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September 1998

Dreamcast

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09 >



volume four

45



FROM DREAMS TO REALITY

Time is the great healer. *Tomb Raider III*, previously voted the biggest disappointment of the recent E3 show, is coming along nicely and is previewed, in all its high-res glory, on page 76. We may have had it up to our collective necks with Ms. Croft, but with the movie looming large in '99 and another outing in the cards, even **Next Generation** has to admit that this girl has staying power. Of course, this phrase also applies to the company behind the star of this issue: Dreamcast.

Sega certainly has staying power, though it's been a long and winding road — and one that has been littered with so many hardware disasters and development missteps that we have to marvel at the sheer size of the comeback. Or rather, the potential comeback. Dreamcast hasn't made it yet, but it has already piqued the interest and sparked the imagination of the world's development community — a first, vital step toward success. As Sega releasns the rules of the hardware launch, the videogame world is watching from behind the glass, marveling at the power of the machine and dreaming of the games that are yet to come. The buzz is back, and the full story starts on page 90.

And what of Sony? As PlayStation approaches the final furlong, **Next Generation** corners the always controversial president of Sony Interactive Studios, Kelly Flock, for a frank discussion. Electronic Arts, for one, may be wishing we hadn't. The fun starts on page 108.

As and the industry powers its way toward a new generation, the magazine that will chronicle the change is making a few changes of its own. We hope you appreciate the new order.

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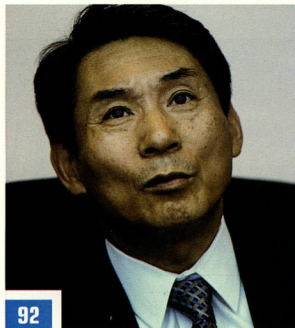
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Adventure
Gaming
is not
Dead

DREAMCAST

90



92



93



100

The full story ...

The next year will be the most critical ever in Sega's history as the company will literally sink or swim on the strength of Dreamcast. Is the system up to task? Is the company focused? A **Next Generation** report ...

92 SHOICHIRO IRIMAJIRI

The top man at Sega is well aware what a pivotal moment the Japanese launch of Dreamcast is going to be

94 BUSINESS STRATEGY

A system lives or dies by its third-party titles. How Sega is changing its third-party plan to woo publishers back to the fold

95 FIVE MYTHS

It hasn't even been released yet, and already everyone has some wrong ideas. **Next Generation** shatters five myths

96 TECHNOLOGY

As with any new system, Dreamcast is home to technology demos galore. Take a look, and see what it can do

98 DEVELOPERS

The steps Sega is taking to make development as friendly as possible, and how a few key developers think it's going

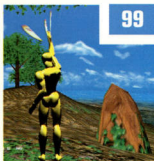
101 GAMES

All this new technology is great, but what does it mean to the gamer at the end of the day? Can we expect anything new?

102 WARP'S D2

The only officially announced Dreamcast title hails from one of Japan's most unconventional developers

99



97

September 1998

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Printed in the USA
Next Generation shares editorial and ad sales with the U.S.-based magazine EDGE.
Unauthorized manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Letters may be edited for space, clarity, or so we look cool.

Congratulations Erik and Jen — make this one stick, brother of mine. The doghouse award for July goes to the big CC: "May flaming voles crawl into your private glances." Enjoy your million dollar chair Simon, I sure looks comfy.



108

How the hell did he turn imagesoft around?

Several years ago Sony Imagesoft was known for hopelessly bad titles like *Hook* and *Frankenstein*. Then came Kelly Flock, PlayStation, and GameDay. Did the fact that Imagesoft was owned by Sony have anything to do with its success? How goes the battle with EA Sports? **Next Generation** has a provocative chat with the outspoken head of the newly rechristened 989 Studios.



Intelligence

All the gaming news of the world, relocated to the front of the magazine so you can read it first. This month, videogame piracy • PlayStation 2 news • The history of the high score • The Learning Company buys Red Orb • Nintendo partners with Hudson



33

08

ANALYZING

Intelligence

Gaming news from around the world

- 11 **Movers and Shakers** (business news)
- 14 **In the Studio** (breaking titles)
- 16 **Toolbox** (developer software)
- 18 **Arcadia** (coin-op news and updates)

24

NG JAPAN

Big in Japan

What's hot and what's happening in the Land of the Rising Sun: Sega's latest coin-op, Spike, storms the arcades; SNK's new PDA

33

NG SOFTWARE

Alphas

What's new and hot: *Tomb Raider III* (PSX/PC); *Redguard* (PC); *Xena* (PSX); *Uprising X* (PSX); *Final Fantasy VIII* (PSX); *Grim Fandango* (PC); *Blood 2* (PC); *Diablo 2* (multi); *Gauntlet: Legends* (arcade); *Turok 2* (N64/PC); *Glover* (N64)

108

TALKING

Kelly Flock

If there's one man in the gaming industry who's never afraid to speak his mind, it's the head of Sony's 989 Studios (or the developer formerly known as Sony Interactive Studios America)

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125

RATING

Finals

The sweet and the bittersweet: *Parasite Eve* (PSX); *Descent: Freespace* (PC); *Turbo Prop Racing* (PSX); *Vigilante 8* (PSX); *Kartia* (PSX)

151

CORRESPONDING

Letters

The president of the IDSA responds to the emulator issue. We respond back

153

NOW HIRING

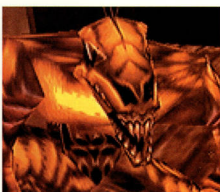
The game industry needs more people, now more than ever — your ticket to greatness?

159

ENDING

Next month ...

An exclusive profile of LucasArts, including new *Star Wars* titles. On sale September 22



Alphas: 35 games previewed

The best of what's yet to come, including: *Redguard* (PC); *Xena* (PSX); *Final Fantasy VIII* (PSX); *Blood 2* (PC); *Turok 2* (N64/PC); *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* (PC); *Diablo 2* (multi)



125



Finals: 23 games reviewed

The good and the bad, including: *Parasite Eve* (PSX); *Descent: Freespace* (PC); *Vigilante 8* (PSX); *Kartia* (PSX); *Mystical Ninja* (N64); *N20* (PSX); *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* (PSX)

The problem of Internet videogame piracy heightens,
and Sony shows its hand on its next generation console

INTELLIGENCE

Game industry news and analysis

CRACKDOWN

As Internet videogame piracy increases,
so too does action against it

The game industry has a huge problem on its hands.

The past year has seen a dramatic increase in the number of videogame piracy operations on the Web. The Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), which has been leading the crackdown on

Internet videogame piracy, receives more than 300 leads a month in regard to this problem. Says IDSA President Doug Lowenstein: "It's clear that pirates are becoming more brazen, are putting more and more titles onto their sites, as well as selling mod chips and Mr. Backup units, and generally daring the industry to act."

It's no dare anymore. The industry is acting, and in a big way, bringing in the U.S. Customs Service, the New York Police Department, the Department of Justice, and the FBI. In fact, the FBI recently boosted intellectual property rights protection closer to the top of its priorities list.

In one case several months ago, U.S. marshals busted a piracy operation in New York City that was selling gold PlayStation discs and soliciting orders through electronic auction houses and email. Materials that were seized included more than 100 different PlayStation titles, some modified PlayStation hardware, and a recordable drive that was being

used to copy the games onto CD-R. The bust occurred after the IDSA and eight of its members — SCEA, EA, Capcom, Crystal Dynamics, GT, Interplay, Virgin, and THQ — filed a complaint. And this was just one instance. The IDSA has in the past shut down more than 50 web sites offering pirated entertainment software over a period of several weeks.

An indication of the seriousness of the crime is the penalty. For a civil copyright infringement, perpetrators face a fine of up to \$100,000, and for a civil trademark infringement, fines can go as high as \$1 million. However, for a criminal copyright violation — the kind that results when a large operation is selling discs for profit — perpetrators face equally big fines and a maximum of five years in prison for each infringement.

Internet videogame piracy is a very young crime. Only in the past two years has the Internet started to boom, as more and



The IDSA is coming down hard on people who pirate games and sell them over the Internet; the crime can result in jail time.

NEWS BITES

Sideswipe comment of the month goes to Revolution boss Charles Cecil. When announcing the developer's split with Virgin, he explained: "Our relationship with Virgin Interactive, particularly its European arm, has worked very well, but it is now time to move on." What can he mean?

Once again the inherent dangers of rushing legislation into new technology arenas have emerged. Arizona Republican Senator Jon Kyl is attempting to ban gambling on the Internet. But his broad definition of "gambling" covers innocuous pastimes like fantasy sports leagues.

EA has once again shown its global leadership in the piracy question. Working with Turkish police and the IDSA, it helped manage a bust of a piracy outfit importing counterfeit games worth \$300,000 into Europe.

MicroProse chief Steve Race recently told a news agency: "We've seen Project X, evaluated it, and we don't think that it's a prudent risk for us to take. We think there are definite questions on the long-term viability of the system." The backlash has begun. It must be noted, however, that MicroProse boss Steve Race, used to work closely with Bernie Stolar at Sony.

PLAYSTATION 2: THE STORY SO FAR

In recent months, first-party and select third-party developers have been getting briefed on the capabilities and components of the PlayStation 2 hardware. While Sony was predictably low-key about the hardware at E3, it's been forced to reveal some of its hand because of the growing hype surrounding Dreamcast.

According to developers **Next Generation** has spoken to, Sony has completed the chipset and is currently developing libraries for the system. Sony has indicated that the console is based on a single-chip solution. Developers have also indicated that the power of the machine will be on par with the 3D capabilities of Dreamcast. One developer told **Next Generation**: "We're planning on doing the

same projects on both machines, given that the capabilities look like they will be very similar."

He went on to comment that he anticipated PlayStation 2 being more difficult to develop for than Dreamcast. He also said that it would almost certainly be far more difficult to port PC titles to the unit.

In other PlayStation 2 news, Sony is asking developers if they feel the need for a DVD medium as opposed to the current plans for CD-ROM. Sony hasn't committed one way or the other, but the fact that it is still polling developers is a good sign. Originally, potential developers

were told that the system would be CD-ROM-based, as Sony wasn't sure that the DVD format would be viable considering the time frame.

Developers have indicated

that Sony is planning a Japanese launch for the year 2000 with a U.S. launch to follow. Of course, by then, Dreamcast will have been on the shelves in Japan for more than a year and in the U.S. for some six months.



more people have become connected. Piracy itself has always been a problem for all creative content industries — movies and records, for instance — but the explosion of the Internet makes the ramifications that much greater.

basically honest and would not knowingly buy a pirated game in packaged form may be more inclined, in the privacy of their home when no one's looking and the fear of trafficking in stolen goods is reduced, to download or buy counterfeit goods."

Companies depend on profits to fund future projects, and if their profits are being usurped by pirates, they can't make as high-quality games. Honest consumers become the victims — while they continue buying games at full price through legitimate channels, they see the quality of future titles compromised by dishonest buyers trying to save a few dollars.

But there's a more emotional issue here too. "You're taking something that people have worked on for 18 months or more, often for 16 hours a day," says Lowenstein, "something that people have poured their creative heart and souls into, something they've invested millions of dollars to create and millions more to market, and in a nanosecond, you're making it available for free or nominal costs to people all over the world, denying the creators the chance to profit from their artistic and creative expression. That's wrong and shameful."

WHAT IS IT?

These two companies once competed for consumer dollars in the console hardware market and now have joined forces to take on an old rival as well as a proven newcomer.

If profits are being usurped by pirates, [companies] can't make as high-quality games

For one, it makes it simple for just about anyone to distribute product. How simple? "Well, suffice it to say," says Lowenstein, "it's quite easy for anyone with a modicum of computer and Internet literacy." Another problem is that the consumer now has an easy, covert conduit for buying games at much lower costs. "Internet piracy is especially troublesome," says Lowenstein, "because people who are

The industry hope is to stifle the problem before it becomes so pervasive that an overwhelming number of consumers become tempted.

If consumers really think about the issue, they come to realize that internet game piracy not only hurts game companies, but also themselves. A typical game may cost upward of \$1.5 million, just to develop.

Nintendo rarely admits to such foolishness as making mistakes. But Shigeru Miyamoto recently came pretty close. "I feel there is a bad atmosphere here that you can't do something new at Nintendo these days. I never would have thought things like that before. Now we are changing into an organization that allows people to create things."

Origin has faced much criticism for trailblazing online gaming. Now it's trying online retailing. *Wing Commander: Secret Ops* is a series of 56 single-player missions, which can be downloaded free over the Internet. This must surely be seen as a trial run for buying games over the Web.

John Carmack says he has as much chance of destroying hackers as he has of eliminating cockroaches. The *Id* game-master conceded: "All we can try to do is make things obnoxiously difficult, but unfortunately, there are people who just take that as a challenge. Effort spent on that is effort not making gameplay better."

Only two games are played as much by females as males, according to research among children by PDA — *Mario 64* and *Croc*. Such are the similarities between the two that you could argue only one game crosses the gender divide.

PROFILE

Name: Bjørn Arild Lynne

Accomplishments: music for *Worms 1 & 2*, *Pinball Addiction*, *Seven Kingdoms*, *Dominion X2*, and *Alien Breed II*

When Norwegian-born Bjørn Arild Lynne started playing around with a Sinclair ZX Spectrum, an add-on device known as a SpecDrum, and his sister's tape machine, it was the first in a chain of events that led the teenager to superstardom. Known as Dr. Awesome of the Crusaders to his peers, Lynne has produced music for many games and released numerous CDs ranging from original trance music to collections of his game and "scene" music. For those interested in his game music, check out *Decade*, a compilation of several standard audio tracks, many MP3 files, a large MOD collection, and several MIDI's — all on one CD. Also, Lynne's latest CD, *Wizard of the Winds*, is a great example of his mainstream alter-ego (<http://www.whiterose.net/lylne/>).

IT IS ...

NEC and Sega, who once locked horns with TurboGrafx-16 and Sega Genesis, face old rival Nintendo and newcomer Sony with the product of their combined efforts: Dreamcast.

NEWS BITES CONT.

Fox says it's sorry for the perceived drug connotations of *N20's* ad campaign. The campaigns, "Never trip alone" and "Breathe in. Breathe out," were pulled after protests from anti-drug campaigners. Fox followed standard industry practice by appearing amazed that anyone would make such an obtuse link.

Many in the industry — including Sega insiders — were confused by Sega's insistence on not using its famous logo in the much-maligned Dreamcast logo. Shoichiro Inumai explained that market research suggests the logo "creates some negative feelings" in certain cases. Sega CD, 32X, and Saturn owners, perhaps?

Hollywood's inexplicable love affair with videogame licenses continues apace. Latest to face the transition is Sega's *House of the Dead*, itself inspired by countless zombie movies.

Sony executives have recently completed an official tour of major third-party publishers in Japan. The agenda? Talk down Nintendo's *Zelda*-inspired resurgence, make soothing noises about PlayStation 2, and most of all, piss in Sega's pond.

When was the last time you scored?

A **Next Generation** look at what happened to the **high score**

In the early '80s, it was hip to feather your hair, wear parachute pants, listen to Van Halen, and hang out at the local arcade trying to beat the high score on *Pac-Man* or *Defender*. Back then, having your initials next to the high score in a game meant bragging rights, jealous friends, and even local superstardom.

But now, games are more dynamic — they're about exploration, stories, and characters, and the concept of the high score has all but disappeared. So what happened? What brought about the high score's demise?

When the first games appeared, they required two players and score was kept per game. *Space War*, the earliest game, kept track of rounds won per player. In 1972, *Pong* debuted in a small bar and followed the same principles as tennis, tracking rounds per player. Suddenly, single-player games emerged, where score became the focus. Atari released a single-player variation of the *Pong* theme in 1976 under the name *Breakout*, in which the objective was to collect points while hitting a ball toward a wall of bricks. The first game to implement the high score was *Space Invaders*, but players couldn't enter their initials. That was still the real beginning of digital scorekeeping,



The importance of achieving a high score has decreased since the birth of gaming



up more than 15 million points in 16 hours of *Defender*. That fed the fire, as gamers of all ages believed they could beat those numbers. The equation was simple: Get the highest score and become a superstar. "It was a thrill knowing that you were the best player in the world at that game and having the admiration of friends and families, and having all the girls wanting to touch your bottom," says Julian Rignall, former world record holder in *Defender*, *Pole Position*, and *Crystal Castles*.

however. The acclamation that came from setting a record even inspired kids to steal money from their parents and rob grocery stores for quarters.

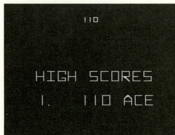
By 1982, the high score craze was in full swing. That year, *Time's* cover story, "Gronki! Flash! Zap! Video Games Are Blitzing the World," brought attention to America's obsession with the high score, singling out several gamers for their scores in games like *Asteroids* and *Defender*. The article brought fame to Steve Juraszek, a 15-year-old who racked

eventually initials (which debuted in *Asteroids*) became the most important goal in games, and *Crystal Castles* even incorporated the top player's initials into gameplay. Contests were held all over the country, television videogame shows like "Starcade" were born, and pimply teenagers got their names in mainstream periodicals for high scores earned over days of grueling gaming.

Movers and Shakers

by Colin Campbell, Next Generation's international correspondent

As the industry matured, however, the importance of the high score began to dwindle, and storylines became more important. The idea of making a story the basis of a game can be traced as far back as Namco's *Pac-Man*. While getting on the high score table was the number one goal, it was also important to make it to the next stage. Each level contained certain bonuses, like cherries or oranges, and discovering what bonus came at the next stage was impetus



Jungle Hunt gave players more than score (top). Asteroids introduced initials (above)

enough to get players to finish a level. In addition, at certain intervals in the game, a story unfolded through the use of cut scenes — *Pac-Man* met Ms. *Pac-Man*, they got married, they had a kid, and so on; gamers had to know what happened next.

Games became more complex, and so did the scoring system. The advancement of graphics and ROM capacity contributed most to this trend. Now games were capable of multiple screens, with more detailed graphics and realistic environments. Titles such as Taito's *Phoenix* pushed shooters into a multistage era, where the real reward was in progressing through multiple screens toward the ultimate battle against the mother ship.

When *Super Mario Brothers* released in 1986, the high score was on its way out. The game still kept score, but the goal was to save the princess and to explore, as players were more concerned with collecting mushrooms and coins for free lives and other bonuses.

There were other factors that contributed to the downfall of the high score. Arcade owners, concerned about turning a profit, didn't like the fact that skilled players were monopolizing machines for hours on end on a single quarter. In response, manufacturers began developing games that had a beginning, a middle, and an end. The introduction of the "continue" option also devalued the high score table, as players could keep feeding the machine quarters to increase their scores. By the time the NES made its impact in the industry, arcades were moving on — and it was game over for the high score.

Will score ever come back?

Probably not. As technology evolves, games will become even more complex, and current titles that still employ a high score, such as *NZO*, *Einhandler*, and *Incoming*, are in an ever-smaller minority. But classic games are making something of a comeback; titles like *Centipede* and *Asteroids* are being retrofitted for the '90s, with score intact. Still, it's safe to say that score will never play the pivotal role it once did in gaming history. **NEB**



Pac-Man's cut scenes gave players another reason to play the game

That rotten game industry

The **Next Gen** editors have asked that this month's column be dedicated to all that's most loathsome, rank, and rotten about this industry. I oblige with heavy trepidation. In high school I flunked Vitriol and was lucky to get a pass in Low Sarcasm. My attempt to join the elite in Sneering Scofferly ended in humiliation.

However, the game industry offers such a rich seam that even an amateur is bound to come away with a few nuggets of gleaming canker. My greatest fear is that hate and scorn tend to consume those who deal in such currency, sending their poor brains awry. But my mind is solid. I dare say I'll come out of the experience in a sane and balanced state.

First in the hate parade,

then, are execs who, in their aristocratic arrogance, treat the public as fools. Villainous crimes under this rubric include:

- Approaching questions of genuine public interest by mouthing fatuous comments to the press.
- Creating sad advertisements that cater to insulting preconceptions about the adolescent mind.
- Internal empire building and

are too, contrary to public opinion, the glorious proletariat of this industry. Many represent the bourgeoisie, exploiting the public for the miserable gain of coin. Their crimes against the people have not gone unnoticed. Come the revolution they will repent. The charges are:

- Herd-mentality planning, which creates an annual swamp of single-genre madness.
- An astonishingly cavalier approach to the dangers not only of cliché but also of stereotypes.
- Craven bowing and scraping to dimly perceived market forces.
- Blaming marketers when things go badly for their crap games.
- An easier willingness to talk about their own talent than to actually express it.
- Goatees.

But there's more. When the industry comes under scrutiny, one group cannot go unremarked. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you The Press. When the glorious revolution arrives, its criminal activity will reap a whirlwind of just retribution. These are just a few examples of its base wickedness:

- Review-mark obsession. Such is the self-regard of some

First in this hate parade, then, are execs who, in their aristocratic arrogance, treat the public as fools

politicking, which results in management overload and the inevitable talent evacuation that follows.

- Brattish behavior when things go badly, particularly regarding low review marks or press criticism.
- Bad neckties.

But exec-bashing is an all-too-simple pastime. Game designers

reviewers that they believe in the sanctity of the review mark and will argue endlessly that their 72% is more accurate than your 73%. This can only be interpreted as an expression of low self-esteem.

• Macho-man marking. "You gave it 21%? Coward. I gave it 4%." This is a result of the warped belief that toughness, not honesty, serves the public ▶

Movers and Shakers cont.

interest. (I will now be wrongly accused of "not believing" in low marks when what I should be accused of is not believing in low morality.)

- Credit frenzy: When you applaud a movie, your goodwill and admiration go to the people who made the movie. Generally, the projectionist doesn't figure. There are editors who haven't worked this out.

- Crowding about exclusives: Even the ducks that get your scraps of bread at the park understand who is ultimately in control. Too many editors haven't figured out that, splash and flap as they might, the exclusive is usually given and rarely taken.

- Wearing short trousers that are likely to cause offense.

No, when all's said and done, it's evident that this industry is diseased. We must rid ourselves of the parasites and scum who sully our great pastime of gaming. It's time for a change. Together, fellow gamer, hand in hand, we must march into a bright sunlit future of five-star games, amusing and perceptive ad campaigns, and an end to exploitation of the masses.

Together we shall sweep the vermin into the sea. And with bare arms and sweating brows we shall sing with joy as we make the games ourselves and distribute them freely among the poor, the wretched, the bored!

No longer shall we suffer the inequalities and corruption of this festering game industry. Follow me, comrades. Raise your voices in righteous song. Follow me now! To the barricades!

Editor's Note: It may be a few months until this column returns to **Next Generation**. We felt that perhaps it would be best for the author to take a little break. A few decades should do the trick.

Company in limbo

What's next for **Red Orb** after being bought by **The Learning Company**?

The fate of Red Orb Entertainment is wrapped up in red tape, corporate lingo, and a lot of "it's too early to speculate" these days.

When The Learning Company bought Broderbund for \$420 million last June, it also inherited Red Orb, owner of brands like *Riven*, *Myst*, and *Prince of Persia*. Since then, the positioning and status of Red Orb have been unclear, and the rumor-mill is picking up speed.

It all started in the last week of June, when Michael Perik, The Learning Company's CEO and chairman, announced the sale and tossed out this comment: "The company, after discussion with Broderbund, I think will put a strong emphasis on these nonentertainment, education, family-oriented productivity franchises, and we will be de-emphasizing entertainment as not seen as the core to this company's future. That does not mean that we will not be opportunistic in terms of generating profits, particularly from the *Myst* and *Riven* franchises."

This was later confirmed by Susan Getgood, vice president of corporate communicators for The Learning Company. "We're not going



to focus on entertainment, we are going to focus on education. That's sort of it in a nutshell."

Leaving Red Orb where? No one knows. There's plenty of guesswork and rumors going on, but nothing concrete has been decided, although Kate Hedstrom, a Red Orb spokesperson, assures, "It's all very positive for Red Orb and its products."

The likely scenario now is that The Learning Company will sell off Red Orb to the highest bidder. But there is a small chance that if The Learning Company finds out how much Red Orb is worth, it will want to hold on to the division. If



POP (top), Baja Racing (center), and Extreme Warfare (bottom) are all still full speed ahead

that's the case, it might not be too bad. After all, Red Orb was owned by Broderbund, another formerly well-to-do edutainment company, and The Learning Company actually does own SSI, known for the *Warhammer* series, via its purchase of Mindscape six months ago. And SSI has remained fairly autonomous.

But all this is speculation. What consumers really care about are the games. And on that front, everything seems just fine. "Right now," says Hedstrom, "all products are moving forward as planned. We're still very excited about *Prince of Persia*, *Extreme Warfare*, and *Baja Racing*, so yes, we're still moving ahead." **NG**



The Learning Company expects to capitalize on the *Myst* franchise

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In the Studio

The Battlezone and Dark Reign teams have left Activision to form Pandemic Studios. The catch? The studio is actually fully funded by Activision for five projects, the first two being sequels to *Dark Reign* and *Battlezone*. "We see it as a win-win situation," said President Josh Resnick, citing the move toward independence as the first amicable one between a developer and publisher. The *Battlezone* and *Dark Reign* sequels are scheduled for release in the late spring of '99.

Tomb Raider for Dreamcast? Adrian Smith at Core Design intimates there is a team working on a next generation game beyond *Tomb Raider III* that might be starring Lara Croft. As the *Tomb Raider* franchise is sewn up exclusively to Sony until Christmas '99, any game starring Lara before then on any other platform will legally have to be called something else.



All those polygons are a natural for Dreamcast

While it's long been known that Acclaim has held the rights to "South Park," it was only recently discovered that the company's premier studio, Austin-based Iguana, will be developing the *South Park* game for Nintendo 64, PlayStation, and PC. While the game's genre remains a mystery, we can only hope that the content will be as disturbingly humorous as the show.



The simple charm of "South Park," coming soon

Shiny Entertainment is moving steadily forward with its not-so-secret secret project, *Sacrifice*. This multiplayer, internet/LAN fantasy title won't be out until next year, at which point Dreamcast will already have a powerful grip on the Japanese market and be gearing up to release here. The connection? Dave Perry has already said that he's excited by the new Sega technology (which includes a built-in modem), and with his own preference moving toward multiplayer games, could *Sacrifice* be a prime candidate for a Dreamcast title? For once, Shiny is keeping quiet.



Could Shiny's Sacrifice be heading for Dreamcast too?

Capcom has announced the titles for discs Three through Five in its classic *Capcom Generation* series. Highlights for *Capcom Generation Three* include the *Xenious*-like, vertical-scrolling shooters *Vulgus* and *Exed Exes*. *Capcom Generation Four* will include *Mercs* and *Commando*, while *Five* will feature arcade-perfect versions of *Street Fighter II*, *Street Fighter II Championship Edition*, and *Street Fighter II Turbo*.



More Capcom classics will see a new Generation

Proving that no car combat game goes without a sequel, *Interplay* is hard at work on *Carnageddon 2*. Activision has further proven this theory, revealing that *Vigilante 8* will see some kind of second coming on PlayStation, and that some spin on the *I-76* universe might appear on a "new console" (read: Dreamcast).

Nintendo and Hudson double-team

Manegi keeps developers happy



In what must seem like shutting the barn door a full year after the horse has bolted, Nintendo has formed Manegi—a joint venture between NCL and loyal developer/publisher Hudson. Headed up by former Nintendo Manufacturing Division chief, Hiroshi Ikeda, the company's role will be to provide much overdue assistance and support for Nintendo third parties and to help develop new technologies. Manegi will also sponsor licensee development for N64, 64DD, and Game Boy, effectively allowing Nintendo to grow its library without getting its hands dirty.

Hudson may seem like an odd choice for a powerhouse like Nintendo (particularly with the similar recent joining of twin giants Square and EA), but in Japan, Hudson is seen as a staunch supporter of N64 and one of the few third parties to consistently produce successful cartridge titles. Far from being merely a help desk for disgruntled N64 developers (of which there are plenty in Japan), the new Japanese venture will focus much energy on exploring new ways to exploit Nintendo's hardware, including, tellingly, the 64DD and Game Boy Color. Both systems provide ample opportunities for greater user interaction and customization along the lines of the already hugely popular *Pocket Monsters* titles.

The company cost approximately \$7 million to start, with Nintendo funding 60% and Hudson the rest. The reasonably small amount of capital pumped into the project suggests rather more low-key R&D activity than earth-shattering game development, but if Manegi can provide third parties with access

to such technology as the *Mario* engine, Nintendo may remove some of the obstacles that have so far kept licensee development—including Hudson's own *Bomberman* titles—in the doldrums. What Manegi will not do, claims Ikeda, is develop in-house titles. Japanese company deals are notoriously secretive, however, and following their previous collaborations (*Wario Blast* on Game Boy pitted *Bomberman* against Nintendo's *Warrio*), this seemingly uninspiring Nintendo/Hudson affair may be harboring bigger plans than it currently admits to.

NG

Datastream

First, free-roaming environment game: *Starfire* from Eady. First, *Pac-Man* cameo in another game: *Kickman* from Bally/Midway. First game based on the rock group Journey: *Journey: Escape by Data Age* for Atari 2600 (inst. *Journey* from Bally/Midway).

First, violent videogame: *Death Race*, the arcade game that featured cars running over people screaming in agony. First game based on a movie: *Death Race*, after the movie *Death Race 2000* starring Sylvester Stallone. First game with a button for hyperspace: *Space Wars* by

Cybertronics. First person to die playing a videogame: Peter Blawski, who died of a heart attack while playing *Barzak* at the Friar Tuck game room in Calumet City, Illinois. First game to use a trackball controller: *NFL Football* by Atari. First videogame made into a cartoon: *Pac-Man*. Number of dits on any given level of the arcade *Pac-Man*: 240. Person who said that his ideal retirement is to sit in a dark room playing *Space Invaders*: Walter Krukite.



Hollywood , game industry 1

Game divisions have claimed their rightful place within media giants Universal and Warner

In the game industry, "Hollywood talent" isn't just an oxymoron, it's the kiss of death. The worst offenders, such as Digital Pictures and Rocket Science, are rotting in bankruptcy, yet that hasn't stopped companies like Warner and Universal from taking on the market. And with savvy game industry veterans at the helm, each company has found a unique model that might just work, both for gamers and for its bottom line.

Taking a more traditional stab, Universal has launched Universal Digital Arts in San Jose, California—far from the glitz of Los Angeles. The group's focus, according to President Roger Hector, is to take Universal-licensed properties the team is passionate about and create engaging games around them. It's not surprising the team picked *Xena* as its first project (See Alpha, page 56).

"It makes sense to get someone from the game industry to work with the game industry," says Hector, a 22-year industry veteran who's worked for Atari, Sega, and EA. "It's been a problem for most of the studios who haven't maintained employees who are hip to games." Perhaps that's why MGM Interactive and DreamWorks, although based on similar models, have had identity



Thanks to Warner Interactive, "Pinky and the Brain" can go 3D

problems and product delays.

By contrast, the oldest of Hollywood muscle, Warner, has opted against investing in its own studio or developer. Instead, it created a new licensing division, Warner Interactive, led by Executive Director Rob Sebastian. The division is responsible for making the library of Warner films and characters, from Ben Hur to Bugs Bunny, available to developers. Sebastian, who polished his licensing and marketing skills as the former vice-president of sales and marketing for InScape, and as

director of licensing for Prima Publishing before that, understands that some concessions must be made in order for interactive products to succeed. "For us," Sebastian says, "it's more important that the game captures the essence of a film. Film is a linear narrative, and following the script has often limited the quality of the interactive property." Three of Sebastian's nine employees are experienced game producers, working to ensure a title maintains the property's integrity, from design through release.

In its eight months of existence, Warner Interactive has secured deals with Ocean to create a series of Looney Tunes games, Sierra to create *Babylon 5*, and Southpeak for a *Pinky and the Brain* title. Sebastian says these "partnerships" can be made with developers as well as publishers, and that if a talented development group can present a solid design document for *Caddyshack Golf*, he can arrange it.

With game industry executives like Sebastian and Hector taking leadership roles within major media houses, one can hope the major days of *E.T.* are behind us. **NE**



Haven't we met before?

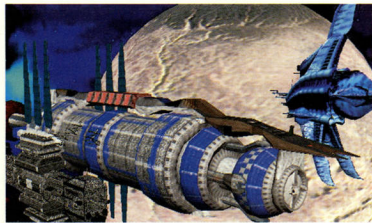
Mr. Nutz
(Ocean, 1993)

Explore stunningly unimaginative forests and collect acorns as a sneaker-wearing squirrel. A typical example of the paint-by-numbers, 16-bit platformer. Mr. Nutz proved once again that great graphics do not a great game make.



Twelve Tales: Conker 64
(Rare, 1998)

Explore stunningly unimaginative forests and collect acorns as a sneaker-wearing squirrel. A typical example of the paint-by-numbers, 64-bit platformer. *Conker 64* proves once again that great graphics do not a great game make. Just kidding.



