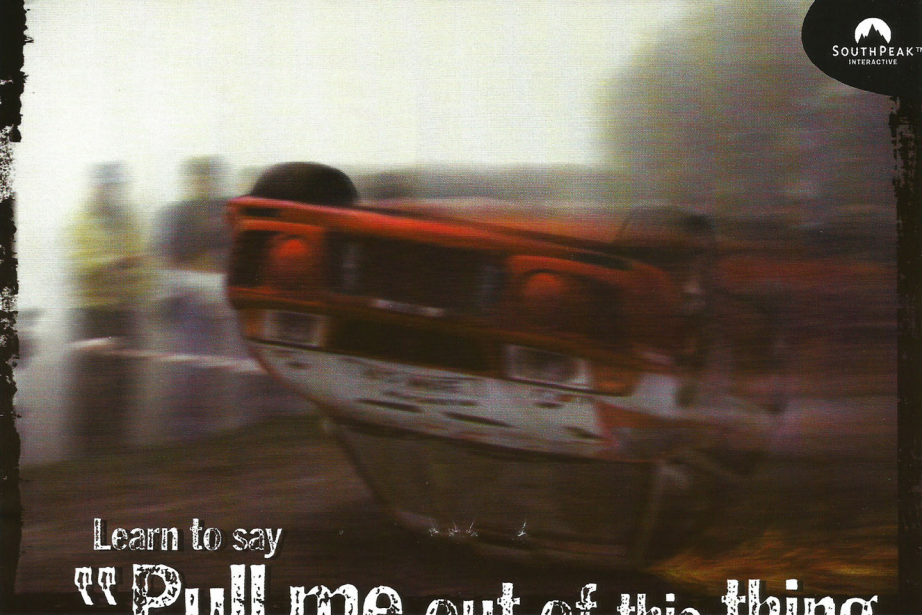
From The Pssst... UFO Interactive...Are you listening? Department:
NEC is working on a dating simulation/adventure game Kanon. You choose from 5 different girls, each with different events and mini games.

From The Go Go Gaming Department:
The Game Boy Color version of Resident Evil has been canned. Capcom believes that a portable system just cannot to the game justice.

Konami, on the other hand, has no problems bringing the Metal Gear Series to the Game Boy Color. Okay, well, they U.S. version does have one problem, the name. Metal Gear: Ghost Babel has been renamed Metal Gear Solid, just in case any gamers were not bright enough to notice the Metal Gear name without the Solid stuck at the end.

Pelican Accessories is readying a new add-on for the Game Boy Color called the Boom Box Boy that attaches to the GBC link cable port and allows user to listen to any Game Boy cartridge music and FM radio station. One of the best features is its price of less than $15.

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Rally Challenge 2000 takes you on a scorching tour of nine countries, each with its own eye-popping 3-D track. Hitting the dirt takes on new meaning on these mud-slinging, sand-spitting, snow-storming highways. Pick from any of nine WRC rally rods.

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NINTENDO64

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Vampire Hunter D

Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Jaleco • **Release Date:** August • **Stage:** 70%

A classic in the field of Anime entertainment has made its way from film to the Playstation and with the help of Jaleco, it will soon be available to every U.S. Playstation owner.

VHD is about the most infamous Vampire Hunter, a Dunpeal named D. Part vampire and part human, D roams the land slaying true blood vampires and protecting innocent humans. With extraordinary graphics and exceptional voice-overs, VHD does a good job of taking the dark, foreboding feel of the Anime and making it into a great game.

Featuring a 3rd person perspective, D uses his ever-present sword and a selection of power-ups to dispatch the life draining vampires and their dark minions. Although Jaleco is taking a chance on bringing an anime-based title to the U.S., we're sure that Otaku will make Vampire Hunter D a success.





Legend Of Mana

Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Square • **Release Date:** July • **Stage:** 85%

Legend of Mana has a lot of history behind it. After all, what top 5 list of action RPGs doesn't include its legendary predecessor, Secret of Mana?

The legend now continues on the Playstation and a number of improvements have been implemented. The most important to blistered-thumbed action RPG players is the easy to use analog control. The battle system has become more refined, with encounters occurring in classic RPG style. LOM is still an action RPG where the player controls movement and special attacks, but combat is not a constant throughout the game, but instead occurs only in limited engagements. All of the color, excitement, and even multi-player action that graced the Secret of Mana have made it unfettered into Legend of Mana, making it one of the most anticipated sequels of the year.



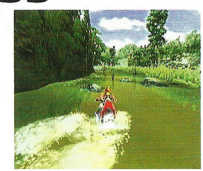


Sea-Doo Hydrocross

Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Vatical • **Release Date:** September • **Stage:** 45%

Sea-Doo HydroCross will give waverunner wannabes the chance to take their favorite Personal Water Craft (Jet Ski is actually a brand name that competing manufacturer Kawasaki owns) into locales that would otherwise be illegal or too dangerous to visit in real life. We're talking Venice, theme parks, Lochness, and even a flooded city complete with building rooftops that double as stunt ramps.

The version we saw was really early, but already had incredible water effects (especially the wake that the Personal Water Craft creates) in place, a solid frame rate and some sweet level designs. The almost surreal environments promise to be the game's main draw, and should really deliver the goods in the fun department. Sea-Doo's developer Vicarious Visions may not be a name you know, but you will.





