COMPLETE GUIDE TO PLAYSTATION 2'S ICO

GAME INFORMER®

The Final Word On Computer & Video Games

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

TONY GETS TWEAKED FOR PLAYSTATION 2

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

GI Goes One-On-One With Game Designer Tomonobu Itagaki For The Latest Info

FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Featuring An Interview With Madden Cover Boy Daunte Culpepper

FINAL FANTASY X

The Import Report On The Most Anticipated RPG In Gaming

ISSUE 101

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SEPTEMBER 2001

PlayStation®

MLB 2002

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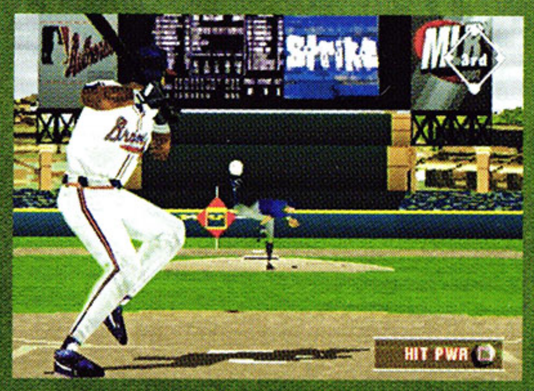

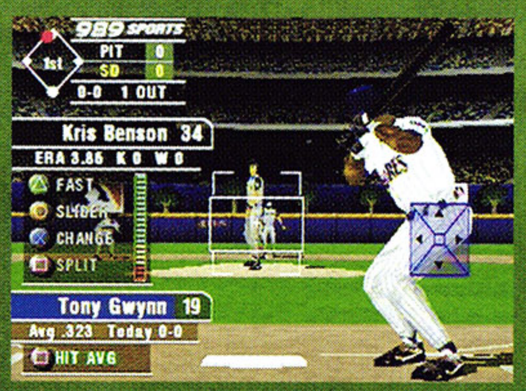

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Emotional. Like the game itself.

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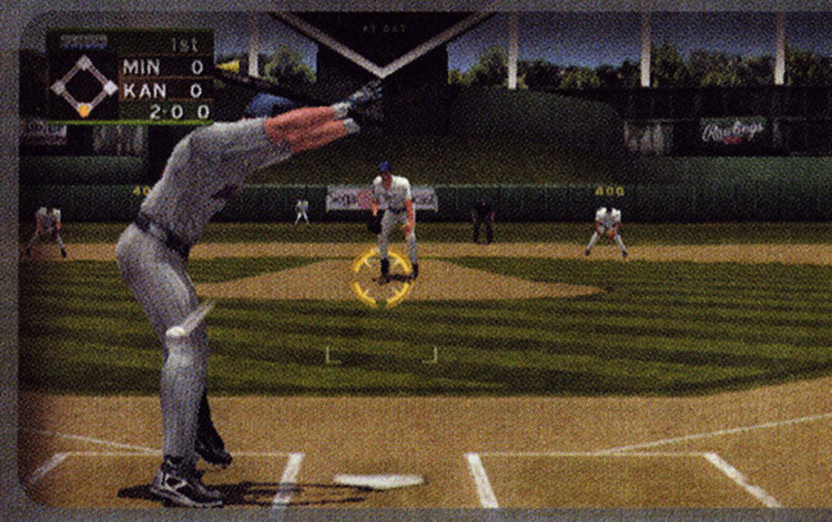

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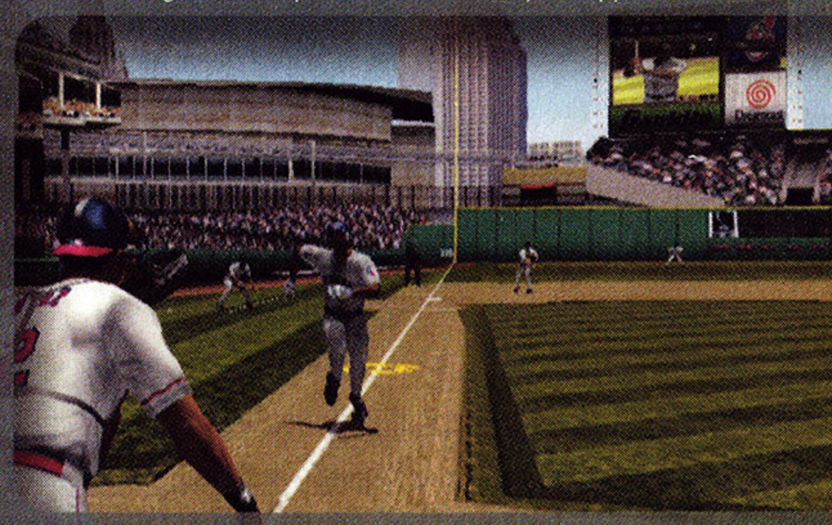

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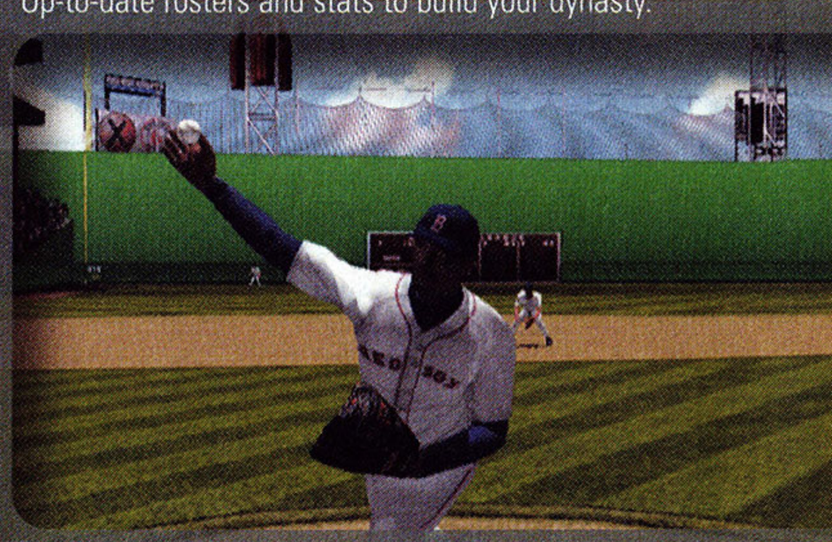

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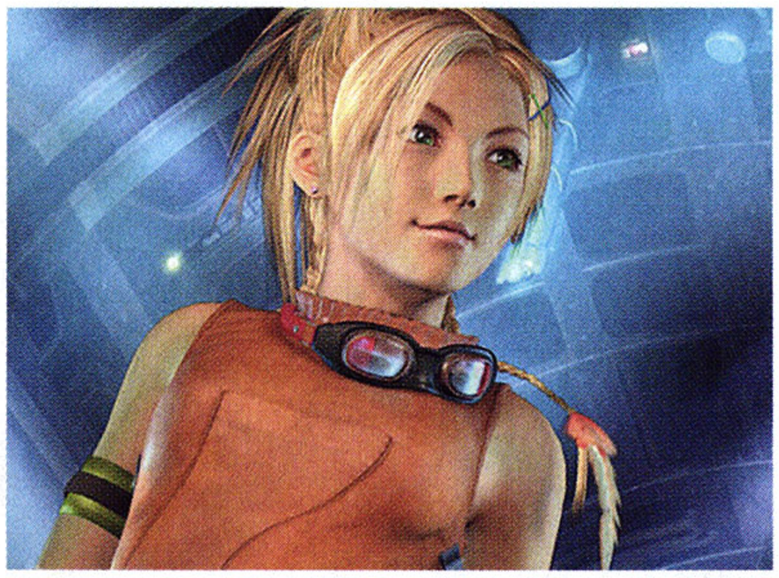

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Quit being a bunch of pervs! There's more to this game than bouncing boobs, tight little outfits, long wavy hair, unblemished skin, taught muscle tone, and... um, what were we talking about again? Oh yeah! This is one kick-ass game. Which way to the bathroom?

RUNE

VIKING WARLORD

One unstoppable viking on the road to Valhalla.