Working through careful licensing deals rather than starting its own studio, Warner works with companies like Sierra on *Babylon 5*

Toolbox

House of Moves

When a game developer or movie studio needs a CG image to move and "act" like a real human being, the quickest and most efficient method of generating this kind of complex animation is through motion capture. Now in its third year of operation, the Venice Beach, California-based House of Moves is among the busiest businesses of its kind, providing not only motion capture equipment and facilities, but also a team of



"raw" marker data must then be filtered and massaged through Vicon's Bodybuilder software into a useable (and recognizably human) animation armature, or skeleton. "It's not just the system," insists Jarrod Phillips, HOM's head of sales. "You have to have the people who are dedicated to the technology and keeping everything upgraded. Our biggest advantage isn't just that we have the equipment, it's been our experience and the ability to work well with our customers to meet their needs. We do a lot of preproduction with our clients up front to make sure we understand. So if they want to get the data into their 3D software, but then also into their game engines, we work with them a lot initially to make sure

Sugar Ray Leonard wears the reflectors (top). The Vicon system can capture large areas, like the deck of *Titanic* (center). The final product: an animated skeleton (bottom)

animators and artists who can fine-tune that data for the customer.

HOM uses the Vicon 370e, a seven-camera system that can capture at 60 or 120 frames per second. The actor whose movement is to be digitized is covered with a series of reflective markers before performing the movement that is digitized by the cameras. A computer matches up the views from all the cameras and projects the positions of the reflectors in 3D space.

This is where the real work—and in some sense, artistry—of motion capture takes over. The

that pipeline is set up correctly," HOM initially began by doing work for commercials and feature films (like the "Virtual Andre" spot for Nike and the movie *Titanic*), but games have been a growth area, especially sports titles like *Knockout Kings*, *Madden '99*, and *VR Football*. The Vicon system also has the distinct advantage of being portable.

If nothing else, the sheer volume of work House of Moves has produced over the last few years—and for such a broad range of clients with such widely varying needs—speaks of the studio's versatility and expertise. In the mo-cap business, it certainly has the edge.

Tracking

Keeping tabs on the latest peripherals

Microsoft has proven it is not only a software pioneer, but also a peripheral pioneer. This fall it will release its first force-feedback steering wheel. The SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel connects directly to a Sound Blaster-compatible PC game port, offering a realistic design and feel. The technology allows true simulation of road surface textures, crashes, bumps, centrifugal forces, engine vibration, and suspension vibration, as well as other driving conditions. The package will include rugged foot pedals and full versions of *CART Precision Racing* and *Monster Truck Madness 2*.



Microsoft also plans to ship its first PC speakers. The Microsoft Digital Sound System 80 is designed to bring PC users high-end audio normally reserved for

home theater systems. The 80-watt system is easy to install and connects directly to a Universal Serial Bus (USB) port or to a Sound Blaster-compatible audio board with a MIDI-enabled game port. The three-piece package will include two satellite speakers and a subwoofer with a built-in digital amplifier. It also features exclusive patented wOox technology from Philips Electronics for impressive bass response.



Lego's fall contribution to gaming (well, sort of) comes in the form of *Lego MindStorms*, a collaboration between Lego and M.I.T. to create programmable Legos. The starter package includes a programmable CPU base, two motors, light sensors, bump

sensors, and an infrared communications tower that connects to a serial port. Users will be able to create programmable robots and vehicles with limitless uses, the foremost, by default (and probably not Lego's intent), being robots for destruction.

Ascii has finally released its Sphere 360 controller for PlayStation. The ergonomic 3D controller is similar to the PlayStation controller, except it has a large orb for intuitive 3D movement in games like *Descent*. Ascii has also released the ASCIIwheel 64, a steering wheel controller for N64 that is easily adjusted for storage and works with the N64 Rumble Pak.



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Arcadia

by Marcus Webb, editor of *RePlay* magazine

"Rushing" on ISDN

Visitors to certain San Francisco and Los Angeles area arcades are getting an extra thrill this spring and summer: a chance to participate in the pilot test of Midway's advanced Wavenet system to link videogames in separate locations for remote gaming in real time (or just about). Since April, more than 50 units of Atari's *Rush the Rock* driving simulator have been linked via ISDN lines for multiplayer competitive gameplay, with no perceptible delay in the action. *RePlay*



Rush the Rock is bringing gamers from across the land together with the Wavenet multiplayer gaming system

recently visited a test arcade site in Glendale, California. Players in Northern and Southern California competed as if they were on a single linked system in one local arcade. Midway and its sister firm Atari said they will expand the test to more than 50 California arcades, with more than 100 linked games in the coming months.

The test has already clocked higher levels of play because of the popularity of the new technology. "I play *Rush the Rock* on the Wavenet system a lot and it's really great," said one local gamer. "One thing I like is how you can actually tell you're competing against another player and not against the machine."

"Wavenet represents a major breakthrough because, unlike existing forms of arcade

play and linked Internet play, there is no delay in gameplay," explained Tony Metke, Wavenet project leader. "Wavenet can link even the fastest sports, fighting, and driving games, allowing players who are hundreds or even thousands of miles apart to compete in real time."

According to Atari marketing VP Mary Fujiwara, "Wavenet technology is a perfect fit for *Rush* because it's been a very popular multiplayer game. The unit's popularity has increased when multiple units are linked at one location; and we expect a major increase in play now that players can race against opponents across California."

A full list of Wavenet locations is available on Midway's web site (<http://www.midway.com>) or the Wavenet web site (<http://www.rushrock.com>).

Sega shake-up

In the aftermath of painfully bad fiscal year-end results (that famous \$300 million plus loss), Sega Enterprises Ltd. has slashed its Japanese board of directors from 25 to 10. As part of the shake-up, some prominent former heavyweights resigned from the voting board, including Sega co-founder Dave Rosen. The new board is being run under Sega Chairman Isao Okawa, Vice Chairman Hayao Nakayama, and President Shoichiro Irimajiri. Four of the 10 directors are new faces from outside the industry; it seems Sega wants some fresh perspectives on the business.

PlayNet bows out

A Reuters report posted in June stated that PlayNet Technologies filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on June 4, listing liabilities of \$19.5 million and assets of just under \$14,000. Court papers showed more than 200 unsecured trade of legal claims against the firm added up to \$17.9 million, said Reuters, with the largest (\$6 million) held by a New York City investment firm, Southbrook International. Arcadia could not reach PlayNet execs for comment.

Hardcore

We can all recall our finest moments of controller-smashing fury. Here are my favorite videogame frustration incidents.

1) After a particularly disappointing loss in *Super Dodge Ball* for the NES, I removed the game pak from the system and slammed it on the floor. I then found that the cartridge's contact area had disappeared inside the cartridge — and it was a RENTED game! After unsuccessfully trying to retrieve the contacts with a pair of tweezers, I slammed the cartridge down the opposite way, and the contacts slipped back into place. I quickly resumed playing.

2) While playing *Pit-Fighter* on the Sega Genesis, I became extremely agitated trying to defeat the two chain men. I heaved my controller at the system. It hit the cartridge squarely, knocked it out of the system, and cracked it nearly in two. It still played fine, however. If there's one edge the old school has on the new school, it's durability — that stuff was indestructible!

3) While playing *Pro Wrestling* on the NES, I got upset because I



Someone forgot to give Mr. Bradley his Ritalin before he played these NES classics

was losing to the third opponent — an insult to my skill. I kicked my TV into the wall, breaking the picture tube. My parents were not pleased, and, needless to say, it was a long while before I had another TV.

Of course, I no longer engage in such childish behavior.

Michael Bradley
MEhype@aol.com

This month in history

- September 5, 1996** Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) releases *Crash Bandicoot* as a PlayStation exclusive for \$59.95
- September 8, 1991** Nintendo of America kicks off the biggest TV campaign in history, with a \$25 million advertising budget dedicated to the 16-bit SNES and another \$10 million allocated to its traditional 8-bit line and the Game Boy. Nintendo expects to surpass Sega Genesis, which was introduced in 1989
- September 9, 1991** Nintendo officially launches the 16-bit SNES on the retail market. It is immediately available at Toys "R" Us for \$199.99
- September 9, 1995** Sony launches PlayStation in the U.S. at \$299
- September 15, 1989** Sega sets out to bury the dismal sales of the Master System with the U.S. release of its Genesis system, with the arcade game conversion of *Altered Beast* as a pack-in
- September 16, 1991** Sega of America kicks off a two-day, \$10 million advertising campaign depicting the Sega Genesis as the superior choice against the Nintendo 16-bit alternative
- September 17, 1995** Windows 95 is released
- September 29, 1996** Nintendo launches the Nintendo 64 videogame system in the U.S. for \$249. In just three days, Nintendo reports to have sold 350,000 units

Sources: Next Generation Online and Don Thomas' I.C. When (<http://www.4software.com/ichent/>)



Odds of landing this move: 10 to 1.

Odds of fathering children afterwards: 1,000,000 to 1.



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Microsoft

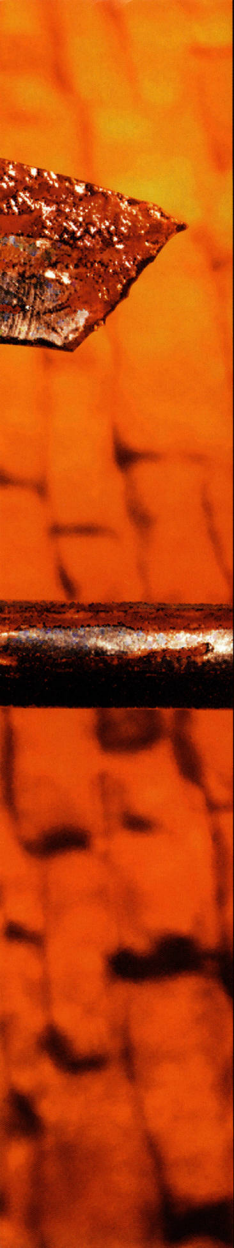


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BIG IN JAPAN

Next Generation reports from the Eastern front

King of pockets

The ever-changing Japanese market is gearing up for its next craze — the PDA. Already, Sony has launched its own, and now SNK (of *King of Fighters* fame) is about to engineer its own leap onto the bandwagon. The Neo Geo Pocket will appear in October and works both as a stand-alone handheld and as an add-on to Sega's forthcoming Dreamcast, accessing the console through the dual ports mounted on the system's oversized controller. Unlike Sony's keychain-style PDA, the Neo Geo Pocket has a 16-bit CPU and a screen resolution greater than Nintendo's own Game Boy. The handheld is compatible with Sega's own VMS (Virtual Memory System), which comes packaged with Dreamcast, but it

is larger and more powerful. Also, a fast CPU and 160x152 monochrome screen allow for more than mere Tamagotchi-style games. SNK plans to convert *King of Fighters*, along with SNK RPGs and sports titles, to the Pocket, which comes equipped with an internal lithium battery for saved game data. Added functionality comes in the form of a world time screen, digital assistant mode, and built-in calendar. For extra appeal, there's also a horoscope program. Though SNK is unlikely to garner the same developer support that has made Game Boy such a success, the Sega connection should prove to be enough of a selling point to ensure strong sales. How long, **Next Generation** wonders, before Bandai gets in on the act?



The Neo Geo Pocket will be both larger and more powerful than Sega's PDA

NEO GEO POCKET SPECS

HARDWARE

Size: 122mmx24mmx74mm
Weight: 160g with batteries
CPU: 16-bit
Screen: 160x152 LCD
Colors: 8 gradations
Back-up memory function

SOFTWARE

Type: Cartridge
Weight: 20g
Size: 54mmx7.5mmx46.5mm

SELLING BIG IN JAPAN THIS MONTH

1. Final Fantasy V (Square)
2. Mitsumete Night (Konami)
3. Bushido Blade 2 (Square)
4. Gran Turismo (SCE)
5. Biohazard 2 (Capcom)
6. Medallot Parts Collection (Imagineer)
7. Clock Tower Ghost Head (Human)
8. Tenchu (SCE)
9. Xenogears (Square)
10. Dead or Alive (Tecmo)

Nintendo squeezes Mother into cart

The 64DD picture, instead of developing, is in clear danger of fading completely. First *Zelda* was seen as a risk on disc, and now *Mother 3* has been pushed over to cart. The popular Japanese RPG would surely have garnered some extra sales for the seemingly doomed add-on, but in squeezing it onto a cartridge, Nintendo has shown (once again) that it harbors little hope that the "bulky drive" can buck the forces of history and become the first hardware upgrade to survive. The executives at Nintendo will no doubt be hoping the *Pocket Monsters* craze is still in full swing when and if the 64DD launches this December. If there's one thing the industry doesn't need right now, it's another oversized silicon paperweight.



The fate of 64DD was once more thrown into question as Nintendo moved *Mother 3* to cart

Sega spiked

HIP TO BE SQUARE



Square has announced that it will be developing titles for Sony's tiny PDA. The keychain-style handheld lacks power but is small enough to become a must-have accessory among Japanese schoolchildren. Square wouldn't say which, if any, of its hit properties it would be converting, but the system is far too primitive to allow for anything above Tamagotchi level, Chocobo raising, anyone?



The Model 3 Step 2 visuals easily surpass VF3

Sega's legendary AM2 division has just completed its next Model 3 coin-op fighting game, *Spike*. But this is no mere *Virtua Fighter* clone — *Spike* could revolutionize the genre with its multiplayer options and unique arena designs. Up to 16 can play at any one time, all of them with their own cabinets, and in what is perhaps a nod to Dreamcast's own network capabilities, they can be linked at different sites — globally. This could allow for championship bouts between competing teams from arcades around the world — a first not just for fighting games, but for any coin-op videogame.

Another first is the size of the arenas. Sega has eschewed the ring in favor of huge urban environments, providing players with the opportunity to take the high ground by standing on elevators or cars, as well as the ability to use a multitude of blunt



But it's the 16-user, multiplayer qualities that could elevate *Spike* to classic status

instruments as weapons. After the disappointing reception received by *VF3* and *Super GT*, this innovative new fighter could be just what Sega needs to spice up its coin-op line. The only potential problem the title faces is expense. Running on Model 3, Step 2 affords unparalleled realism but will leave arcade owners with huge costs that many may find too much to bear.



Spike offers never-before-seen freedom for players as they take the fight to wide-open streets and malls

Namco goes techno



Soul Calibur is the much-improved sequel to last year's popular *Soul Blade*



If the history of '90s coin-op can be summed up with just two words, fighting and racing, it is largely the fault (or honor — depending on your point of view) of Namco R&D and its opposite numbers at Sega's AM divisions. It would surprise no one, then, to learn that the latest titles to emerge from Namco's Japanese headquarters are *Soul Calibur* and *Techno Drive* — a weapons-based fighting game and a racing sim respectively.

Soul Calibur, previously announced as simply a "new weapon fighting game" back in March, is the System 12 sequel to the popular *Soul Edge*, a game that appeared in the West as *Soul Blade* on PlayStation last year. The original was a bigger success on console than it was in Japanese arcades, where otaku like their fighting games complex and perfectly play-balanced. *Soul Calibur* aims to set the record straight and advance the 3D fighting genre another inch with an innovative control system. Previously, both the *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken* series allowed for bouts only along an imaginary line, effectively limiting the characters to a 2D range of movement within a 3D environment. Namco has solved the problem by allowing a single tap on the joystick to move the characters in any of eight directions, with a tap-and-hold providing a *Bushido Blade*-style dash. By simply pushing the joystick, the player can summon a move, jump, or crouch. The overly simplistic *Soul Edge* button formation has also been replaced with a four-button

attack system that splits moves into horizontal, vertical, guard, and kick. *Soul Calibur* will certainly be converted to PlayStation, though no release date has been announced. By the looks of the graphics, however, the Namco coders will be spending a lot of time with Sony's Performance Analyzer in an attempt to squeeze every last drop of power from the aging chipset.

Techno Drive is equally innovative, though somewhat less exciting, as it won't be making the leap to console. Quite separate from Namco's Racer brand, *Techno Drive* judges the player more on individual skills than on overall performance. As well as placing in a race, the game evaluates you on hand, foot, and real techniques. "Hand" skills include high-speed adaptability, feel for the car, awareness, and decisiveness, while "foot" covers courage, jump skill, power control and reaction speed, and the rather less clear-cut "power of assessment of situation" (i.e., "I put two bucks into this thing and only lasted three seconds — should I go home or try again?").

"Real" skills are more conventional with spin travel, smooth travel, continuous travel, thought-link travel, and reverse travel. Once the race is complete, players receive a percentage rating that drops into your lap as a printed sheet. If you screw up, you get the label "student driver," while demon drivers with 100% gain "omnipotent" status. And no, we're not sure what "thought-link travel" means either.

GAME BOY COLOR



Nintendo has announced that Game Boy Color will cost ¥8900 (about \$65) when the unit goes on sale at the end of September. Despite the current PDA popularity and the announcement that SNK is throwing its hat into the ring, Game Boy Color is expected to open with record sales, thanks largely to the seemingly insatiable appetite that the Japanese public has for *Packet Monsters*, combined with the added incentive of owning what is effectively a handheld NES — one of the biggest-selling Japanese consoles of all time after — yes, the Game Boy.



The graphics are highly stylized, a concession to the real meat of the game: technical driving ability

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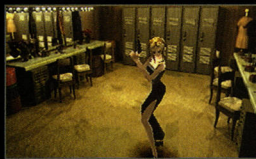


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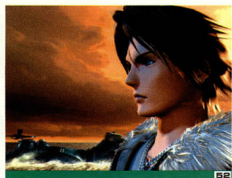
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Redguard PC Final Fantasy VIII PlayStation

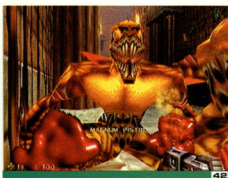
Tomb Raider III PlayStation/PC Turok 2 Nintendo 64/PC Blood 2 PC

ALPHAS

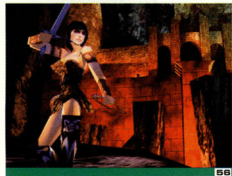
The future of games



52



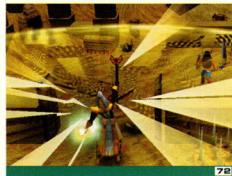
42



38



46



72



64

In the beginning, there were originals. Now there are holidays and sequels.

34 Redguard PC
Bethesda's latest is no slow RPG

38 Blood 2: The Chosen PC
Caleb is re-reanimated for more shooting

42 Turok 2 N64/PC
Acclaim's lifesaver returns. Who'd guess?

46 Alpha Centauri PC
Sid Meier's next game — any questions?

48 Uprising X PlayStation
PlayStation gets a cutting-edge engine

52 Final Fantasy VIII PlayStation
It's back, Chocobos and all ...

56 Xena PlayStation
Princess Toadstool has nothing on her

60 Glover Nintendo 64
A genre-buster not unlike Marble Madness

64 Diablo 2 PC/PSX/Dreamcast/Mac
Hark! The point-and-smash RPG returns

68 Sports Car PC/PlayStation
Virgin hits the road with a new license

72 Gauntlet: Legends Arcade
Classic dungeon experience, new look

76 Tomb Raider III PlayStation/PC
Once — twice — three times a lady ...

MILESTONES

GRIM FANDANGO	PC	81
SPEED BUSTERS	PC	82
RAYMAN 2	PC/N64/PlayStation	82
DELTA FORCE	PC	83
TOP GEAR OVERDRIVE	N64	83
WILD 9	PlayStation	83
SLAVE ZERO	PC	84
DUKE NUKEM: TIME TO KILL	PlayStation	84
OGRE BATTLE	N64	85
TORU	PlayStation	85
BRAVE FENCER MUSASHI	PlayStation	85
RALLY CROSS 2	PlayStation	86
WINDBACK	N64	86



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82



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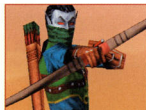
Redguard

Bethesda's *Elder Scrolls* games (*Arena* and *Daggerfall*) are known among RPG enthusiasts for their huge, sprawling worlds and seemingly endless gameplay. However, *Redguard*, which takes place within the *Elder Scrolls* world of Tamriel, is much more along the lines of a graphic adventure, joining the company of Origin's *Ultima: Ascension* and Sierra's *Mask of Eternity* in its attempt to combine third-person, 3D action with more traditional role-playing elements.

"The main thing we wanted to do with this game was based on our reaction to *Daggerfall* and *Arena*," explains Project Leader and Designer Todd Howard. "Those [games] were very reactionary towards your character. They were all about you and your numbers,

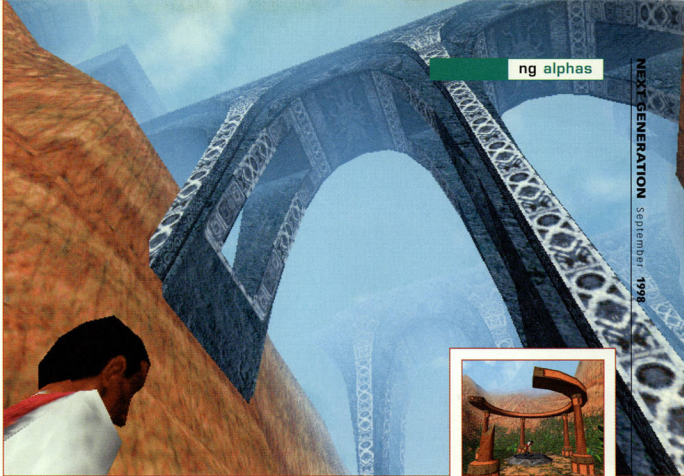
Bethesda's *Elder Scrolls* series gets a state-of-the-art 3D engine and a new spin-off: "The *Elder Scroll Adventure*"

and the world around you was just a backdrop to get stuff. The towns only existed so you could get directions to the weapon store so you could get a better sword. So we said, 'What if we put all that effort into one city, one island, and just detail the hell out of it? Forget all the random stuff — let's make a



Dram, the dark elf, is an assassin for the Empire — he's not very nice

Format:	PC
Publisher:	Bethesda Softworks
Developer:	Bethesda Softworks
Release Date:	Q4 1998
Origin:	U.S.



The port town of Stros M'kai is Redguard's main playing area

game where the world around you is much more alive."

To this end, the game is a prequel of sorts to the other games in the *Elder Scrolls* series, set some 400 years before the events in *Arena*. During this period in Tamriel's history, the Imperial Army, led by Tiber Septim, is busy conquering everything, including the Kingdom of Hammerfell, home of the Redguards, a clan of fiercely proud warriors. The player takes the role of Cyrus, a former Redguard turned mercenary. He must return to his homeland and travel to the island of Stros M'kai to find his sister, who has mysteriously disappeared after running afoul of pirates — or did she actually fall in with them?

Redguard's 3D world is certainly impressive. The game currently runs in either software only or else with 3Dfx acceleration (which is, naturally, preferred). The landscape is sprawling and even daunting at times, and its creation is one reason for the game's 18-month-to-two-year development schedule. "The world just took us an incredibly long time to make," Howard says. "The amount of texture work and everything else was just insanity. We were like, 'No two buildings in town can be the same!' That level of detail, making sure there was something interesting around every corner ... took forever."

The results are worth it. Stros M'kai is awash in the kind of small touches



Much of the game centers around Dwarven ruins and technology



Combat and action are parts of the game, but the control has been kept simple so it doesn't hold the player back from the story



ng alphas



The developers at Bethesda have worked hard to make sure the game has an exciting, cinematic feel

that can make or break a title of this kind. The game will include 32 individual NPCs for Cyrus to interact with, as well as a wide assortment of "generic" thugs, guards, undead creatures, and so on. The storyline requires some 5,000 lines of spoken dialogue and numerous scripted sequences in and around the game's mostly adventure-based, exploratory gameplay mechanic. For the most part, the player is free to roam anywhere at any time and solve the various subquests in any order. "Some of this is linear," Howard says. "You get captured by the Imperials and they throw you in the catacombs, and you have to find your way out — and that's fine for part of the game, but we wanted to keep a lot of it open."

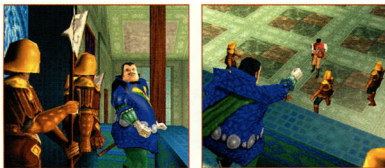
Which does bring its own problems. "It becomes hard," Howard continues, "because we've got this huge story, and you may have 20 things you have to do at once, and we wondered if people could really swallow this stuff. What did we do? We made the tavern in town

almost like a help desk — 'Go tell your troubles to the bartender.'" So, when the player is feeling lost, a chat with the barkeep will result in a nudge about what's most important, either through what he says, or in Cyrus' response.

"Everything in the game has a



The designers have thrown in a little of everything: action, mystery, betrayal, magic, romance ... hopefully, it will all fit together



Lord Richton is the Empire's governor of Stros M'kai — every story needs a villain, and in *Redguard*, he's it

purpose," Howard insists. "From the onset of the game it'll look like, 'Here's a random quest, and this and that happens,' but everything is intertwined. We spent a long time making sure that things had importance to what was going to happen in the story — so something you might do early in the game that you shrug off comes back, and you go, 'Oh shit, that really mattered!'"

The game's combat system falls squarely in the *Prince of Persia* school of using two buttons: one for attack and one for defense, plus a direction on the joystick or keyboard. However, the pace has been kept realistic, and the defense animation matches up with the direction a blow is coming from — the player need only be concerned with hitting the



Most of the game's cut scenes use the same models as the gameplay

button in time. This makes the fight scenes seem very cinematic but keeps the gameplay simple.

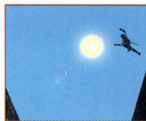
If nothing else, the backstory certainly has enough elements — rebels and imperial governors, pirates, magic, romance, and a hero with a tragic past — to support a sprawling, even swashbuckling adventure. The question remains whether an adventure audience is ready for action.

Howard believes so. "People accept the action/adventure metaphor easily, and I wish we didn't have to use that because we really just sat down and decided what sort of game we wanted to do. It came up in a lot of conversations. 'Can people handle that?' And of course everyone on the development team, total game geeks, are all going, 'Well, I like that.' So we decided to go on the assumption that good games are good games, and that's what people want to play. I don't think there are people — in computer games anyway, consoles are maybe different — who just say, 'I like strategy games,' or 'I like action games.' They just like good games."

NB

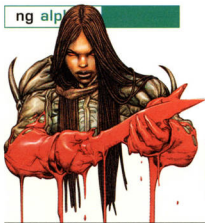


Certain areas, like the Dwarven observatory (top), are simply breathtaking — the production design is top-notch



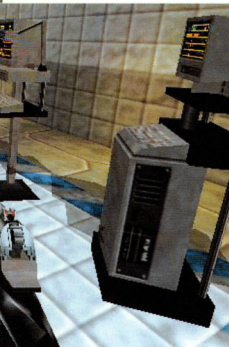
Treasure hunts and rooftop chases — all in a day's work for Cyrus

ng alp



Blood 2: The Chosen

Monolith introduces a new 3D engine and unique gameplay, but is it enough to fend off the competition?



Unlike in the first game, all objects and effects are rendered in real time through Monolith's universal 3D engine

Despite the glut of first-person shooters, *Blood* won the hearts of many gamers when it released more than a year ago. Now the story of Caleb continues in *Blood 2: The Chosen*, a game that features the latest in 3D technology, an incredibly detailed backstory, and more multiplayer options than just about any game of its kind.

Set 100 years after *Blood*, *Blood 2* again places players in control of Caleb, the undead hero who (again) faces the evil Cabal. *Blood 2* is more than just a cookie-cutter sequel, though. Instead, Monolith wants to increase the scope of the game by adding elements from other genres. "We created a system where players have direct control over the character they are playing. It's similar to

RPGs, where you control the stats of your character, weaponry, and items you use," says Jay Wilson, project leader at Monolith.

The game features nearly 40 weapons, 12 inventory items, and an innovative magic system. Conventional



Creatures in *Blood 2* are far more intelligent than the creatures found in the first game, in part due to the new AI scripting in Lithtech

Format:	PC
Publisher:	GT Interactive
Developer:	Monolith Productions
Release Date:	Q4 1998
Origin:	U.S.



weapons play a major role, and spells are only used for defense. "I wanted a new way to play the game," says Wilson. "All the magic weapons and spells have one ammo source that is called Focus. Spells can reflect weapons back on attackers and throw up walls to block players from following you."

Monolith conceptualized the design in storyboards. To help build the atmosphere and separate the game from the competition, characters called the Chosen were created to help Caleb defeat the Cabal. "As a writer, I love character interaction," says Wilson. "Each of the Chosen has been given a lot of attention, especially on how they relate with Caleb. The best example of this is with the relationship between Caleb and Ophelia. In the first game, they were lovers. Now Caleb finds out that she just used him for his power (left)." All of the Chosen are linked and speak to each other throughout the game. When they get into trouble, they can call out for help. Whether or not the player aids them affects the way those characters help Caleb in later levels.



Blood 2's post-modern apocalyptic setting is best illustrated in its character designs

The multiplayer mode is even simpler than in the first game. Players configure their characters before starting, balancing attributes and selecting weapons, as none will be placed in the levels. Once a character is designed, it can be saved and traded over the Internet, but for those lacking patience, the game will ship with default characters. In addition, the team is planning a Capture the Flag game and is hoping to incorporate Tag, where one person is "it" and has a constant power-up. There may even be some sort of level racing, where all players start off at the beginning of a level and race to the end,



Another feature of the new engine is the ability for the design team to create complex machinery that plays a crucial role in the game



More proof why washing machines are a force for evil (above). There has to be a reason why this guy isn't afraid of a handgun (left)



complete with creatures and everything. In development for more than two years, Monolith's Lithtech engine (originally intended to be part of DirectX) is the driving force behind *Blood 2's* visuals. Unlike the *Quake* engine, it was created to adapt to almost any gaming environment, meaning that the rendering engine can be upgraded to support OpenGL and other 3D technologies after purchase.

The horror-based soundtrack for *Blood 2* is again being orchestrated, and Dan Bernstein, Monolith's in-house composer, has added atmospheric effects, like the sound of small children playing in the background, giving the game a gothic flavor. Another advance is the Interactive Music Architecture, which changes the music score according to the situation and builds tension at key moments before an attack. "After hearing what can be produced," says Wilson, "we never want to go back. It's much more cinematic."

The original *Blood* succeeded in a crowded market, and if the team can realize its vision with *Blood 2*, it may have a chance of doing the same thing this time around.

NEB



Open areas, colored lighting, and complex textures add to the game's gothic atmosphere



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BLAST!
evil lagamorphs with the devastating H.A.R.E. rifle!

SWING!
JUMP!
FLY!
along with Allison and her host of mutant allies!

GROOVE!
along with Allison's dancing as she hypnotizes the bunnies to do her bidding!



LIKE MANY
WOMEN,
ALLISON
IS LOOKING
FOR AN EFFECTIVE
HARE REMOVAL
SYSTEM.

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Turok 2

As the first third-party title announced for Nintendo 64, the original *Turok* spent a long time in development. In the end, its brilliant visuals wowed the crowd, but most people said the gameplay wasn't as polished. But action-starved N64 owners overlooked the flaws, and this one-title miracle saved a near-bankrupt Acclaim. A nearly identical PC version shipped several months later — it used the same dense fog and glaringly omitted the multiplayer support common to the PC.

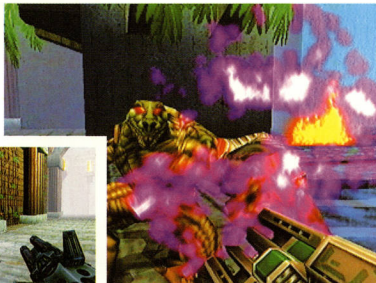
But this is all history, as one year later, the Iguana team is in its final stretch with the second coming of *Turok*. While most of the original N64 team is back, it is without lead programmer Rob Cohen, who has since started his own development studio



New weapons, with more complexity to their functions, have been added to *Turok 2*. Of course, they'll improve visually as well

Bored of *Deer Hunter*? Iguana's second dinosaur season is about to open

Format:	Nintendo 64/PC
Publisher:	Acclaim
Developer:	Iguana/Iguana West
Release Date:	Fall 1998
Origin:	U.S.



with Gathering of Developers.

But according to Producer David Dienstbier, this hasn't stopped the team from completely overhauling the original engine. The memory management has been rewritten, and a new system calculates the visible geometry. "Which basically means," says Dienstbier, "the N64 is not drawing objects that the player cannot actually see. These two things have helped us to move the fog back considerably in the game."

Dienstbier also notes that new lighting and particle systems have been implemented; and much work has been put into the level editor, which has enabled the team to enhance gameplay. This means that ambush situations and other intricate sequences of events or puzzles can be choreographed by designers. In addition, the AI has been entirely rewritten. "This time around," says Dienstbier, "each type of enemy behavior is governed by its own AI. Enemies navigate the worlds in brand new ways,



For the PC version, a Voodoo¹-caliber 3D card and a minimum of a P166 will be required

and they are much more clever."