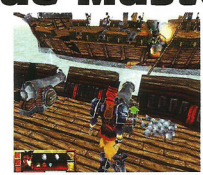
Legend of the Blade Masters

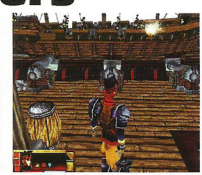
Platform: Dreamcast • **Publisher:** Ripcord • **Release Date:** June • **Stage:** 75%

Legend of the Blade Masters will appeal to fantasy, RPG, Internet and strategy gamers as it stresses extremely solid gameplay that requires the player to think.

Real heroes don't go running overland willy-nilly looking for lost animal crackers. They need a serious quest with unique missions. An example of this would be the pictures to the right. They show what SM believes is the first ship-to-ship battle (with cannons, of course) ever in a DC game. It's not a mash-the-button-as-fast-as-you-can affair, but a mix of strategy/puzzle solving. Figuring out the enemy's firing pattern and how to counter it is key to success.

There will be two versions of the game. One is Internet enabled, thus making competitive online play possible and the other is for those who prefer just playing against the computer.





Tenchu 2

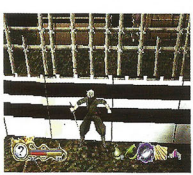
Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Activision • **Release Date:** August • **Stage:** 70%

There's almost nothing more satisfying than the gurgling sound made by a palace guard trying to scream through freshly slit vocal cords (except maybe the horrified look of his friend as he stumbles across the blood-soaked body).

Hey, it's feudal Japan. Violence is a necessity for bringing evil to justice. Tenchu II, the prequel to 1998's sleeper, aims to provide gamers with background info on their favorite stealth assassins, Rikimaru and Ayame. A slick graphic engine allows for highly detailed environments and cleaner animation while keeping the sneaky-kill feel intact. Enemy AI is meaner, but there are now more ways to make them suffer for their evil deeds.

This early build showcases a lot of new features, and it is evident this prequel will top the original game in every way.





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Sega Dreamcast.

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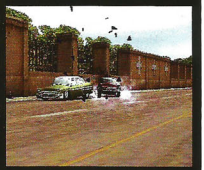
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Driver 2
Playstation • October
D2's new cities include Chicago, Las Vegas, Havana, and Rio de Janiero. All new and old cities feature more realistic roads and highways than before. Did we mention 40 new missions? The "more" part is covered.

There are also a number of new gameplay elements. Our favorite is the need to change cars during some missions in order to lose cops or mob hit men.



Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse
Dreamcast • September
The screen below is a conceptual render, however Metro 3D assures us that the final product will look as good as what what you see now.

DA is an action RPG that puts you in control of a vampire hunter simply called Anna. Through out the game's twelve levels (which range from swamps to medieval dungeons), she must unravel a twisted story and save the world.



Spec Ops: Omega Squad
Dreamcast • July
SOOS is part Goldeneye, Syphon Filter and Rainbow six with a few twists.

The missions take place in some wild locations in some unique ways. One innovative operation is Antarctica. Using the infrared scope, it's easy to pick enemies off from up to 1/4 mile away. If you're closer, arm the laser sight and all you need to do is put the dot on the target, then pull the trigger. There will be an Internet version too.



Railroad Tycoon 2

Platform: Dreamcast • **Publisher:** G.O.D. • **Release Date:** June • **Stage:** 85%

Move over Chu Chu Rocket, there's a new Choo Choo on the Dreamcast. Railroad Tycoon 2 made the leap to the Playstation earlier this year with an excellent port and now is poised to bring Dreamcast owners its unique brand of strategy.

RT2 bypasses the control issues usually associated with porting a game between platforms by making excellent use of the Dreamcast controller. Using the L and R buttons, you have access to a nice array of shortcut keys. The analog stick stands in for the mouse when placing buildings and laying rail while the digital pad navigates the menu system. The visuals are the best a console has yet offered the series with all of the trains, building, etc rendered fully in 3D. With the power of the Dreamcast, it is finally possible to get PC strategy without the expected visual downgrade.



Eternal Eyes

Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Sunsoft • **Release Date:** June • **Stage:** 80%

If Role Playing Games were judged by their Pedigree, then Eternal Eyes would be a thoroughbred. The Scenario Director is none other than Kenji Terada, the writer of the first 3 Final Fantasy offerings (often considered to be the best of the series). Sunsoft, which is famous for its RPG roots and their re-release of the Game Boy Final Fantasy titles (in the U.S.) knows RPGs.

Eternal Eyes is a beautifully rendered Strategy RPG that features sprite-based characters much like Vandal Hearts or Grandia. The character design and animated interludes are all done in a beautiful anime style. With a distinct old school look and new progressions in gameplay, it certainly has our attention. With a little polish to its dialogue, EE could very well grace the top of more than a few RPG wish lists this year.



Hercules: TLJ

Platform: Nintendo 64 • **Publisher:** Titus • **Release Date:** July • **Stage:** 70%

Before you dismiss this title as yet another, "dud license game that will go over with fans of the show, and still make a boat load of money, hey- Superman is proof of that", we'd advise you to give Titus the benefit of the doubt. This one is looking pretty hot.

We played an early build and walked away with a positive feeling. The graphics are some of the best the 64 has produced, and the gameplay is pretty good. Hercules is one of four playable characters, and after we went through the training mode, the Zelda-ish feel grew on us. Also like Zelda, the characters use both might and magic in the quest to stop Ares.

There are 12 missions in total and they are filled with events from the TV show. If you're a fan you'll feel right at home and even if you're not, it won't make any difference.