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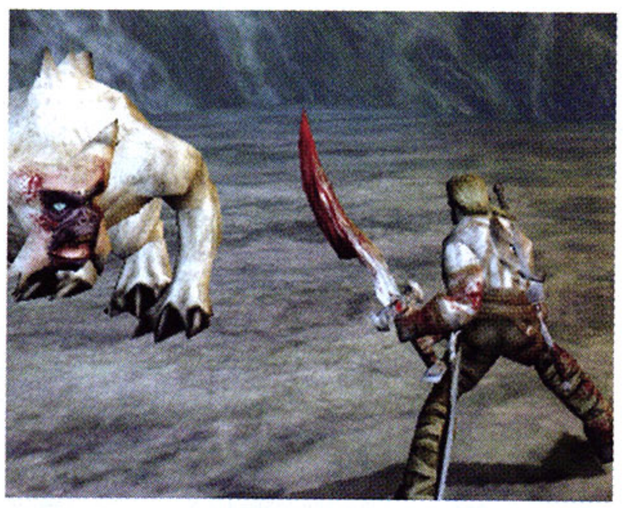

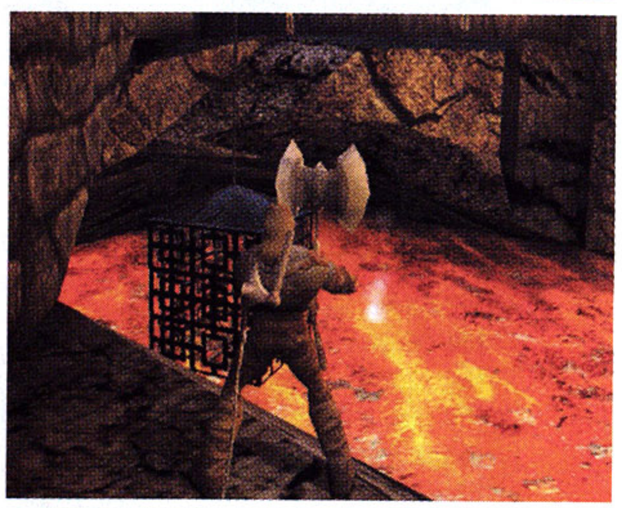

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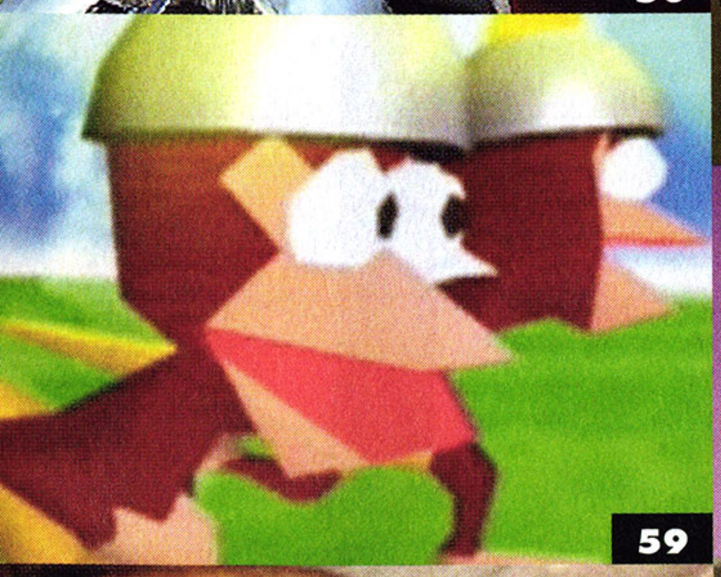

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100 PLAY TO PERFECTION
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106 SECRET ACCCESS
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110 CLASSIC GI
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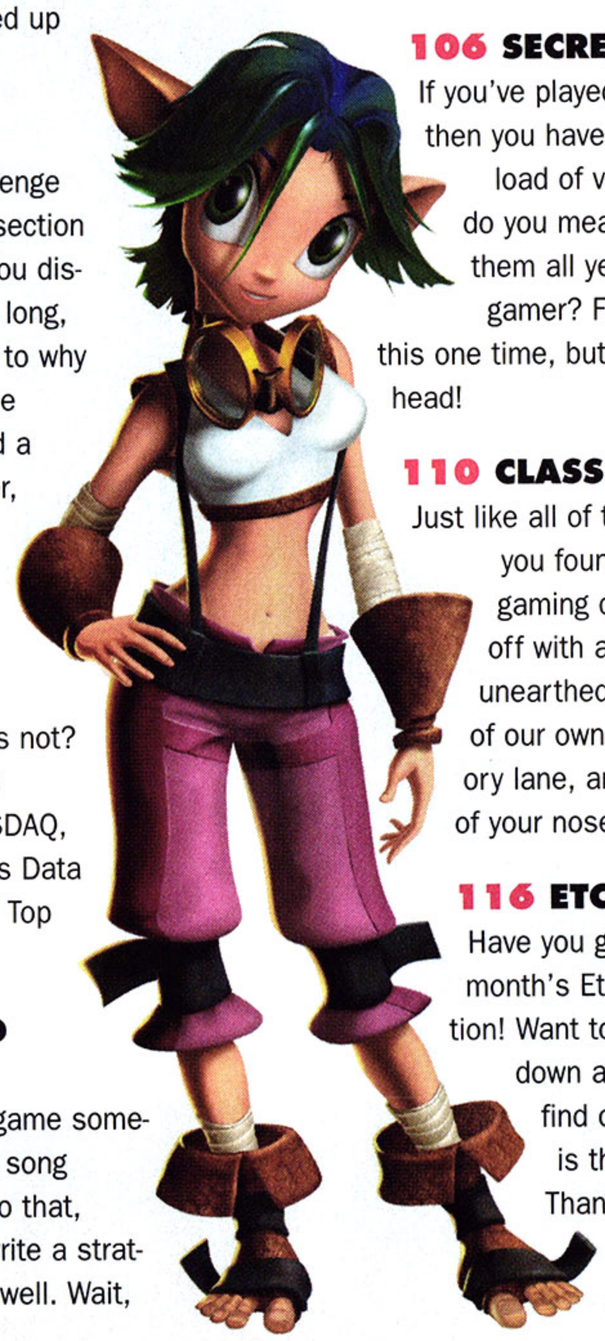

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EDITORS' FORUM

SMOKIN'

The emails have started rolling in asking the age-old question of which system is best. At this point, since all the info on Xbox and GameCube is still coming in, it's really hard to say. But in the here and now, even though my PS2 spent a fair amount of time gathering some dust when it first came out, the system has really started to smoke.

Twisted Metal: Black and Gran Turismo 3 come to mind as awesome games that are already out, but the list of hits doesn't stop there. ICO, Tony Hawk 3, Metal Gear Solid 2, Jak and Daxter, Maximo, and Devil May Cry all come out before the end of the year. To me, that's a lot of games I want to play. Heck, Tony Hawk 3 by itself is reason enough to own a PlayStation 2 (the game, even in its incomplete state, has quickly become the one to play here in the office).

Now I'm not gonna count Nintendo or Microsoft out, but the road ahead of them is a tough one. Even though both systems are more powerful on paper, the PS2 certainly packs a fair amount of punch – especially with its plethora of hit games on the way. As Nintendo reveals more of its lineup in the coming months, I'll be interested to see how much third-party support the company gets. I know I'll buy a GameCube just to play all its first-party stuff, but it sure would be nice to play it more than six times a year (unlike my N64). With some backing, Nintendo could make a run for the number one home console spot.

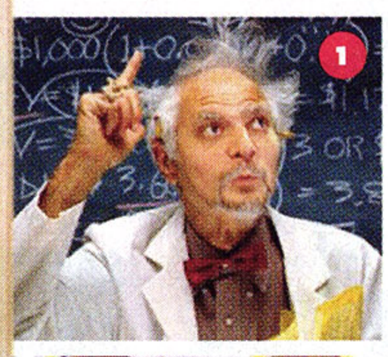
Microsoft? Well, its job is more difficult, but not impossible. What Xbox needs is a slew of high-profile games that console gamers will die for, since I don't think Dead or Alive 3 and Halo (though amazing titles) will be enough. Maybe Microsoft still has some rabbits it can pull out of the hat, but we will have to see. Perhaps its best option is to run the long race, and hope that the Xbox's power outshines the PS2 in the long run.

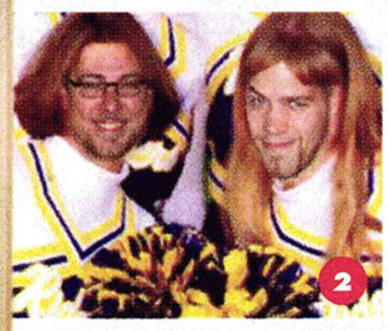
Until all these questions on the other systems are answered, I don't know what you are gonna do, but I'll be busy playing Tony Hawk 3.