Not only will enemies move evasively and dodge attacks, but they will also track players. Their effectiveness will vary according to the type of enemy and variables like landscape conditions. When an enemy takes a hit, it will flinch in real time, as opposed to the motion-captured, hit-specific animations found in *Goldeneye*.

"If a bullet hits a creature in the face," Dienstbier explains, "then you will see that creature's head snap to the side, or back. The same can be said for a creature's arm. If a creature is firing a blaster at Turok, and the player fires and hits the arm that is holding the blaster, the result will be that the creature flinches, throwing the arm back, and the shot will go wild." Dienstbier feels that the fast-paced battles are better served with this realtime solution, as opposed to having "huge, bristling, 700-pound reptilian bad guys" running around holding wounded limbs.

As the cart is 16 megs, double that of the original *Turok*, the N64 team has been able to increase the level sizes and number of textures, which will help eliminate some of the redundancy in the first game. "There is a huge level of diversity in this game," Dienstbier says. "Each level of the game is composed of completely unique geometry and texture maps. People will find that as they progress deeper and deeper into the game, the environments will become more and more intense, and the visuals become more and more surreal."

The reason the game becomes more surreal also has to do with the storyline, as Turok must face an evil being called the Primagen and his brotherhood of minions called the Seeds of Evil. Primagen's



The game is even bloodier this time around, now enabling players to take off the limbs and heads of rampaging reptiles



In this sequel, the draw distance is three times greater on N64 and 10 times greater on PC. Some atmospheric fog has been kept for effect

meddling from the Lost Land, a universe lost in time, threatens the fabric of Turok's world, and he must launch an assault before the world is destroyed. A symphonic soundtrack will complement the story, replacing the tribal rhythms of the first game with an epic score more akin to an action film.

The PC version is being developed simultaneously by Iguana West, and the single-player game will be identical to that of the N64 version, although the artwork will be converted to high-res; and, of course, there will be full multiplayer support for both versions this time. Both the N64 and PC games will feature a four-player, single-screen deathmatch, and the PC version will feature added deathmatch levels for LAN and Internet play. PC players will also be able to save anywhere in a level.

Dienstbier makes it abundantly clear that *Turok* is a team effort and assures us that his talented group has pushed itself extremely hard to make the best sequel possible. Certainly, the team members can expect some fat royalties if *Turok 2* sells as many copies as the original. But signing those checks over to Iguana is the least Acclaim can do as thanks for keeping it in business.

NG



Jumping has been redesigned to be a little easier this time around



I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.

I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.

I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.

S O W H Y

I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.

DME  100
FLD  68%

EGY  11
AMP  50%

 Fox

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URBAN ASSAULT™

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

Format:	PC
Publisher:	Electronic Arts
Developer:	Firaxis
Release Date:	November 1998
Origin:	U.S.

If there is a God of strategy games, he probably looks a lot like Sid Meier. Along with Designer Brian Reynolds, his latest project, *Alpha Centauri*, picks up where the classic *Civilization* series left off; and never mind that the *Civilization* name still legally belongs to MicroProse (or maybe Activision — the courts are still sorting it out), *Alpha Centauri* still falls well within the realm of historical sims — it just happens to be based on events that haven't happened yet.

While on a voyage to Alpha Centauri to escape a dying Earth, the colonists' ship is hit by an asteroid. In the ensuing chaos after landing, the colonists break up into seven different factions, each with its own beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses, ranging from the warlike Spartan Federation to the Peacekeeping Forces, who are more, well, peaceful. From there the gameplay will seem familiar to *Civilization* devotees, although there are myriad differences.

To begin with, the terrain is fully 3D and is fractally generated anew with each game. Players can use terraforming techniques to modify the planet's surface and environment, and the planet itself can help or hinder players as they uncover the secrets of the local flora and fauna. There are 80 technological advances to work on, and players can implement and experiment with a number of different social and economic models as well as diplomacy. Best of all, the game offers multiplayer support for up to seven

Need to get off a dying Earth? How about playing Sid Meier's latest instead?

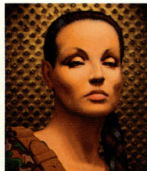


Although conquering the planet is one way to win, the player can also win through diplomacy, or evolving to a higher plane — no kidding

players over LAN or the Internet, and also supports voice technology, so players can actually speak to one another as they play.

Since founding Firaxis, Meier has pledged that no game his company develops will be released until it's ready and in exactly the form it should be. And that its first release was the superb *Gettysburg*, it certainly bodes well for the spiritual successor to the classic *Civilization*.

NG



Alpha Centauri's seven different factions each has its own beliefs and social systems



Map

I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.

I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.

I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.

I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.

I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.

SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?

I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.

I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.

I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.



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URBAN ASSAULTSM

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Uprising X



Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Cyclone
Developer:	Cyclone
Release Date:	Q4 1998
Origin:	U.S.

Earlier this year, *Uprising* for PC combined realtime strategy with first-person action for an intense and fast-paced, if ultimately over-challenging game (see review, **NG 37**). The game's central conceit, that of piloting around an uber-tank called a Wraith, then teleporting in troops and support vehicles to destroy and take over enemy installations, proved highly original and highly addictive (and very popular with the PC-buying audience). Now Cyclone is porting the game to PlayStation, but as the title indicates, it's not, strictly speaking, a port.

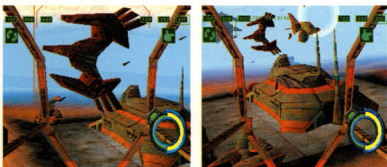
"We're definitely trying to make it a PlayStation-exclusive title," explains Kudo Tsunoda, producer for *Uprising X*. "It's not a port of the PC version. I can't think of one PC to console port that sold very well at all. Even C&C — they did a pretty good job porting it, but the markets are totally different."

The first step was to make PlayStation sit up and beg. To do this, Simon Everett, formerly of Argonaut Software, was brought in to port Argonaut's powerful 3D API, BRender, to PlayStation. The result is one of the more impressive efforts seen



The Wraith — the player's tank — has been given a mild face-lift

Uprising for PC practically created its own genre. Can it work on console too?



The game's engine supports an impressive number of high-polygon objects, yet maintains a high frame rate and resolution

on console to date. "The guy really knows how to max out the PlayStation hardware," Tsunoda says. "Just in the amount of polys we're able to draw onscreen, the lush look and feel of the environment. We'll have support for dynamic tiling as well, and the way we're using RGB lighting — it gives us a lot of different looks and feels."

In the *Uprising X* engine, the terrain is continually streamed off the disc, giving each of the game's 15 one-player levels a huge, expansive feel. This also enables the player to go anywhere at any time. The game's textures are all 8-bit, 64x64, and even so, the engine can push 130,000 polygons at 30 frames per second, even in high-res.

The missions have been streamlined,



While the mission structure has been pared down and the story strengthened, the pulse-pounding pace has been maintained



With terrain streaming off the CD, *Uprising X* takes place on huge battlefields

with far less of the between-mission resource management of the PC version. While the overall storyline has been strengthened and plays a more important role than in the original, gameplay within each mission remains essentially nonlinear, and players are free to roam the map at will. However, the core gameplay — calling in units and deploying them properly, then supporting their assault — remains intact, as does players' ability to take over (in first person) the gun turrets and other built-in defenses of their own installations should the need arise.

In addition, *Uprising X* offers a number of two-player modes, both cooperative and deathmatch, and as far as we could discern during the demo we were given, neither the frame rate nor the graphic quality diminishes much at all from the one-player game. In fact, thanks to the streaming in of terrain, one player can be on the opposite side of the battlefield from the other, and the game never slows down. Two-player modes include such goodies as a Galaga-inspired

contest in which each player controls a gun turret and fights off wave after wave of incoming airborne enemies. "Think about it like a three-point contest in basketball," Tsunoda says.


Beyond these technical considerations, the PC version's 60-plus key control scheme has been simplified to suit a standard PlayStation controller and feature dual analog support. There's little doubt the control scheme works well, however — players can use the D-pad to control the Wraith's direction while employing the four buttons to control the direction of fire. Shoulder buttons take care of the rest. "That's definitely another thing we're paying a lot of attention to," Tsunoda assures, "that this is an easy-to-pick-up-and-play kind of game."

Whether *Uprising X* will make any more of an impression on the PlayStation audience than the modest success the original managed on PC remains to be seen. However, with an impressive graphics engine and fast-paced gameplay, it certainly deserves to.

NG



Calling in units and supporting them is the heart of gameplay



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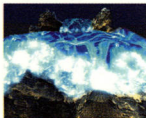
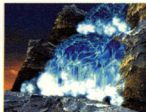
up to Tiny Tank to save the world. Sure he's small, but he's no wuss. He's got enough fire power to start WWII...and he's trigger happy. So bringing his enemies down to his level and annihilating their pathetic robot asses is a cinch. But whatever you do, don't call him Tiny. He may aim higher than your knee caps.

Final Fantasy VIII

Realism and emotion are the keys to Square's next masterpiece



For this next installment in the epic *Final Fantasy* series, Square has dropped the cute, or "kawai," look in favor of taller, more realistic-looking characters. Replacing Cloud as the hero is Squal Leonhart



As with Square's previous render-fest, the game will boast hundreds of megs of dramatic CGI sequences

The *Final Fantasy* story began in 1987 with the Japanese release of the original NES RPG. It became an instant classic, paving the way for a seemingly never-ending stream of sequels. Noted for their humanistic plots and emotive orchestral scores, the titles had sustained appeal in Japan. However, success in the West remained elusive until the release of PlayStation — with the introduction of CD storage, Square's talented artists were given a far broader and more detailed canvas for their work than ever before, rendering the fantastic world of Midgard as lovingly in CGI as Tolkien had crafted Middle Earth in ink.

In spite of its awkwardly traditional, turn-based battle system and a market hooked on the likes of *Tekken* and *Resident Evil*, *Final Fantasy VII* became a runaway success in both the U.S. and Europe. To date, combined Japanese and

U.S./European sales of the title have reached the four million mark, bringing the series total to an astounding 18.5 million. So it's hardly a surprise, then, to find Square already midway through the development of its seventh sequel. And even though *Final Fantasy VIII* will arrive at least nine months in Japan before U.S. gamers get a look, the hype is already reaching skyscraper proportions.

At the recent Tokyo unveiling of the forthcoming epic, the assembled press was left with more questions than answers. This is usually the case in Japan, where details are jealously guarded by publishers eager to eke out every last drop of ink from the salivating



The world of *Final Fantasy VIII* is considerably brighter than the gloomy, post-apocalyptic cityscapes of the previous game

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	SquareSoft
Developer:	SquareSoft
Release Date:	Q1 1999
Origin:	Japan

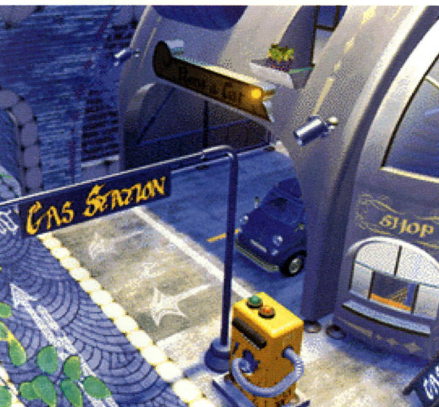


Japanese press corps in the months leading up to a big release. The conference did, however, shed some light on how Square intends to develop its most successful franchise, fast approaching its twelfth anniversary.

Despite adorning the covers of hundreds of magazines around the globe, the star of *FFVIII* will not be Cloud. Just as with Hollywood's *Batman*, Square is careful not to promote any one face above the franchise. By this time next year, Cloud, Aeris, Tifa, and Barret models and toys will be replaced by a



Though it retains the somewhat unwieldy battle system, *FFVIII* should deliver increasingly outrageous special effects



Though little is currently known about the plot, it's a sure bet that cute scenes such as this will soon enough yield to mass destruction

new set of heroes. At the conference, *FFVII*'s renowned director, Shinobu Sakaguchi, was coyly tight-lipped about the precise roles of the principal players, but he did introduce Squall Leonhart and Laguna Loire as the new stars of the *Final Fantasy* universe. A girl character was also spotted in the trailer, likely to be a love interest, but her name remains a mystery. What is clear is that Laguna and Squall inhabit different worlds. Knowing Square's penchant for epic stories, it's possible that they may never meet until the dramatic climax.

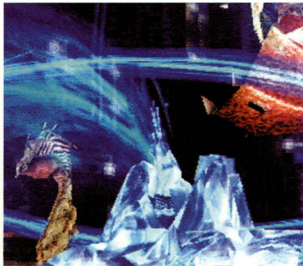
In regards to the combat system, Sakaguchi confirmed that the interface will be a little less daunting, combat speedier, and the melee and spell effects more impressive. Perhaps the biggest change concerns the character visuals. Square has abandoned the cute, or "kawaii," look in favor of more realistic models. Gouraud shading has also been dropped and replaced by more conventional-looking texture mapping, a change that Sakaguchi attributes to a greater understanding of the hardware. The results are taller models that resemble more closely their battle-mode



Enter Squall Leonhart, the new hero of the *Final Fantasy* franchise, armed with a gun/sword combo



Here Squall casts an ice spell on an enemy creature. Sakaguchi and his team have increased the special effects quota ten-fold



The European retrofit look is again the choice of Square's CG artists

counterparts, but suffer from pixelation.

The added realism of the character art reflects the wider concerns of the designers, who are working towards making *Final Fantasy VIII* their most complex and mature title yet. *Final Fantasy VII* was noted for its emotive, touchy-feely themes, and Sakaguchi emphasized that the weep-factor would be even higher, with technical advancements allowing for facial expressions on all the characters.

Those tidbits of information represent the sum total of Square's *Final Fantasy VIII* pitch. But the beauty of the game is unlikely to lie in the technical innovations or even the artistic sensibilities of Square's undoubtedly talented character designers. Rather, the heart of the game will be the dialogue, character interaction, and sheer size of the stage. Sakaguchi is a sumeru storyteller — a dream weaver of Miyamoto proportions. *Final Fantasy* was perhaps the best example of the much

maligned and misunderstood "interactive story," sacrificing the direct visceral response of the gamer for a more emotive and cerebral connection — an experience (dare we say it) closer to a movie than a game. Though resolutely closed-mouthed on the details of the seventh sequel, Sakaguchi, when quizzed, said that he believes that the much-hailed convergence between films and games is in the post (and indeed, Square is known to be working on a movie of its own); yet he also said that it won't necessarily be the result of better graphics or the photo-realism of the world, but rather a greater appreciation of the emotional aspects of the characters.

It's a refreshing change to hear a developer talk not just about technological advances or greater polygon power, but also about finding a direct use for them. Currently, the only by-product of greater realism in many titles is detail. Sakaguchi intends processing power to do for his games what the close-up did for movies — to further the emotional involvement of the viewer to yield a more immersive experience. *Final Fantasy VII* was the test bed, and *Next Generation* fully expects the latest installment to further the experiment, with equally successful results, both in Japan and in the more action-oriented U.S. market.

Ultimately, no matter what your opinions of the already accelerating hype machine that is Square, it's clear that Sakaguchi and his team understand well what Hollywood has known forever — that when it comes to entertainment, there's nothing so compelling as a good story, well-told.



The Leviathan Spell yields an impressive water dragon (top), while the Limit Breaks have also received a considerable face-lift

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Xena: Warrior Princess

Sword in hand, the one princess who doesn't need saving seeks redemption in her own adventure



The Xena art (above left) depicts the in-game model within a high-res background created to display the radiosity effect the team is hoping to achieve. Xena (below right) dispenses soldiers with her trademark scissors kick

You've heard of *Super Breakout*, *Battlezone* (the original), *Skate or Die*, and *Sonic 2*, but you've probably never heard the name that binds them all together — Roger Hector. President of the newly formed Universal Digital Arts, Hector is a 22-year game industry veteran, and his latest project involves the leather-clad bad girl of syndicated TV.

"We knew we wanted to do *Xena*," Hector says. "*Xena* is just one of the really high-quality, perfect properties to work with from a games standpoint."

Unlike Universal Interactive, which is responsible for original properties like *Crash Bandicoot* and *Spyro the Dragon*, San Jose-based Universal Digital Arts has been charged with taking the Universal properties and creating games based upon them. "The library of assets that Universal has," Hector says, "has been laid before us. And they've said, 'Find what you feel passionate about.'"

The group found passion in the sword-swinging form of Xena. From a

third-person perspective, players navigate Xena through roughly nine combat-intensive levels in a quest to destroy a giant three-headed Titan unleashed upon the world. Her journey begins in a typical thatched roof village and leads to strange places like the Valley of the Amazon Bird Women and Hades Castle, where foes range from generic evil soldiers to giant Ogres, dragons, and evil druids. "It's not *Tomb Raider*," says Designer Steve Morris. "There's no puzzles to solve, but there will be elements where players will have to think their way through a given situation."

Action is the mainstay of gameplay, but Morris wants Xena's world to be the antithesis of the traditional shallow beat-'em-up. As an example, he describes a level where villagers are attacked by



Smart combat will be required when taking on more than one foe

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	TBA
Developer:	Universal Digital Arts
Release Date:	Q4 1998
Origin:	U.S.



The face of Xena actress Lucy Lawless has been mapped onto this model

soldiers. "When you're entering the village for the first time, villagers will come streaming toward you," Morris says, shamelessly admitting that he stole this directly from *Golden Axe*. "And the raiders aren't just waiting for Xena. They're actually burning things down and wailing on villagers." Morris explains, though, that it should be fairly obvious that Xena will have to save the village from destruction. "You can't keep pling on challenges after challenges," he says, "or players get jaded. They need an emotional direction, and there's nothing quite like that when people are threatened."

In keeping with the theme of the show, Morris has incorporated Xena's continuing quest for redemption into the gameplay. If players can use strategies to defeat enough enemies without killing them, they will be rewarded. And Morris hints that the game has something special for people who act morally.

But to this point, most 3D brawlers have been marginal at best. Morris is aware of the control and camera problems that have plagued titles like *Nightmare Creatures* and *Fighting Force* and is using what he calls "control logic" to solve them. For instance, players won't need to line up directly in front of their opponents to attack them. So if Xena wants to kick left, she can do so while facing forward.

Xena's arsenal includes her sword, staff, and Chakram — a flying silver disc used for long-range targeting, similar to MDK's sniper gun. Of course, many of Xena's signature moves from the show will also be incorporated into the game. "For example," says a grinning Morris, "she'll jump up and do a bicycle kick into her opponent's face."



Xena will face more than the ordinary foot soldier, as can be seen by this stone golem who's apparently undaunted by her leather outfit



"Let me stand next to your fire" takes on a new meaning as Xena battles this dragon. Frontal attacks might not be the best tactic

To create Xena's world on PlayStation and compete against second and third generation engines, UDA has written a new engine entirely in assembly, which has been benchmarked at 30 frames per second. The team is also attempting to incorporate radiosity effects, for the same dramatic natural lighting that is seen in the show. "Objects will glow," says programmer Charlie Wallace, "so you'll get things like a nice red glow in a pond."

The game still has a ways to go, and a publisher has yet to be named. As of this writing, the company had just secured the voice talent of actresses Lucy Lawless and Renee O'Connor, who play Xena and Gabrielle in the TV series.

So why haven't we heard anything about Roger Hector and his new studio group before now? Well, in an industry where egos often thrive at the expense of the product, those who make games their priority can get lost in the shuffle. But, as Hector, who has been involved in the creation of more than 80 games throughout his career, rightly points out, "I'm mostly interested in making the hoopla announcements and such based upon our product, not so much on us."

NEB



Hey, is this PlayStation? Xena, like Mario, will boast cool lava effects



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Glover

Format:	Nintendo 64
Publisher:	Hasbro
Developer:	Interactive Studios
Release Date:	November 1998
Origin:	U.K.



At the end of each world, players must solve puzzles to unlock the exit while avoiding monsters like these

Glover can best be described as *Marble Madness* meets *Head Over Heels*. The *Marble Madness* factor is evident in that the player must guide a ball through a series of obstacles and puzzles; the *Head Over Heels* connection comes from the innovative control system that's at the heart of the game. Like *Head Over Heels*, the game features two central characters: Glover (a glove) and the ball.

"The player does not actually control the ball directly," explains Philip Oliver, one of the heads of Interactive Studios. "The game's central character is the glove, who can physically interact with or without the

ball. Alone, Glover can perform all the moves you would expect from a modern day platform game, but the game comes into its own when you pick up the ball, as the whole control method changes." When this happens, play switches from running and jumping about as the glove in order to prod the ball in the right direction, to rolling around the *Mario*-esque cartoon landscape.

The ball itself can change states too — for instance, it can turn into a beach ball or a huge snowball, and as a result, will feel heavier and less responsive. Enemies can also affect the ball — for example, a ghost character, Ethel Real, will either turn the ball into fragile crystal, forcing you to handle it very gingerly, or into a deformed mutant ball, making it very hard to control.

Glover is structured around six themed worlds, including the rooftops of a pirate city, a bizarre carnival, and a low-gravity alien environment — all connected by a central hub, the Crystal Kingdom.

With its novel gameplay and skewed take on typical platform mannerisms, *Glover* is certainly intriguing. If nothing else, *Glover* will, as Oliver states, "come as a breath of fresh air in a market full of tired genres."

NG



The ball itself can change states at times in the game. This affects the game's physics and control



Players learn to control with and without ball

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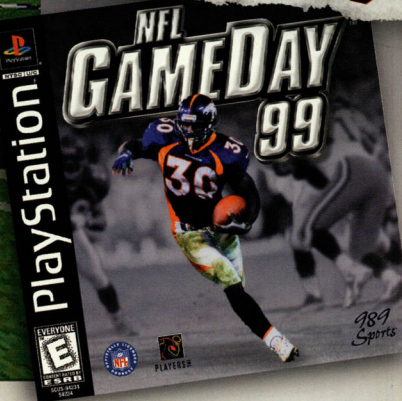
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Diablo 2

Can Blizzard take its genre-redefining action/RPG to another innovative high?



As in the first game, quests will be epic in scope (left). There are many more outdoor areas in *Diablo 2* than in the original (right)

Blizzard is one of the last companies that can sell a game on reputation alone — a position it solidified when it decided to kill *WarCraft Adventures*. "It was an incredibly difficult decision to make, but we felt we had to stay true to our goals and what our customers expect," says Bill Roper, producer at Blizzard. "To make it the kind of product that we wanted, it would just have been prohibitive from a time standpoint."



The control scheme is not yet finalized — expect to see feedback from those who play the PlayStation version incorporated into *Diablo 2*



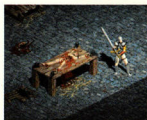
Format:	PC/PSX/Dreamcast/Mac
Publisher:	Blizzard
Developer:	Cendant
Release Date:	TBA
Origin:	U.S.



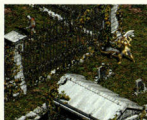
Now Blizzard is preparing to release the sequel to its groundbreaking action/RPG *Diablo*. Based on the company's past performance, players can be sure of two things: first, that Blizzard won't release the game until it is tuned to perfection, and second, that it will ship late.

The plot, as in the first game, is basically disposable — *Diablo*, or someone (or someones) equally evil, has returned, and you have to vanquish him/them. But dungeon crawlers like this aren't really about plot; they're about exploration and raising your stats — in short, role-playing. The game will introduce five new character classes: the Amazon, Sorceress, Necromancer, Paladin, and Barbarian (the original character classes will be around as NPCs but will not be playable). And unlike the first game, where, as Roper says, "you were saving the world, but you often felt like you were just saving your village," the scope of the game will be broader — taking place across four disparate environments, each with larger dungeons and a lot of explorable wilderness.

What else can gamers expect? Surprisingly, the biggest change will be



As in the first game, there are a number of interesting set pieces to be encountered by players



Incredibly detailed graphics were a hallmark of *Diablo*, and the trend has been continued in *Diablo 2*

graphical. Unlike in the first game, where different equipment was represented by generic graphics, this time each variation in equipment will be evident. So battle plate will look like battle plate, not just "heavy armor." Each different weapon will be realistically rendered in the game, not just in the inventory screen. Roper explains: "While at its base it's just a graphic change, it really affects the gameplay, especially in multiplayer. It lets people build a reputation and talk about themselves. If a guy pulls out a really great, rare weapon, it gives him bragging rights, lets him tell the story about how he got it, and really starts to build community."

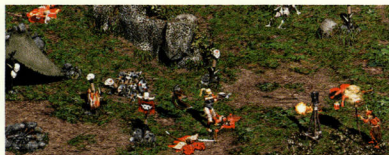
Of course, for a rare weapon to mean anything, it has to actually be rare. Rampant cheating destroyed *Diablo*'s multiplayer experience on Blizzard's Battle.net service, so fixing that will be the other main challenge for the team. "Obviously cheating hurt *Diablo*," says Roper. "You can do a lot of fun things with the economy when you make things that are rare and hard to find. It makes it more exciting for players." By keeping character information stored on the



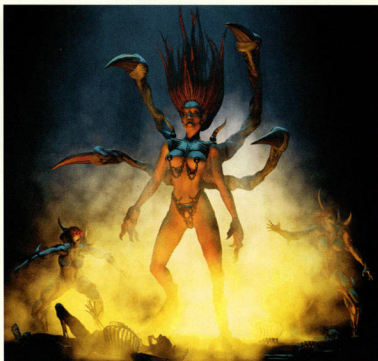
Dispense swift point-and-click beatings via five new characters — Amazon, Sorceress, Necromancer, Paladin, and Barbarian

server, as well as with other proprietary technology (as Roper says, "We don't want to get too particular with the details about what we're doing"), the company hopes to keep the multiplayer experience fun and balanced.

The focus on multiplayer doesn't mean Blizzard will ignore the single-player mode, though. "Both are vitally important to us," Roper asserts. "Multiplayer is growing, and that community is very vocal, but our primary focus is on the single-player experience because that's how most people will play the game."



Different armor and weapons will be realistically represented on each character in the game. Now, having a rare weapon means something





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Sports Car

Virgin hopes to win the heat with an official Sports Car license and an eye on realism



Sports Car has some of the most authentic-looking re-creations of the world's most popular race tracks

Professional Sports Car Racing has been around since 1969 with the establishment of the International Motor Sports Association, which has been running Grand Touring championships for sports cars since 1971. So an officially licensed game based on the series has been a long time coming.

Plenty of research is required to properly simulate the sport. Chris Bauer, Virgin Interactive's creative director, knows how important it is that the physics engine support a true simulation. "We've looked for areas where we can take it even further; specifically collision dynamics, vehicle physics, graphic detail, weather effects, and extensive vehicle modification and setup capability for the player."

Image Space Incorporated is handling the PC version, while Point of View is taking care of the PlayStation game. ISI has already implemented vehicle and trackside lights in the endurance races, as well as reflections and water trails on wet track surfaces, all while maintaining very real physics models and AI behavior for each car. To give an example of how intricate the physics model is, the game takes into account details like reduced grip outside of the preferred line where

Format: **PC/PlayStation**

Publisher: **Virgin**

Developer: **Image Space Incorporated and Point of View**

Release Date: **Q4 1998**

Origin: **U.S.**

bits of tire rubber (a.k.a. "marbles") accumulate. Likewise, the car's weight actually shifts while cornering, accelerating, and braking, all while the suspension tries to keep the power down.



Each view produces a different experience. For instance, racing from the inside finally sounds and behaves as it would in reality



Each car is modeled after a real-life counterpart, both in how it looks and how it behaves physically

All this is possible in part due to the amount of cooperation from manufacturers and teams. For instance, Rob Morgan, who raced a WSC car in the Sports Car series, acted as an on-site consultant for the first few months of development to help ensure authenticity.

The game features three classes of cars: GT3, GT2, and GT1. The circuit is made up of real-world cars, like the Saleen Mustang, BMW M3, Porsche 911, Acura NSX, and Mazda RX-7. There are also a number of more exotic GT1 cars, including the Porsche GT1, Mercedes CLK, and Panoz. Comprehensive photo coverage from actual races was used to create the vehicle textures, and players can expect all of the cars from the '98 PSCR season, as well as a few of the best cars and paint designs from Sports Car's '97 season. Tracks include many popular Sports Car locales, including Sebring, Road Atlanta, Laguna Seca, and the Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Both versions of the game use a combination of prelighting, dynamic lighting, and reflections on the cars to make them look as if they fit perfectly in the various environments; features like tire smoke, skid marks, headlights, and taillights further enhance that effect. The audio is being handled by Virgin's in-house studio, which is taking sound recordings of each car at the races, then working with the two developers to accurately layer them into the game.

As for multiplayer options, the PC version will support up to eight players in a single-race game and possibly 16 on a dedicated server. Virgin plans on hosting online racing leagues that will track player's standings throughout a season and career. The PlayStation version will include a two-player split-screen mode,

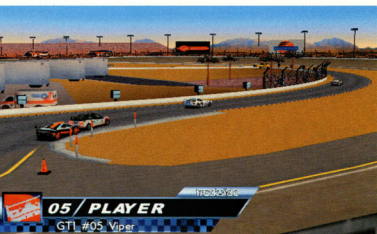
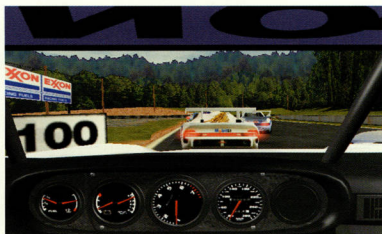


Each environment is designed to have little to no pop-up while displaying numerous cars on the track at the same time

but most importantly, two players are allowed to race not only against each other, but also against a full field of competitors.

At this stage, both versions of the game appear to be fulfilling Virgin's design criteria. If the games shown to **Next Generation** are any indication of the final product, Professional Sports Car Racing fans won't need ESPN2 or TNN to feel the rush.

NG



Diverse locations and winding tracks are a staple of Professional Sports Car Racing. Different members of the development teams have traveled to almost every location to capture the essence of the sport, as well as consulted with a number of Professional Sports Car drivers



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Gauntlet: Legends



Warrior. Wizard. Valkyrie. Elf. Monikers familiar to old-school arcade rats who also remember a reverberating voice calling, "needs food badly" — a reminder from an omniscient dungeon master warning players that their quarter was going to expire if they didn't find a spare turkey lying uneaten in some corner.

Released in 1985, *Gauntlet* was the first dungeon crawler that moved at a pace that was anything but slow. Designed by Ed Logg (whose prior works included *Asteroids* and *Centipede*), the game embodied the intensity of a shooter while never shedding the dungeon-lurking pacing associated with fantasy games. This time, though, Logg (recently responsible for the fantastic N64 port of *San Francisco*



Special magical attacks boast plenty of visual flare. When properly powered up, the wizard really clears out a room

A legendary four-player coin-op game returns — but will it draw players back into the arcade?

Format:	Arcade
Publisher:	Midway
Developer:	Atari Games
Release Date:	October 1998
Origin:	U.S.



The wizard, warrior, and valkyrie (above) must cooperate to open some areas

Rush) is not involved. But *Gauntlet: Legends* still retains the feel, playability, and top-down perspective of the original.

At Atari, the *Gauntlet* legacy has passed into the hands of Producer Mike Hally and his team of six artists, three programmers, and an audio engineer. Together they have harnessed the Voodoo² chipset to bring the game into the '90s, with a variety of fully 3D landscapes, bosses, secret characters, and hidden levels. A "turbo" button has been added to the original controls, lending three new levels of attack to the traditional two-button control scheme.

And like all games of late, *Gauntlet* now incorporates a storyline. Players must banish a demon and his minions who've invaded the worlds of *Gauntlet*. Not a profound story, yet one that enabled the team to design four consistent homeworlds for each of the characters, including the warrior's mountain, the wizard's desert, the valkyrie's castle, and the archer's (originally the elf) jungle. A

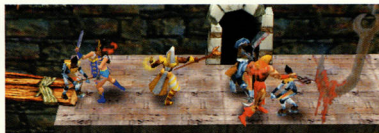


New potions and special items abound, including a few classic favorites like rebounding shots

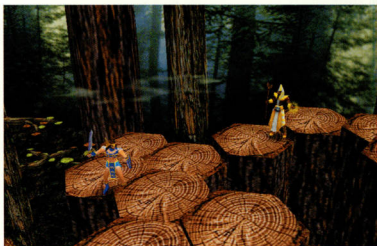


Formerly the elf, the archer (top) has undergone a gender change. The wizard (left) boasts an Egyptian look this time out, and the minotaur (right) is a "secret" character who plays similarly to the warrior

hidden playable minotaur character will also be buried within the game. Each of the four worlds is selectable from the outset, and bosses have been summoned by the demon to guard each world. **Next Generation** got a look at three of the bosses — a dragon, chimera, and giant genie, each ornately rendered with 2,000



Breakable walls, timed spike traps, stun tiles, green acid blobs, and even that pesky Death character all return to antagonize players



Exploring the archer's lush forest world (above) is like a visit to an Ewok village

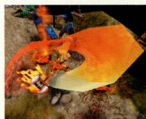
to 3,000 polygons. Their involvement? "Each boss has been entrusted with a key," says Lead Programmer Steve Bennetts, "so the heroes have to vanquish each boss, take their keys, and open the citadel the demon has set up as his palace and banish the demon."