Evolution 2:

Platform: Dreamcast • **Publisher:** Ubi Soft • **Release Date:** July • **Stage:** 70%

Evolution, the act of evolving, means that you progress, grow, and/or advance. Ubi Soft is working hard to make sure that Evolution 2 lives up to that definition.

For the most part, the cookie cutter randomized dungeons from the first release are history. Except for a few training dungeons, all adventures will now take place in predefined labyrinths, something that RPG purist will relish. The addition of random weather patterns and a daytime/nighttime progression also helps to insure that Evolution 2 is a genuine RPG experience. Controllable cameras will also be included in the list of advancements in this follow-up. With the action picking up right after the first adventure ends, E2 is a true sequel with most of the characters from the original returning for a second shot.



Threads Of Fate

Platform: Playstation • **Publisher:** Square • **Release Date:** June • **Stage:** 85%

Traditional RPGs seem to be a dime a dozen these days. Square Soft is hoping to break that mold and differentiate itself with its latest action RPG, Threads of Fate (originally called Dew Prism in Japan).

What we really liked about TOF are the two characters with separate story lines. The player can choose between Rue's serious adventure and Mint's less serious escapade. Play the role of Rue and you have the ability to assume the form of defeated enemies. Play the role of Mint and you control an intricate spell casting system. These special abilities have a lot of impact when it comes to what each character can accomplish and how the stories unfold. Threads of Fate looks to be a breath of fresh air for all RPGs lovers and should have a lot of play value thanks to each character's different abilities, personalities and adventures.



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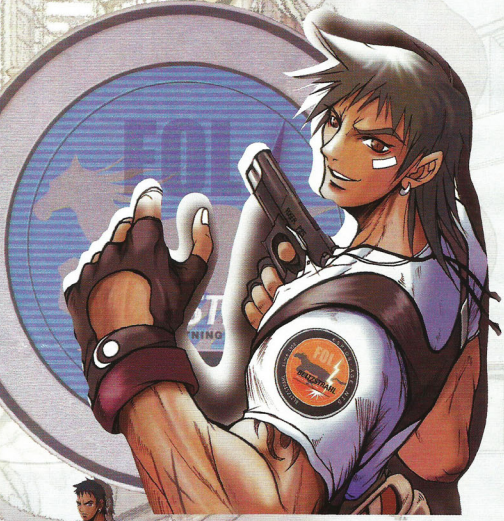














NAME: Jeffrey K. Saunders
CODE NAME: Suggests
SPECIALITY: All Skills
AGE/SEX: 25/Male
NATIONALITY: U.S.A.
HEIGHT: 6'5"
WEIGHT: 229lbs.

This young man was once part of the elite US Army Intelligence. After an incident at Army Intelligence that forced him to question their methods, he entered Blitzstrahl so that he could make his own decisions about right and wrong.

Just like his nickname **SUGGESTS**, he is the ultimate agent, able to utilize any and all skills.

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UFO

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Sega Dreamcast.

NEC

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Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX

Sega Dreamcast



PLAN, EXECUTE, PROTECT!

"Remember... if you fail, the game isn't over ...the world is!"

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TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PLAY AS IF 5.7 BILLION LIVES DEPEND ON IT!





Sega Dreamcast.

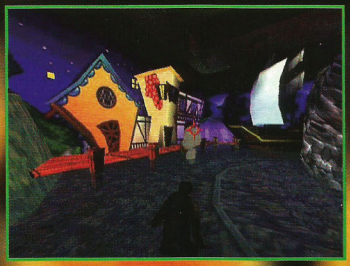


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Unlike other games, if you make a mistake you're gone... because in the real world one shot counts!

Retrospect

Dreamcast

•SM's Rating System: From 1-99 points in units of one. 50 is *average*, and 99 our *top score*. We don't give 100s as no game is or ever will be perfect.

Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX
Majesco
Mission: Recon.
Subject: Rainbow Six for Dreamcast.
Report: Intelligence has laid their hands on the latest incarnation of the tactical experience known as Rainbow Six, named for the "fictitious" leader of the highly skilled anti-terrorist organization. Initial impressions are as follows. Graphical representations of operation personnel are highly detailed and surprisingly accurate. (Note to internal security: Check for information leaks in Quartermaster regiment).

Gameplay centers squarely on expertly timed execution of well devised covert operations. Loose cannons and rogue personnel are subject to quick and undignified deaths, a fitting demise for troopers who cannot follow orders. While pre-devised tactics are provided, commanders have full power to revise them as needed or submit alternative strike plans.

Control is dexterity intensive and requires exhaustive memorization. While giving complete control to the team leader, we witnessed more than an occasional causality due to its cumbersome nature. Watching a green soldier pulling his map out when he should have been reloading was a heart wrenching sight.

Depth and number of missions are extraordinary, far surpassing any previous Rainbow Six offering. Comprehensive training operations should insure that all team members are more than adequately trained before they enter into a true firefight situation and the actual mission count should have the C.I.A. double-checking to see if the cold war is truly over.

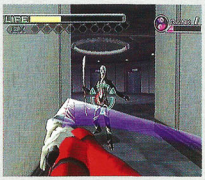
Conclusion: Rainbow Six is a thinking soldier's dream that could benefit a bit from a more intuitive control scheme. Recommended for VR training for all future black ops personnel.
•SM Rating: 83



Maken X
Sega
Atlus of Japan has made a foray into a normally American dominated market, the first person shooter. With an innovative twist, the normal array of high-powered firearms has been replaced with a living weapon, the Machina. The Machina can assume almost any shape from a sword to a halberd. It also has the power to "Mindjack," taking over various characters, allowing the player to assume their form and powers.