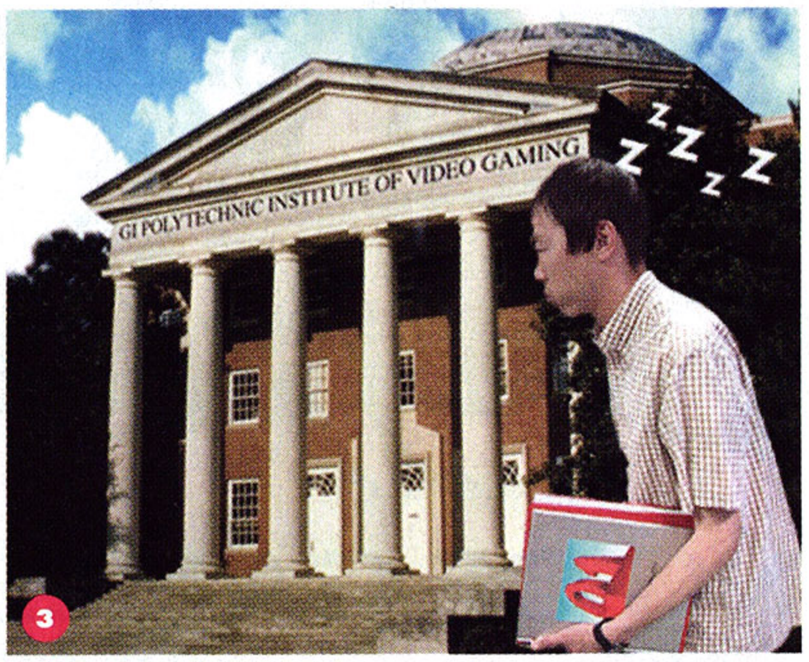
Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

BACK TO SCHOOL

1. Professor Gerhard Von Reiner makes a point while delivering another boring lecture in Physics 101. 2. Andy McNamara and Justin Leeper prove GI still has some of the ugliest cheerleaders in the Game 10 conference 3. Honor student Matthew Kato sleep-walks his way to the library for 14 more hours of study. 4. Matt Helegeson's lab experiment goes horribly wrong. 5. Undergrads Jay Fitzloff and Kristian Brogger earn extra money as tackling dummies.







REINER, THE RAGING GAMER
reiner@gameinformer.com

Being a loyal Star Wars fan is finally starting to pay off. Just a few weeks ago, LucasFilm invited me to visit Skywalker Ranch, view a slew of upcoming Star Wars material, then talk with the man himself, George Lucas. Of course, I cannot divulge any details as to what took place, but I can say, the future of Star Wars absolutely rocks, and while Lucas is God-like to me, he's actually one of the nicest people I've come into contact with. On the game side, LucasArts' upcoming lineup is shaping up to be a Force to be reckoned with. Rogue Leader and Jedi Outcast are everything you'd expect...and oh so much more. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a Tony Hawk cover story to pen, and a Phantasy Star Online: Version 2 character that needs leveling.

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER
matt@gameinformer.com

After two trips to Cali in the space of a week, I'm actually looking forward to spending some quality time in the roach-infested tenement I call home. Think the jet set lifestyle of the video game journalist is all gravy? Think again. For one, living on a diet of Coke and over-priced airport fast food is enough to put you in an early grave, especially when coupled with a healthy intake of free cocktails. There's also the tedium of hours spent in a hotel room by yourself, with only those sassy *Sex and The City* girls and a well-stocked mini-bar for company. Wait...let's see...fast food...free drinks...*Sex and The City*...what am I talking about?! Life on the road rocks! I'm a cowboy, on a steel horse I ride!

JAY, THE GONZO GAMER
jay@gameinformer.com

I would like to use this space to make a rebuttal to Justin's statement in last month's Editors' Forum that "everyone here is scared" of his scorpion. Not only is a pet scorpion as exciting (if not less so) than a goldfish, it is about as horrifying as well. If that feeble arachnid were able to somehow scale the eight-inch plastic partition that has stymied it for its entire miserable existence, I would simply squash it underfoot like the bug it is. This assumes, of course, that it were actually threatening me. More likely, I'd see it scampering away from me in fear, and then I'd laugh at it.

KRISTIAN, THE GAME DAWG
kristian@gameinformer.com

Do you ever get the feeling that if you had a flying car all of your troubles would be over? As I sat in the midst of what was recently listed as one of the five worst bottlenecks in the US, I wondered how carefree I would be if I were soaring through the clouds at that exact moment in my very own flying automobile. No more slipping on ice in the winter, and no more detours. We'd live in a stress-free society! There would be no more crime due to increased vigilantism of those who would paint their cars like the Batwing, and pizza delivery would be nearly instantaneous. Long live flying cars!!!!!

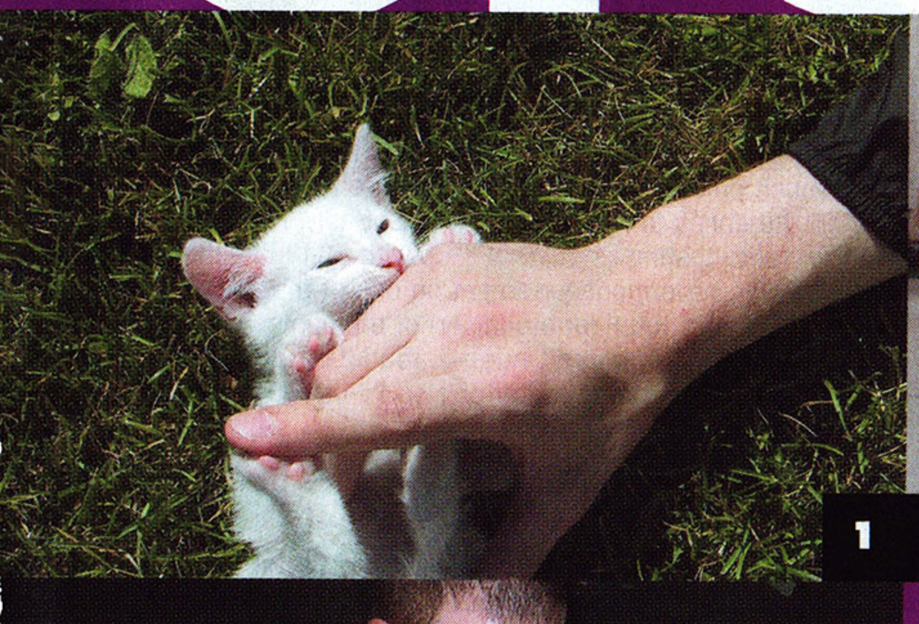
JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT
justin@gameinformer.com

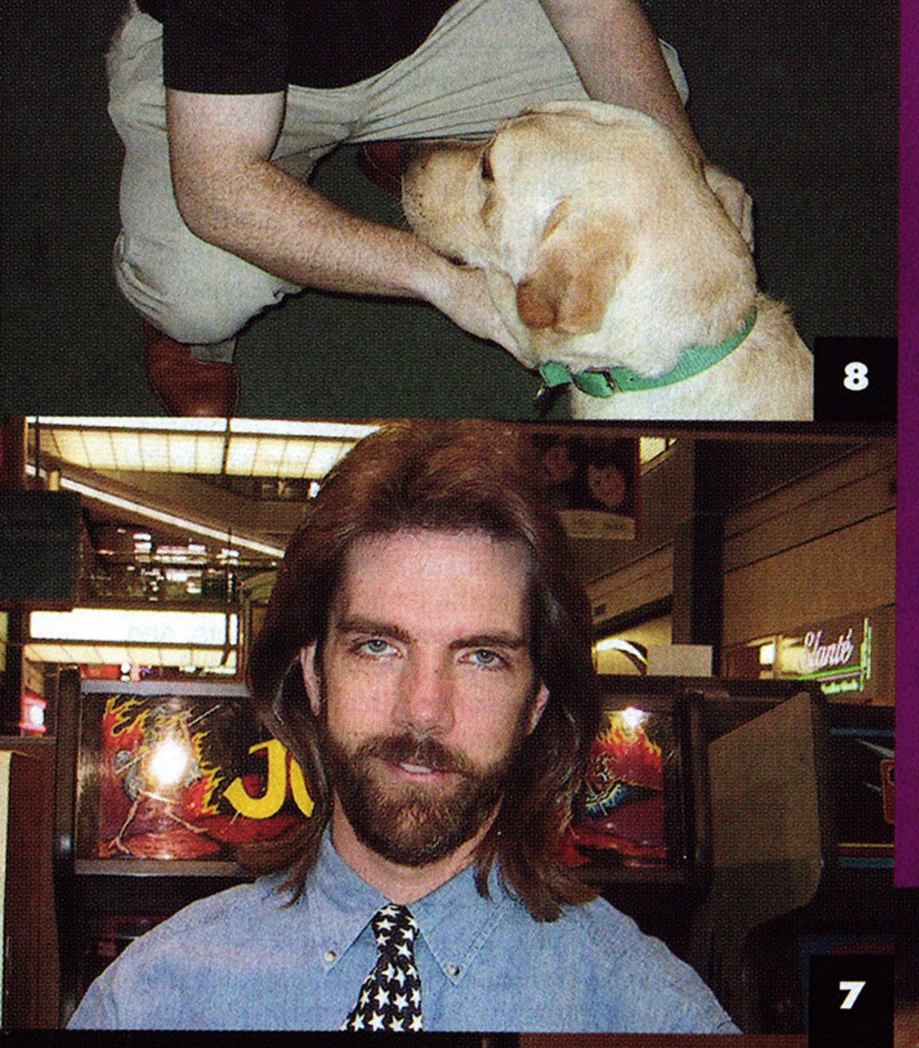
Last month I think I might have angered some of you by putting Limp Bizkit in my dislikes. Well, after listening to some of their songs on the NHL Hitz soundtrack while previewing the game, I've had a change of heart. Just kidding, they still suck donkey. While we're on the topic of music, though, my buddies GWAR are working on a new album that will blow up your ears and kick your eardrum's butt. On a side note, I am no longer bald, so the persona of a bald, mean German wrestler doesn't fit quite as well as it used to. I'm looking for a new gimmick. If you have any ideas, shoot me an email.