It would seem logical for the game to end after this citadel world, yet players who collect all 13 rune stones hidden throughout the game can open the underworld portal and slay the demon.

As elaborate as the bosses are, polygon counts for the standard grunts have been kept lower, so more could be put on the screen at once," says Hally, "and believe me, 25 of our enemies in this perspective is quite swarming."

Which is good, because swarming enemies were much of what made the first game so intense. Hally is also keeping the same flavor in respect to the sound effects, the voice-overs, and the music, which should keep fans of the original pleased. Eventually, too, *Gauntlet* lovers can look forward to an N64 version, which will be developed in house, as well as PlayStation and PC versions, which will be handled by external developers.

However, right now, the focus is on the arcade, and as the world of coin-op has moved well into the *Tekken* age, **Next Generation** wonders if a game based on repeatedly smashing an attack button can still deliver arcade satisfaction. *Gauntlet* was also one of the first truly multiplayer games that had players cooperating against a common CPU foe, and player camaraderie has long been missing in coin-op games. Is it enough to get players back? Atari is counting on it. **NG**



Goblins, mummies, tree creatures, and golems play hosts



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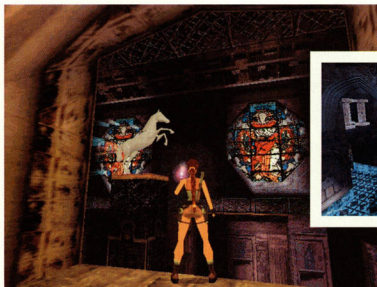
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CORDS OF A PALACE GUARD.]

Tomb Raider III

Can Lara wow the crowd one more time, or is the Eidos show pony destined to stumble?



New colored lighting effects (above) can be seen in the stained glass and flare. The new particle system offers smoking guns (right)



The third installment of one of the game industry's hottest properties is one that has troubled Core Design. Adrian Smith, Core's operations director, explains that the biggest challenge has been to continue to innovate and enhance the *Tomb Raider* experience in the face of aging console hardware. Smith admits that the E3 test level was rushed and didn't properly show off all that the game is going to be.

"80% of the engine has been

Format:	PC/PlayStation
Publisher:	Eidos
Developer:	Core
Release Date:	Q4 1998
Origin:	U.K.

rewritten," says Smith, "but it's a rewrite of a system that already works. *Tomb Raider* is now four years old to us, and each year I wait to see a game which is 'better than *Tomb Raider*.' I think I can put my hand on my heart and say I still haven't seen it."

The rewrites Smith mentions include a high-res version for PlayStation, yet this boost still pales when compared to the latest Direct3D version shown on an accelerated PC. However, the draw distance on the console version has significantly improved, and that has allowed the designers to open up the levels and build multiple paths through them. The team believes the multiple paths will balance the gameplay for a variety of skill levels and offer replayability.

"There are those die-hard gamers that will find whatever we throw at them probably too easy," says Smith. "The person who isn't that familiar with it will be happy just to go through it. The better players will be going backwards and



Tomb Raider becomes more a misnomer as this third installment offers scenic London architecture (above)



Back in the caverns again ... this time, however, environmental hazards like piranhas and quicksand are among the new obstacles



Which way now? In this game, there are multiple routes through the levels

forwards, looking at different routes and trying to pick everything up."

Not only will the environments be larger, but they will also be more organic. New effects include blowing leaves, snow, and rainfall; mist will sit on some bodies of water, and Lara will leave footprints in snow. An improved lighting system includes radiosity (natural lighting) effects, as well as colored lighting. A particle system also gives Lara smoking guns, and bullets will spark off rock walls should the gunfire miss its mark.

The game's story puts Lara in search of pieces of a meteorite with mythical properties. Her varied search takes her to an Indian jungle, London's rooftops, Area 51, and Antarctica. Of course, she'll switch outfits along the way, and there will be new weapons, including a rocket launcher and grenade launcher. Vehicles will again play an important part in the game — this time Lara will even have to canoe some rapids. And then, there are the new moves.

"I think new moves can confuse players," says Smith. "We're trying to add new moves that are very simple to achieve. The sprint dash move is a good example; it's a very fast, very easy, single-button-activated move."

The designers have tried to keep the new moves organically linked to the world — same with the new duck and crawling animation used to get through tough spots and the new hand-over-hand

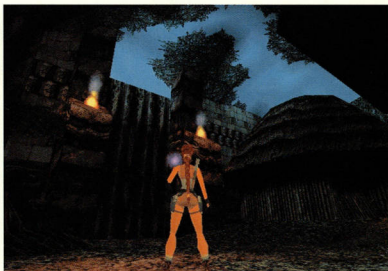


With better draw distance, designers have created spacious levels

movement used to cross monkey bars.

While the changes are many, they are, Smith admits, subtle ones. "There's only so much we can do on the current range of hardware," says Smith, noting that the significant changes will occur when the next consoles launch in the next couple of years. "I still maintain that *Tomb Raider* is today what it was when we originally started it. I think people get value for money, and they get hours and hours and hours of enjoyment, just trying to figure out what's around the next corner. I don't think those goals have ever changed."

NG



Lara's polygonal model has been slightly enhanced, mostly for the sake of the new animations; players may notice Lara now has ears

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In-game cinematic sequences

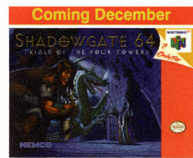
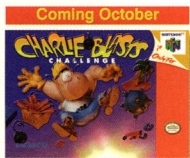


Gigantic animated bosses

KNIFE EDGE: Nose Gunner

Blast off for revolutionary game play action with KEMCO® Knife Edge: Nose Gunner™ for Nintendo 64! Knife Edge combines the fast-paced action of a sci-fi shoot-em-up with the thrilling joyride of an arcade-style flight game. Beautiful 3D polygon-constructed extraterrestrial environments fill the screen. The pioneer colonies on Mars are invaded and you have to shoot your way through enemy craft and ground defense placements. KEMCO's innovative game pass generation system computes the player's choice of assault craft, navigator character, difficulty level, and enemy kill ratio to open up new branches and routes through the hostile environments and introduce new enemy attack configurations. Knife Edge offers a new game play experience every time.

Coming Soon On N64:



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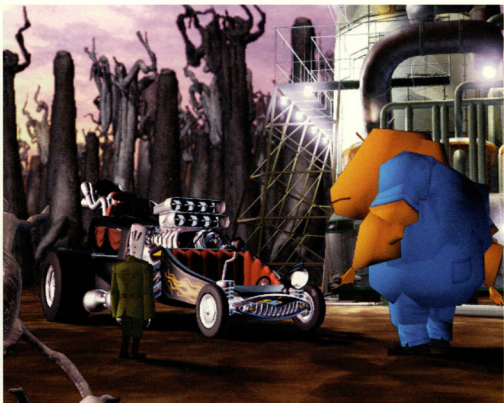
Milestones

This month, we're featuring only one 2D game and plenty of 3D games with 2D origins. LucasArts is the latest to make the big step, bringing its trademark adventure genre into the third dimension with spectacular results. Ubi Soft follows the trend by introducing its most popular character to the world of X, Y, and Z, as well as a batch of new, quality games. Plus, we have many other

A **Next Generation** report on the latest developments from the gaming front

videogame superstars making their comeback, along with games that feel as though they've been in development for longer than the duration of the Cold War. Regardless, the bar continues to rise as quality titles outweigh mediocre ones. How long can this nirvana possibly last?

GRIM FANDANGO PC



LucasArts' latest endeavor remains faithful to its adventure roots while leaving enough room for innovation. For the first time, the story will unfold in real 3D and not require a command interface. Given that, the story, look, and style will be unlike those in any other game to date



FIFTH ELEMENT



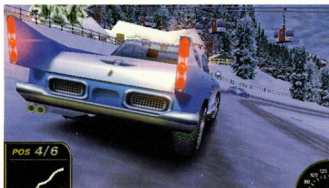
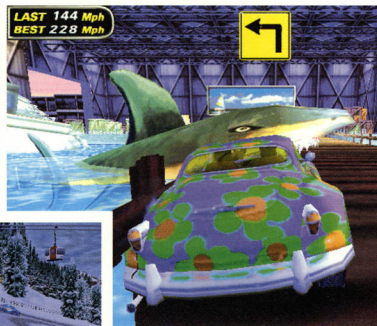
Kalisto and Activision team up once again for this PlayStation adaptation of last year's bomb. So far, the game exceeds the film

HYPE: THE TIME QUEST PC/Nintendo 64



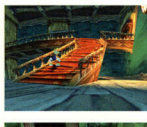
A Playmobile game in Next Generation? You bet. Don't let Ubi Soft's license fool you. Based on the classic toy sets, it really is fun!

SPEED BUSTERS PC



Fast and fun. *Speed Busters*' unique tracks force players to contend with sharks, dinosaurs, and other beasts. Players race against five opponents, human or computer, over internet or LAN. Ubi Soft just can't stop making games!

RAYMAN 2



You'll be seeing much more of this game. Ubi Soft's 3D adaptation of *Rayman* makes its way to N64, PlayStation, and PC

SILENT HILL



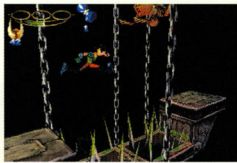
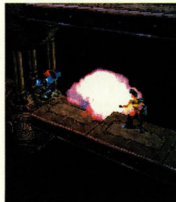
Konami's latest title in development for PlayStation is its first 3D horror adventure in the vein of *Resident Evil*

DELTA FORCE PC



NovatoLogic combines its voxel technology with *Goldeneye*-style gameplay. The result? A single- or multiplayer deathfest disguised as a serious mission-based simulation. The crossbred shooter should attract very diverse gamers

WILD 9 PlayStation



Shiny's long-awaited adventure may be a little too long awaited. Hopefully its unique gameplay will eclipse its linear levels

TOP GEAR OVERDRIVE



Many N64 owners will be pleased to hear that Kemco's follow-up to last year's *Top Gear Rally* will be much bigger and faster

ng alphas

ULTRAFIGHTERS



Interactive Magic is at it again, this time with a futuristic flight sim that shares very little with previous PC simulations

SLAVE ZERO PC



THRILL KILL

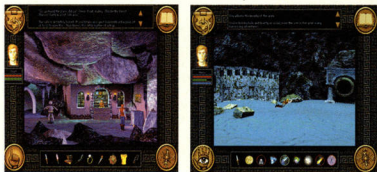
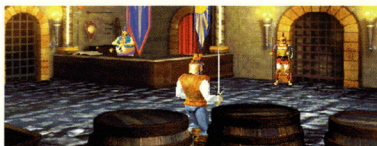


Virgin's orgasmic fighter for PlayStation will most definitely be the center of controversy for its adult content



Accolade's giant monster action title is looking better than ever. The sense of size and interaction with the game world are absolutely unbelievable. Players control a giant gun-wielding creature that can scale buildings and stop traffic with a single roar. By year's end, this game will be regarded as a first in an emerging genre

QUEST FOR GLORY PC



Quest for Glory is just the latest addition to Sierra's large family of fantasy adventures that rely on the phrase, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"

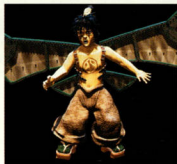
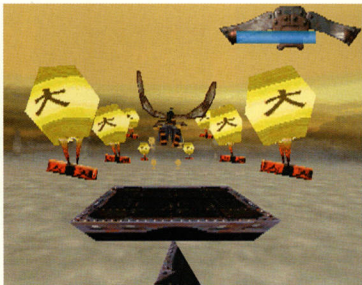
TIME TO KILL PlayStation



N-Space is developing the latest Duke adventure. It bears many similarities to Tomb Raider but still has Duke's patented brand of humor

**BRAVE FENCER
MUSASHI**

The comic book retelling of the great two-handed swordsman Musashi is a welcome departure from SquareSoft Japan

TOBU PlayStation

It's hard to explain Sony's latest adventure game. Picture a platformer + a flight sim + the control mechanics of Joust. Interesting ...

OGRE BATTLE Nintendo 64

The inclusion of small, detailed characters will be a first on N64, as will the genre — Atlas' latest will be the first strategic RPG on the system. The sprite-based animation works well, and analog control should make playing easier

NHL FACE OFF '99

Sony's yearly NHL update for PlayStation should be the best yet. Where will it go from here?

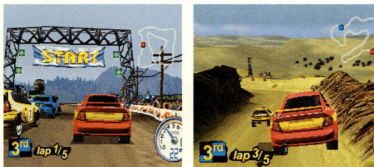
HEAVY GEAR 2

Activision attempts to fix the problems of the first PC game, foremost being varied environments

ng alphas

ARMORED CORE 2 PlayStation

Project Phantasma is From Software's sequel to its groundbreaking mercenary mech game. It's coming here courtesy of Ascii in October

RALLY CROSS 2 PlayStation

989 Studio's *Rally Cross 2* should improve upon the foibles of the original's control. Dual shock support is a given, as are hidden tracks

MILO'S ASTROLANES

If Crave wants to release a space-themed bowling game for Nintendo 64, who are we to argue? Plus, it looks pretty fun

WINBACK Nintendo 64**FIGHTING FORCE**

Fighting Force should arrive on N64 from Eldos about the same time as *Milo's Astrolanes*. Decisions, decisions ...



Koel's first effort for Nintendo 64 looks to take its lead from *Metal Gear Solid* and *GoldenEye*. This is a genre that is getting crowded, but there's still plenty of room for quality titles, and given Koel's reputation for quality (the game is being developed by the same team that did *Dynasty Warriors*), we're anxiously awaiting this



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THE INTENSOR™ SURVIVAL GUIDE

(Because we're not always going to be there to hold your trembling, sweaty little hand.)

PART ONE

Be warned: this is technology with a real "punch-you-in-the-gut-while-you're-not-looking" brand of sensitivity.

There's never been anything like Intensor. So in order to survive it, you need to understand a few things. Like to begin with, you need to know what a Sensory Gaming Experience is. It's complete immersion. It's intense tactile

feedback. It's being able to see, hear and feel the game you're playing like never before. All you have to do is hook it up to the audio jack of any system, play any game and hold on. You may also want to say a little prayer.



Fig. 1. A breakdown of what you're up against.

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1	Left 2" Mid-range Directional
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4	5.25" Low Frequency Tactile Driver
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7	Tactile Intensity
8	Electronics Unit
9	Heavy Duty Single Cord Connector
10	Optional Office Chair Base
11	Optional Subwoofer
12	Headphone Jack

PART TWO

Remember, in this chair no one can hear you scream.

Not everyone will have what it takes to handle Intensor's patented audio system. After all, we're talking 5 high-performance built-in speakers with 108dB output. Technically speaking, that means it's really

loud. So for the neighbors' sake, you may want to use the headphone jack — which you can do without losing any tactile feedback. But keep in mind — if your ears start bleeding, you should probably turn the thing down.

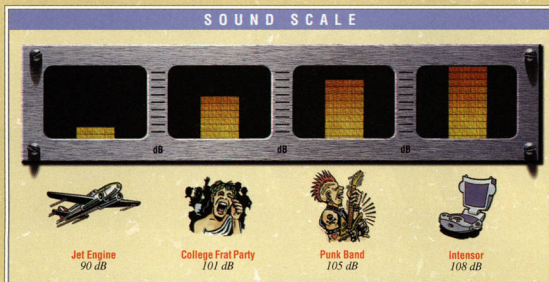


Fig. 2. At 19 pounds, Intensor is designed for quick evacuation in the event things get ugly. (Shaky hands will appreciate the built-in molded carrying handle.)

PART THREE

Ducking, dodging, whimpering and other useful gaming skills you might want to perfect.

Be advised. With Intensor, you'll not only hear your games like never before, you'll also feel them. In your back. In your legs. You'll feel sensations in places you never even knew you had. Which means every

engine rev, every explosion, every kick will seem more real than you may want it to. So it's important to note that under this type of extreme duress, screaming in high-pitched tones for one's mommy is quite common.

DEFENSIVE PROCEDURES



Fig. 3a.
The Dodge



Fig. 3b.
The Weave



Fig. 3c.
The Duck

TACTILE SENSATION GRAPH

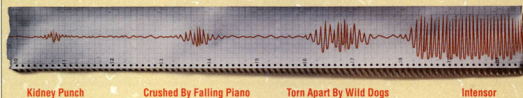


Fig. 4. Artist's conception of Sensory Gaming's effect on the human heart. Those with heart conditions should proceed at their own risk.



Fig. 5. Note: Players attempting to negotiate Intensor on anything less than a good, stiff spine may be reduced to a vegetative state.

PART FOUR

Any game. Any system. Any medium. After this, nothing will ever be the same.

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And there's no going back. It's the gaming version of the thousand-yard stare. You'll recognize it in others who've "been there." Seek them out. Talk to them. This therapeutic approach can help preserve your sanity.



Fig. 6. Intensor has been known to induce shock. In such cases, place victim flat on back, elevate legs 8 to 12 inches and call for help. (If victim begins vomiting, place him or her on one side to allow fluid drainage.)



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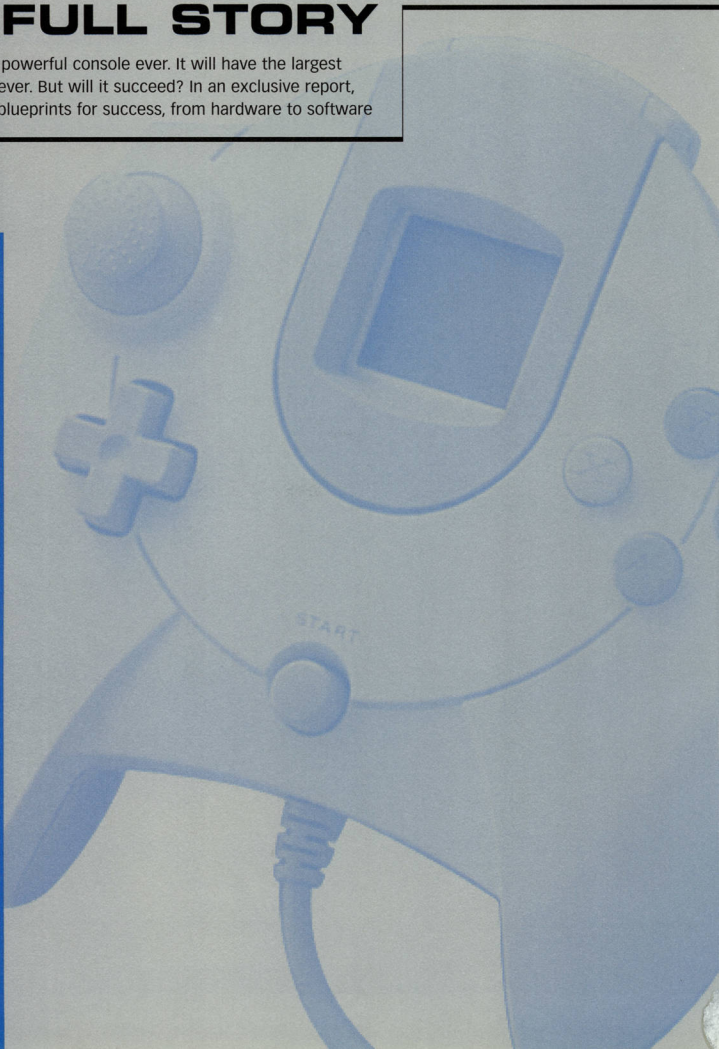
Dreamcast

THE FULL STORY

It will be the most powerful console ever. It will have the largest marketing budget ever. But will it succeed? In an exclusive report, we outline Sega's blueprints for success, from hardware to software



Dreamcast uses an innovative PDA-style memory card, known as the VMS (Visual Memory System), with an LCD and control pad of its own. Although this is the final design for the Japanese release, there's no official word yet on what color Dreamcast will be in the U.S. Also, a short while after this product shot was released, a "Powered by Windows CE" sticker was added in Japan, the wording of which is not yet final.



PAGE 92
An audience
with Shoichiro
Irimajiri

PAGE 94
Sega's business
strategy

PAGE 95
Five myths
about
Dreamcast

PAGE 96
The technology

PAGE 98
The developers

PAGE 101
The games

PAGE 102
Previewed:
Warp's *D2*

November 20, 1998, will certainly go down as the most important day in Sega's history. On that day, Dreamcast will ship in Japan, and the system that will either remake Sega as a console powerhouse, or firmly doom it to an also-ran status, will be released to, Sega hopes, an excited public. Ten months later, Dreamcast will ship in North America.

Dreamcast will likely launch without serious competition from Sony or Nintendo (beyond the predictable price drop, of course), so the success or failure of Dreamcast in the U.S. will rely on two main factors: the games and the marketing. Mindful of the fierce competition in the console wars, Sega is unwilling to discuss marketing beyond general terms: dollar numbers (\$100 million) and partners (Foote, Cone & Belding). But the company is keen to talk about games, or, more precisely, the things first parties need to do to foster great games — provide solid hardware and a supportive development environment.

Today, roughly one year before the

system's U.S. release date, Sega of America is already in full launch mode. The marketing department is quietly preparing and lining up the major partners and sponsors needed to get Dreamcast, in Bernie Stolar's words, "everywhere" during the launch period. Development teams in Tokyo and Redwood City, California (Sega will move to San Francisco later this year), are hard at work on first-party titles for 1999, 2000, and 2001. But the most important task at this stage? Lining up and supporting the third-party vendors who will provide the bulk of the software.

PlayStation's success, in large part, lies in the massive amount of support Sony gave third parties before it launched, as well as the ease of development for the system. Thus, supporting third-party development efforts is a top priority for Sega, and not by coincidence — much of the current Sega management team, including Bernie Stolar, came from Sony's third-party department.

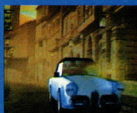
Sega made a huge number of mistakes in attempting to transition between 16-bit and 32-bit. The 32X, the multiple system marketing strategy, the aloof attitude it took toward third parties, the difficulty of developing for the dual-processor Saturn, the lack of quality first-party software at launch, the high price, the underpowered technology — all these things contributed to the (almost inevitable) failure of Saturn. But unlike the Sega of 1995, which refused to admit that anything was wrong, the Sega of 1998 is composed of an entirely new team, one that recognizes the mistakes of the past and is determined not to repeat them. Can the company come back? That will be decided by the marketplace, but the initial plans and efforts certainly seem promising.

Next Generation is pleased to bring you an exclusive, detailed report on the state of the Dreamcast development effort as it stands in September, 1998. Over the next 12 pages, we've brought you a complete look at Sega's third-party strategy, its technology, the reactions of key developers for the system, the first games, and technology demos.

The controller has room for two expansion packs, although Sega has only announced one. SNK's controller pack should be out in Japan before the system launches in the fall



The VMS (above) connects to controllers and other VMSS. Expect Dreamcast to ship with at least one VMS in the box



One of Dreamcast's promotional videos flashes up a number of interesting images. From top: Sonic is definitely set to make an appearance on the new console, but in what form, and can it erase the memory of the aborted *Sonic X-Treme*? The can below may be from Bizarre Creation's forthcoming *Metropolis*. Could this be *Dream Nights* (third) and a version of *Virtua Striker 2* (fourth)? *Warp's D2* is the only officially announced title, but Ubi Soft is rumored to be converting *Tonic Trouble* and *Rayman 2* to Dreamcast, as is GT with *Unreal*.

AN AUDIENCE WITH SHOICHIRO IRIMAJIRI

Sega's boss talks about the costs, the competition, and Dreamcast's bid for worldwide domination

Sega never expected that an outsider would have so swiftly demolished its preeminence in the videogame market. But armed with a powerful machine, Sony did exactly that, pulling the rug from under its rival's feet and redefining how a console could — and should — be designed and marketed. But Sega has learned fast, slimming down its management structure and ditching the overcomplex Saturn in favor of the sleek Dreamcast. At the head of the change has been Sega Enterprises Ltd.'s president, Shoichiro Irimajiri, ex-Honda, ex-Formula One engine designer, and now Dreamcast devotee. He's a confident figure, with clear, intelligent eyes and a broad command of the English language. Along with Kazutoshi Miyake of Sega Europe and Bernie Stolar of Sega America, Irimajiri is providing the company with an open and dynamic approach to developers and consumers.

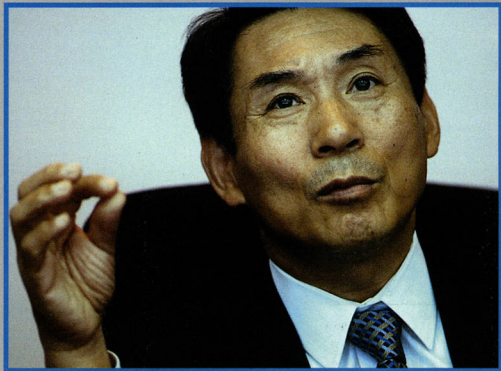
Inside Sega's Tokyo headquarters, **Next Generation** was granted an interview with Irimajiri to learn about his views on Dreamcast, Sega's fresh direction, and how the dominance of PlayStation can be overcome.

Next Generation: So tell us about your competition — Sony.

Shoichiro Irimajiri: As you see, the performance of the hardware is far superior to the PlayStation's. Most of the third parties say that they want to develop their lead titles for Dreamcast because of the superiority of the hardware, and I think that gives us the upper hand for one or two years. The most important thing is that before PlayStation 2 comes out, we get a considerable share of the market and generate enough momentum to carry through. Even though PlayStation 2 will come out in 1999, our hardware will remain superior because I believe all of the basic elements [of Dreamcast] are the most advanced technology available. However, we recognize that Sony is our most fierce competitor.



At Sega's corporate headquarters in Japan, the strategies for making Dreamcast a worldwide success are being finalized



NG: Is Dreamcast deliberately being launched between the two incarnations of PlayStation, and if so, wouldn't it make sense to do the same in the West?

SI: We had a difficult situation in Europe and America with Saturn, and we've learned a lot. We recognize that doing business in the U.S. and Europe is far more difficult than in Japan, so we decided that we must be 200% prepared for Dreamcast's launch next year. This year we are running at 100% in preparation for the launch in the domestic market [Japan]. And, as you know, in Europe and the U.S., game development takes a lot longer — 18 months on average. When we launch Dreamcast in the Western markets, we will have a lot of titles because we can transfer our best Japanese releases, and also we will have the third-party titles. This will be the first time for us to launch with enough titles for the U.S. and Europe.

NG: Historically, though, being first to the market hasn't always been a successful strategy for Sega, such as with the Mega Drive in Japan. What makes Dreamcast different?

SI: Right now, the so-called next generation consoles — Saturn, PlayStation, and N64 — are all set to be upgraded. We will do it this year. If PlayStation becomes PlayStation 2 next year, and Nintendo upgrades in 2000 or 2001, then it will be a time where all the platforms are changing. We think that the issue of who is earlier or who is late may not be such a big issue.

NG: Given the state of the Japanese economy, isn't it true that the Western markets are now more important?

SI: Our economy is not good, so who will excite the market? We will Young people say they can't find specific things to buy at Christmas. They need to buy a more attractive new machine. This is it.

NG: How much damage has the Sega brand taken with the failure of Saturn?

SI: We have lost some credibility among our Saturn users — even in Japan — because they have seen the PlayStation become the dominant force. To recapture their minds, we have to convince them that Sega is serious about satisfying its customers. In the past, Sega has never created such a huge conference to send its message to the world. Up to Dreamcast's launch on November 20, we will be taking all opportunities to send our message to our customers.

NG: It seems like Sega is being far more open than it has been in the past. Is that a conscious decision?

SI: I have been saying only one thing: Think and look at things from the customers' point of view. In the past, I think that Sega has maybe been arrogant. We decided to be far more open and listen to our customers.

NG: Back on the subject of Saturn, where does the Dreamcast announcement leave the older machine,

given that it's still popular in its domestic market?

SI: If there is demand for Saturn hardware, then we'll supply it, and we'll also support any software development for it. There are around 150 titles for Saturn yet to be released — we're encouraging the third parties to develop Saturn titles. Some companies are thinking there will be less competition on Saturn. As you know, in the Japanese market there is huge demand for 2D animation. So, probably 3D titles will go to Dreamcast and 2D titles might go to Saturn.

NG: Another popular genre in Japan is the RPG, a market over which Sony seems to have a stranglehold. Do you think that Dreamcast will be an attractive prospect for developers such as SquareSoft?

SI: The biggest advantage of Dreamcast is to provide almost movie-like graphics for games. So, when you think about role-playing games, it's a kind of movie-like story. In the past, even though the computer graphics behind RPG gameplay were nice, when you went into the game the graphics suddenly changed! But with the performance of Dreamcast, the visuals will be exactly the same throughout. I think this machine is the ideal machine for RPGs.

NG: As for other game genres, did you opt for Microsoft's operating system mainly to encourage Western developers to produce titles for Dreamcast?

SI: The reason to use Windows CE is simple. We wanted to have a much wider range of titles for Dreamcast. Some developers who have very good engineering capabilities will not use WinCE. They might write directly to the hardware and get good performance. That's OK. We are very fond of titles that have existed in the past — such as driving and fighting games — but we think that through the much higher performance of the hardware, the

boundary of the new generation of titles will be far broader than before. For those people, the WinCE development environment offers a favorable situation. Almost 120 developers have already been confirmed worldwide, and we have delivered around 1,000 development kits.

NG: How much is Sega spending to evangelize Dreamcast to developers and consumers?

SI: Roughly, worldwide, \$500 million. For the development of the hardware, it costs \$50 to \$80 million. For the software development, \$150 to \$200 million, and for the marketing in each territory, we will spend \$100 million. That's huge numbers. When I was involved in the auto industry, it cost about \$200 million to design the engine, chassis — everything. For the tools and dies it cost \$200 million, and to launch a new car it cost \$200 million. So that means \$600 million, the same as to launch this tiny machine! I don't understand ... [laughs]

NG: Including a modem in the console was a brave and positive move, but it's proving hard for some companies to make a profit from online gaming. What makes you think that Dreamcast can break the mold?

SI: There is some consensus of thought on this matter among Japanese developers. Online facilities will be a mandatory requirement for all game development in the very near future. At the same time, we know that we can't make money from the online game business, but we also know that everyone has to add value by developing online gaming. I discussed this issue with lots of top management people from the big publishers. They all said that it will be hard to make a profit from online gaming over the next few years. But still they have to explore the business opportunities.

NG: Looking at the machine's casing, it seems that the modem is removable ...

SI: That's right. Modem performance is always changing, and in the U.S. there might be a kind of high-performance cable modem. In that case, the consumer can replace the modem board.

NG: What is Sega's strategy now regarding its internal software development?

SI: Our arcade people are already working on versions of our best games. Yu Suzuki already told me that he has exceeded the power of Model 3 on Dreamcast, so we can expect a lot of arcade titles to come out for the home. On the other hand, the demand for quality titles from consumers is much higher than before. As you know, the Naomi arcade system is related to Dreamcast but will be more powerful. So we will carefully select only the arcade titles suitable for conversion.

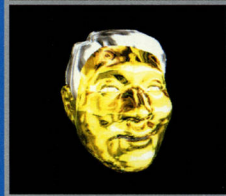
NG: There was a hint at the presentation that a certain blue mascot might appear on Dreamcast ...

SI: Sonic will remain as the major character for Sega, but we also want to bring lots of new characters forward, and that's one of the major challenges.

DEMO 1: IRIMAJIRI

Devised by ex-AM division creative Tetsuya Mizuguchi (who recently switched to consumer game development), the first of Sega's technical demonstrations featured a motion-captured representation of Shoichiro Irimajiri's head. Running in the console's standard 640x480 resolution, the quality of the texture maps used was immediately impressive. Essentially the title poked fun at Nintendo's introductory sequence for *Super Mario 64*, and was complete with light sources that circled around Irimajiri's head [second from top].

Of the various effects showcased in the software (some of which still images cannot convey), the morphing between shapes proved particularly notable. At one stage, the head blended into a golf ball before being struck off the screen.

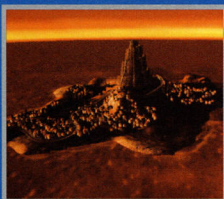


DEMO 2: BABYLON

Another of Sega's AM stars was called in to produce Dreamcast's second demonstration title. Yu Suzuki's *Babylon* proved a better indicator of what can be expected from Dreamcast: game environments.

Scattered around the foot of the central tower were scores of houses, each mapped with a high-resolution texture. Zooming close into the buildings simply resulted in more and more detail becoming clear, with no hint of frames dropping space. The lighting was dynamic and switchable between day and night.

High-end, accelerated PCs offer a similar performance, but when launched, Dreamcast will offer \$2,500 performance for around \$250. Tempted? **Next Generation** suspects the best is yet to come.



THE THIRD-PARTY STORY

Third parties = success. How Sega puts itself into the equation

One of the biggest factors in the failure of Saturn was the low number of third-party titles, a direct result of the difficulty of developing for the system. Sega's attitude toward third parties, coming off its seemingly invincible, 16-bit days, didn't help, nor did the company's bizarre attempt to simultaneously market Saturn, Genesis, Sega CD, and 32X (we won't even mention CDX or Neptune). But Sega says things are different now.