The controls of Maken X cross many lines. Single characters can be targeted and once you have locked onto an enemy, they become the main focus, with combat centering upon them. With proper timing, enemy attacks can be dodged, parried, and with a well-timed jump, give prime access to their unprotected backs. The character graphics are not highly detailed, but this assured no slowdown or choppiness. Strafing is used in a very limiting manner, so it is not the secret weapon that it is in other first person offerings. Some weapons allowed us to power them up by holding down the attack button, but we found this mostly useless, for the attacks executed too slowly. Regrettably, the game could only be saved at the end of each mission, which led us to replay levels repeatedly, only to die at the hands of the end boss.

Maken X is a distinctly Japanese take on the first person shooter, giving it a fresh perspective that is welcome in a quickly stagnating field.
•SM Rating: 67

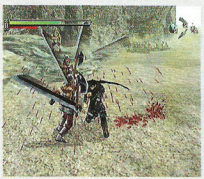


Sword of the Berserk: Guts' Rage
Eidos
Was there a memo somewhere that declared the Dreamcast the New Hope for the beat em' up? It has had more than its fair share of this usually sparse genre and SOTB: GR proves that they will just keep getting better.

Sword of the Berserk looks and plays like a Japanese Anime. The lead character, Guts, is an one-eyed rogue with a sword that would make even Cloud Strife from Final Fantasy VII envious. The story is advanced through extensive cut scenes that are so enthralling gamers won't want to skip through them. The Eidos veterans who handled the voice acting for LOK: Soul Reaver also did this title and they can easily count it as another success.

The gameplay is pure hack and slash glory. An automatic hand crossbow, grenades, knives, and even a small gun compliment Guts' massive sword. Unlike most hackfests, power-ups are sparse and require prudent usage.

In what seems to be a never-ending annoyance with 3D action titles, the camera is a hindrance. It never quite gives an expansive enough view, thus allowing enemies to rush from off of the screen and attack without leaving you much of a chance to defend. The collision detection could also use some work, with enemies passing through walls an almost regular occurrence. Dreamcast owners get barrels of action and buckets of blood in this short, but intense title.
•SM Rating: 73



Playstation 2

Dead Or Alive 2 (Import)
Tecmo
Dead or Alive 2 is the first instance of the same title hitting two 128 bit platforms and finally gives a good way to compare the graphical prowess of PS2 and DC. What did SM find? Read on.

The good news is that there are a couple of new levels not found in any previous release and some of the older levels have been improved with more detail. The best example of the "upgrade" path is the snow level. As the wind blows, it kicks up flurries of snow. It's obvious that the PS2 is more adept with particle effects than the DC. We also noticed that the character's portraits during the selection screen are fully 3D and animate as you decide which one to play. The biggest improvement went to the soundtrack. This version's sound is lush in a way that the DC cannot match.

On the down side, the character graphics are identical between the two platforms, but the level textures on the PS2 are not as sharp and colorful as the DC. A great example of this is the floor of the opera house. On the DC it looks bright and freshly waxed while the PS2 rendition is notably dull. It's not a huge issue, but we expected more.

Don't get us wrong, this is the best looking PS2 game yet. Still the huge premium the import runs is not warranted since the DC version is every bit as good of a product and in some areas even better ($49 vs. $99). We are not saying that the DC is more powerful hardware, but it certainly is competitive. No matter how it is cut, DOA 2 is the best looking fighting game on the market regardless of platform. Note: the DC version got the same rating in last month's magazine.
•SM Rating: 93



Tekken Tag Tournament (Import)
Namco
TTT is without a doubt the PS2 title that most deserves to be imported. Bear in mind that this statement is half complement and half circumstance.

Let's start with the complement aspect. If there were ever a fighting title that has been hyped to death, this is it. Fortunately TTT manages to live up to most of the hype and through solid execution manages to deliver the goods.

The visuals are impressive. While the character graphics are surpassed by the competition, the lack of joints and human-like movements are hard not to like. On the background side, this title is in a league of its own. Not only are the levels interesting, but there is a huge amount of detail. A good example is the school yard where there are literally dozens of school kids cheering on the fight. Unlike fighting games of the past, all of the onlookers are rendered with the same level of detail as are the combatants, and they too animate with complete fluidity. It is just amazing.

Gameplay is 100% Tekken; either you love it or hate it. We liked how easy it was to pull of even the toughest combos after only a short time. As time went on, we managed to discover new moves and combos. The fight engine was very, very sophisticated. In other words, the gameplay will satisfy both beginner and

Continues on page 20



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PlayStation®

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veterans. Still after playing DOA2 or Namco's own Soul Calibur, the pace of the fights was a little leisurely.

The circumstance portion of our argument is fairly straight forward. Since DOA2 is available for the DC, and the PS2 port isn't worth the extra money, TTT is the only option left. That's not to down play what a great bit of software it is, but when all is said and done that's what it boils down to.

•SM Rating: 85



Playstation

Nightmare Creatures II
Konami

Rob Zombie finds his way into more games these days...

Nightmare Creatures II finds Herbert Wallace, one of the first game's heroes, locked in a dank cell. The wretched villain Adam Crowley has found a spell to support his hell-spawned life, and has spent the last few decades performing sick experiments on poor Wallace. Driven to insanity, Wallace escapes during a raucous and now prowls the city seeking revenge. (Or as Konami's very cool ads put it, "an extremely gory revenge".)