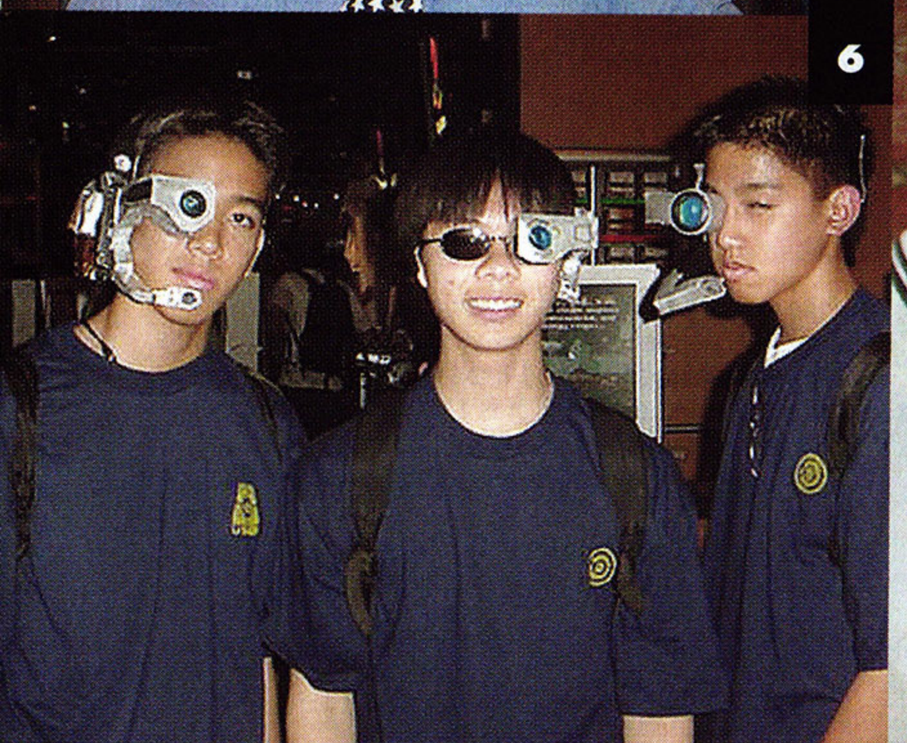
KATO, THE GAME KATANA
kato@gameinformer.com

Wooooo!!!! Issue #101, alright! What? No one wants to celebrate GI's one hundred and first issue?! Actually, there is reason to celebrate – another summer is about to go up in flames. I like summer, and admit I do feel guilty about wishing away all that quality outdoor time, but it must die if the new football season is to begin – and that's fine by me. Besides, I always get a kick out of this time of year because I remember I don't have to go to no stinking school ever again! Anyway, I'm here to officially tell all of you who are rollerblading around like wusses (skate or die!) that your days are numbered. Bring on the football and long, guilt-free indoor gaming sessions!

GI SPY







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CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Cuh-yooot! Reiner's new kitty, Nymh, bites the hand that feeds him. As a result, the Raging One has now been forced to change his name to Cap'n Hook, the Bloody Stump Gamer. **2** Jeff Poffenbarger of Activision, associate producer of the Tony Hawk series, demonstrates his real-world boarding skills in the Game Informer warehouse. **3** After a controversial game of rock, paper, scissors failed to produce a clear winner, Bill Linn of Linn PR and Andy fight over a coveted Xbox development kit. **4** "Charlotte, would you like to touch my monkey?" PSM's Chet Barber tries out his Dieter impression on Sony's Charlotte Panther. **5** Capcom's Matt Atwood presents Reiner with the 2001 Ol' Dirty Bastard Award For Best Smelling Man in Video Games at an impromptu ceremony held at the Hotel Sofitel in Bloomington, MN. **6** Here's an exclusive photo of the three people who actually saw *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, pictured at a Square fan day at the Metreon in San Francisco. **7** Loud n' proud Pac-Man champion Billy Mitchell, named "Player of the Century" at the Tokyo Game Show, shows off a hella-wicked mullet at the Twin Galaxies Video Game Festival at the Mall of America. **8** Naughty Dog's Andy Gavin poses with his naughty dog, Osiris, at the Naughty Dog offices in Santa Monica.

DEAR GI

PUNK IS AS PUNK DOES

I was flipping through the last issue and saw that Jay got a mohawk. At first, I said to myself, "Go Jay! Rock on!!" But then I thought about it and saw that he was a poseur. So let me say now, Jay, you should either:

A. Start listening to punk

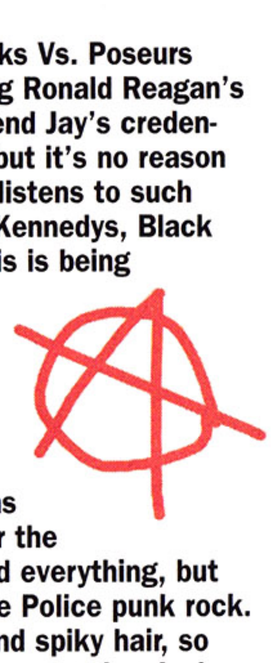
Or...

B. Get a different hairstyle

If you don't do one of these things, the Punk Rock Police will get you, I'm tellin' ya! Wait, what's that? I think it's the Clash and Rancid knocking on the door, ready to beat you up!! You'd better think fast, Jay!

Patrick Clarke
Via aol.com

While we'd suggest that the Real Punks Vs. Poseurs debate became passé sometime during Ronald Reagan's first term in office, we do have to defend Jay's credentials. Sure, his haircut is a little silly, but it's no reason to get your panties all in a bunch. He listens to such punk rock icons as the Misfits, Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, and even Blink-182! Heck, as this is being written, Jay is leaving work early to go see Fugazi! Why, it's like having our own little Sid Vicious right here in the office. We're not too scared of the Clash, being that they're really old, and we figure the GI Posse could take Rancid in a fight, as long as that Lars guy wasn't with them. As for the "Punk Rock Police," we love Sting and everything, but we're not really sure that we'd call the Police punk rock. Although, he did have a funny name and spiky hair, so maybe that counts. In any case, we suspect that Jay's new coif is just a phase, and will probably be gone in a month. Just to show you that there are no hard feelings, we've included an anarchy symbol for your viewing pleasure. Enjoy! Now, go out and break some windows, or whatever it is you crazy punk guys do.



VIDEO GAME RACISM?

I don't get it. I haven't noticed a single black character in any of the games for any of the video game systems, except for the sports games. I'm really starting to think that they are all biased against blacks! Think about it – there is a now a BLUE character (Azurik), yet there are still no black characters. What's up with that! What do you guys think? Are video game developers racist? Please, if you think they are not racist, tell me why!