"I think the advantage we have this go-round is that Sega is humble, and focused on one product," says Gretchen Eichinger, director of third-party licensing and technical support at Sega. "It's really difficult to try to manage numerous product lines and try to launch a new product. But now we've cleaned up the past, and we're focused. It's like we're a startup

department. Before a game is released, code shown to the first party is supposed to be confidential, but in the past, Sega's reputation for confidentiality hasn't been the best. "This is one of the things we structured differently this go-round," says Eichinger. "We wanted to make sure our licensees were getting technical support from the third-party group, as opposed to [what used to be] part of first-party internal development. This way, when developers talk to us, they can be sure the information won't 'go across the hall' to a competing Sega development team."

Another major change? Publishers will have a choice about who manufactures their discs. Sega plans on licensing out manufacturing of its proprietary, high-density CD format to a number of CD replication plants across the country, then letting third parties deal

The biggest question in many publishers' minds must be, "Why bother?" Given the success of PlayStation, is there any need, financially, for publishers to support Dreamcast?

again, and that's what's really kind of fun about this."

"In terms of third parties it's a very different company," adds Neal Robison, Sega's director of developer support and technical evangelist. "I think the attitude about the role that third parties play in our success is very different."

Still, gaining a substantial stable of third parties is by no means assured. The biggest question in many publishers' minds must be, "Why bother?" Given the success of PlayStation, is there any need, financially, for publishers to support Dreamcast? "The research we've done," says Eichinger, "and the research that we've gathered from other sources indicates that PlayStation is going to top out on hardware sales this year, and software probably next year. So people are already looking for their next system [to develop for]."

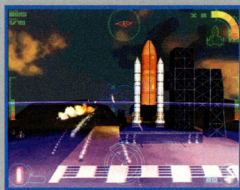
Another point for Sega is that many companies, regardless of the market, are simply getting tired of developing for PlayStation. "We've got developers telling us, 'I've done the same game on PlayStation three times now,'" says Robison, and this has been a key part of Sega's third-party strategy. Says Eichinger, "One of the things we've done is not only approach the publishers from the top down, but also make sure we're successfully evangelizing the technology from the bottom up to the developer community."

Sega has made a number of changes to the way it does third-party business to try to make the third-party relationship as painless as possible.

One of the most important has been to move developer technical support to the third-party

directly with those manufacturers. "We figure most of the big publishers in this business are more than capable of managing their own manufacturing, so we'd like to let them do it," says Eichinger.

One of the most contentious areas in the first-party/third-party relationship has always been product approval. To get the final "stamp of quality" before a product is sent to manufacturing often requires several tries, sometimes delaying a product beyond a critical launch window. Again, Eichinger says that Sega has changed. "We think it's appropriate that Sega evaluate titles for quality; after all, it's our name on the box, but we're looking at a system wherein we would evaluate titles in their alpha and beta stage, on a milestone schedule that would be separate from a final quality-control submission done at the end of the product life cycle. Because by the time someone submits, they're



This shot of *Incoming* running on a PC-based PowerVR card shows Dreamcast's potential

done. We want to address qualitative design issues early in the development cycle." According to Eichinger, developer reaction to the idea has been strong. "We expect to look at 500 to 600 proposals a year, so publishers are very anxious to hear what Sega has to say about a game."

Although Sega is talking to anyone with a development office in the United States or Canada, development kits are still being allocated carefully because of strong demand in Japan. "It's a balancing act," says Eichinger, "because on the one hand we want to make sure that we effectively evangelize the console for developers, and if people have new and innovative ideas, we don't want to close our eyes to that. But at the same time, we need to focus on quality, and there are typically only a handful of companies that do that. So we want to be open, but at the same time we need to make sure we end up with good titles."

According to Eichinger, publisher reaction has been strong. Although only a few have been publicly confirmed, Eichinger says that Sega is "in contract negotiations with all the major publishers. If you talk to the frontline people, the programmers, they're all really



Lighting effects like these will probably be a common sight in Dreamcast titles

excited, but of course if you talk to the CEO, that person is always going to take a hard line to negotiate the best contract. The bottom line coming out of E3, though, was that everyone said, "We plan on supporting Sega and supporting Dreamcast, no question." Is there anyone Sega isn't talking to? "Well, we don't really feel comfortable dealing with wholly owned subsidiaries of our competitors," she says. (Psygnosis, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony, fits this category.)

"It's pretty exciting," says Eichinger, "because after all the meetings we've had, no one has even said anything like, 'It's great, but I wish you had added a little bit more of this,' or 'If it were a bit faster,' or 'If it could only do that it would be truly great.' Instead, it's universally been, 'Wow, we can do some really, really cool stuff.' We could always be bigger, better, faster, but what we've delivered and what they're going to be able to do with Dreamcast just has everyone trying to figure out how to use it. 'How do we use the VMS? How should we use the modem? What's your online service going to look like? How can we take advantage of that? How can we get closer to Neal and his group? We'd like to come sit on your laps' [laughs]. I mean, what else do you want? It's been pretty neat so far."

5 MYTHS ABOUT DREAMCAST

1) DREAMCAST IS ONLY AS POWERFUL AS A GOOD 1998-LEVEL PC.

"Because the specs are described in a way that relates to a PC," says Neal Robison, director of advanced developer support and technical evangelist, "and there are several components in it that quite frankly look like a PC, that may be the impression. But it's really far from the truth. The architecture of this system is designed from the ground up to be optimized for console gaming."

"Think about how many compromises games have to make to work on different platforms and configurations," says John Smith, developer relations manager at PowerVR. "The nice thing about a console is that it's all one known system, all the vendors have worked really closely together, it's all extremely well-documented, and the developers know exactly what they have to work with, and because they know those parameters, they don't have to ever sacrifice anything."

Adds Charles Bellfield, NEC's product marketing manager, "What we have been able to do is design a processor, which is optimized for the other components that coexist with it — that just doesn't happen on a PC. There are limitations on the PC — from trying to read a joystick port to sound compatibility to how fast you can load in and out textures — compared to Dreamcast, which was built from the ground up, with everything designed to be compatible and to help developers create that ultimate gaming experience."

"Something that allows for information to travel amongst the different components of this closed-box architecture," concludes Robison, "each one of which has been tweaked for videogames, is just something you can't have on a PC."

2) THE HITACHI SH-4 IS ONLY 200MHZ — MY PENTIUM IS FASTER THAN THAT!

First, comparing the megahertz rates of different CPUs is meaningless. Second, unlike the Pentium, the SH-4 is optimized for floating point math performance. "Floating point," explains Robison, "gives you the accuracy and gives you that ability to manipulate 3D calculations, specifically the matrix transforms that every serious developer is using."

3) WITH THAT WINDOWS CE OS, DREAMCAST IS GOING TO BE THE HOME OF LOTS OF SHOVELWARE PORTS.

"Believe it or not," says Gretchen Eichinger,

director of third-party licensing, "the publishers are actually concerned about that happening. The way we at Sega typically think about ports is that it's not very good business. The best games are the ones that are specifically designed for the particular hardware in question, and if a company is pursuing a porting strategy, it just doesn't seem like a very smart strategy, either from a quality standpoint or a business standpoint."

So does this mean that Sega will simply refuse to approve PC-to-Dreamcast ports? "You know, as a platform holder, you've got a carrot and a stick to work with. Sega is much more interested in using the carrot," says Eichinger. "We hope we can convince people that it just doesn't make sound business sense, but the bottom line is, we're going to manage quality. We want to make sure that the consumers who have stood by Sega and those who buy Dreamcast are able to play the kinds of games that this machine is capable of delivering, so we're going to be tough."

4) IT'S GOT A MODEM, IT'S GOT A KEYBOARD ... IT'S NOT REALLY A GAME SYSTEM, IS IT?

Eichinger responds: "Clearly, we have a design that's going to enable us to do a lot of other things with the box, but you can be assured that short-term, our focus is on our core business, which is videogames. We're going to deliver the box, the games, and the marketing behind that. After that, there are certainly opportunities for noncore business development, but they're very secondary at this point. It's a videogame machine. That's where we're focused."

5) AFTER 32X, SATURN, AND SEGA CD, JUST PUTTING THE WORD 'SEGA' ON A CONSOLE IS GOING TO DOOM IT TO FAILURE.

Lee Caraher, Sega's VP of corporate communications, responds to this with a hearty laugh. "There are several companies and media outlets around the world — like *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, and *Interbrand*, which is globally renowned for building brands — that have come to us and said, 'Your brand is still strong. Do not give it up.' The name Sega means so much. All of our research shows that people associate Sega with good games. Some people are never going to be satisfied with Sega's strategies, and they are going to have to deal with that themselves, but to throw away the brand name in this country would be insane."

DREAMCAST GAMES

The following is a list of games that our sources have indicated are currently under development for Dreamcast. We should note, however, that none of these titles has been officially confirmed, and also that there are probably some titles in development that are not listed here.

3D character adventure - No Cliche

(2 titles in development)

Age of Empires - Microsoft

Akolyte - Ionos

Basketball - Sega/Visual Concepts

Battlezone 2 - Activision

Black and White - Lionhead/EA

Blitz 2 - Midway

Bug 3 - Sega

Carmageddon 2 - Interplay

Castlevania 3D - Konami

Command & Conquer -

Westwood/Virgin

Croc 2 - Argonaut

D2 - WARP

Dark Earth Adventure -

Kallisto/MicroProse

Daytona USA 2 - Sega

Dead or Alive 2 - Sega Arcade

Die by the Sword 2 -

Interplay/Tantrum

D-Jump - Ubi Soft

Dragon game - Konami

Drakan - Surreal Software

Drive-By - Bizarre Creations

Duke Nukem - GT Interactive

Dune 3K - Westwood/Virgin

Ecco the Dolphin - Sega/Appaloosa

Extreme GX - Acclaim

Fighting Bushu - Konami

Fighting Force 2 - Eidos

Fighting Vipers 2 - Sega

Football - Sega/Visual Concepts

Fox Sports Games - Fox Interactive

Futuristic Racing Game - Midway

Gauntlet - Midway

Get Bass - Sega Arcade

Gex 3D Part Two - Crystal Dynamics

Giants - Interplay

Grandia - ESP

Gun Griffon III - ESP

Hockey - Sega/Visual Concepts

King of Fighters 99 - SNK

LA Riders - Sega Arcade

TECH DEMO

Screens taken from a technology demo running on a prototype graphics development system with less than half the performance of the final Dreamcast console



DEMO OF PARTICLE ROOM

Represents examples of advanced texture mapping, a particle system, and advanced polygon processing capability. The particle system is represented as a fire, and animated particles rising from the fires heat into the shape of a dinosaur. All of the graphics in the room are handled in the system's graphics chip so the CPU can be used for AI, a particle system, or other gameplay elements.

WALLPAPER AND WOOD

Demonstrates advanced mip-mapping techniques, which let the graphics scale without breaking up, no matter how close the gamer gets to the wall. Can use point, bilinear, trilinear, and anisotropic mip-mapping.



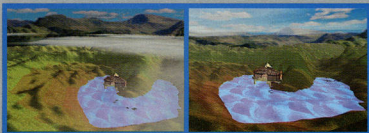
DINOSAUR PARTICLE SYSTEM

Shows 1,000 particles and 3D model of dinosaur floating above fire. Each particle has its own behavior. The particles rise from the fire and take on the shape of the dinosaur. The CPU is running this animation.



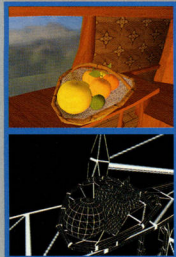
MOUNTAIN/LAKE/HOUSE SHOT

Displays a scene built with more than one million polygons. System's graphic performance eliminates the need to use fog because there is no background pop-up. Cloud layer is built with 3,000 polygons and is translucent, letting sun shine through in different degrees depending on thickness of cloud layer. Causes varying shadowing effects on terrain below. The water is not made up of a single texture, but instead built from many polygons for more lifelike movement. Objects below water are made with single-pass translucent rendering, something no other PC or gaming machine can do.

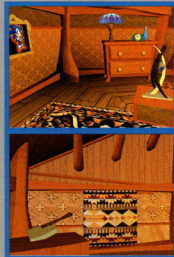


FRUIT BASKET

Made up of more than 90,000 polygons per second. If this scene were on PlayStation, the basket of fruit would max out the PSX's polygon capability.

**TEXTURE ROOM**

Uses 40 different textures ranging from 8x8 to 256x256 resolution. All of the textures in this entire room take up less than half of the system's VRAM uncompressed.

**REVOLVING GLOBE**

Represents a special texture-blending technique that constantly changes the surface of the globe while keeping it translucent so you can see the background through it.

**LACE**

Can actually go through the lace without seeing any breakup in the graphics. System is rendering the entire room behind the lace.

Each edge is anti-aliased.

**HOBBYIST DEVELOPMENT**

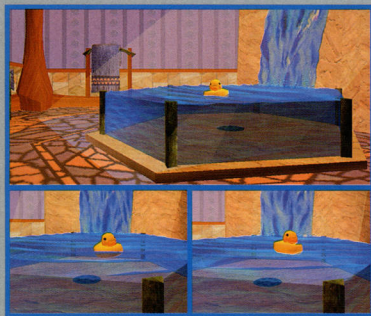
Sony's Net Yaroze program has been influential in resparking an interest in hobbyist and underground development. Is Sega planning anything similar?

Neal Robison, director of developer support and technical evangelist at Sega: "Certainly at launch the focus has totally got to be on games and putting our resources in the right place and making sure we're supporting the right developers. So in terms of the launch strategy, [hobbyist development kits] would not be part of it. But we've got some ideas [laughs] ...

"After the launch ..."

DUCK IN POOL

Demonstrates specular highlighting on waves for more realistic wave patterns. The room shows different lighting sources, ranging from ambient lighting to multicolored directional lighting, specular highlights, and a modifier light volume. The modifier light volume is a geometric volume of light. When it intersects with any other object, it can change specific lighting and texture behavior on a pixel-by-pixel basis.



- Last Bronx 2 - Sega
- Le Mans 24 - Sega
- Looney Tunes - Infogrames
- Lost World Arcade - Sega
- Lunar - ESP
- Madden 2000 - EA Sports
- MechWarrior - FASA
- Interactive/MicroProse
- Messiah - Shiny
- Metal Gear Solid 2 - Konami
- Metropolis - Bizarre Creations
- Mortal Kombat 4 - Midway
- Motor Raid GP - Sega
- MRC 2 - Genki
- Munch's Oddysee - GT Interactive
- NHL 2000 - EA Sports
- Nights: Into Dreams 2 - Sega
- Omikron - Eidros
- Outcast - Infogrames
- Panzer Dragoon - Sega
- PenPen Triathlon - General Entertainment
- Prince of Persia 3D - Red Orb
- Quake 3 - ID/Activision
- Rayman 2 - Ubi Soft
- Resident Evil 4 - Capcom
- Rush 2 - Midway
- Samurai Shodown DC - SNK
- Scud Race - Sega
- Sega Rally 2 - Sega
- Sega Sports Series - Sega
- Skies - Paradigm
- Skies - SegaSoft/Paradigm
- Soccer - Sega Japan
- Sonic 3D - Sega
- Sonic RPG - Sega
- South Park - Acclaim
- Street Fighter 3: 2nd Impact - Capcom
- Super GT - Sega Arcade
- Tenth Degree - Atari Games
- Title Defense - Climax
- Total Annihilation 2 - Cavedog
- Trespasser - DreamWorks
- Turok 3 - Acclaim
- Ultimate Race - Kallisto/MicroProse
- Unreal - GT Interactive
- Untitled game - Red Lemon
- Untitled original game - Activision
- Vampire Savior - Capcom
- Vehicle Combat Game - SingleTrac/GT Interactive
- Vigilance - SegaSoft/AnyChannel/PostLinear
- Virtual Cop 3 - Sega Arcade
- Virtua Fighter 3 - Sega Arcade
- VR Sports Series - VR Sports
- World Series 2000 - Sega
- World Series Baseball - Sega Japan



DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

Sega has a unique strategy: "Code first, hardware later"

One of the biggest reasons Saturn failed was the sheer difficulty of developing for its dual SH-1 processors, compounded by a lack of 3D APIs or libraries provided by Sega. Eventually the company did provide a set of libraries so complete it virtually constituted a new operating system, but it was hard-pressed to compete with the PlayStation's well-thought-out, easy-to-use development environment.

This time, however, Sega and its development partners, Microsoft and PowerVR, are determined to make Dreamcast development as easy as possible. While Set 5 development systems that contain final

hardware were only just going out the door in July, many developers already had projects well under way. How? The Set 4 and earlier systems enabled developers to use a PC, Microsoft's Windows CE development environment, and a prototype of the PowerVR second generation technology chipset.

This head start is important because PowerVR's rendering technology, based on "infinite planes," or, as the company prefers to refer to it, "tile-based rendering," isn't exactly the method developers are used to. Microsoft and PowerVR have worked closely on integrating PowerVR's features into the DirectX APIs, so developers don't have to worry about it.

"One of the things that we and Sega talked about a long time ago," says John Smith, developer relations manager at NEC, "is that we would tie our PC efforts into where Sega's efforts are going. So we would work a lot more closely with a developer we knew Sega was going to target as well, to help them learn more about PowerVR early so that when Sega approached them with Dreamcast, they'd say, 'Hey, we already know about tile-based rendering and all that other stuff.'"

"One of the important things to recognize," adds Charles Bellfield, product marketing manager at NEC, "is that this isn't new to developers. They've known about PowerVR second generation technology for two years or 18 months, and they know, from PowerVR first generation, the core technology. And we've already seen some of the examples of this at E3 and other

places. And now they've got 18 months before anything ships in the U.S. — that's much longer than developers had with PlayStation.

"One of the luxuries of being someone like NEC is that you have the financing and the backing to say, 'What are our objectives? Where do we want to be five years down the road?' and to decide we want to work with that company and we want to be active in that market. And then go speak to developers here, speak to the publishers, the prospective customers, and when you get their wish list, ... just deliver everything they want, everything that the game developers need."

Sega isn't talking much about the custom Sega OS or Sega's proprietary 3D API (even the name is considered a state secret at Sega), but more is known about the Windows CE development environment.

The Windows CE toolkit for Visual C++ 5.0 includes a compiler and tool set optimized for the SH-4. An SH-4 compiler and debugger for the C++ IDE includes inline SH-4 assembler support and a straight SH-4 assembler, which will theoretically let people go "straight to the metal," even when using Windows CE, as opposed to Sega's OS. Microsoft will also provide a custom version of DirectX, code-named Ninja, which takes advantage of PowerVR second generation features, like modifier volumes, that are currently unsupported in DirectX 5 or 6.

We will have more details about the development system (and its results, of course) in coming months.



Forsaken, running on PowerVR Second Generation in a PC, shows what kinds of effects players can expect — at minimum

DEVELOPER TALK

Michael Abbot, senior VP of product development at Midway's San Diego studio

NG: How has working with Sega been this go-round?

MA: Sega has been really great with us — letting us know everything from the get-go.

NG: Midway's biggest strengths lie in the arcade. How hard will arcade-to-Dreamcast conversions be?

MA: You know, it was a concern at the beginning when they were developing the hardware, but Sega has been very open in listening to what our needs are going to be, so I don't think it's gonna be a big deal.

NG: Are you planning on using Windows CE or Sega's OS?

MA: Our company has traditionally always done things right at the metal. We like that we can use every ounce of power on the machine. It's going to be really interesting to see how that

decision comes out, but we haven't made it yet.

NG: Sega has been very keen to tout the floating point performance of the Hitachi SH-4 processor. How important is floating point to you? Is integer performance good enough for the kind of quick and dirty 3D most games use?

MA: No, no. Floating point is extremely important. The future is floating point. Down here, we're going through this now, comparing our MIPS processors versus Intel versus the SH-4. The real equalizing factor here is floating point — from PC to PlayStation 2 to Dreamcast, making conversions across all platforms is going to be simpler because we aren't going to have to waste time doing floating-point-to-integer conversions.

I can't say how the SH-4 performs because we haven't run it through all our tests down here, but floating point is really key going forward.

NG: What do you think of the VMS [Visual Memory System]?

MA: We saw it at E3, and we were really intrigued with it. One of our games is going to implement that right off the bat.

NG: Will Midway put VMS ports in arcade games?

MA: Possible. Possible [laughs]. Extremely likely. We've talked to other people in the past about that, and it's extremely likely that you'll see something along those lines. We're excited as an arcade company about the possibility of linking our home games with our arcade games. You know, a new game goes into the

arcade, then you can use that game to release characters on the home game, and going the other way, then you can use the home game to release characters in the arcade game and give it a whole new life in the arcade.

NG: Will Dreamcast simply make the kinds of games we have now look better, or do you think it will enable entirely new gameplay styles?

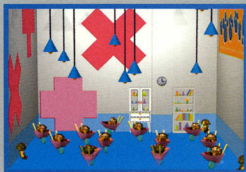
MA: Well, it's definitely going to let us make the staples look better. You're going to get a better football game, a better driving game, etc. But is the new hardware in Dreamcast going to let the creative folks come up with crazy stuff? I don't know. It's really up to the creative people now. This thing is so powerful that the emphasis is going to be on creativity and not on technology so much.

SENGOKU TURB AND SEVENTH CROSS

NEC returns to the game business — can *Bonk 3D* be far behind?

In addition to creating the 3D hardware for Dreamcast via PowerVR, NEC has another division, the recently formed NEC Home Electronics, creating games for Dreamcast. Extremely early shots of the first two, *Sengoku Turb* and *Seventh Cross*, are shown here, taken directly from the development system. NEC says it is looking into bringing both games to the U.S. and Europe. However, *Next Generation* believes the extremely stylized graphics of *Sengoku Turb* will likely limit its appeal to the domestic (Japanese) market.

We'll be blunt: *Sengoku Turb* (top) looks a lot like a launch title from a team without much experience with the system. *Seventh Cross* (bottom) is a far more impressive effort, at least to look at



DEVELOPER TALK

Eric Hammond, Sega's VP of product development

NG: How dramatically will the 12x CD-ROM drive affect load times, especially start-up times? Will it be closer to six seconds (power on to play in *Sonic 2*), or 51 seconds (power on to play in a certain PlayStation racing game)?

EH: Six seconds? Wow. It won't be six seconds because of the security check and other CD stuff. But it should be fast. How fast, I don't know, because the RAM is just now being finished. But the good thing is that we have a CAV drive — constant angular velocity, meaning the disc always spins at the same rate. So depending on where the data is on the CD, it will arrive at different speeds. There's a really nice tool — I've never seen one like this before — to find data on specific locations on

the disc. You can organize your content by how fast you need it to be loaded in.

NG: What kinds of games are you working on? Franchises? Or is that being handled in Japan?

EH: Well, we'd be stupid not to take some of our franchises and build on them, but part of Sega's strategy in coming out with a new console is to come out with stuff that's new, that's different, that's radically altered. You really have to cover both sides. What's cool is that at first party, our charter is to do something different, and we have the money to do it, so we're going to go out and build games that are not like anything else.

NG: What about online?

EH: Oh yeah, *Toe Jam and Earl 3*,

online [laughs]. No, online is something we're obviously paying a lot of attention to. I'll leave it at that.

NG: How's development progressing? Is it frustrating to start developing on one system, Set 4, say, and then get a new one? Is it slowing the development process?

EH: Oh, no! I mean, it's really cool to see the beginning of our hardware and see it come through the process and then have the performance hit what we wanted, and then outperforming it. For example, in a sports game, we set our [polygon] budget and then we got the final hardware, and suddenly it was running at 150 frames a second. Someone said, "Should we add polys?" And I said, "No, no, it looks great. Let's work on collision, let's

work on animation." So, we're getting lots of extra time to play with the AI, which is really cool.

NG: How much of that is the SH-4?

EH: The SH-4 is giving us a chance to say, "OK, we can push 10,000 polygons a frame. No problem. We can push 20-25,000, so let's back off the graphics a bit. It looks beautiful, let's spend some time on the AI." Traditionally, 10% of the time on a game is spent on AI, and 90% is just trying to cram in the graphics. And we don't have to deal with that anymore. The SH-4 can do so much math and so much physics math, you can just hand the graphics portion off to the artists and you've still got all this room left over. You don't have to make the sacrifices you used to.

ng special

THE DREAMCAST PARTNERS

Sega has been very careful about its choices.

SEGA

Dreamcast responsibilities: Sega is responsible for marketing the system and in charge of licensing all software. Sega chose the hardware partners, created the system architecture, and did the console's industrial design.



COMPANY INFO: Founded by American David Rosen in Tokyo after World War II, the company grew into a successful arcade manufacturer and was sold to Gulf & Western. After the arcade crash of 1982-83, G&W liquidated Sega in the U.S., but a Japanese management buyout saved the company in Japan. Dreamcast is the company's fifth console after the S-1000, Master System, Genesis, and Saturn. The company's revenues are nearly \$3 billion per year.

NEC

Dreamcast responsibilities: NEC is providing the technology that will drive the graphics power of Dreamcast. The technology is based on PowerVR's second generation, optimized for the Dreamcast system architecture and the Hitachi SH-4 chip.



COMPANY INFO: A \$49-billion firm, NEC is one of the world's leading electronics companies, although its

corporate profile is perhaps lowest in the United States. Specialties include RAM chips, monitors, flat panel displays, and lately, 3D graphics chipsets. NEC once competed with Sega in the home market with the NEC TurboGrafx.

HITACHI

Dreamcast responsibilities: Hitachi is providing the CPU for Dreamcast. Although it is only 200MHz, the chip is optimized for floating point calculations. Hitachi will also manufacture the Dreamcast hardware.



COMPANY INFO: Headquartered in Tokyo, Hitachi is the world's largest electronics company, with revenues of more than \$68 billion last year. The company specializes in consumer electronics, computers, and microchips.

YAMAHA

Dreamcast responsibilities: Yamaha is providing the sound hardware for Dreamcast, which is made up of two chips, a 32-bit ARM 7 RISC processor (some say it is more powerful than the PlayStation's CPU), and a dedicated DSP. It will deliver 64 channels of sound, with 64-voice polyphony, as well as reverb, 3D sound, and other

PIRACY

How worried is Sega about piracy?

Neal Robison, director of developer support and technical evangelist: "Obviously it's a concern, but we've been pretty lucky in that we have very good security, which I am not going to tell you about [laughs]. But in Taiwan, with Saturn, they were literally cutting rings off of [legitimate] discs to get the pirates to work. Plus, our custom CD format and the CAV drive should both help thwart casual CD-R piracy."



COMPANY INFO: Founded in 1887 (when it made reed flutes), Yamaha today is a global concern, making and selling everything from motorcycles to high-end music keyboards to industrial robots. The company has a reputation for creating products with an exceptional attention to detail.

MICROSOFT

Dreamcast responsibilities: Microsoft is providing one of the two operating systems for Dreamcast, a modified version of Windows CE. It is also providing a custom version of its development system and DirectX APIs, tailored to the PowerVR technology and the SH-4 processor.



COMPANY INFO: Founded in 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen to sell BASIC for the Altair, Microsoft is now the dominant provider of operating systems, productivity software, and computer languages. In recent years, the company has made numerous efforts (Dreamcast, WebTV) to expand its OS business beyond traditional desktop computers. Revenues in 1996-1997 were \$11 billion.

DEVELOPER TALK

Mark Rein, Epic's vice president

NG: What do you think of Dreamcast?

MR: "I think it's gonna be pretty cool. It's definitely a step in the right direction for consoles — it provides a good base for people from the PC side to port their products easily, and it provides a much more powerful system than most console people are used to. We PC developers get a system that's almost as big as a fat PC, and the console people get something even better.

NG: Spoken like a true PC chauvinist. So you don't think it's going to be more powerful than a PC?

MR: If anyone says that, they're kidding themselves. The graphics technology is better, but the overall

system is ... I mean, a \$300 console versus a \$3,000 PC, give me a break. When it came out, Nintendo 64 was more powerful than a PC, but that's not true today. Maybe today Dreamcast is more powerful, but by the time it comes out ...

NG: Are you worried about the RAM limitations?



GT Interactive's *Unreal* will almost certainly make a Dreamcast appearance — and will likely look almost identical to this, if not better

THE GAMES

All the technology in the world doesn't help if the games don't measure up

While Sega has made sure no third-party developers go on record about the games they're working on, one thing that most developers will go on the record about is how enthusiastic they are about the possibilities that the expandable controller packs and modem offer. "We were at a developer last week," says Neal Robison, Sega's director of developer support and technical evangelist, "and one thing that kept the conversation going for like 30 minutes — in a roomful of 30 engineers who originally wanted to hear just about the graphics hardware — was the Visual Memory System. They just see so many opportunities with VMS to expand what you normally think of as direct interaction with a videogame. We were hearing ideas that we had never heard before — it's clear developers are going to just grab this and run with it, and who knows where they'll go."

Although some options for the VMS are no-brainers, like being able to select plays secretly in sports games, others are less obvious. One of the more exciting ideas is adding VMS ports to arcade games. Not only could players get downloads from the arcade machine to unlock secrets in home games, but the interaction could also work the other way: Players could use information from the home game to unlock secrets in the arcade. This would also help stop the recent slide in arcade revenue, which was caused in part by the rapid release of arcade games to the home. Training Dreamcast characters on the VMS away from the machine and joining VMSs to share information and codes are also strong possibilities.

Regardless of how the VMS is used — and it's certain to be used in ways that developers haven't even imagined yet — it is clear that its inclusion as a standard system element will enable gameplay mechanics that simply are not possible with any other console. Although the VMS's 48x32 LCD screen is not very impressive, the 8-bit processor inside is fairly powerful (for a memory card, anyway), and this bodes well for future controller pack add-ins.

Another item exciting developers is the modem, since this is the first time they'll be able to offer console players a chance at online multiplayer gaming. More important, SegaSoft will be providing a gaming service dedicated to Dreamcast owners. Because each system's hardware will be identical, an extremely high level of integration and targeting can be done by the service, which should enable a high level of performance. Sega also confirms that in addition to point-to-point connections (that is, my Dreamcast calls yours), this online service will be Internet-based, not a dial-in service like DWANGO. "It's going to be fairly easy, technically, for developers to add online functionality to multiplayer games, so it's sort of a given for all the games that it makes sense for," says Gretchen Eichinger, group director of third-party licensing. Persistent online games like *Meridian 59* or *Ultima Online* (or SegaSoft's own *zSO*) are also likely. "We're in discussions right now with a number of publishers who are very interested in that, so I think the answer is yes, there will be persistent online



High gloss, high action titles will likely be the mainstay of Dreamcast's library, but with all that power, perhaps new genres will emerge

games for Dreamcast," says Eichinger.

In addition, a web browser will ship with Dreamcast (although neither Sega nor Microsoft will confirm that it's Internet Explorer). There will also be a keyboard adapter available, although it's still unknown whether any games will require the keyboard to play.

More than new hardware features like the VMS and modem, though, the sheer power of the system will make the biggest difference. "We've met all these people," says Robison, "who see the system and are like, 'Wow, now I can make this game that I've been dreaming of for three years.' It's like we've removed technology from the equation, and the only limits now are what the developers can think up."



MR: Not really. For a sub-\$300 machine it's got plenty of RAM. Twenty-four megs, 8MB VRAM — and a lot of Voodoo cards only have four. It's got, what, six times more RAM than N64? No, the RAM is good, the graphics are great, and the processor ... no comment [laughs].

NG: What have you done with the hardware so far?

MR: We have *Unreal* running on



With Dreamcast's built-in modem, multiplayer death-matches should be a natural

it, on PowerVR second generation, already.

NG: And?

MR: It's very powerful. We've been told the cards we have are

50% or less of the final speed of the silicon, and they already run comparable to Voodoo². You couldn't tell the difference between Voodoo² and PowerVR second generation, except the visual quality is better on PowerVR. The colors are a little better. If it's going to do twice that, you're talking SLI quality, and that means *Unreal* will look great.

NG: How has developer support been from Sega?

MR: So far so good. They're definitely a new Sega there.

NG: What do you think of the operating system strategy? Which will Epic use for *Unreal*?

MR: Windows CE, probably. I never realized how cool it was till I started playing around with it.

NG: How hard will the actual porting be?

MR: Oh, trivial. From what we understand and what we've done, it will really be trivial. Easy.

NG: What about multiplayer?

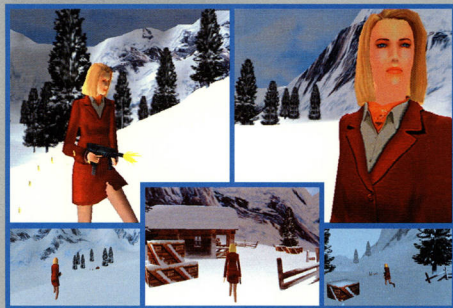
MR: The four ports are cool, but my guess is we'll do modem play. We could probably do [split screen], but because *Unreal* isn't really set up for it, we'll go for the modem. We expect there to be a good modem-to-modem API, and of course some kind of server too. We think right now we should be able to do Dreamcast versus PC play too, at least modem to modem.