Twitchy, sidestepping battles return in this sequel, but now there is a more extensive combo system, plus the added ability to perform grotesque fatalities. These usually involve excessive bloodletting and/or flying limbs. Analog control is pretty good, but we opted for the precision of digital. Enemies attack in the same manner as before, that is, they attack in numbers, but generally take turns swiping at you. Wallace can "lock" onto one particular foe therefore improving combo handling. New abilities include climbing and swimming, ala Lara Croft.

Graphics and animation are leagues ahead of NC2's predecessor. Wallace really moves with the swaggering, but determined gait of a madman. The dark, yet detailed environments are littered with interactive objects. Noticed was the rain effect, which was truly the best we've seen.

The NC series deserves credit for creating foreboding atmosphere and NC2 expands upon it with this above average adventure.

•SM Rating: 75



Vagrant Story
Square

Remember that feeling when you first saw/played Metal Gear Solid or Final Fantasy VII? Prepare to feel it all over again. Vagrant Story possesses a story for the ages, with a presentation that resembles MGS in visual quality, plot and depth. The only thing missing are voice-overs.

Vagrant Story is a classic role-playing game wound within an action RPG shell. While you will move boxes and leap from enemies, the combat comes down to selecting an attack and having the game execute it for you. However, VS adds to the classic chemistry with chain and defensive moves that are executed in real time coinciding with these attacks. With the proper timing and a button press, basic attacks can expand into ultra destructive assaults. Vagrant Story further refuses categorization by providing a ranking upon finishing each level. This will grant completists and perfectionists alike with challenge that also provides replayability.

The extreme depth of this title makes reading the instruction manual a must. Throw and go gamers will find themselves lost and maybe even a little intimidated by the complexity. However, the reward for reading and mastering the instructions is an unequaled gaming experience.

Square has proven that they don't have to have a franchise to produce a fantastic game and the freedom provided by this new series has allowed them to create a stunning success.

•SM Rating: 92



Triple Play 2001
Electronic Arts

Every year the Triple Play series returns and seems to digress just a little more. EA has seemed to lose sight of the fact that realistic gameplay is what baseball fans want most.

TP2001 has a plethora of new options and goodies. The home run derby has been taken to the maximum. Now available is the Extreme Target Mode where you can hit various targets in the outfield to build up extra points in the home run hitting contest. Other features are novelty awards and codes based on in-game performance including power-ups, special hidden players, and mystery stadiums. These newly added features are a definite plus.

The gameplay can be described as shaky at best. The AI's pitching and player changes are absurd and inconsistent. The timing and reasoning of these moves left us scratching our heads more than a few times. Another annoying tendency was the AI's over use of bunting (especially at inappropriate times). Having the 4th and 5th place hitters trying to sacrifice runners over is insane. The most glaring problem was the outrageous number of foul balls we kept hitting. In the end it tremendously slowed down the gameplay. If you are looking to purchase a baseball title this year we suggest looking elsewhere.

•SM Rating: 69



Mr. Driller
Namco

Duck and cover! We're under attack by multi-colored blocks and our fate lies in the hands of a little guy with a head that's bigger than his weapon. Namco has gone grass roots with its latest puzzle offering, Mr. Driller. While it doesn't sport the latest graphics technology, it does provide an addictive challenge.

The goal is to make your way down to checkpoints by drilling in any of the four directions and running around like mad to avoid falling blocks. If you drill through a block that is connected to other like colored blocks, they will all dissipate and anything above them will plummet. Needless to say, these falling blocks can cause chain reactions, and as a result you will find yourself panicking as you scurry for safety. Blocks marked with an "X" are more difficult to drill and require more oxygen use. You didn't think you could just run around under the earth and not have to worry about breathing, did you? Air capsules are scattered about, and you'll need to think and fast to keep from asphyxiating.

A hectic pace accentuates the addictiveness. However, a few downers mar the experience. First, there isn't enough view space to anticipate large chain reactions. Second, we sorely missed a two-player mode. If this game is in your home, others will want to play, and passing the controller around stinks.

Replay value may be somewhat limited, and we recommend a rental before purchase.

•SM Rating: 65



Vanguard Bandits
Working Designs

Vanguard Bandits is an old guard strategy RPG. With the benefit of some innovations at the hands of Working Designs, it'll provide hours of mind taxing tactical execution.

VB placed us within a war torn nation, commanding a mech and fleeing from an unrelenting empire. Each Mech (called ATACs in homage to Working Designs' Vasteel) is represented by a sprite on the game map with the actual battles played out with 3D polygons models. The battles can be disabled and for speed's sake we did take them offline, but at times we would re-enable them to admire newly acquired attacks.

At first glance, the gameplay appeared to have an extremely daunting learning curve. However, after a few hours, we found that with shrewd division of experience points and a judicious usage of the support system, it became manageable. Unlike other strategy titles, VB does not limit of the number of controllable characters, making us feel as though we were actually controlling a legion of ATACs.

The dialogue and translation is classic Working Designs, which is, simply put, the best in the industry. Humor is laced throughout the title, but it never became too much or very distracting. The

Continues on page 22

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Matrix software

ACTIVISION

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Retrospect

story features three separate branches. This aspect and unlockable extras, had us playing though numerous times. VB is a title that requires well thought out plans and careful execution. Which is exactly what we were looking for in a strategy RPG.