Neo
Via aol.com

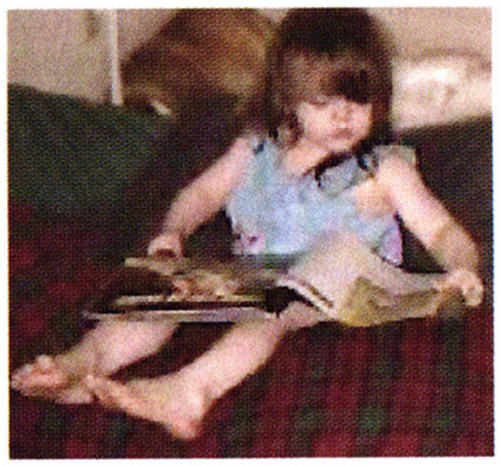
That's a tough one. Upon reading your letter, we sat around trying to think of African American video game characters, and came up with only a small handful. Offhand, we can think of Shadow Man, Blade, Dee Jay from Street Fighter, Barret Wallace from Final Fantasy VII, Akuji the Heartless, Mack from Global Gladiators, Jax from Mortal Kombat, and B.D. Joe from Crazy Taxi. There might be a few more we're forgetting, but when you consider the thousands of games that have been released since the late '70s, it's pretty shameful that we have to rack our brains to come up with a half-dozen black video game characters. Given that African American culture, from music to movies, is so popular around the world, it's surprising that video games haven't followed suit.

While we doubt that this is a conspiracy on the part of the industry, it's probably fair to say that there is a certain amount of unconscious bias involved. In much the same way that shows like *Friends* and *Seinfeld* portray a fictional New York that is almost devoid of minorities, the video game world is still stuck in a decades-old vision of what America looks like. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many games are developed in Japan, where there are very few persons of African descent. Hopefully, as publishers start to realize how many gamers of color there are buying their products, the games will change to reflect the diversity of their audience.

NATURE VS. NURTURE

My husband and I are big fans of your magazine, and are avid game players of both new and classic gaming systems. We even make our living selling video games online. The reason that I am writing is because I have been meaning to ask you some questions. First of all, have you been game players since birth, or have you just grown into it? How about your parents, do they play? The reason I am wondering is that my daughter is 2 years old and just as much of a game freak as her parents, and has been since she was 10 months. I just wanted to know if game playing is genetic or just the product of environment? Attached are two pics of my daughter Ally enjoying your magazine.

Mommywolf
Via email



The Game Informer staff gravitated to gaming at a young age, hopping on the Atari bandwagon when we were but wee lads. However, given that most of our parents' gaming experience doesn't go much past playing bridge and Othello, we have to surmise that gaming is not a genetic trait, but rather a very pleasurable disease that can infect people of all ages. Obviously, your daughter has already caught the bug. Now, we applaud the fact that you support your little one's habit, and we also are gratified to know that she is growing up in a solid, all-American, Game Informer-reading household. Each year, thousands of children are emotionally traumatized by being forced to read substandard video game magazines. The real tragedy is that these unfortunate incidents can be avoided. Please, parents, learn from the excellent example of Mommywolf. If your child isn't reading Game Informer, there's a good chance he or she will grow up to be a homeless pariah, shunned by society and aimlessly wandering the streets. The cost of a Game Informer subcription is a small price to pay to ensure a bright future for your little ones.

HOW CAN I BE DOWN?

I consider myself to be a fairly experienced gamer. I've played games from Day of the Tentacle (a long-forgotten, but much beloved PC title that was made when floppies ruled the earth) to Dynasty Warriors 2. Sadly, I'm still not on any beta testing lists. What's up with that? I've met people who have managed to get on one of these lists, and they aren't HALF (or a quarter) of the gamer I am. I'd breathe games if I weren't human. You MUST divulge the secrets of being a beta tester or else I'll call you chicken-wusses!

Loki,
Fort Worth, TX

Actually, the process of becoming a beta tester is pretty straightforward. Many PC games, particularly massively multiplayer games like EverQuest and Anarchy Online, solicit beta testers for what is termed an "open beta test." In these instances, it's just a matter of filling out an email form with some personal information, and possibly signing a nondisclosure agreement that states you will not divulge any gameplay details to the press. In return for the sneak preview, you'll usually be asked to complete "bug reports" on any glitches you might find in the game. In other cases, the beta test is "closed," which means the developer will only open it to hand-picked gamers whom they are familiar with from past experience. Generally, if you keep your eyes open, you should be able to be a part of a PC beta test without too much difficulty.

Being a console tester is a little more difficult, especially if you reside outside of California. In the console world, tester is a job that must be applied for like any other. You'll be asked for a resumé, and go through an interview. These positions are posted in the employment ads, and are pretty plentiful throughout Silicon Valley and the Bay Area. The test department has traditionally been an entry-level position in the game industry, and many game producers, designers, and public relations people in the industry today got their start in test. A warning – these positions can be extremely demanding, requiring you to play the same levels for hours on end, scrupulously videotaping your screen and attempting to re-create bugs.

D.I.Y.

Yo wazzup GI, I read your magazine and I have a subscription, and I think it is a really great magazine. I am 15 years old and I would love to have my own magazine. My best friend and I want to start our own gaming magazine business. I also want to know some information about your job. On a scale of one to ten, ten being the greatest, what would you rate your job? Last, but not least, do you like your salary? Is there enough money involved for you to make a good living?

Blue Cat
Via aol.com

While getting to play video games for a living might seem like a great gig, when you factor in other duties, like proofreading text and hand-washing Andy's collection of thong underwear, plus the $3.25 an hour we are paid, our job satisfaction ratings come in at around – 7.25. So, you still think you want to be a video game journalist?

If you want to start up your own magazine, there's nothing stopping you. With a decent home PC, some

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desktop publishing software like Quark and Photoshop, a little hard work, and a trip to Kinko's, you could be publishing your own video game fanzine in a matter of a few weeks. Or, if you prefer, learn a little html coding and start up your own video game website. There are several really well done fan sites to use as an example, such as www.mastergamer.com and www.nintendojo.com. While you probably won't actually make money off your 'zine, it's a great way to learn about the industry, and will also look very impressive to prospective employers once you reach the age of 18 and start applying for work in the magazine business. Just like those wacky punks say – Do It Yourself!

SPECIAL ED

What ever happened to those side notes by the infamous Ed? I miss them.

Psycho Mantis
Via aol.com

The mysterious Ed you refer to was actually ex-*St. Elsewhere* star and renowned actor Ed Begley Jr. After being ostracized by Hollywood for taking off his pants at the *Coyote Ugly* premier party, Ed was forced to take up video game journalism. His random comments on all things video games appeared in brackets throughout the pages of GI for about a year. Sadly, when his torrid love affair with Reiner ended badly, Ed left his position here at Game Informer.

Seriously, the abbreviation "– Ed." or "– ed." stands for "editor." These parenthetical asides are shown in brackets to distinguish them from the main text of an article. They are used to allow the magazine's staff to make editorial comments on a statement or quote from an interviewee. You've probably seen these used in many magazines other than Game Informer from time to time. [Assuming you read any other magazines – Ed.] See, we just used one! Neat, huh?

NO CHANCE!

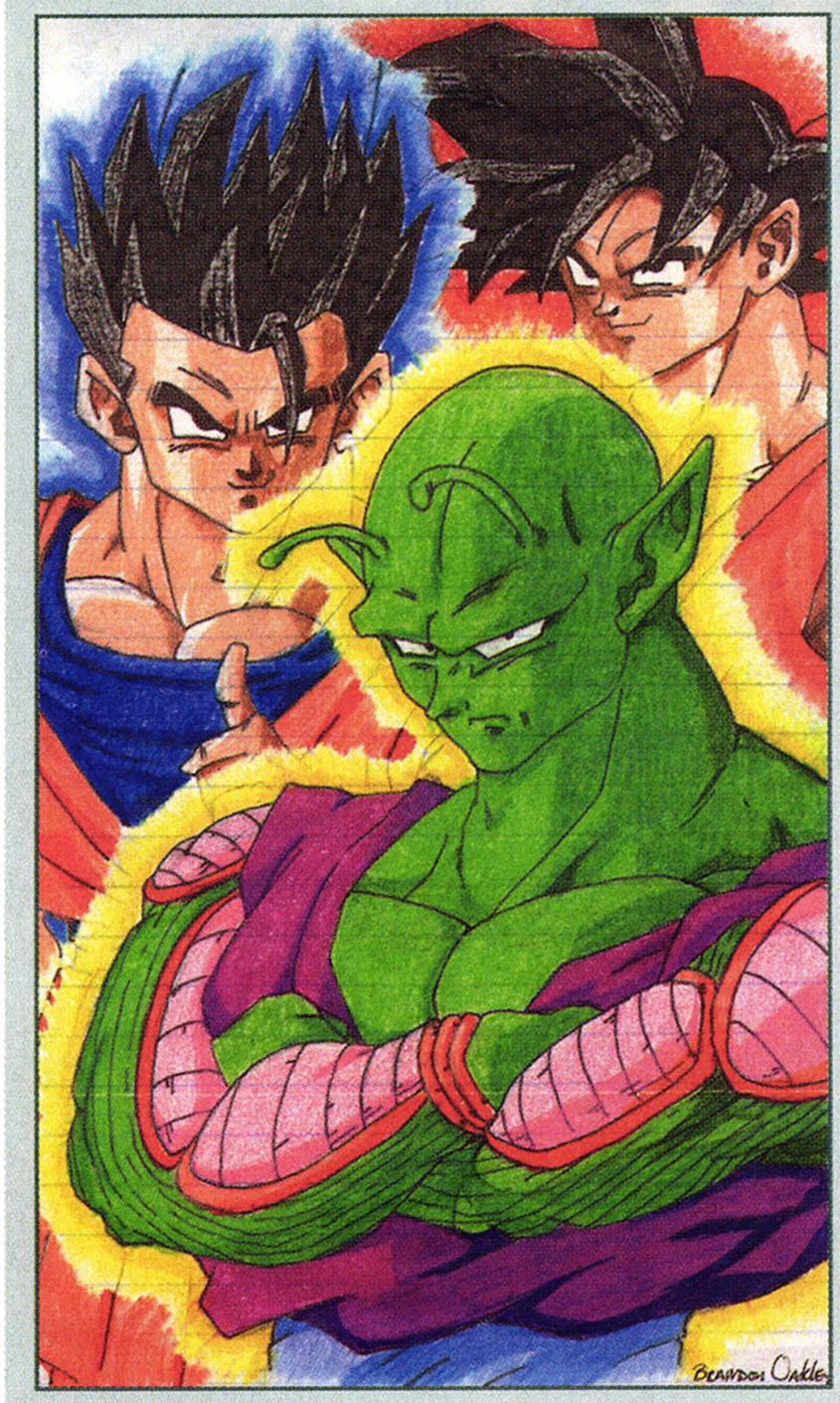
What are some pointers on how to get our letters published in your magazine?