NG: Final thoughts?

MR: Hmm ... it's cheap, great graphics, good OS. I think they really got it right.

WARP FACTOR

Dreamcast's only officially announced title has been a long time coming



Warp's eternal heroine, Laura Lewis (who not only starred in the original *D*, but also *Enemy Zero*), is back again. Can she escape being known as "the other Laura?"



Well, this answers one question: Things can blow up real good on Dreamcast — no worries there

With the hardware out of the bag and the marketing buildup aimed like a rocket at Sony's stern, attention now turns to the software lineup — that crucial but previously misfired weapon in the war for market dominance. Quite unexpectedly, and seemingly more through luck than judgment, the first officially announced title for Dreamcast is Warp's *D2*.

Warp's boss Kenji Eno is something of a pop personality in his native Japan, appearing regularly on hip TV shows and pulling huge crowds of young otaku at the annual Tokyo Game Show.

Having first cleared his intentions with Shoichiro Irimajiri, Eno chose to announce his latest creation immediately after Sega's own high-profile unveiling — a move he now claims, somewhat churlishly, to regret. But it was a smart move: Not only does he cash in on the immediate buzz surrounding the Dreamcast launch, but also he has the software playing field all to himself, at least for now.

True to the decidedly oddball image of Warp, the *D2* presentation opened with a video that left many none the wiser as to the true content or nature of the game. Scenes consisted of mountain peaks, outer space, plane interiors, and close-ups of the heroine, Laura. Eno's flair for dramatic music was underlined with a sonic mix that included the cries of wild birds, "Enordinately" loud heartbeats, and a symphonic score worthy of John Williams. The movie concluded with the Dreamcast logo.

Eno then made his presentation, emphasizing that *D2* is a game that will rely heavily on what he described as "real feel, real world, and a real story." The game features a mix of gameplay styles that includes a shift from third- to first-person perspective during combat — an element that puts *D2* firmly in the action/adventure bracket. It's a long way from the *D2* that was first touted for the never-released M2 console in 1997. The only element that remains of that game is the name. Gone is the Gothic haunted house, and gone too are the ponderous pace and overemphasis on puzzles. For Dreamcast, Warp has redesigned,

reprogrammed, and repositioned *D2* as an action/adventure likely to appeal as much to Western audiences as to the eccentric tastes of Warp's own loyal fan base in Japan, who last year helped push the original *D* up and over the magic one million sales mark.

Following the official unveiling of the title in Tokyo's Chiyoda district, Next Generation cornered the charismatic Eno to get the scoop on what is, if not the most eagerly anticipated Dreamcast title, certainly the most timely.

Next Generation: Sega has a massive catalog of potential Dreamcast titles. Warp is a respected company, but it seems odd that *D2* was chosen to be the first game announced.

Kenji Eno: I was told that Sega would make an announcement on May 21, so I decided to make mine right after. I'd thought Sega would have shown its games before mine — I only heard one week before that Sega would not show any titles. I asked before the announcement what they intended to do with *D2* on the 21st and they answered, "Nothing." I immediately thought the timing was not good for me. Irimajiri-san told me they wanted to make an announcement to demonstrate the polygon power of the Dreamcast — I like to call him Polimajiri [laughs]. I found the humorous presentation very effective. I have a lot of admiration for him. This time Sega wanted to catch people's attention and their dreams. Despite the awkward timing of the *D2* announcement, the 11,000 attendance was pretty good.

NG: Did they come for the *D2* announcement or for Eno-san?

KE: [Laughs] Don't know. The graphics were good, weren't they?

NG: *D2* has been on the cards for some time now and was originally planned for the M2. When did you shift to Dreamcast?

KE: Last September. At first, we didn't have any hardware, so we went to New Zealand to do research [on environments and weather], only a few days after deciding to work on Dreamcast. In Japan, September is still summer and it was not the snow season. It would have been unfortunate not to see snow when I'm making a game taking place in it! When we returned, the development kit was at the office and we started work.

NG: Matsushita abandoned M2 in May last year. Why did you wait three months?

KE: We decided to make a completely new game. *D2* for M2 was an old project. We wanted to make something related to nature — I did not want to use buildings or machines ... The Inuit people have more than 30 different words to express "white" — like "green" in Japanese. I felt challenged by making a nice snow world with lots of shades.

NG: So there's no similarity between the two versions?

KE: Absolutely none. The game is completely different.

NG: Is the development team the same?

KE: Yes, this team made *D*, the M2 version, and is presently working on this Dreamcast version. We started to work on another RPG game, which is presently on standby. The total number of Warp staff is around 20. There are between 10 and 15 people working on *D2*.

NG: During your presentation there seemed to be a few parallels between *D2* and *Tomb Raider* ...

KE: No, it's different. Because we had to show it very quickly at the announcement, when entering in a combat phase, the scene turned into a cut scene. I played a lot of *Tomb Raider II*, although I couldn't reach the end ... In *Tomb Raider*, you can't see very far,

but in *D2* you can see the distant background in real 3D. However, the fact that you can see an enemy from a few hundred meters away is a problem because you can avoid him. Even if the character appears very close, the game isn't so interesting... We tried a system similar to *Tomb Raider II* around February, but that wasn't interesting either, so we gave up and implemented a new system, and we're about 20% through that now.

NG: What are your aims for the development of *D2*?

KE: Our objective was to make a game playable by anybody — like *D*. A number of *D*'s players were adults. We want to target the same people with *D2* and release a game that's not too difficult.

"We're showing about 30,000 polygons per frame ... but Dreamcast is capable of displaying up to three million polygons per second"

So when you enter a battle phase, the game becomes a shooting game. With the change to a special battle section, *D2* is a kind of action/RPG, although we wanted to avoid the loading phase and random encounters. Enemies will be assigned and will appear from different kinds of places — out of the snow, from behind houses, etc. When walking close to them they'll appear. After a few times the player will know where they are and remember.

NG: Dreamcast has some new features for a console. Do you intend to use the PDA and/or the modem?

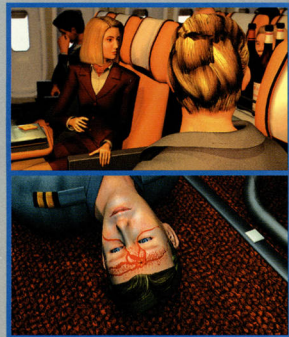
KE: We have a programmer working on it, but nothing is decided yet. Maybe we will make a kind of Bulletin Board, enabling players to download messages.

NG: How about the PDA?

KE: You can use it for memory or for displaying information that another player can't see. You can carry the PDA with you — and exchange information. The communication capability is high.

NG: *D2* seems to be a one-player game. Dreamcast has the ability to be linked directly, like PlayStation. Will you use this?

KE: It's a one-player game, so we're not planning to use the link. In the future, linking different machines will be good for an RPG type of game. But Warp makes software based on quality. We don't really want to make an "updated" version.



D2's prerendered promo managed to show a lot without really showing what sort of game it will be

NG: Moving on to Dreamcast's technical performance, what sort of power are you using?

KE: We're showing about 30,000 polygons per frame. We don't know exactly how many we'll display in the end, but Dreamcast is capable of displaying up to three million polygons per second.

NG: There has been a certain amount of cynicism about that figure, given that Dreamcast would then be far more capable than Model 3. Is it a realistic count?

KE: Yes, the machine can display this number of flat-shaded polygons. However, a game looks best when you use two or three light sources and maybe some fog, and then that number drops.

At the beginning, we thought that rather than using 50,000 or 60,000 polygons per frame it was better to use only 20,000 or 30,000, with numerous light sources and effects. Sega's people agreed that the result looked good. At the moment we're using 15,000 polygons for the background and 10,000 for the characters — the demo we showed only had 25,000 polygons per frame.

NG: How does Dreamcast compare with other platforms?

KE: Saturn and PlayStation display about 3,000 polygons per frame [at 30fps]. Dreamcast is about 10 times this figure, while compared with M2 it's about three to four times more powerful. Having said that, three months ago I looked at some old screenshots of *D2* on M2 and thought it was pretty good for three-year-old hardware. When the M2 project was canceled, we thought about releasing *D2* on the N64, but its position wasn't good in Japan. We're happy to release it on Dreamcast because it offers great graphics performance. But honestly, I liked the M2 a lot, although I'm not keen on the PlayStation or Saturn. I like the N64 a little bit, though [laughs].

NG: Much has been made of Dreamcast's Yamaha sound chip. With your musical inclinations, it must be exciting for you.

KE: For *D2* we want to emphasize aspects of nature, so we are using a lot of sounds. For example, when you enter a room, sounds like fire or a rocking chair will be played in stereo. The 64-bit stereo output is pretty good, thanks to the Yamaha chip.

NG: Another feature of Dreamcast is its use of Windows CE ...

KE: I believe Windows CE is a good environment, but we use assembly language and C. Windows CE and DirectX3 will enable lots of people to make games easily, including simple conversions from Windows 95. Sega showed us some demonstrations where it converted a couple of titles from PC in almost one week.

NG: Sega is promising to support developers better this time around. Have you received final development tools yet?

KE: No, they're still being improved. Their Saturn tools were not so successful. Worse than the N64's maybe... PlayStation was successful because of its library and tools, and I believe Sega understood the implications of that. For Dreamcast's graphics, it's possible to use Graphics Studio Max and Lightwave 3D. Sega's development environment is very friendly. The hardware is still a little way off, yet the present version of the tools is already sound.

NG: Do you exchange development information with Sega?

KE: Yes, I often see Yu Suzuki or Yuji Naka. They're excellent producers and designers. We get on really well.

NG: It sounds like Warp and Sega have a very close relationship. Does it go further than sharing information?

KE: Absolutely not. There is no financial relationship. We're just good friends. I'm on very good terms with Irimajiri-san. Sega's people are very nice — I like Sega a lot.



This spinning Sega logo, showing an environment map (Sonic), was displayed running at 60 frames per second at E3. Will it be the start-up logo for the new systems?

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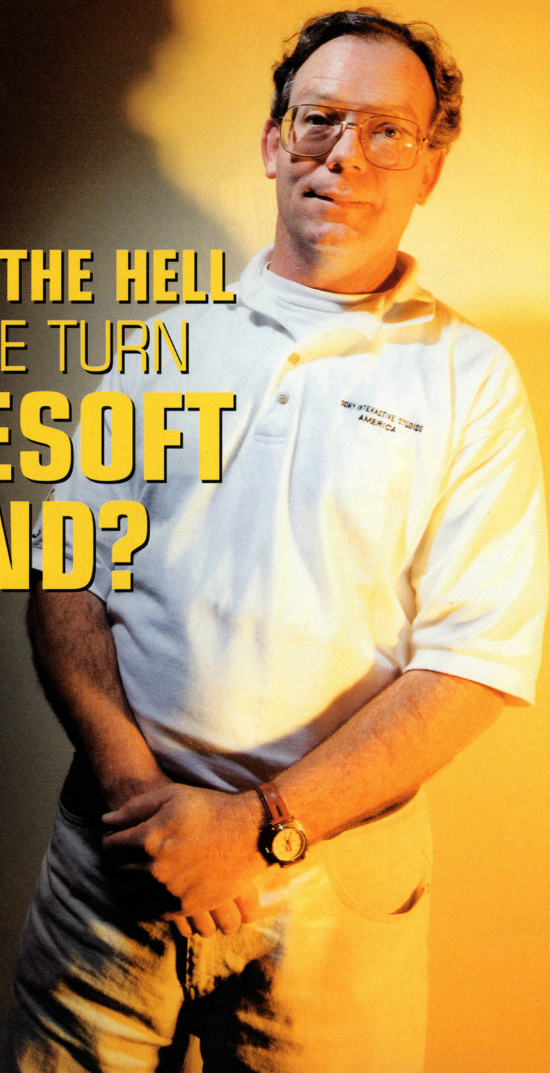
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"Sony's executives are going to launch PlayStation with Sony Imagesoft, the *Johnny Mnemonic* people, doing first-party development? Are they ignorant, or stupid?" That was the question three years ago, as Sony prepared to launch PlayStation with the questionable backing of Imagesoft, soon to be renamed Sony Interactive Studios America. Three years later, we ask the president of SISA ...

HOW THE HELL DID HE TURN IMAGESOFT AROUND?



Despite a legacy of some of the worst software ever created — for instance, *Hook* — Sony Interactive Studios of America (SISA) pulled the rug from beneath EA's feet. Led by Kelly Flock (formerly of Trimark Interactive, LucasArts, and, ironically, EA), SISA aired TV commercials of *NFL GameDay* that led EA to cancel its first PlayStation *Madden* title at the 11th hour, permanently shifting the balance of power in the lucrative videogame sports market. Three years later, the EA/Sony sports battle still rages, and EA, the company that built a seemingly insurmountable lead in the 16-bit era, often finds itself as the underdog.

So how did SISA, now renamed 989 Studios, manage to pull off such a feat? What secret advantages did being a Sony-owned company give it? **Next Generation** enjoyed a candid chat with Flock over dinner (and a couple of bottles of wine) to discuss his continued support of PlayStation, and — inevitably — the ongoing battle with Electronic Arts. And at Kelly's request, we'd like to state explicitly that the views expressed in this interview are his alone, and do not reflect the official position of Sony or 989 Studios.

Backing PlayStation

NG: How did you guys get started?

Kelly: We started out as Sony Imagesoft back in 1995, and we were a division of Sony Electronic Publishing out of New York. Originally, we were supposed to be an independent cross-platform developer supporting all viable platforms in the marketplace.

NG: "All viable platforms"? So you weren't created purely to make games for PlayStation?

Kelly: Not at all. Sony is a big company. There is no reason why it shouldn't have divisions that ignore the considerations of other divisions. We could have supported any platform that was viable, including Nintendo and Saturn and others. In fact, Imagesoft was a Saturn developer when I joined.

NG: So why did you drop all other console development and concentrate on PlayStation?

Kelly: Because I figured that PlayStation would be a successful platform. In fact, it was the reason I came to Sony in the first place.

Just two weeks after joining Imagesoft I attended a big Sony board meeting in New York. It was in Mickey Schulhoff's boardroom, who was the president of Sony Corporation of America at the time, and it was the same boardroom featured in the movie *Wall Street*, so it was pretty intimidating. I announced that Imagesoft would only be supporting PlayStation, and Mickey stopped the meeting and said, "What happened?" He didn't look at me, he looked at Olaf Olafson, and he said, "Why is Imagesoft just supporting PlayStation? Why isn't it supporting all viable platforms out there?" and I chimed in by saying that I didn't want to be in a similar meeting a year down the road and have to say, "Sorry, the PlayStation didn't work, but here's all the money we made supporting Sega Saturn." The point being that I thought that we were inextricably linked to PlayStation.

NG: You believed that the fates of Imagesoft and PlayStation were intertwined.

Kelly: Right, but there was another important reason why I canned all of the Saturn development. I hadn't seen all of the software Imagesoft had in development until after I officially signed on. After I got a chance to see all the games in the works, one of the things I noticed was that people were compromising the strength of the PlayStation games in order to ensure ease of portability to Saturn. I said to our programmers, "What if we dropped Saturn and you could tailor this game exclusively to PlayStation?" and the developers said the games would be a whole lot better, so I said, "Saturn's dropped."

NG: That was quite a gamble.

Kelly: Back in 1995 a lot of people still thought that Sega

was going to win and that as a newcomer Sony would drop the ball. People were talking about *Matsushita* and *M2*. But we took a chance on PlayStation and were rewarded for it.

If you looked around the game industry, everyone was taking the strategy of building games by creating an asset and then porting it to as many different platforms as they could. But if you think about it, when you do this, you just build a generic piece of work that doesn't excel on anything. And this way you're going to get your butt kicked by someone who picks just one platform and then devotes all their energies to it, writes hard machine code, and says, "Damn everything else." And so that's what we did. And that's why we caught most of the third-party community flat-footed. That's why we

I'm saying right now, [Dreamcast's] gonna fail

were the first ones out with a football game and why *GameDay* beat the shit out of *Madden* in the first year.

EA didn't even show up to the party. You want to talk about our battle with EA? We're still waiting for them to show up. If they stopped sending you guys in the press nice leather jackets and instead started building games, then we'll see if we end up with a decent fight on our hands.

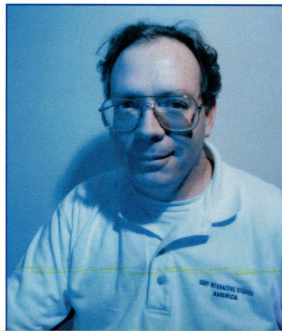
Taking on Electronic Arts

NG: EA will claim that it's winning. If you look at the worldwide sales numbers ...

Kelly: Well they are winning, and it's kind of depressing because they're not making the best games, are they? What they have is a great deal of cache in the *Madden* brand — we can't deny it. But what I think is this: If you flipped things around last year and the product that was called *Madden* was really *GameDay* and the product that we shipped as *GameDay* was really *Madden*, then you would have seen a 10-to-one wipeout. What we like to say is, "If you want to play next year's *Madden* early, buy this year's *GameDay*."

NG: So if *GameDay* is superior to *Madden*, why isn't it selling more?

Kelly: We did a lot of market research and analysis of this and we learned two things. First, the underlay crowd buys the best football game and overwhelmingly supports *GameDay*. The over-18 crowd, the guys who are slowing down, whose synapses aren't firing quite as well as they used to, they love *Madden*, and it's kind of hard to tell them that the love of their



life has grown old and ugly and they should get a new one. In 1998, if you buy into the whole, "it's an EA game, of course it's going to be great" thing, then you've turned into your parents. Get a life. Open your eyes.

I spoke to [EA president] Larry Probst at E3, and he admitted that *GameDay* kicked *Madden's* ass. And I said that's a pretty big ass! We beat 'em. It's over. The problem is that all you reviewers think you're gonna fucking work for EA some day so you won't tell the truth!

NG: We've never given *GameDay* less than five stars.

Kelly: OK, but for the last three years on PlayStation we've been the dominant football game. We've always been a year ahead of *Madden*. And yet, still, after all this time we get compared to *Madden*. You've still got it the wrong way round. They're the ones that should be compared to us.

Now *Madden's* finally polygonal. You want to know how

they've got nowhere to go, there's nothing innovative coming out of there. And this is nothing new. Peter Molyneux said it all when he walked out.

NG: You think EA's lost its creative edge?

Kelly: If you talk to EA and ask them what their strengths are, they'll say distribution, marketing, their franchises, their sports line. It's a long way down the line before they get to an ability to incubate and create original creative talent. They innovate the old-fashioned way — they buy it.

NG: So how long can EA keep going?

Kelly: They'll keep going, even though they don't make very good products anymore. But no one wants to say this because everyone's afraid. Half the people think they're going to work for them some day, the other half are selling a lot of advertising to them, or whatever. Once you get to EA's position you become untouchable because you're perceived to be tremendously powerful; the situation becomes self-perpetuating.

NG: Is Sony untouchable?

Kelly: No, EA is the only one. Anyway, I'm tired of fucking defending our products against fucking *Madden* because we're better. They're looking up at us. They can sit there and say with a straight face that they outstep us in marketing, and the magazines can print that, along with all that crap

In 1998, if you buy into the whole, "It's an EA game, of course it's going to be great" thing, then you've turned into your parents. Get a life. Open your eyes

we feel now? We finally can see them in our rearview mirror, that's how we feel. We see their headlight blinking over the horizon, and we know that someday they're going to be where we are now.

NG: What other ways did EA leave the door open for you?

Kelly: There are good reasons why EA is behind us. They've got some great people working there, but EA is a marketing-driven organization. It's very conservative. Name the last innovative Electronic Arts game. Can you name any? It's fun to bash *Acclaim* and *GT*, sure, because they are a totally market-driven organization. But *Electronic Arts* is worse. *Electronic Arts* is the quintessential market-driven organization. Hats off to them — they'll be the first company in this industry to sell for \$5 billion to someone who wants to get into this and buy all those brands.

EA went after *Godzilla*, they're buying all of these intellectual properties, why? Because they're creatively befet,

about v-polygons. What's a v-polygon? What's a rendered sprite? What's liquid AI? Liquid AI is the crap that ran down their leg when they saw *GameDay*.

Secret advantages?

NG: You credit your success to focusing on PlayStation early — backing the right horse and sacrificing portability in order to make the most of PlayStation's hardware. But did you have any other advantages because you're owned by Sony?

Kelly: No, not at all. In fact, we got our PlayStation development kits three months after *Electronic Arts* got theirs. Everyone else had to wait six months, so I guess you could say we had an advantage.

But seriously, no, we had absolutely no advantage and no inside knowledge over anyone else.

NG: And you didn't have any access to PlayStation's secrets and inner workings that third parties didn't?

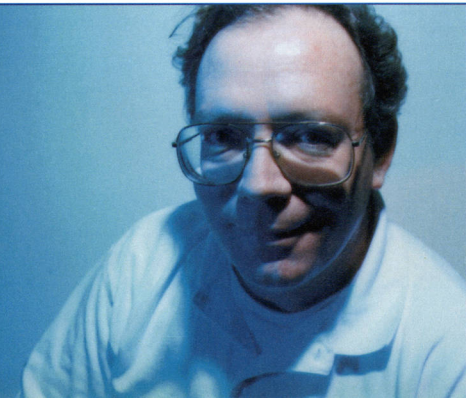
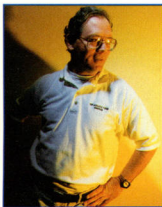
Kelly: No, nothing.

NG: What about feedback from your colleagues at SCEA about what other third parties were up to? If you knew the games that other people were working on, that would be a huge advantage ...

Kelly: At Sega, during the 16-bit era, developers had to accept that if you submitted a game to Sega Japan for approval or even just consideration, then it would be passed around all of their internal development studios, and everyone would get a chance to see what the competition was up to. This gave Sega's internal development a huge edge, sure. But nothing like this ever happened at Sony. *Imagesoft* was a completely different entity to the PlayStation business. It's a level playing field.

NG: How about costs? As a software developer, do you have to pay SCEA the same manufacturing and licensing fees?

Kelly: I can't discuss internal financing or accounting. But let me tell you that we function as a stand-alone P&L, and we have comparable budgets to any third parties. I don't have an edge. I don't have any advantage. It's fair and square. Although it would be nice ...



NG: You can't blame people for being suspicious of your success. Imagesoft produced crap, and then — all of a sudden — you started kicking ass on PlayStation.

Kelly: People are somewhat suspicious and paranoid of any console company because of the amount of power they can potentially wield and abuse. But in my experience with Sony and PlayStation, this paranoia is unfounded.

NG: So why was the early Imagesoft stuff so bad? *Last Action Hero, Cliffhanger, Frankenstein, Johnny Mnemonic ...*

Kelly: I wasn't there at the time [laughs]. There were different agendas back then. You have to remember the climate, with the drive toward multimedia and Full Motion Video, and what people thought that the introduction of CD might mean. There was also a huge influx of nongaming people into the decision-making process of the business. Imagesoft was driven by the idea of supporting licenses from movies. There was this slew of gaming software being treated like just another form of movie licensing, as opposed to a distinct art form of its own. Very little attention was paid to the actual game development.

There were reasons why a lot of this stuff happened, although I, personally, don't understand them all. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Anyone who talks about interactive movies doesn't know the first about either.

NG: How can one division of Sony get it so wrong, and yet, at exactly the same time, another division of Sony can get it so right? Imagesoft floundered whereas PlayStation excelled?

Kelly: Again, it simply shows that Sony's a big company. We are one island within Sony, and there are lots of other islands. It's a \$50 billion company worldwide, and when you get that big, it's like ... it's like being a government. Except that a Sony passport will probably get you into more countries.

PlayStation was definitely the brainchild of Ken Kutaragi and his group of engineers. Imagesoft was a completely different entity.

Dreamcast? No thanks

NG: As an independent publisher who can support any platform that you like, will you be supporting Dreamcast?

Kelly: No, we're not supporting any platforms right now other than PlayStation and PC.

NG: Why not? Hasn't Sega convinced you that Dreamcast

is closely associated with PlayStation and have enjoyed so much success that we are prepared to take the risk of being on only the second tier of developers for Dreamcast? If indeed it becomes a success. Especially given the sorry condition that Sega's currently in.

NG: Doesn't the technology excite you?

Kelly: From what I've read, the performance of the Dreamcast hardware is comparable to that of a current high-end PC. Now, this creates two problems. The first is that third-party developers are going to take a step back with a "wait and see" attitude and simply port PC games over to Dreamcast. Sega's given them the chance to take the easy



This generation of the PlayStation business has years to run. I think Dreamcast is coming far too early in the cycle

is going to be a success?

Kelly: We haven't spent a lot of time talking to Sega about it. We have had one meeting with them, but they didn't disclose all of the Dreamcast information to us.

NG: So what does Dreamcast mean to you right now?

Kelly: Dreamcast feels like an opportunity maybe for some of our online stuff coming out of our PC business. But in terms of distracting us from our core PlayStation development, no way.

NG: They're not after you for your sports game expertise?

Kelly: No, they have their own deal and plans with Visual Concepts [laughs]. And I think Interplay wants to try and at last convince someone to buy something from VR Sports by aligning themselves with Dreamcast. And I would guess that EA is weighing in there too.

NG: You don't sound excited by Dreamcast's prospects.

Kelly: This generation of the PlayStation business has years to run. I think Dreamcast is coming far too early in the cycle. I mean, it sells magazines, right? It's great for you guys. It's always fun to get excited by new hardware and put it on the cover. But it's got a long way to go until it proves itself to be commercially viable. And the reality is that right now we are so

way out. Now, one of the things that we've learned in this business — and Trip Hawkins now knows it — is that early adopters who are the first to buy new game systems have already got a high-end PC. So why will they need Dreamcast?

To this, Sega claims that it will be mass market from the day it ships. They claim that they will be considerably more mass market than PlayStation was. They claim that coming out at under \$200 from day one means that they don't have to rely on just the early adopters. And to this, I have to say, "bullshit." They're just not going to get all the pieces in place to be a viable mass market proposition. It will never happen. Dreamcast's only real chance will be driven by the software developed internally. And this means that they're going to have to build a large development studio in North America from scratch. And I can tell you, if you want to start and build a studio now, don't expect to see anything for three years. That's the way it works. It takes a while.

NG: Can't Sega rely on its Japanese development talent?

Kelly: It didn't work for Saturn. Besides, the North American market is substantially different to Japan. Sports games are 20% of the marketplace. Clearly there is North American-specific software that Sega will need that it won't



[Sony's] a \$50 billion company worldwide, and when you get that big, it's like ... being a government. Except that a Sony passport will probably get you into more countries

have at launch.

NG: When Saturn launched, at least it had hit coin-op conversions like *Virtua Fighter*, *Daytona USA*, and later *Sega Rally*. How valuable are Sega's coin-op properties this time?

Kelly: What have they got? *VF3*? *Sega Rally 2*? They've got nothing. Everything that they have is a sequel, and it's very much a "been there, done that" scenario. The bottom has dropped out of the coin-op market. Coin-op is going away. The coin-op market was built on the fact that the games were so technologically superior to the home systems. This is no longer the case.

NG: You're saying the future for Dreamcast looks grim ...

Kelly: I'm saying right now, it's gonna fail.

NG: OK, what about VM Labs' Project X?

Kelly: [Laughs]. It's 3D0 2! There's no business model there. All this shows is how desperate the magazines are to have something to write about. If, as it seems, that its main virtue is that it shaves a cost off of manufacturing DVD players, then [laughs] that's a market position I don't particularly envy.

NG: So you're not a big fan of Project X then.

Kelly: No one's supporting VM Labs. No one's a big fan. It seems like a nice little chipset to stick in a DVD player. But I think everyone recognizes that until DVD is recordable, it's never going to do more than supplant the laser disc.

Still a PlayStation believer

NG: So how healthy is PlayStation's future?

Kelly: In my opinion the sky's the limit. I think it could do 50 or 60 million units in North America. People can say I'm crazy because conventional wisdom says that the North American market has previously maxed out at 30 million machines. But the way I look at it, the hardware's advanced at such a rate, the diversity of software is broad enough, the price point is

competitive enough, and we're seeing a broadening of the demographic across the board. This thing could go on for years. I don't know what the upper limit is.

NG: Spoken like a true Sony believer.

Kelly: I'm not just throwing out a bunch of corporate B.S. Sooner or later, one of these days, a dedicated game console is going to achieve the same level of market penetration as VCRs. It's clearly coming. I don't know if that game machine will be PlayStation or not, and I don't know what the official numbers are right now, but I know that right now we are at a fraction of what PlayStation's potential could be.

NG: A change in the status quo may not be good for Sony right now, sure. It may even upset the plans of the third-party publishers. But it might not be bad news for gamers. Can PlayStation software really keep drastically improving for many more years? Already many people are complaining that all games are starting to look the same ...

Kelly: I would disagree. We're doing a lot of sequels, but these games are dramatically different from the games that we did the year before. *NFL Extreme* is a lot more advanced than previous football games.

And there are new genres to explore. There has yet to be a big success on PlayStation in the strategy genre, for example. There's a lot of virgin PlayStation territory out there yet to be explored. We're doing things internally, such as *Tobu*, that are tremendously innovative from a gameplay perspective.

NG: E3 didn't offer much hope that PlayStation development was still radically improving.

Kelly: You can't judge it by E3 because everyone keeps their cards close to the vest. They show things that are already out there. They don't want to make a statement about where things are going. But, in the back rooms, there's some cool stuff going on.

NG: There's also far too many "me too" derivative games.

Kelly: Well ... maybe there aren't enough good ones. The way to get exciting, experimental, groundbreaking games is to encourage a lot of development. If there were like 65 identical racing games, then you'd have a problem. But what Sony has created is an economic model where publishers can take chances.

Sure, people can say that too many titles killed the Atari VCS. People say that too many games killed the Genesis and Super NES. "We have to restrict supply" is the message from Nintendo. But this is just because they insist on keeping 60% of the market share for themselves and let everyone else fight over the crumbs. But Sony has taken a different approach. Sony sees the PlayStation business more like the music CD market, in which publishers can take some chances, put stuff out there, see how it performs, and make some money on relatively low sales numbers.

NG: So quantity is the price of occasional quality?

Kelly: I'm saying that "too much software" isn't necessarily a problem.

NG: How much untapped power does PlayStation have?

Kelly: I don't know. I read an interview with the programmer of *Gran Turismo* who said that he used to think that the game was pushing PlayStation 100%, but now he knows that it's only pushing it 75%.