•SM Rating: 83



Walt Disney World Quest: Magical Racing Tour
Eidos

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Magical Racing Tour will be known for its sweet-talking adulation. Granted, mascot racing is not the most inventive genre (Mario Kart set the standard and since that time everyone else has followed the same basic blueprint), but MRT has the relative "originality" of the Disney license going for it and very little else. This game is a prime example of too much dependence on a license.

Since this game is Disney based, one would assume that it would be targeted at younger gamers. Instead what we found was a game with a difficulty level that will send most 8 year olds crying to their parents. While the Disney bunch may seem like a likeable group, we soon found that they were possessed by some of the most ruthless (bordering on annoying) Artificial Intelligence that would be much more at home inside of Twisted Metal. Also, the representations of the characters during the selection screen looked a tad on the evil side. (Possibly a bit of the AI showing though?)

While MRT sports the Disney license, the most recognizable characters are second stringers Chip, Dale, and Jiminey Cricket. The top tier of Mickey, Donald, and Goofy are nowhere to be found. The gameplay, power-ups, and control are carbon copies of those found in other character racers. That translates into solid gameplay that hardly qualifies as even evolutionary.

MRT receives the following middle of the road rating due to solid control and the Disney license (NOT because it takes chances anywhere else or tries to expand the genre in any new ways). Call it Disney Kart or Disney Team Racing.

•SM Rating: 55



Nintendo 64

Rally Challenge 2000
SouthPeak Interactive

Rally Challenge 2000 has plenty of ingredients to make a satisfying rally racer. A number of true to life cars, a nice selection of tracks, and the drift steering that dominates rally racing. However, firm competition on the console rally market is the hardest thing RC2K has to overcome.

The look of Rally Challenge 2000 is respectable with dust clouds and well-rendered vehicles among the highlights. While most of the automobile settings are adjustable, it is done by use of a slider bar. This excels in ease of use, but does not allow for the level of tweakabilty simulation junkies will be craving.

While the racing may be rally, it is video game rules that apply. You start in last place each race and must work your way up into contention and the same competitors seem to always place highly, making a lost race hurt more than it should.

The controls are limited to gas and brake (unless choosing to manually shift) so a few minutes with the controls will allow racers to stay with the pack, but choosing the correct car makes all the difference. There is a 4-player versus mode but, sadly, championship mode can only be taken on solo.

Rally Challenge 2000 is a good N64 racer, but other high quality console competition causes us to recommend it if the N64 is your only or favorite console. It's worth a look, though.

•SM Rating: 74



Game Boy

Monster Rancher Battle Card
Tecmo

There is a certain coming of age feeling when a video game series spawns its first splinter game in a different field. Monster Rancher Battle Card spins monster breeding onto the card battlefield and even provides a linking story. It is explained that true monster ranching requires the strength that only an older player has the power to master. However, younger ranchers can learn the ropes of Monster Ranching though the power of card collecting without risking physical injury. Don't be fooled by this explanation, MRBC features some very advanced and challenging card battles.

All of the monsters from the previous games and the animated television series appear, in both their "real" form (you meet them during your quest for cards) and in card form. MRBC is very much a Role Playing Game mixed with the card collecting. Dungeons must be explored and there the player collects "discs" that can be taken to the monster shrine to unleash the beast contained in the disc. All winnings are not monster cards, some are actually skill cards, which act as support for the battling monsters by raising their attack, defense, power and intelligence.

No card game would be complete without a link mode and MRBC includes this option. It also includes an Arena where you can battle AI controlled characters for cards or items. The one aspect of Monster Rancher Battle Card that could use some serious improvement is the translation/dialogue. Typos, missing words, and confusing sentences thrive within this title taking away from the overall high quality feel.

Monster Rancher Card Battle does an excellent job of bringing the appeal of both the animated series and the Playstation titles to the portable world in this challenging card battler.

•SM Rating: 80



Neo Pocket

Faselei
SNK

The very first thing we noticed upon starting up this game is that the opening theme actually has vocals! With the total lack of voices on most cartridge based systems, this came as quite a pleasant surprise. The story and characters are all rendered in detailed anime style. You are put in control of a large mech (funny, the U.S. goes years without a mech strategy game and this year promises at least 3!). Unlike many strategy games of the past, you plan out your route, input it, then both you and the AI execute at the same time. The interface is very well laid out and we had no problems picking up the gameplay after the tutorial. Some parts of the planning stage of game are a bit tedious (like having to buy ammo, take it to your mech and then tell the game to load it).

Faselei is an enjoyable experience with a surprising amount of depth. This is just the type of game the NGPC needed to help secure it as the hardcore gamer's portable of choice.

•SM Rating: 82



The Last Blade
SNK

Much as the Neo•Geo home system was known for being a system for incredible fighters, the Neo•Geo Pocket Color is acquiring the same lofty reputation. The Last Blade is the latest in the march of high quality fighters to hit this hardcore portable. While not sporting a high profile name like some of its SNK brethren, The Last Blade does contain some high-octane fighting.

The look and playability is on par with other Neo Geo brawlers and that is to say it is nearly flawless. 10 hit combos come off without a hitch and an amazing number of frames of animation have been squeezed into this tiny cartridge. Small options like the ability to choose what button combination will act to repel attacks and difficulty levels that actually mean something show how SNK has honed the fighting craft to fit the masses and fanatics alike.

The biggest hurtle with TLB is competition from SNK's other top-shelf products. While it might not be the best fighter available on the system, it certainly holds it own.