Nick
Via aol.com

Well, you could start by composing an intelligent, well-written letter that actually had a point instead of an insipid questions like that! C'mon, do you really think we'd publish this feeble-minded query in the hallowed pages of Dear GI? Get a life! Your letter has as much chance of getting published in this magazine as Kato does of getting a date with Elizabeth Hurley! That is, absolutely no chance! This is a serious forum for discussion about the video game industry, not some loser message board. So, just remember, come up with something with a little more substance and then maybe we'll consider printing it. Oh wait, we just printed it! You tricked us! You fiendishly clever fool! Aaaaaaaarrrgh! This defeat shall be avenged – we swear it. You may have won this battle, old friend, but the war is not over.

ENVELOPE ART

SEPTEMBER WINNER!

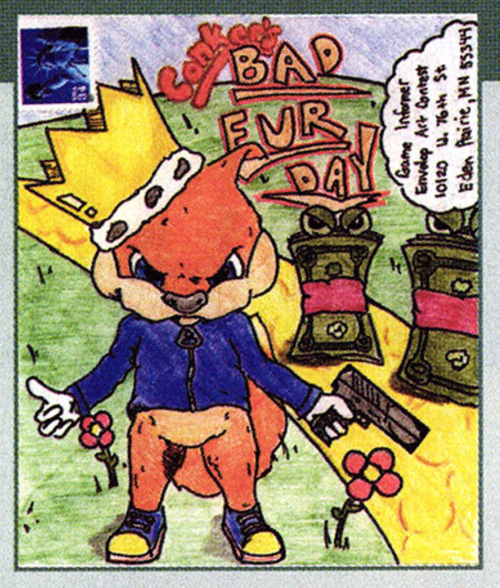


Brandon Oakley
Although we're getting a bit tired of Dragonball Z envelope art, we can't front on this colorful piece.

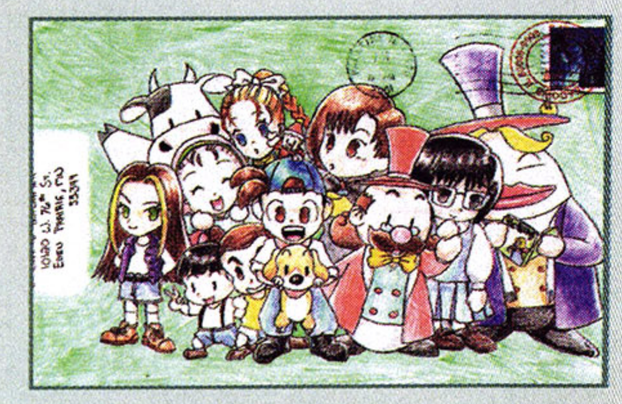
Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:
Game Informer • Envelope Art Contest
10120 W. 76th St. • Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Guillermo Silva
"Once my mustache is complete, no woman in the world will be able to resist my charms!"

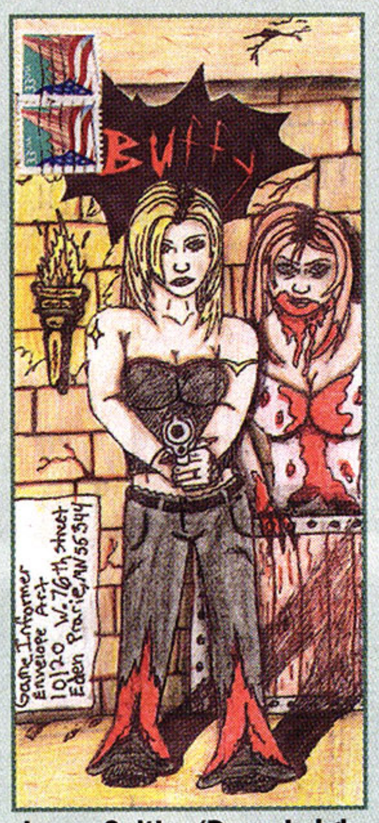


Nick Adkins
Being king means you never have to wear pants



Katie Keable
This Harvest Moon drawing is cute and makes us very happy. You are neat and we love you.

Angel Arvisu
Angel represents Metal Gear Solid with this dope comic-influenced envelope art



Jason Spitler/Dana Leigh
Evil Buffy doesn't know that blood-stained bustiers are soooo last year.

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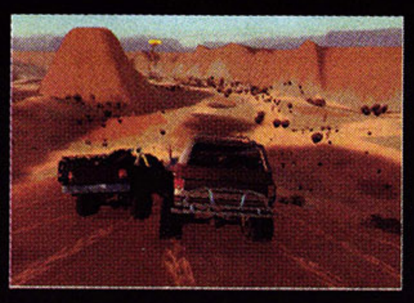