We're all getting smarter. We're learning new tricks. We're getting closer to the metal. And we're coming up with new ideas. The future's looking pretty damn bright. **NG**

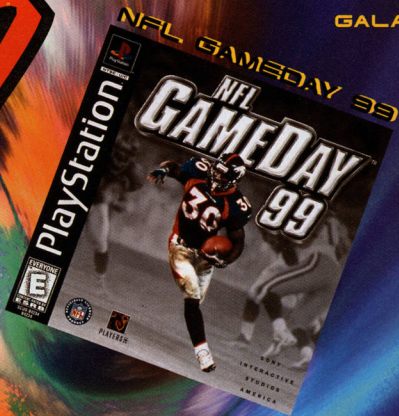
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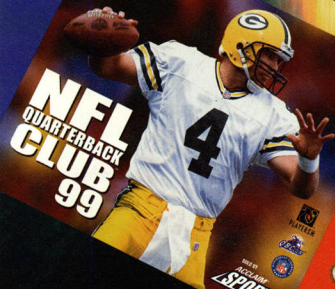
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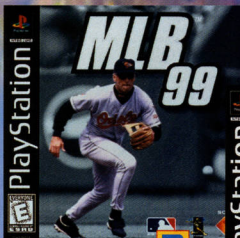
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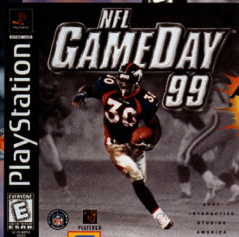
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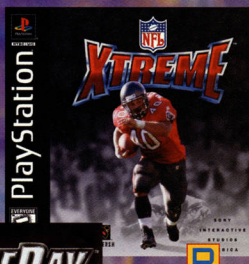
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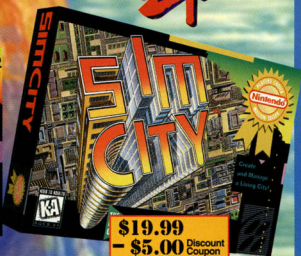
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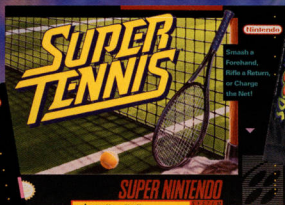
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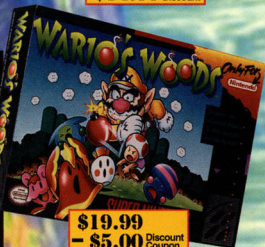
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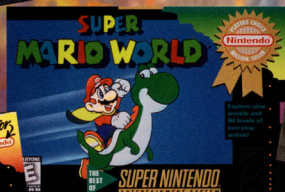
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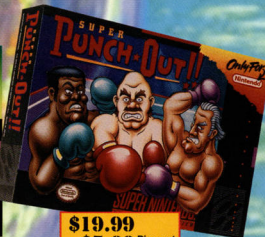
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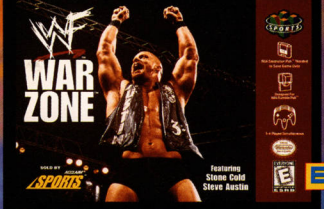
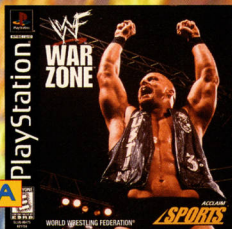
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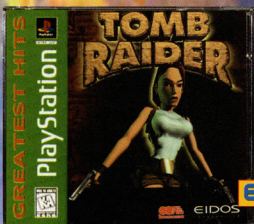
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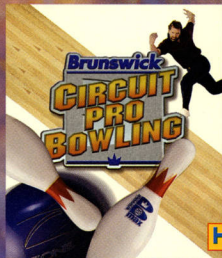
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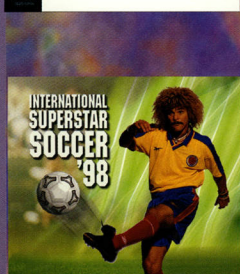
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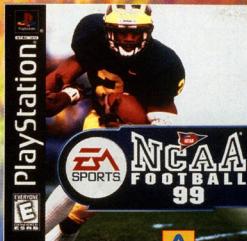
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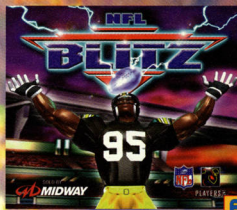
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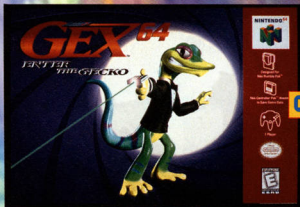
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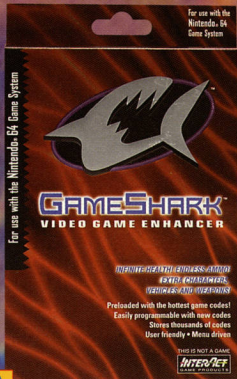
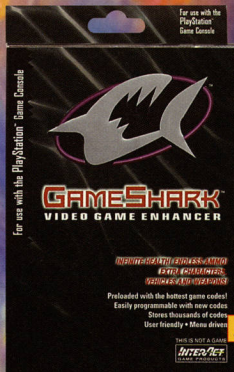


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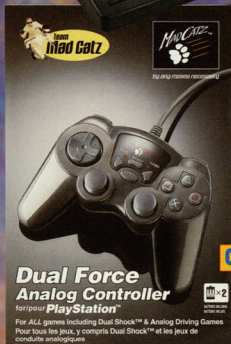
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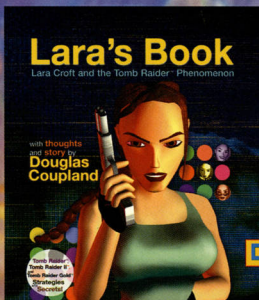
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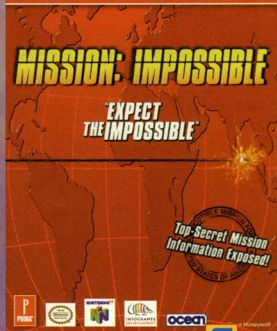
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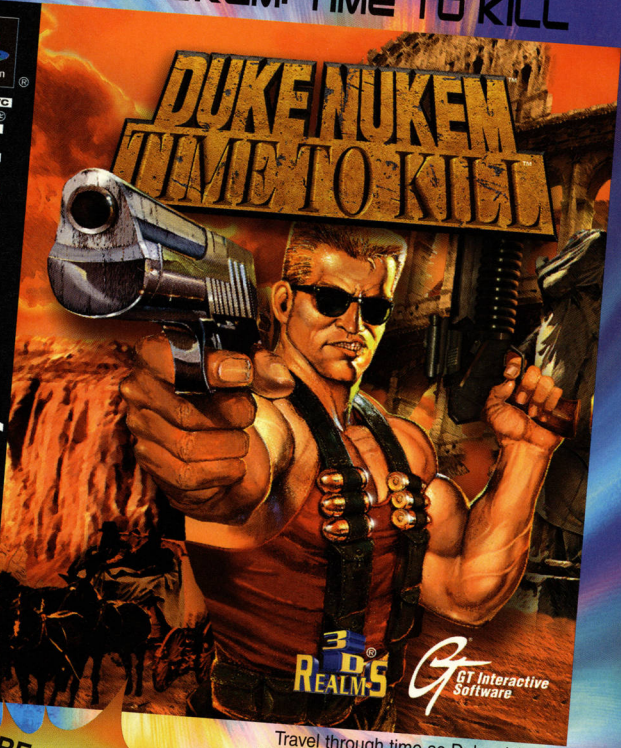
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High profile doesn't always mean **high quality.**

Have the mighty fallen? A look at Square's latest

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★★★★★

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Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high watermark.

★★★★

Excellent

A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★

Good

A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★

Average

Perhaps competent — certainly uninspired.

★

Bad

Crucially flawed in design or application.

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product.



126



128



129



130



131



147



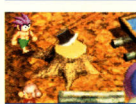
134



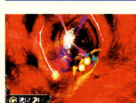
134



134



136



136

126 Parasite Eve PlayStation
Lots of flash, but mighty slow going

128 Descent Freespace PC
The space combat sim is back

129 Turbo Prop Racing PlayStation
PSX gets its very own Wave Race

130 Vigilante 8 PlayStation
Interstate '76 done the PlayStation way

131 Kartia PlayStation
Atlas serves up a fine action/RPG

147 The Gamer's Guide Multi
More than 600 games rated

Mystical Ninja Nintendo 64 **134**

Circuit Breakers PlayStation **134**

N2O PlayStation **134**

Risk PlayStation **136**

Pocket Fighter PlayStation **136**

Tomba PlayStation **136**

World Cup 98 PlayStation **138**

X-Men vs. Street Fighter PlayStation **138**

Addiction Pinball PC **138**

Flesh Feast PC **140**

Game, Net & Match PC **140**

Industry Giant PC **140**

Jazz Jackrabbit 2 PC **142**

RedJack PC **142**

Redneck Rampage Rides Again PC **142**

Daytona 2 Arcade **144**

Plasma Sword Arcade **144**

Radical Bikers Arcade **144**

Square's high-profile attempt to mix genres
falls a little short of the mark

PARASITE EVE

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Square
Electronic Arts LLC
Developer: SquareSoft

When Square set out to make *Parasite Eve*, it wanted to create a cinematic RPG much in the same vein as the *Resident Evil* series. Molding the storyline around the core concepts introduced in a best-selling, award-winning Japanese horror/sci-fi novel by Hideaki Sena, Square hired a Hollywood director and enlisted the aid of its newly opened Honolulu office to oversee the production.



Actually, the game's combat system, which combines strategy and real time, is top-notch



Though in the end the game is merely competent, *Parasite Eve* does prove that Square has the admirable ambition to try something new

The result is a beautiful, high-production, but ultimately flawed action/RPG.

The game, loosely based on the concepts in Sena's popular Japanese novel, takes place in New York City and centers around a young police detective named Aya Brea. Her encounter with an opera singer named Melissa begins a chain of deadly events, which promptly leads the police force on a wild chase around the city. Melissa has transformed into a super villainess named Eve, who has the power to transform and kill all life-forms by somehow manipulating their mitochondria. Aya is the only human capable of withstanding Eve's attacks, and their adversarial relationship (which has roots in a mysterious past) is the main focus of the game's storyline, which is told over the span of six episodes or "days."

Action takes place in a completely 3D setting, allowing Aya to explore prerendered environments and look for clues to Eve's location while fighting off her mutated minions. Battles

themselves are based on a tweaked version of the *Final Fantasy VII* engine, utilizing the same "active time battle" system in order to pace Aya's attacks. But unlike in *Final Fantasy VII* or most RPGs, the combat in *Parasite Eve* takes place on the same screen that the player is currently on instead of switching to a battle screen. This is integral to the type of fighting that goes on in the game. When a random enemy encounter takes place, Aya is free to move around almost the entire screen, dodging enemy attacks and finding the optimum position to strike back. The effectiveness of an attack varies, depending on the player's distance from the enemy and the type of weapon used. *Parasite Eve* encourages much more active interaction from the player and adds a whole new dimension on a typically role-playing type of battle system — here the game excels.

The many other role-playing elements in the game make small innovations in the way weapons are upgraded and experience points are distributed. If *Parasite Eve*

concentrated more readily on simply being an RPG, the game might very well have fared a little better in terms of pace and gameplay. But because of its uneven focus, the balance between atmosphere, immersion, and gameplay is thrown askew. Dialogue is stilted due to cumbersome text and uninteresting characters, making the player's potential involvement minimal. And there are long moments filled with text-driven conversations between characters that seem to drag on forever, slowing down the pace to a crawl. *Parasite Eve* could have benefited greatly from the use of speech during long dialogue segments, which would've given emotion or expression to the otherwise dry translation. This flaw seems to be mirrored by the action on the screen, as well. Aya's walking and even running speed is painfully slow, making exploration of large areas much longer than needed. Simple movement from point A to point B can feel like an epic trek when you're attempting to make it across a screen spanning a large area of Central Park.

If Square was truly going for the cinematic feel of the *Resident Evil* series, it somehow missed the mark by failing to deliver enough atmosphere to keep players interested in the progression of events throughout the game. With a stealthy cellular war going on and an inhuman villain on the loose, a consistent air of suspense and fear should be hanging over Aya's head throughout the game as she creeps around empty buildings. Not so.



Polygonal characters contrasted against prerendered backgrounds give the game a distinctly *Resident Evil*-style look and feel — the pace, however, could have used a push



Instead, it feels as if you're simply shifting from one area to the next out of necessity, without the same desperation or tension that was clearly felt in *Resident Evil*. This is largely due to the lack of an appropriate soundtrack to accompany the events in the game. Revealing conversations between characters in the game draw no interest simply because there is no music to heighten the mood. Meanwhile, moments that are meant to be tense or to inspire dread are dulled by the mellow techno track that seems to pulse indiscriminately throughout the game. While atmosphere might not have any direct bearing on the gameplay, lack of it greatly reduces immersiveness.

Square's emphasis from the start has been for immersion to

come in the form of an extensive series of CG cinemas interspersed throughout the game. Instead of using longer movies to illustrate a tighter set of key points in the game, Square opted to punctuate numerous events with shorter cinemas. The end result is a glossy, high-end succession of gorgeous CG-rendered snippets that give the player a glimpse of the full motion version of Aya Brea's world. And while the substantially large number of these cinemas may reduce the player's feeling of accomplishment in reaching one, they do give the game a stylish, high-production quality unmatched by any current title. But unfortunately, no matter how much flash is given a game, it cannot mask its lack of substance.

So does *Parasite Eve* want to be an action game or an RPG? It's difficult to say. As an RPG, the game lacks a good deal of immersion and personality to successfully involve the player. As an action game, the deathly slow pace and random battle sequences seem out of place and take away the necessary sense of excitement. And because the game falters in both categories, even with top-notch graphics and a few interesting innovations, *Parasite Eve* can't be qualified as anything beyond a stylistic success and a merely competent hybrid.

Rating: ★★★



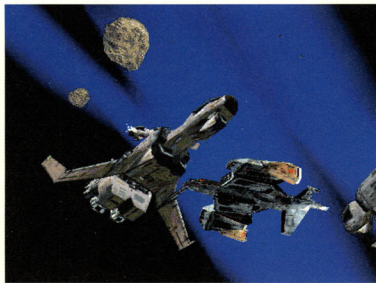
Square shows that it's mastered the art of CG with dazzling cinemas



Life in the Big Apple just hasn't been the same since a mutating opera singer came to town — that always causes no end of trouble

Freed from its **tunnel-based origins**,
the *Descent* series **comes up a winner**

DESCENT FREESPACE: THE GREAT WAR



Enormous spaceships and a grand sense of scale are the hallmarks of *Descent Freespace: the Great War*

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Interplay**
Developer: **Volition, Inc.**

The long-awaited *Descent Freespace* stands true to its name. The game incorporates all the aspects that made the *Descent* series a hit while moving from claustrophobic tunnels into open, free space. And while *Freespace* is unmistakably similar to other space sims on the market, its breathtaking graphics and superb single-player game definitely make it something to take a look at.

Descent Freespace: The Great War incorporates the common "fight against the malicious aliens" type of plot, as the Terrans and Vasudians work together to defeat the advanced Shivans. Each mission is preceded by a lengthy and thorough briefing, informing players of their situation, objectives, and possible threats. Also, after every three or four missions, players have the chance to watch pre-rendered CG cut scenes that, overall, are not bad, especially in comparison to the badly acted FMVs riddling the market today.

Freespace does an excellent job of progressing the story as players work through the game by discovering new alien technologies and ideas, which can be harnessed for future battles.



Graphically, *Descent Freespace* is at the top of its genre. Allowing acceleration both through Direct3D and the 3Dfx Glide library, it caters to a wide variety of systems and is packed with numerous eye-catching effects, ranging from realistic missile trails, to lens flare caused by looking at the sun, to a ripple effect seen when using subspace (i.e., warp) drive. The game includes a wide range of detailed and complex models, anything from minute fighter-class ships to gargantuan space stations, whose sense of scale is unrivaled in today's gaming world. The complexity of these capital ships and carriers is truly commendable, even with features like functional escape pods and gun turrets.

The game plays like all other space-combat sims on the market. Players quickly learn to use (preferably) a joystick-keyboard combination. There is a learning curve, not unlike in the *Wing Commander* or *X-Wing/TIE Fighter* series. At the onset of each mission, players have the option of fully customizing their ships with the resources at hand, and as the game

progresses, more shields and weapons become available. Through the innovative HUD and interactions with other pilots, *Freespace* creates a relatively realistic and easily navigable space atmosphere. During dogfights, which make up a large percentage of mission time, wingmen actually give helpful comments and warnings as well as follow directions, as opposed to being brainless, annoying hindrances.

On the multiplayer side, the game supports up to 12 people via TCP/IP; all other protocols (IPX, modem, etc.), however, are not directly supported. Cooperative and team play modes are available through a number of included multiplayer missions, while the dogfight mode, although referred to in the manual, is missing.

Overall, despite a few minor lapses, *Descent Freespace: The Great War* is definitely a keeper. Although it is too similar, especially in its controls, to other space sims (i.e., the *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* series) to be considered "revolutionary," it does take the space-combat simulation genre one step further.

Rating: ★★★★★



Control in *Descent Freespace* is strikingly similar to that in other prosperous space sims on the market

PlayStation gets a boat racing game that rivals the best on other consoles

TURBO PROP RACING



Pick up five yellow icons, and the player will have the opportunity to race a bonus course. Beat the bonus course and the player will be awarded with new boats and upgrades

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **SCEA**
 Developer: **SCEE**

Once again Sony has shown that PlayStation is an amazing home console system with plenty of life left in it. What's more impressive is that Sony proved it with a Sony of Europe title (*Rapid Racer*) that was created over a year ago.

Turbo Prop Racing is a high speed game that has players racing through six different environments with a selection of 10 boats. Each boat is upgradeable, but upgrades as well as new boats must be earned in bonus levels. An integral part of the gameplay involves the collection of three objects: one is a turbo, one opens a bonus level when five are collected, and the last one slows you down. This system adds a ton of playability to what would have otherwise been some average racing action.

Water physics is the most important ingredient to any boat racing game. *TPR's* physics may not be completely accurate, but for the purpose of making a boat game extremely fun and playable, they certainly do the trick. Each environment is different, so a

variety of water physics models are utilized for each. At one extreme is the wave-filled beachfront course with very little current, and at the other, the downhill rushing river course with an incredibly strong current. (There is even a course made of lava.) As a result, each course requires a different piloting skill. That combined with a control interface that's intuitive and totally effective makes this a great-playing racer that rivals the intense kind of fun that *Wipeout* first offered.

The game design and control are very impressive, but what makes *Turbo Prop Racing* a PlayStation technical marvel is the fact that the entire experience runs at a blazing 60 frames per second, in high-res. It looks like a PC game with its crisp detail and fluid animation. To pull this off, the amount of detail and textures used are reduced to a more simple graphic approach. This isn't necessarily a detractor because it is done well and looks good. Other racers for PlayStation simply can't hold a candle to this game's speed and fluidity.

Another major innovation,

which should be the next big thing for all racing games, is the inclusion of a fractal course generator. This single option could conceivably extend the gameplay forever, with an infinite amount of new tracks to race. Players can input their own characters and numbers into the generator to create their own courses and trade them with their friends. Rounding out the title is a nice two-player mode. Anyone who thinks that PlayStation is finished should check this game out.

Rating: ★★ ★★



Course design is extremely varied and creative



With the game running in high-res and at 60fps, SCEE still managed to squeeze in some now-standard effects such as lens flare

It's a **PlayStation port** that doesn't act like one —
the world needs **more games like this**

VIGILANTE 8

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Luxoflux Corp.**

Why such an otherwise flawless PlayStation game should suffer from such nondescript nomenclature is beyond us, but what do we know? *Interstate '76*, the PC game that this title is based on, had a great name and great branding. *Vigilante 8* (as a name) is just sort of ... vague. The game tells the tale of a group of "vigilantes" trying to save the U.S. oil reserves from nuclear catastrophe, a fuel crisis of epic proportions. Frankly, the plot doesn't make a whole lot of sense either.

Names and plots aside, the game is fantastic, and the team responsible for *Vigilante 8* is to be congratulated. It has entered the arena once dominated by *Twisted Metal* and clearly redefined the standard. Cars battle cars in an impressive display of guns, bombs, magic, and even alien technology. The graphics engine alone is something of a marvel. Sharp, solid cars, bug-free clipping, and a feeling of space and immersion make *Vigilante 8* quite unlike the vast majority of competing games.

Vigilante 8 is very similar in feel and style to *Twisted Metal*,



Activision acted wisely and kept Vigilante 8 from being a straight port of Interstate '76. Instead, it's pure console

but the emphasis is on linear adventure in the one-player mode, which is straightforward and mission-based. Obviously, opposing vehicles must be destroyed in the process, but the feeling of progression adds infinite interest to a usually chaotic genre. The level layout is a nice combination of free-roaming arenas and logical track layouts — space, direction, and exploration, all in one easy package. The radar and clarity of graphics also alleviate any potential confusion.

There are eight characters to choose from, all with their specific arsenal of weapons to complement a '70s muscle car. Some of them seem to be at home in the *Vigilante 8* universe, while others appear to have been dropped in at the last moment by the Cliche Department. This variety is only important in two-player mode, since each of the vehicles is easily capable of completing the missions. Players can unlock three "secret" drivers (they're mentioned in the instruction manual, so their



secretary is somewhat compromised) to beef up their options.

There are other, less obvious touches that give *Vigilante 8* a charm and personality of its own: the brilliantly conceived level design, the implementation of physics (for example, water flows and affects car movement), and the astonishing array of pyrotechnic frills. And in two-player, split-screen battle mode the experience is twice as intense. Ironically, the most promoted part, the '70s themed Area 51 plot, is lost in the melee of violence. The trite storyline and predictable characters add nothing to the proceedings, but then they don't need to, since *Vigilante 8* is an immediate classic. Actually it's more fun than *Interstate '76* and currently the best game of its type on PlayStation.

Rating: ★★★★★



Widely varied environments add a lot of visual interest, and the game's controls are smooth and easy to understand

Atlus steps to the plate with a winner RPG

KARTIA

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Atlus

Despite the increasingly crowded RPG genre that's growing by the quarter on PlayStation, Atlus has stepped up to the plate with its own contribution in the form of *Kartia*, a high-production strategy RPG on par with Square's successful *Final Fantasy Tactics*. In contrast to the company's last role-playing effort, *Tactics Ogre*, Atlus has decided to pare down the intense complexity of that title for the relatively simpler, but flashier *Kartia*. It does so by incorporating some surprisingly sophisticated CG cinemas and an innovative magic, weapons, and monster creation system, on top of unique character designs inked by *Final Fantasy* artist, Yoshitaka Amano.

The name *Kartia* is derived from a deck of cards used by the characters in the game. The cards provide sustenance in the form of everyday materials (water, food, etc.), but they can also be used to create worker monsters (called Phantoms), develop varying degrees of magic, and fashion powerful weapons and armor to be used in battle. Throughout the game, players collect different types of cards, which can then be combined with others to reach higher levels of creative abilities. This feature lends the game a very



Kartia serves as material to perform actions like creating monsters, making weapons, or casting impressive magic spells

customizable feel and provides a superior amount of flexibility in battle to upgrade every aspect of your units. While the *Kartia* system itself can be initially daunting, the process slowly becomes enjoyable and is one of the high points of the game.

Battles take place on a decent scale, allowing you to use a large number of self-created Phantoms. The Phantoms are split into three different classes, each with a weakness to a particular opposing class. This increases the level of tactical challenge to a new level without overwhelming the newer player with the usually cumbersome act of constant stat-checking. Another interesting tactical feature of the game is the ability to use magic spells to change the terrain of the battlefield. Actions like raising or lowering the ground, freezing over patches of rivers, or burning fields of grass can give your battle unit a strategic advantage during combat, and doing so will greatly vary the conditions of war. But again, the intricacies of battlefield tactics never feel overbearing in light of the refreshingly simplistic combat interface and the easy-to-follow logic of most of the commands.

The use of *Kartia* also figures

heavily into the storyline for the game's two playable characters. At the start, you choose to play as either Toxa, a free knight searching for his life purpose, or Lacryma, a shrine warrior living a life in her heroic father's shadow and bound by strict laws. Both characters' lives are greatly affected by the use and abuse of *Kartia* in their world, and the sequence of events throughout the game reflects their individual involvement with the consequences of these problems. Each story has its own separate set of characters, a completely different series of battles, as well as a unique ending. But the really interesting feature of the storyline is that both of the individual stories eventually cross over at some point, and each main character will have a good deal of interaction with the other. This clever concept is well-executed and successfully draws the player deeper into the world of *Kartia*.

With an excellent soundtrack, a competent translation, and a host of immersive and innovative features, Atlus succeeds in showing that it has what it takes to go to bat against the competition in the role-playing genre and emerge a winner.

Rating: ★★★



While the theme is not quite as epic as that of *Final Fantasy Tactics* or *Tactics Ogre*, *Kartia* has characters who develop unique personalities, complemented by good design and a decent translation

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rating

MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
 Publisher: **Konami**
 Developer: **KCEO**



Mystical Ninja looks pretty but plays about average

V Initially unknown in the United States, Konami's *Goemon* series has sold millions of copies in Japan on both Super Famicom and Game Boy. Fearing the ultra-Japaneseness of the side-scrolling adventures wouldn't be understood by Western gamers, Konami only released the first installment of the series in the U.S. (*Mystical Ninja*, Super NES). However, the pipe-swinging hero and his gluttonous sidekick have become a favorite of the import scene.

Whether its latest success in Japan was the result of N64's thin lineup or the game's hip 3D graphics, we're not sure, but we're glad that Konami decided to once again send the ninja Westwards. *Mystical Ninja* is a delightful romp through Japanese jidaigeki (historical drama) clichés and everything else one would expect from 16th Century Japan: haunted

bamboo groves, Shamisen music, peach-shaped UFOs, and mech battles.

The gameplay is a unique mixture of several styles, including platform jumping, boxing, and role-playing. To create the overall feel of a Nintendo adventure, Konami borrowed liberally from the *Legend of Zelda* series. Items like the grappling hook, ice beam, or fire beam, and locations like Turtle Rock will be instantly familiar to veteran gamers. Luckily, Goemon's Japanese settings and fun characters are enough to save the game from being a mere 3D rehash of Miyamoto's classics.

On the downside, the graphics are often jerky, the camera problematic, and many of the predecessors' staple elements are sorely missed in the N64 sequel, such as the memorable two-player mode and the many hidden mini-

games. All problems aside, *Mystical Ninja* is a valid attempt at doing a *Zelda*-style action/RPG in 3D. If only Konami had taken the time to polish it (and make it longer), *Mystical Ninja* could have been the best N64 action/RPG by more than just default.

Rating: ★★



The game is very Japanese, and Western gamers might not get it

CIRCUIT BREAKERS

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Mindscape**
 Developer: **Supersonic**

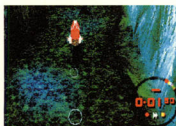
At first glance, *Circuit Breakers* will appear to be just a shameless knockoff of the popular *Micro Machines* series. They certainly look similar—both are among the few racing titles played from an overhead view.

Unlike *Micro Machines*, however, *Circuit Breakers* opts for tracks that are relatively realistic instead of settings like the kitchen table. This works to the game's advantage, as there are a huge variety of tracks available (16 single-player and 16 multiplayer), ranging from Egypt (race up and down the Pyramids) to underwater (sub racing) to backwater

swamps (powerboats), and there is almost no repetition. There is, however, an insanely steep single-player learning curve because the computer cars race the tracks almost perfectly. Also, since all of the cars go the same speed, there is little chance to catch up.

All is forgiven, however, thanks to the four-player battle mode. Basically, all four players start on the track, and the one who can either bump the other cars off or pull far enough ahead gets a point, the winner is the first to reach a given point total. This too is similar to *Micro Machines*, but in *Circuit Breakers*, the cars are actually easier to control, which makes it less intimidating for newbies. If you possess a multitap and three willing friends, this game should be at the very top of your "must buy" list.

Rating: ★★★★★



Circuit Breakers obviously owes a lot to Micro Machines, but it manages a number of new wrinkles of its own—and it's a blast



N20



N20 isn't terribly original, but it's fast and plays well

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Fox**
 Developer: **Gamlin**

If you take away the Designers Republic-esque menu screens, the jammin' Crystal Method soundtrack, and the intense psychedelic visuals, you'll find that *N20* is really just another rendition of the classic tube shooter *Tempest*. But in many ways, that's OK, as the game doesn't really depend on its originality so much as its over-the-top intensity.

There is even a storyline of sorts that has you as the lone spacefighter shooting through the underground tubes of the planet Neptune, fighting off mutated, buglike invaders. The twist is that every bug shot releases some nitrous oxide into the air, which boosts the ship and makes it move faster. Each level is timed, so the idea is to blast enough bugs to obtain enough speed to

make it to the end of each level—of course, the faster it goes, the greater the challenge. It's this twist on gameplay that gives *N20* its strategy, and as the tunnels become increasingly more complex, speed can kill.

The game includes a curiously unfun two-player mode that could have been left out. Other complaints include the lack of ability to continue (saving is only possible after each level); the Redbook audio's tendency to play straight through tracks whether you are in the game or not; and the abundance of cheap deaths that result from the screen being so overloaded with special effects that you can't see your ship. Overall, however, shooter fans who thrive on the ability to top their last high score time and time again won't be disappointed by this high energy blast-a-thon.

Rating: ★★★

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RISK

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Hasbro**
 Developer: **Rune Craft**



Risk just doesn't translate well to PlayStation — pity

Ofentimes, the danger in converting a classic board game to console is that you lose something in the translation. And suddenly the game you once spent hour after addictive hour playing is not the same anymore.

Such is the case with Risk. We're not quite sure how, but Hasbro has managed to turn a game of strategy and global domination into a game of figuring out a clunky, overly-complicated-for-its-purposes interface. It's not that the interface is atrocious, it's just that it's not very interesting, intuitive, or attractive. Doing pretty much anything in the game usually requires one extra, unnecessary push of the "X" button or a few too many toggles through an options screen. Not to mention that the game just isn't very pretty. The map interface is simplistic, and the oceans look as if they were pilfered from the selection of Macintosh desktop patterns.

On a brighter note, the game is sort of fun to play, and you are also given different customizing options — for instance, you can select your territories or play on different maps. You can also play Ultimate Risk, where many more factors (weather, deadly plagues, and terrain, for instance) influence the outcome, and battles are actually played out in a little screen of animation — fun to watch the first few times.

For Risk fanatics who sometimes have trouble convening games with human opponents, this is a decently satisfying quick fix, as you can just play against several computer players. But for anyone else, it's an unexciting, uninspiring, unimpressive interpretation of a classic game.

Rating: ★★

POCKET FIGHTER

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Capcom**
 Developer: **Capcom**

Capcom's *Street Fighter* franchise appears to be a limitless one. The games just keep coming — this month alone, the *Next Generation* office received three separate *Street Fighter* games. Of the three, *Pocket Fighter* is the only one with a sense of humor (well, intentional humor), but the humor, be warned, is very Japanese and perhaps not the greatest reason to buy a game.

The graphics use the popular "Super Deformed" style — an anime device whereby characters are parodied as youthful, squat, midget interpretations of their former selves. *Pocket Fighter* features "SD" versions of *Street Fighter* and *Darkstalkers* characters. This art is pretty much the main attraction, as the animation is relatively abysmal — a function of PlayStation's limited RAM and the huge number of moves and costumes the characters possess.

This is almost a collector's item rather than a true game release. Its appeal is limited to *Street Fighter*

fanatics and perhaps very young children — not a huge segment of the PlayStation audience. Graphically it's attractive and fun, but the gameplay is a mish-mash of recent *Street Fighter* themes. In fairness, *Pocket Fighter* is a sparkingly adept conversion of the arcade game, with lots

of options only available on PlayStation. The game itself is distracting fun for two players (although utterly mindless as a single-player game) and again, amusing. Solid stuff, but only for the true cognoscenti.

Rating: ★★★



Pocket Fighter is cute and plays as well as any 2D Capcom brawler, but the one-joke premise wears thin pretty fast

TOMBA

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **SCEA**
 Developer: **Whoopee Camp**



Although the gameplay is mostly 2D side-scrolling stuff, Tomba pulls out a few new tricks and proves fairly entertaining — and don't ask what he's doing to the pig, OK? Just don't ask ...

Tomba hearkens back to when pastel-colored sprites with names like "Andy the Aardvark" were the norm and a box could proudly proclaim that it contained hours of "happy goodness." Yes, Tomba is a (mostly) side-scrolling, (mostly) sprite-based action/adventure — but oh what fun.

Players control Tomba, a wild little man with pink hair. The play mechanics will be immediately familiar to anybody who remembers 16-bit (the founding members of Whoopee Camp developed the classic *Ghouls and Ghosts* series,



among others), but there are a few 32-bit twists. Tomba can, of course, run, jump, and use his weapon (a yo-yo type device), but he can also jump on the backs of creatures and bite them (the whole process looks, um, peculiar, to say the least), then flip up and throw them. So far, a decent scrolling platformer. But Tomba has lots more to offer, like the ability to walk in and out of the screen in certain locations for a 3D fe, as well as numerous quest elements.

There are hundreds of mini quests, ranging from capturing butterflies to

learning a dwarven language to finding Charles the Monkey's lost pants (and if that isn't "happy goodness," we don't know what is). This quest structure is utterly engrossing and disguises the familiar platform mechanics quite well.

The package is wrapped up with beautiful graphics, smooth animation, and at least one catchy tune. So if you remember fondly the time when games were extremely playable, colorful, and silly instead of being a post-apocalyptic grind, then Tomba is the game for you.

Rating: ★★★★★



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rating

WORLD CUP 98

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **EA Sports**
 Developer: **EA Sports**

Released to coincide with the recent World Cup frenzy, Electronic Arts' *World Cup 98* is technically a winner. The game delivers fast reactions to controller commands, realistic player movement, clean graphics, an excellent soundtrack, and adrenaline-pumping excitement.

So what's wrong with this picture? Nothing much, except that EA Sports only recently released *Road to World Cup 98*. About the only major difference between the two games is the lineup of teams and the play-off format. *Road* gave us league

play leading up to World Cup selections. The new game gives us the 32 teams that eventually made it.

There are refinements, to be sure. In *World Cup 98*, analog control is supported, passes are crisper, and the play-by-play announcer is a plus. There's nothing like pulling off a nice play and having the voice-over gush, "Oh, that was a tricky move."

But two such similar games in a single season? Players may not want to shell out the extra bucks for both. Still, if you missed *Road*, here's a chance to pick up one of the system's best soccer titles.

Rating: ★★★★★



World Cup 98 is a fine game, but it's almost identical to Road to World Cup 98 — just the teams are different

X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Capcom**
 Developer: **Capcom**

Capcom has always had problems converting its memory-hungry, sprite-based fighting fests to PlayStation due to the low system RAM, and *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* should convince the company that it's time to stop. The real problem in converting this title, more so than previous titles, comes from the fact that in the arcade version, a single player could swap between two different characters with the flick of a button. It was this interesting tag team-based gameplay that stirred so much interest in the title (besides, of course, the hyperspasmic, aerial combo-based gameplay that is a tradition for Marvel/ Capcom games).