•SM Rating: 76

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Decrypted: Codes and Cheats

Legend:
U=Up
D=Down
L=Left
R=Right

Die Hard Trilogy 2 (PSX):
Level select:
At the main menu, press L1 (2), ●, ●, ■, ■

First person view:
Pause the game and press ●, ●, ▲, ▲, ■, ■ in adventure mode.

Auto-reload:
Pause the game and press ■, ■, ▲, ▲, ●, ● in arcade mode.

Resident Evil: Code Veronica (DC) :
Unlock various modes and characters:
Battle Mode: Complete the game on any setting.

First Person View: Pick up the Sniper Rifle.

Hunk: Complete the game in less than 3 hours and collect all the files.

Steve: Collect the gold Lugers.

Wesker :Take Wesker's sunglasses in the Incubation Lab while playing as Chris.

Alternate Chris: Complete battle mode with Wesker

Pokemon Stadium (N64):
Surfing Pikachu:
Successfully complete the game to get surfing Pikachu.

Talking Pikachu:
Upload Pikachu from the yellow version of the game to Pokémon Stadium.

Alternate Pokémon colors:
Renaming you Pokemon can change their color. It seems to have to do with the syllables used in the naming. Try different nicknames and upper and lower cases letters.

Chu Chu Rocket (DC):
Sonic Chaos
Successfully complete each of the challenge mode levels to change the mice into Chaos from Sonic Adventure.

Nights Characters:
Successfully complete each of the mania mode levels to change the mice into characters from Nights (the Saturn game).

Hard mode puzzles:
Successfully complete all puzzles in normal mode.

Special Mode:
Successfully complete all puzzles in hard mode.

Mania Mode:
Successfully complete all puzzles in special mode.

Armada (DC):
Infinite lives:
At the title screen, hold Start on controller 3 and press A, B, A, B, U, D on controller 4.

Ace Combat 3 (PSX):
U14054 Aurora:
Get a rank of "A" in all simulator missions on the normal or hard difficulty settings.

Orbital Satellite Laser and X-49 Night Raven:
Get a rank of "A" in all simulator missions on the hard difficulty setting.

XR-900 Geopelia:
Get a rank of "A" on simulator mission thirty-six in the mission simulator.

Mission simulator:
Unlock all five endings by completing all fifty-two missions. Save then return to the title screen and load the completed game save file. The "New File" option will change to an "S-File". Choosing this option will allow any mission to be played with any airplane and at any difficulty.

Bonus mission:
Get a rank of "B" or better in all thirty-five regular simulator missions to unlock a bonus mission.

Japanese intro:
Successfully complete the game on the hard difficulty to view the original Japanese introduction.

Triple Play 2001 (PSX):
TP 2001 has some new power up options. While everyone doesn't care for the Arcade feel, here are the requirements to unlock various modes and players.

Unlock Babe Ruth:
Hit a homerun with a pitcher in season mode.

Unlock Cy Young:
Throw ten consecutive strikeouts in season mode.

Unlock Hank Aaron:
Hit four consecutive homeruns in season mode.

Unlock Satchel Paige:
Throw three consecutive strikeouts in season mode.

Unlock Willie McCovey:
Hit three consecutive homeruns in season.

Hidden teams:
Win the World Series in season mode. You should unlock The World All-Stars, Dominican Republic All-Stars, The Legends, and The Triple Play Team.
Power-ups:

Strong arm:
Get caught stealing more than twice in one game in season mode.

Big bat:
Hit two consecutive homeruns in season mode.

Big baseball:
Throw nine consecutive strikeouts in season mode.

Flaming baseball:
Throw six consecutive strikeouts in season mode.

NASCAR Rumble (PSX):
All tracks and drivers:
Enter C9P5AU8NAA as a password

Vanguard Bandits (PSX):
Easy Kills:
About 1/2 way though the game, some of the ATACs will acquire the skill "Turbulence" which has a range of 4. In some battles, the imperial ATACs have a field of vision of 3 squares (they will not attack you until you enter their zone of 3X3). By situating yourself outside their field of vision, and not having any of your comrades enter their zone, you can use this attack and they will simply sit and ignore you. This does NOT work on all ATACs, some have a larger field of vision, but it does allow you to nickel and dime some enemies to death.

GameShark

Star Wars: Jedi Power Battles (PSX):
Infinite Health:
800B240C 0064

Infinite Force:
800B2414 0064

Infinite Special:
800B228C 000A
800B241A 000A

Syphon Filter 2 (PSX):
Unlock All Missions:
8014AF3C 0015

All Weapons & Items
8012A5B0 FFFF
8012A5B2 FFFF

Infinite Armor:
D0089E68 0006
80089E6A 2400

Silent Bomber (PSX):
Infinite Gravity Liquid:
300D7E2C 0063

Infinite Napalm Liquid:
300D7E2A 0063

All codes are tested before we print them, and they should work. If one doesn't, please let us know and we'll have the code editor shot in return for your effort.



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Gear

Nintendo 64
Sharkwire
Interact
The Sharkwire is modem and keyboard that attaches to both the N64 and a phone line. This hardware allows access to Interacts' online service. This service resembles AOL before it added access to the Internet. message boards, cheat codes, and user's game saves. The site itself is well laid out and we even got our own e-mail address. However, it doesn't allow head to head play, newsgroups, or anything Internet related outside of its service.

The Sharkwire is essentially a terminal with access to one Internet site, and no matter how well planned that site is, it cannot be everything to everybody. Smaller towns may find themselves without a local number, requiring a toll call in addition to the regular service fee (9.99 a month for 10 hours).