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

MILD LYRICS

INFOGRAMES™

developed by Angel STUDIOS

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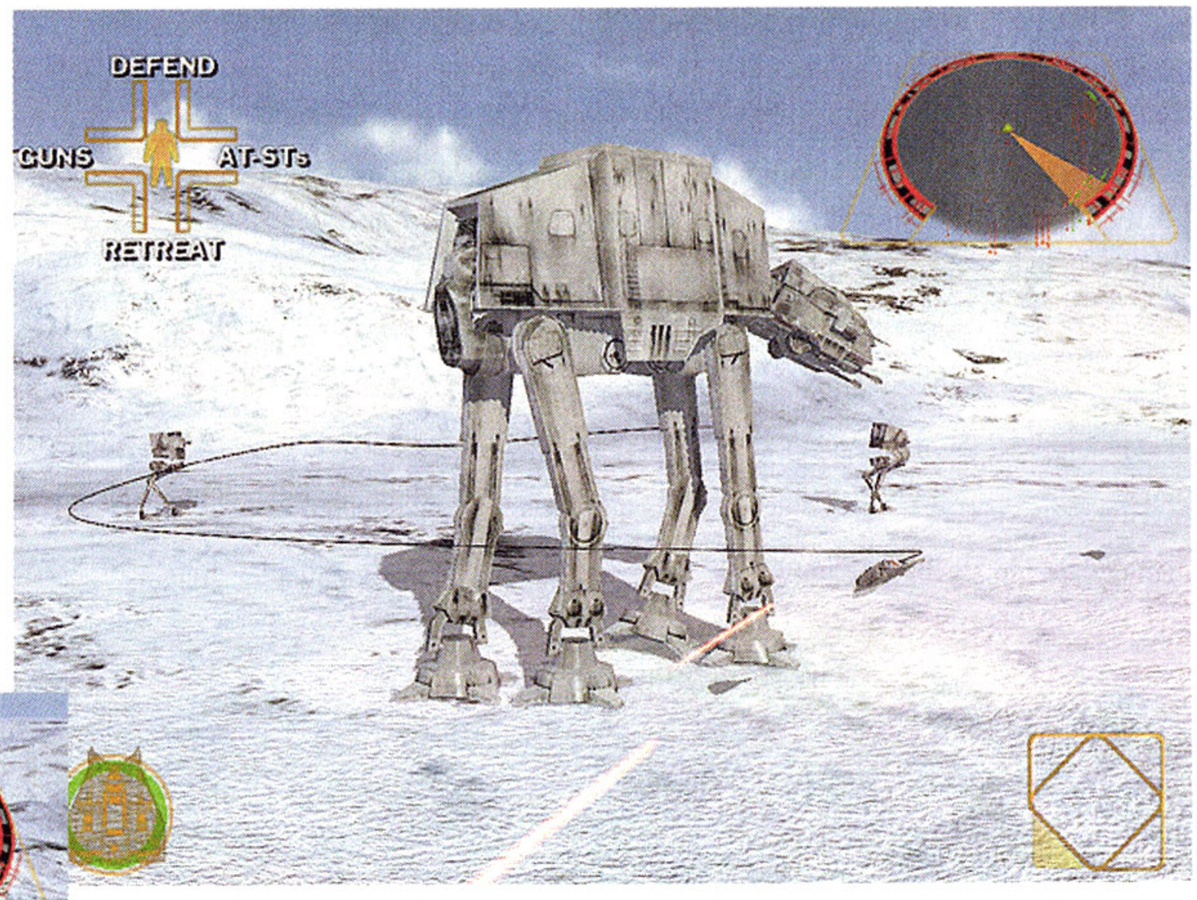
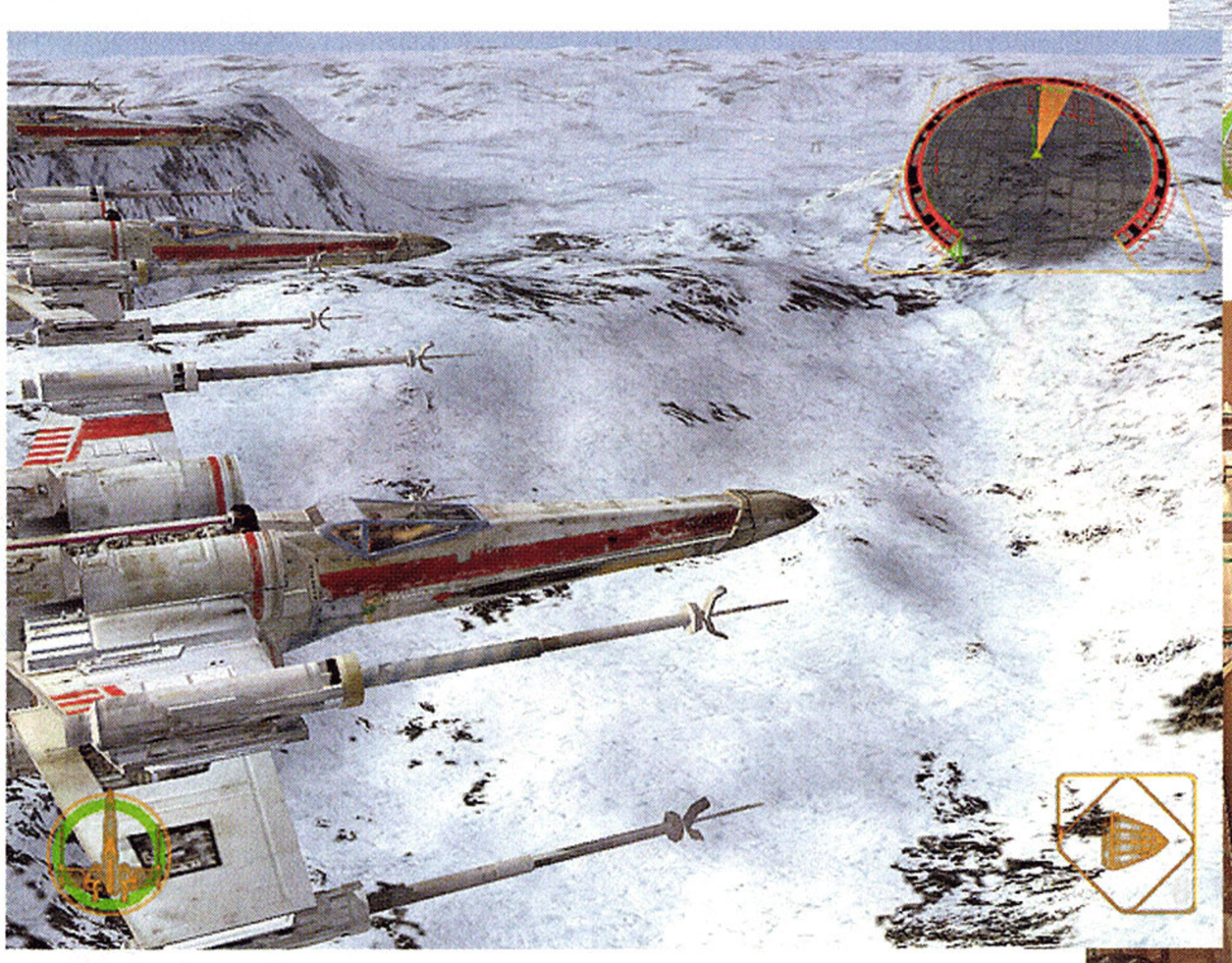
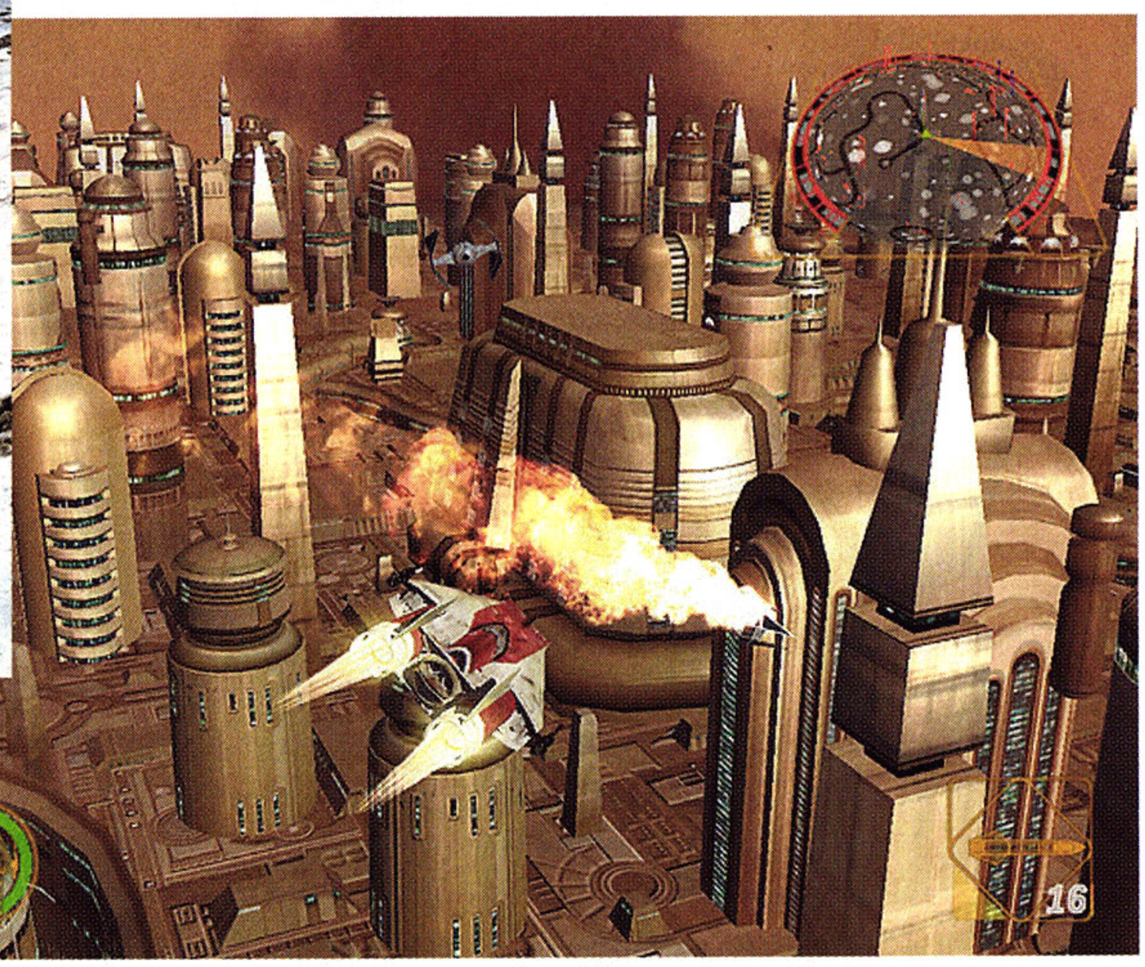
GI NEWS