Unfortunately, that one feature, which was really the whole draw of the game, was omitted from the PlayStation version due to lack of RAM. Oh, Capcom tried to cover it up a bit by allowing you to still choose two characters at the selection screen, but the second character only

ADDITION PINBALL

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **MicroProse**
 Developer: **Team 17**



Addition Pinball is one of the best pinball titles around

Addiction Pinball is a very aptly titled product. With perfect ball movement, dead-on physics, and amazing graphics, this game is like standing over an actual pinball machine and watching a real silver ball shooting, rolling, and bumping — you know, addictive.

The game features two tables and six views. Team 17, creator of the game *Worms*, developed *Addition Pinball* and even gave those slithering little creatures their own pinball table. The better of the two tables, however, is *Rally Fever*, which looks and plays like a more classic game.

The best part of the game is its attention to realism. The ball looks and moves as it would on an actual pinball table — better than the motion of any other ball in any other pinball game.

The reflection on the ball, ramps, and flippers is fantastic as well, and the amber screen located at the top of the table, showing off missions, scores, and bonuses, is also nicely done. It looks just like the screen on your local arcade's pinball machine, yet it fades into the table just enough so as not to distract.

Only several things could have improved the game. For one, if you want to recustomize the table options, you're forced to exit to the menu to do so, which is somewhat aggravating. It also would have been nice, for variety's sake, to have another table or two.

But that's just us being hypercritical. Simply, *Addition Pinball* is the smoothest-playing and best-looking pinball game we've seen.

Rating: ★★★★★



shows up when you do a super move — and even then with only a frame or two of animation. To accommodate this "feature," Capcom stifled the animation of the primary characters even more so than usual — and the game still slows down all the time.

If you've never seen a Capcom fighting game before, this might be fun for a few minutes, but there is not one single positive thing to be said for the trade-offs that Capcom made to get this game to PlayStation. **Rating: ★**

If ever there was a wake-up call to Capcom to quit producing 2D brawlers for PlayStation, this is it

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rating

FLESH FEAST

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **SegaSoft**
 Developer: **Ingames Int.**

Even a gory killfest can include worthwhile endeavors. In *Flesh Feast*, players must slaughter zombies and save the hides of fellow humans. Rather than mindlessly annihilating these flesh-eaters before they can sink their teeth into someone, players must figure out how to escape each of 14 levels. If they can save other humans on earlier levels, players can control up to four characters in later ones — a quite challenging endeavor.

Graphically, this top-down 3D action/adventure is dated, with detail reserved for the killing process and grisly animated sequences between levels. Both characters and zombies move slowly, even with a Voodoo² card. The slow movement we can forgive — this is a

zombie game, after all, and zombies are slow. Dodging and picking off zombies while solving the puzzles in one-player mode is quite fun.

In an unusual turn of events, *Flesh Feast* is a better single-player game than multiplayer. Players can team up with up to seven others to massacre zombies or play one-on-one, humans versus zombies. However, playing as the ultra-slow-moving zombies is less than satisfying. And *Flesh Feast*'s strategy element is lost in multiplayer games, which get monotonous quickly.

Surprisingly, even though much of *Flesh Feast*'s appeal comes from the bloodshed — imparted from 30 plus weapons ranging from human limbs to uzis — it's the puzzle-solving that keeps it interesting.

Rating: ★★★



Flesh Feast won't win any accolades for its graphics, but it's still fun — those with weak stomachs might want to pass, however

GAME, NET & MATCH

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Blue Byte**
 Developer: **Media Games**



As far as tennis games go, *Game, Net & Match* is solid and accessible, even if, in the end, it isn't spectacular

The main problem that *Game, Net & Match* faces from the start is the lack of audience among hardcore gamers. While people fantasize about being great sports figures, an impossible dream that is fulfilled through videogames, only a small percentage of the sport gaming population (mostly women) actually dreams about tennis. It just isn't as glamorous as more popular sports, namely basketball and football.

With that out of the way, *Game, Net & Match* does a decent job of pleasing its audience. Offering 3D and Glide support, the characters are 3D models that look decent from a distance, and other than an occasional glitch, have smooth animations. Closer camera angles reveal their true, blocky appearance. The controls, which involve different strokes, spins, and slices, are easy to learn and use, and even though the collision of racket and ball is noticeably unrealistic, its lack of

precision does make the game easier.

While the game itself has a minimal amount of options, it does provide a varied number of play modes, which allows singles, doubles, and tournaments against the computer, other people, and over a network. Players can choose predefined characters or customize new ones from scratch. Overall, *Game, Net & Match* does a decent job of filling in for the lack of tennis games on the market.

Rating: ★★★



All the usual tennis game options are here

INDUSTRY GIANT

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Int. Magic**
 Developer: **Jo Woods Production**

Interactive Magic's *Industry Giant* is God's gift to hardcore sim fans. It combines elements of *SimCity* with the complexity of a Sid Meier title.

The object of the game is to seek out demanding markets and manufacture goods to satisfy those markets. In order to get that far, players must find available real estate and build facilities and distribution channels, keeping in mind transportation routes that will ensure a consistent flow of goods. Players also have to plan out marketing strategies and regulate pricing if they intend to face the competition. Essentially every aspect of corporate evolution is addressed in the game, and players must learn how to balance the elements of their corporate dynasty to

sustain growth.

At any point in the game, players can evaluate their progress with the statistics options and growth charts that reveal profit and revenue. Navigating through the game's options is relatively simple, thanks to a convenient side bar of icons and buttons.

Industry Giant is presented well, with polished graphics and an upbeat soundtrack. It may not have mass market appeal, but it is a solid enough game to keep sim fans salivating for a long time.

Rating: ★★★★★



Notable for its straightforward strategy, Industry Giant fills the bill

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Our games go to 11!™

rating

JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Gathering of Developers**
 Developer: **Epic Megagames**

We're a little confused. We thought G.O.D. was going to be releasing the hottest games from the hottest developers, and now it's first title is this? After *Unreal*, Epic may be hot, but *Jazz Jackrabbit* is as cold as a cadaver.

Anyone who has ever played a 16-bit side-scroller, no matter how bad (and we're talking U.S. Gold's *Izzy's Quest* here), has played a better game than this. Imagine an 8-bit side-scroller, complete with repetitive textures, bad animation, and a dearth of creativity in the level design. That's this. The side-scroller went past square blocks, exploding into little square blocks in about 1990, but apparently no one told Jazz.

Consider also that the game has almost no curved surfaces and that it scrolls poorly—even on a P2 300—and you have, basically, a game that looks a little worse than your average PC shareware game, circa 1995.

The novelty of playing deathmatch or Capture the Flag in 2D with the game's multiplayer feature is nice, as are the sound effects (and the ability to prove that you — or your mom — can do a better game with the level design tool, but it's just not enough to save this dog.

Frankly, this as the launch title for G.O.D. makes us slightly apprehensive about the company's chances. It may be easy to get product on shelf when you can call and say, "We're the guys who did *Quake*," but we think it will be a little harder when you're the "Jazz Jackrabbit people." An unimpressive first release.

Rating: ★



Jazz Jackrabbit 2 — a side-scrolling game for PC?

REDJACK: REVENGE OF THE BRETHERN

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **THQ**
 Developer: **CyberFix**

A pirate's life is physical rather than cerebral, so it's only fitting that *RedJack* includes a heavy dose of action. But this pirate-themed adventure packs in so much sword play that quintessential adventure fans — and recent converts from CyberFix's successful *Titanic* game — may be overwhelmed.

Much like with the sword fights in *The Last Express*, players who can't mouse-click fast enough are soon dead — over and over and over again. Wisely, CyberFix includes a sword fight tutorial early on in the game, which players must master before they progress.

For those who can keep up, there are plenty of traditional logic puzzles interspersed with the fighting. The story is well-developed and fast-paced, though necessarily pretty linear. Character models move much more realistically than in past CyberFix titles, and they impart plenty of personality. Detailed island backdrops and animated sequences are beautifully rendered, and moody music adds tension to this dramatic tale. Gamers who yearn for the perilous life of the pirate will relish the perpetual challenges that befall their character. While not as accessible as *Titanic*, *RedJack* may just transform steadfast adventure gamers over to the action genre.

Rating: ★★★



Ah, a pirate's life — after all, who doesn't want to give swashbuckling a try? *RedJack* fills that need, although not much about it really stands out

REDNECK RAMPAGE RIDES AGAIN

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Interplay**
 Developer: **Matrox**

Welcome to the last gasp of the Build engine, that once-conquering first-person 3D experience that powered *Duke Nukem* to fortune and glory. Last year's original *Redneck Rampage* used it (so did *Blood*) and got away with it — barely. This sequel also uses it, and when all is said and done, also gets away with it — barely.

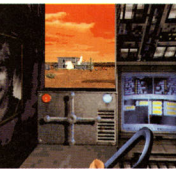
Once you get past the fact that this game essentially runs in DOS box with some tweaking, it will run in a DOS box under Win95), this unrepentantly lowbrow spin on first-person shooters has an undeniable appeal. Expanding on the premise of the original, the idea is to take every good 'ol' boy cliché and run with it, preferably with as little concession to good taste and political correctness as possible. Even the level

designs are cheerfully offensive — beginning with the alien-infested "Area 69," then on to blowing up the compound at Waco and trudging through the wreckage of the ValueJet crash in the Everglades.

Sure, it doesn't look that great, the control is a little peculiar, and the game

has its tedious and frustrating moments, but if you buy into the redneck premise, it's good for enough belly laughs to keep players coming back. Frankly, any game that calls its invincibility cheat "Elvis Mode" can't be all bad.

Rating: ★★★



Redneck Rampage Rides Again makes no concessions to good taste — blowing up the compound at Waco is the least of its sins

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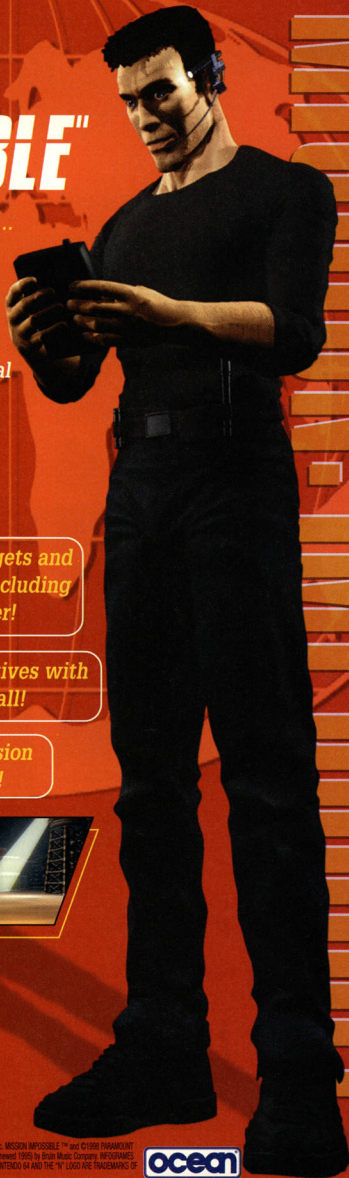


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rating

DAYTONA 2

Platform: **Arcade**
 Publisher: **Sega**
 Developer: **Sega AM2**

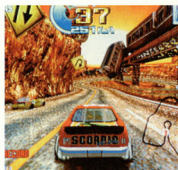
After too many years, we finally get a direct sequel to one of the most popular arcade racing games ever. We're happy to report that it comes complete with impressive graphic improvements, new tracks, a level of detail that brings new sophistication to the game, and eight-player heats.

Daytona 2 maintains the same sensibilities as the original in the player vs. computer modes, and in the head-to-head match-ups, it keeps the competition fierce. Players and computer AI knock cars around like preschoolers with matchbox cars, and the damage affects the handling and speed of the car. AI cars will line up to draft one another, but they also might perform unpredictable stunts, forcing pile-ups that come from nowhere.

Where *Daytona 2* falls short is in its latest incarnation of the powerslides that were an integral part of the *Daytona* experience and made the difference between winners and second-place wannabes. Unfortunately, in *Daytona 2* the cars are heavier, the feedback is often overwhelming, and the slides aren't as light and loose as they once were. *Daytona 2* gleans too much from the *Super GT* driving system and makes steering more of a chore.

That's not to say *Daytona 2* isn't a great game, because it is fun. The problem is simply that *Super GT* took a little of the punch out of *Daytona 2*'s arrival, and we're already familiar with too many of its tricks.

Rating: ****



Daytona 2's Model 3-based graphics are even an improvement over *Super GT*

PLASMA SWORD: Nightmare of Bilstein

Platform: **Arcade**
 Publisher: **Capcom**
 Developer: **Capcom**

It's clear from Capcom's history that the first game in any of its fighting game series won't be its best. *Plasma Sword* is the sequel to *Star Gladiator* and takes the series into a more playable, smooth, and familiar zone. Because of this, the game is likely to get a lot more playtime, despite having few true innovations.

The biggest problems with *Star Gladiator* were its sticky, sometimes mechanically moving characters, which didn't possess a large enough arsenal of moves. This has been addressed the second time around because there are more characters (22, plus 10 extra), all of whom now move with limber ease and feature many more kinds of attacks. The slickness of the side-stepping, number of aerial attacks, and

the all-around tight feel of the gameplay are all far more well-tuned this time around. Graphically, the game is a fireworks display of lighting effects. The game has a darker palette with high contrasts and pumping multith-bit combos that burst with tons of color and detail.

Plasma Sword takes a little of the power meter from *Street Fighter*, a pinch of camera angles from *Rival Schools*, and an ounce of offensive mayhem from *X-Men* to complete its recipe for the second go-round. Capcom has taken few (if any) big steps forward with *Plasma Sword*, but the fighting game giant has managed to round out and deepen the gameplay essentials of its growing 3D library.

Rating: ****



Plasma Sword turns out to be a nice surprise, improving on *Star Gladiator*'s "mostly harmless" graphics and gameplay

RADIKAL BIKERS

Platform: **Arcade**
 Publisher: **Atari Games**
 Developer: **Gaesco**



The world could use a few more loopy games like *Radical Bikers*, the game that makes delivering pizza a death-defying challenge

Possibly the most exciting new arcade game today is a funny little pizza delivery title that makes a rough-

and-tumble delivery job appear to be the most fun a player could ever have.

Radical Bikers sports a simple interface and a 3D steering wheel that pulls back and pushes forward as well as moves from side to side, giving players a stunning amount of control at their fingertips as they race their little Vespas. The aim in this game is to deliver a pizza across town before the competition, but the world of narrow streets, oncoming traffic, and busy, European-looking towns make the task almost heroic.

Certainly one of the game's brightest spots is its depth. You're unlikely to beat the computer AI unless you've found the handful of secret passages and power-ups that are littered

all across the cramped, crowded, urban settings — this is what keeps players coming back to this 12-course, one-player game.

Graphically, *Radical Bikers* isn't a Model 3 wonder, but it's clean, with very little clipping. The game features attractive, cartoon-style animation and funny-looking characters (who all have silly Italian names). Gaesco, the Spanish developer that worked with Atari Games on *Surf Planet*, has tapped into a surprisingly fun, fresh arcade sensibility that reminds us of early coin-ops like *Pac-Man* and *Outrun*. There's nothing else quite like this game in the arcades, and it's sure to bring a smile to your face.

Rating: ****

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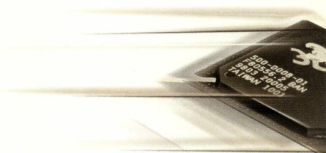
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LETTERS

Next Generation dons its chain mail

There was a major inaccuracy in the piece **NG** ran recently (**NG 43**) on the emulator and ROM piracy issue. That article stated that "there is no question about the legality of emulators — it is not only totally legal to emulate the workings of one machine on another, it's also practically the definition of the modern general purpose computer." In fact, emulators that port games from one platform to another, for the sole purpose of being played on the other (newer) platform, are not legal. It is vital that **NG**, which is such a reliable source of information to many people interested in the emulator/ROM scene, prominently correct this error so your readers are not left with the impression that an activity that is clearly illegal is otherwise.

Yes, some programmers do use emulators to create games. However, programmers who are properly licensed to create games for a game console use a hardware emulator, which uses proprietary code in combination with a modified console system and other specialized hardware. In this case, programmers are using emulators lawfully, that is, they use them to create new, properly licensed videogames with the authorization of the copyright owner. In contrast, most emulators that are freely available today are merely software emulators that have no role in the creation of properly licensed videogames and therefore have the exclusive purpose of infringing copyrights and are unambiguously illegal.

Some emulators are made by hobbyist programmers, but that does not mean that they are legal. If the sole purpose of an emulator is to allow the playing of a console

game on a PC, and the owner of the copyrights in that console game has not authorized the performance, display, or derivative work created when a console game is played on a PC, then the creation and use of that emulator constitute a contributory infringement of the copyrights in the console game.

Doug Lowenstein
President, IDSA

According to the copyright experts **Next Generation** has spoken to, running an emulator is not in itself illegal. Using an emulator to run a copyrighted ROM or disk image may be illegal. There is a case that a copyright holder like Nintendo or Sega could seek an injunction against the distribution of an emulator because its primary use would be to infringe, but we stand by our contention that the actual program that enables a computer to emulate the actions of another computer is entirely legal.

Vour great magazine is the only thing that has kept me from killing myself for the last month. Although I have come very close to lighting myself on fire, I have managed to survive in Egypt, a country that's stuck in the Stone Age, with hardly any videogames. All I have is my Game Boy, on which I've beaten all of my games (except the Japanese ones), and a tiny arcade that's filled with button mashers that I don't even get to go to that often. What has kept me from killing myself? The few issues of **Next Generation** that I brought with me and the hope of going home. I just want to thank you for making a great magazine for real, hardcore gamers.

George Malek
nim103@psu.edu

Any solace we can give a beleaguered devotee trapped in a far corner of the world like Egypt (or for that matter, say, Atlanta), we are happy to provide.

I love your magazine, and I love your reviews (I am a proud owner of *StarCraft*), but I have to disagree with your review of *Rebellion*. It isn't "click, click, click, yawn" to me. I realize some may disagree with me, but some games are for intellectuals, and this is one. This isn't shoot-'em-up or a *Myst* clone, but I think it is a great game for people who want to try a mind teaser if they can handle it, manufacturing and all ... and I like the battle interface.

Anthony Holmes
tw_holmes@hotmail.com

P.S. Sometimes I can't help but wonder if magazines base reviews on their advertisers' "gifts." Some do, so say it ain't so! I would appreciate feedback.

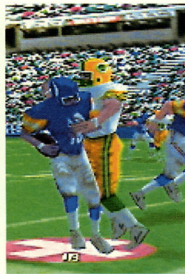
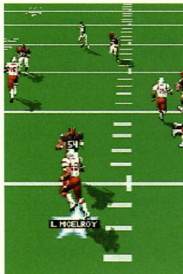
Hey, we've always maintained that if you like a game, more

power to you (even if it is a disappointing mess like *Rebellion*). On the other hand, the suggestion that **Next Generation** reviewers are open to bribes of any kind is insulting: For one thing, all kidding aside, we're committed professionals and take our responsibilities seriously. On a more practical note, if we lose the trust of our readers, we lose our audience, and sales plummet — in other words, why take some short term goodie or another if it means we eventually won't have a job?

But lastly, all seriousness aside, we get so much free crap from so many companies, practically nothing stands out enough to sway our judgment one way or the other. After all, who really needs another Rolex or Porsche Boxster?

I have a question about the licensing of games. Why can't two companies have the same license at the same time? Is that illegal, and why would it be?

Ian Smith
uzqzpep@aol.com



Of course it's possible for more than one company to buy the rights to a license — how else do so many football titles get to use NFL teams?

corresponding

Actually, it's not, and it happens quite regularly. Although many times, as part of a licensing contract, a developer or publisher stipulates that intellectual property X may not be licensed to any other video or computer game company, such agreements are up to the holder of the property. Football titles, for example, wouldn't get very far if only one series had the exclusive rights to all NFL teams, and the NFL itself would be stupid if it made such an agreement — as it is, it can sell the license to as many publishers who can scrape up the money.

In fact, even when exclusivity agreements are made, these can often be very complicated and leave a lot of leeway, especially when it comes to being exclusive, but only for a given platform. Universal Digital Arts has a license to develop a *Xena* game for PlayStation, for example, but Titus thought the rights for Nintendo 64.

In other words, many companies can and do have the same license at the same time — it's all up to what kind of a deal they can get from the licensor.

There's something I don't really understand. For the past four to five months, you guys have been putting two pages full of names in almost every issue, in alphabetical order of people who apparently "Get It." Now it doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out that these people are probably subscribers. So I figure, "Well I'm a subscriber, so I get it." Apparently not, because in last month's issue, where I should have been saluted, I wasn't. Now I guess it's really not all that important to me because the main reason I read your magazine is to see what the smart and worthwhile games are, but it's a little disappointing to see my favorite magazine seem to somehow forget me.

Could I at least know what it is I don't get? Or could I have two pages with just my name being

saluted? OK, that's going a little far, but I would like to know. Thanks.

Andrew Packer
Pacmen1040@aol.com

The trouble with the subscriber list (and please, you're not the only one who got left out) is that it was compiled by our circulation division and wound up being taken from a list that's about six months old. If you were left off, it's likely because you subscribed less than six months to a year ago.

Or hey, maybe you just don't get it. Who knows?

I am very happy that the Dreamcast specs are so powerful and that Sega is really working hard on this system. I have one problem with it — the controller needs to add two more buttons. Why would they go from one system that had eight buttons to a more powerful system with only six? Let's face it, with a system as powerful as this one, you are going to need eight buttons to do all the new things that I am sure new games will have to offer. I would like to know why they would do such a thing. I hope that they will add the other two when the system comes out. It would be a bad thing if I would have to play a Capcom fighting game with only four buttons on top and not six. It would not have that perfect feel the Saturn controller has. I would like to know if Capcom can get them to add the buttons? I hope you can give me some answers.

Tyrone Morrison
Tmorri2239@aol.com

Sega seems to be following Sony's take on this one, which is that for most people, four top buttons is plenty and six just gets confusing. In fact, among the **Next Generation** staff, the N64 controller, with its mess of six buttons of two different sizes, is downright annoying.

There's little correlation, really, between how "powerful" a system is and how many



Would *Mario 64* still be #1 if **Next Generation** did another "Top 100 Games of All Time"? We're not telling — yet

buttons it needs. Indeed, the Dreamcast PDA, which is an integral part of the system, can conceivably be used for certain games — flight sims or war games, for example — which might need more complex control schemes. Rest assured, though, if there's demand for a six-button controller for Capcom-style fighting games, a third-party controller with all six buttons along the top will no doubt appear.

The American Film Institute just unveiled its top 100 movies of all time. Are you gonna go with the flow and do a follow-up to your top 100 games of all time article you did back in **NG 21**?

Jesse Mason
BuggynKino@aol.com

The **Next Generation** staff runs this idea around every so often, and the general consensus is that, were we to do the top 100 again, there would be very, very few additions — at most a half dozen new titles might make the list, and the net result would be little more than shuffling around the titles that were already there (and some would fall pretty far). However, it's almost certain we will do it again some day.

I've been a die-hard Nintendo fan, from NES to SNES to N64. Only recently has Nintendo faced any major competition, and now I realize how wrong I was about Nintendo. Its major problem is that it has no original ideas. Just one look at the competition shows me how unique those designs are. For example, the analog controller combined with a normal crosspad was one of the greatest ideas ever by both Sony and Sega. The addition of force feedback to the home market by Sony's Dual Shock Analog controller was a stroke of genius. The greatest achievement, however, will be Sega Dreamcast's addition of four controller inputs for multiplayer gaming, setting a new high watermark for multiplayer consoles. I now need to look towards Sony and Sega for unique advancements in gaming.

Brian Peterson
effrefax@uno.com

Hmm ... it looks like "Sarcasm Corner" is back.



Someone actually liked **Rebellion**? Go figure ...

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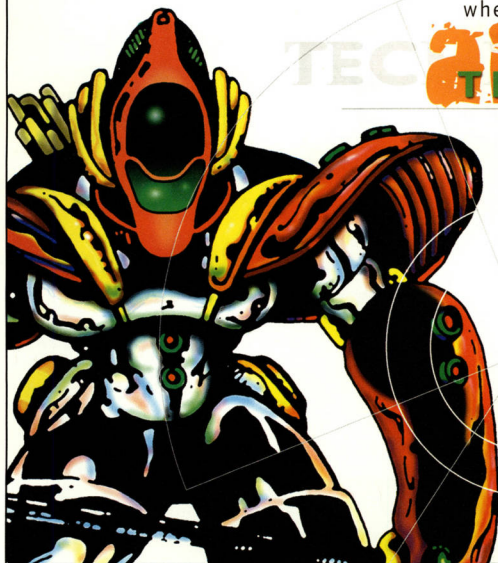
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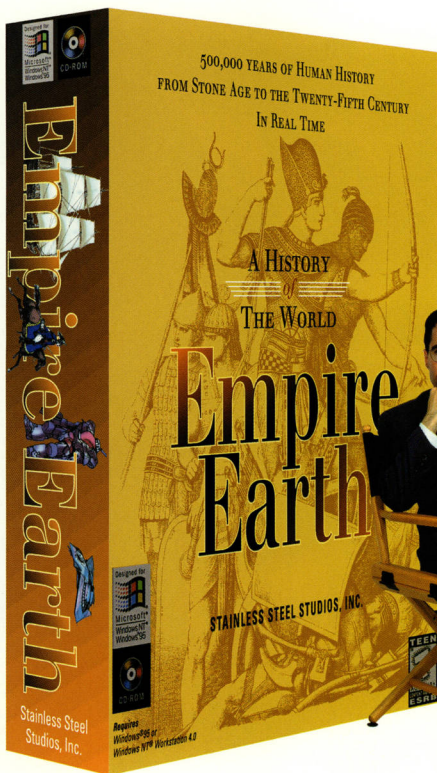
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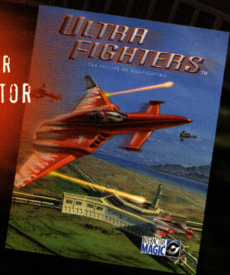


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RETROVIEW



by **Steven Kent**, author of a forthcoming book on the history of videogames

Resurrection (part 1)

Let's set the stage properly here: When Nintendo launched the Famicom in Japan in the middle of 1983, it was an instant success. It sold more than 500,000 units in the first two months. Internationally, the videogame market had never crashed the way it did in the United States. Even the Canadian market remained more intact than the U.S. market. In fact, 1983 was an extremely mixed year for U.S. videogame makers. It started out with great promise, but by the end of the year, many companies failed, and the few survivors were mortally wounded.

Warner Communication's Atari, which pioneered home videogames with such classics as *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*, [had] lost \$356 million so far that year, dropped 3,000 employees from its payroll of 10,000, and finished moving all of its manufacturing facilities to Hong Kong and Taiwan. Plagued partly by sluggish sales of Intellivision games, the electronics division of Mattel [had] run a \$201 million deficit in 1983, while laying off 37% of its 1,800-member work force. Activision estimated that it lost \$3 million to \$5 million in the past three months, despite scoring hits with its new *Enduro* and *Robot Tank* games. At Bally, the leading manufacturer of arcade video machines, profits [were] off 85%.

— Charles P. Alexander, "Video Games Go Crunch," *Time*, October 17, 1993

Had Nintendo burst into the U.S. home market with an American version of the Famicom in 1983, history would be very different.

Retailers might not have been taken by the Famicom at that point, and Nintendo may have been sucked down with Coleco and Mattel. Instead, Nintendo decided that it needed a marketing partner and squandered months trying to set up a relationship with Atari. That partnership never materialized. After leading Nintendo on for a year, Atari broke off the negotiations and focused its attentions on the 7800.

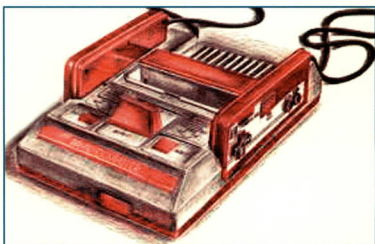
Left to market its game console alone, Nintendo introduced the Famicom as the Advanced Video System at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, in January 1985. Working out of a small booth in a corner of the Las Vegas Convention Center, Nintendo of America President Minoru Arakawa himself helped out with a simple display that included a basic Famicom (with a NAVS label), a computer keyboard, a music keyboard, and 25 games.

We didn't even know if we really wanted to get into the home videogame business in the United States. We got a mixed reception at the show. The reaction, as I recall, was that anybody who would get into the videogame business was nuts. They liked the game, though. They liked the games.

— Howard Lincoln

In January '85 we introduced the Advanced Video System with the music keyboard and a [computer] keyboard and computer exercises, and it wasn't popular at all. Everybody really thought we were crazy or dumb.

— Minoru Arakawa



When the Nintendo Entertainment System debuted at the 1985 CES show, most attendees were skeptical that it would succeed

One person who saw Arakawa at CES described him as a small Japanese man who looked very lost. No one placed orders for the system. In fact, the general perception was that the NAVS was nothing but an Atari VCS in disguise.

It was amazing because it was basically a rewarmed VCS, even going so far as having the same processor in the box as the VCS. [The Famicom had] a better graphics display chip, but the basic processor was the same. And the reason that they could have better luck with that addition was they had slightly more RAM in the thing so you could address more pixels, that's all.

— Tom Zito, former vice president of marketing, Axlon, Inc.

Time was not on Nintendo's side. By the time the Atari deal collapsed, the once-promising videogame industry had become a nightmare. Stores were practically giving unwanted VCS and Intellivision

cartridges away in discount bins, and no one welcomed Nintendo's "rewarmed VCS."

Retailers took a tremendous financial beating because of the way the Atari business had fallen apart. I mean, with the demise of the old 2600 business, you wouldn't even try bringing up the word "videogame" with some of these buyers. It was like they were going to pull you out to the parking lot and shoot you if you said the word "videogame."

— Jim Whims, former vice president, Worlds of Wonder

Over the next few months, however, Nintendo found ways to overcome those impressions. In fact, within one year of making its dismal showing at Winter CES, Nintendo had a powerful new partner and disguise. Within 18 months, some of the very people who laughed at Arakawa in Las Vegas found themselves knocking on his door in Seattle.

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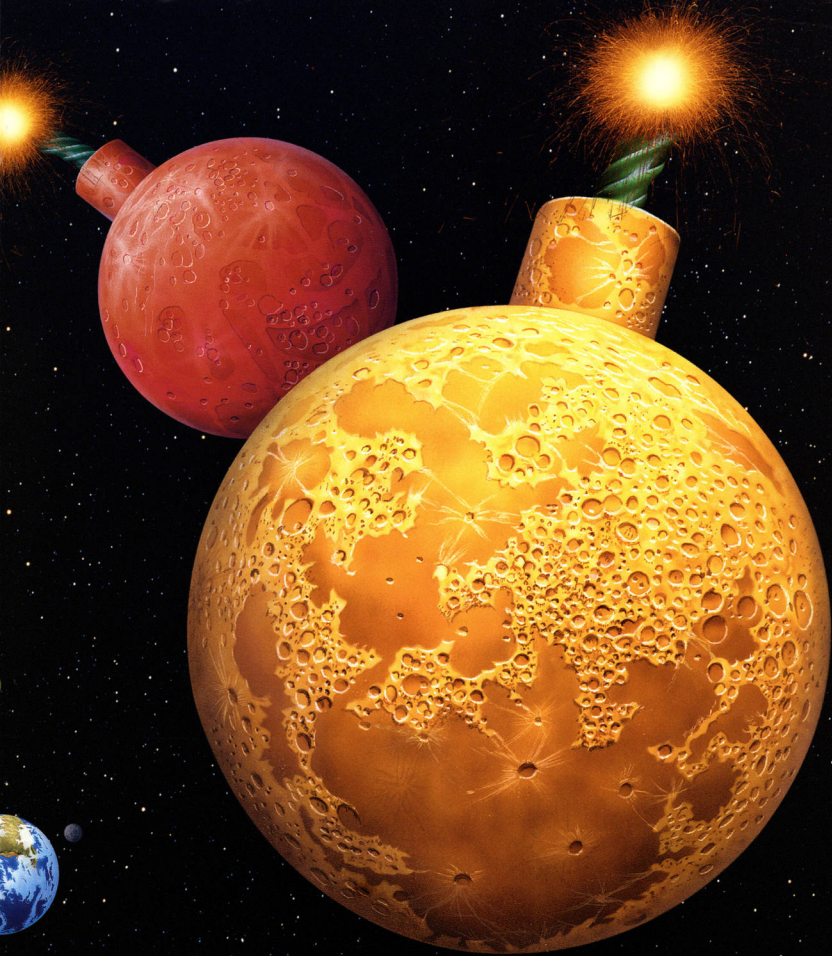
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