The Sharkwire might have had a chance if it would have debuted with the N64. Instead, it is just hardware whose time has passed.
•SM Rating: 40





Dreamcast
Rally 2 Racing Wheel
Pelican Accessories
Who said it's the size that matters? The Rally 2 Racing Wheel puts the "less is more" theory to the test.

Although the compact size of the R2 may scare some gamers away, it contains the same usability of the big boys without taking up as much space. One nice feature of the R2 wheel is the adjustable steering sensitivity that directly effects how the car responds to the movement on the wheel. The R2RW performed well with all racing titles, especially Sega Rally and Tokyo Xtreme Racer.

The controls on the wheel are responsive and smooth. The analog gas and brake are a great touch. The only drawback might be the tiny X/O buttons. Those of us with big fingers will find these buttons to be a bit troublesome.

The R2 Racing Wheel is a very serious, yet compact wheel that packs a big punch. It would be a great addition to any Dreamcast, and is worth a long, hard look.
•SM Rating: 82

E3 Special: the little engine that did

MAJESCO SALES INC

In an era of gigantic, factory-like game publishers and more consolidation than you can shake a big ol' stick at, it's encouraging to know that smaller companies can get a hold of top shelf licenses and compete.

We caught up with Majesco Inc.'s President Jesse Sutton and David Elmekies Director of Product Development at Majesco's production house Pipedream Interactive. Here is what they had to say.

***•SM-** Gamers may not be familiar with Majesco Inc., would you give us quick rundown of what you've been up to lately?*

Jesse- For the last ten years Majesco Inc. has been one of the nation's largest videogame distributors. Building upon our strength as a distributor and recognizing the opportunities before us, we started out by publishing a few Game Boy products. We then moved up to the Game Boy Color and began to develop and distribute games under an agreement with Hasbro Interactive that includes classics like Centipede and Frogger.

***•SM-** Even though you are a new publisher, do you feel that gamers will hold you to a higher standard since you are working with titles that are near and dear to their hearts?*

Jesse- First and foremost, we have to keep the integrity of the license itself in tact and really respect the history of these classic titles. Staying true to the addictive gameplay and using the current technology to its fullest is key to success. We have a big responsibility here since many of the people currently playing games are discovering the classics for the first time.

***•SM-** Tell us a bit about your corporate structure.*

Jesse- Majesco Inc. is the parent company with a combination of Pipedream Interactive doing our in house development and Majesco Sales handling the sales and distribution aspects of our software.

***•SM-** In the future will you outsource any of your development as the number of titles grows?*

Jesse- The majority of console and Game Boy products will be developed in house by Pipedream.

***•SM-** Rainbow Six for the Dreamcast is an incredible title and must have been quite an undertaking. Do you feel it stacks up 100% to the PC version?*

Jesse- Let me start answering that question and then I'll hand it over to David. It stacks up very well. Red Storm Entertainment (the developer of the PC version) was involved in this project from start to finish and their know how was a big plus. We have maintained the PC visuals while giving the gameplay the feel a Dreamcast owner expects. Getting the Rainbow Six code to run on the DC with all of its features (including improved graphics) was only possible through proprietary technology developed by David and his team.

David- Just to say a little bit more, a big concern was taking this title to the extreme. We wanted to offer more than the PC version and take advantage of Dreamcast's unique features. In addition to the 16 original missions and 27 training missions found in the PC version, we added 4 of the Eagle Watch missions (part of the PC expansion pack). Plus our frame rate is completely steady through out the entire game.

***•SM-** How long was the total development cycle?*

David- I would say about nine months.

***•SM-** Geez! That about half the time it takes other developers, and the visual **are** solid.*

Jesse- A lot of it has to do with our proprietary tools.

David- What is even better is that our tools are not platform specific. We can use them on any platform to shorten development time and get great results.

Jesse- They will help us get our software out with a higher degree of quality than most companies when a new system launches, for example.

David- Also, when we do a game for multiple systems, our tools will allow us to guarantee simultaneous release of a given title.

***•SM-** Will you sell or license your tools?*

Jesse- Right now we're still focusing on making a name for ourselves. Still it is always a possibility. We keep our options fairly open.

***•SM-** How many people are working at Pipedream? We've heard less than ten.*

Jesse- Ten is still overstating the actual number.

***•SM-** Should we expect more Dreamcast, PSX and/or possibly PS2 games?*

Jesse- Definitely. We have three more Dreamcast titles all from in house development, one or two PSX titles, and...

David- ...One PS2 title.

Jesse- We'll support any platform that looks viable. That includes Dolphin and X-Box.

***•SM-** Tell us about your next batch of games.*

David- At E3, we're planning on displaying videos of three DC titles, but right now there are some licensing issues that are still being worked out. One Dreamcast game we can tell you about is Rogue Spear the sequel to Rainbow Six. It will run on an enhanced version of the Rainbow Six engine and is slated for the fall and will feature cooperative play and a deathmatch mode. We're going to succeed and a big part of that is because our development team is made up of the best people out there. They really put their heart and soul into their work. We couldn't have done it without them.

MAJESCO SALES INC

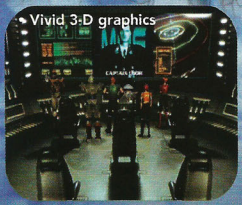
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Soundtrack by Rob Zombie.

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Sega Dreamcast.

PlayStation

KONAMI



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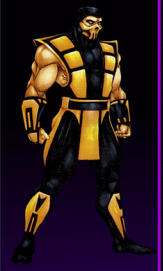
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