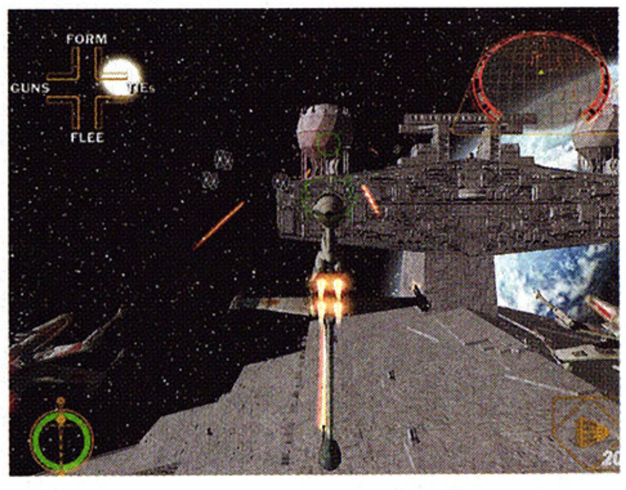
NEW SCENES FROM THE ROGUE LEADER FRONT

Nintendo's GameCube will launch a thousand ships when it comes out in November. **LucasArts'** ***Star Wars: Rogue Leader*** is as hot as they come, and with this month's new shots and info, you'll go supernova with delight. *Rogue Leader* encompasses all the combat scenes of the classic trilogy, and the **Battle of Hoth** is looking as cool as anything with its inclusion of everything from AT-STs to the Ion Cannon. You can control Rebel ground troops from above using your D-pad (as well as your wingmen), switch fighters in mid-battle, and harpoon AT-ATs in a scene reminiscent of ***Shadows of the Empire***. Other locations such as Cloud City, with underground trenches you can zoom into, are no less breathtaking. They shall all amaze and be waiting for you when the GameCube launches on November 5.

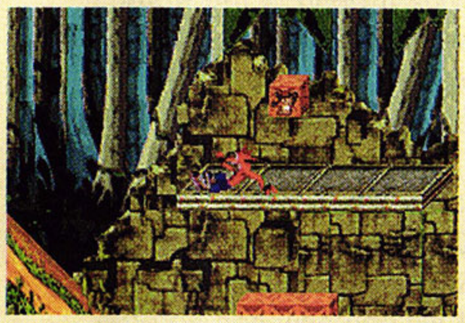






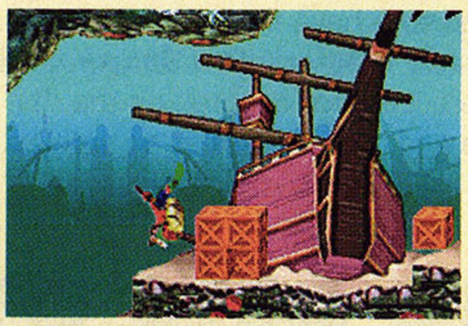


FIRST LOOK: CRASH & Z.O.E. FOR GBA


Crash Bandicoot Advance

Returning to the **Game Boy Advance *Crash Bandicoot*** story we broke back in the July issue (#99), we now bring you the first shots of the title. Set to release in March of next year, the tentatively titled ***Crash Bandicoot Advance*** pits the formerly Sony-exclusive marsupial against his main nemesis, Dr. Cortex, in six different environments and 20 levels, including a Mayan jungle, underwater ruins, Arctic caves, and Dr. Cortex's space station. Story, Time Trial, and Gem Collecting modes give you plenty of room to perfect all of Crash's platforming moves, which are now upgradeable.

Crash Bandicoot Advance is being developed by **Vicarious Visions**, the makers of the GBA version of ***Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2***. From what *GI* has seen, this Crash should easily rival the greatness of the orange one's first **PlayStation** title. Still, Vicarious Visions has said that it certainly doesn't intend to just coast on the fact that it can deliver non side-scrolling levels like in the PS-X Crash, and fully intends to throw us some innovative new surprises.


Crash Bandicoot Advance

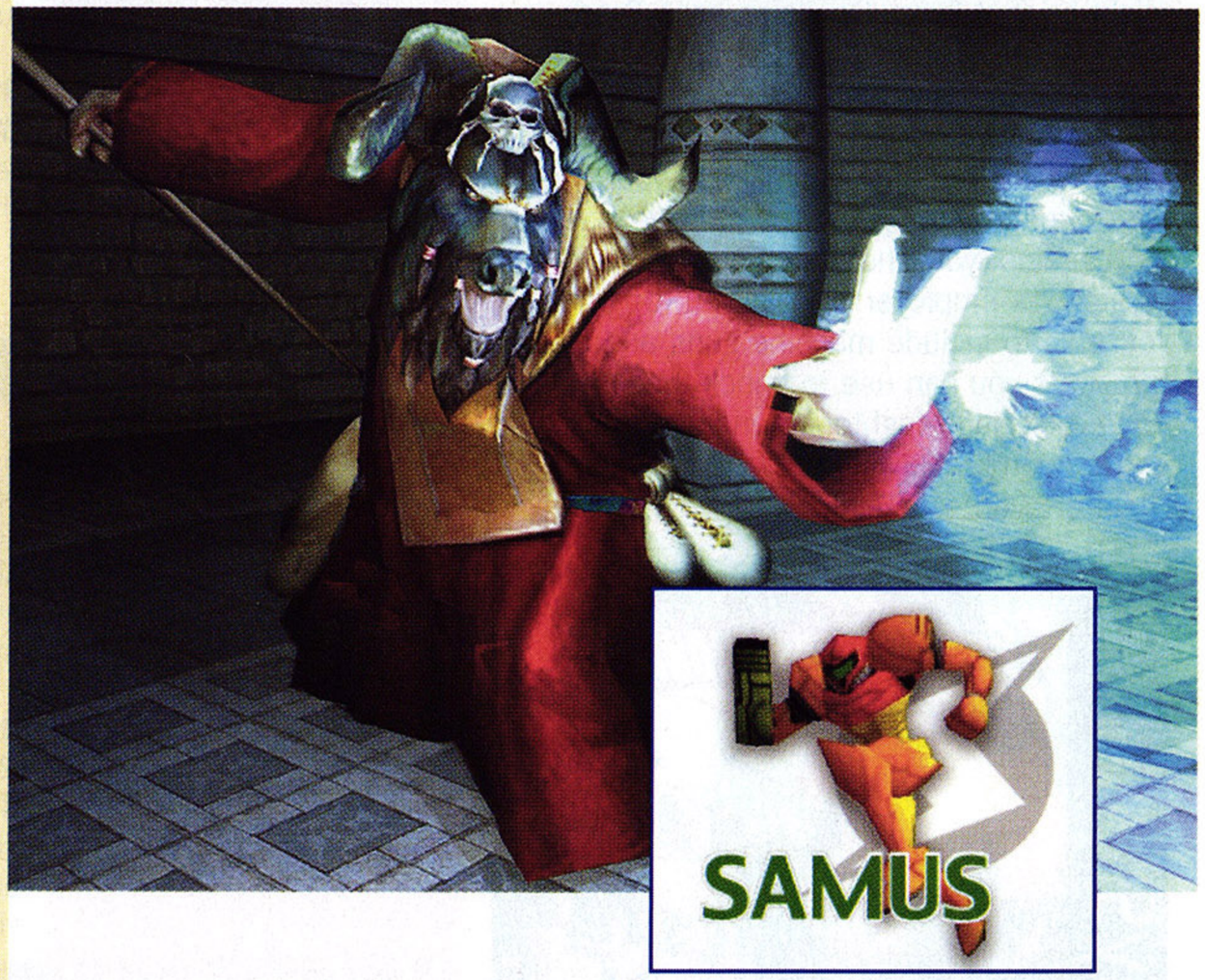
Also making its pictorial debut in *GI News* this month is the GBA version of **Konami's** mecha action/philosopher ***Zone of the Enders***. ***Z.O.E. 2173 Testament*** is scheduled to appear in Japan in late September. *GI* spoke with **Konami of America**, but representatives wouldn't divulge if the cart would make it to these shores, only that work has indeed begun on the title. Testament introduces a whole new set of characters than the **PlayStation 2's** *Z.O.E.*, and doesn't feature the involvement of **Hideo Kojima**. Instead, **Winky Soft** is developing it; replacing PS2's high-action mecha gymnastics with "interactive action strategy."

Zone of the Enders

SAMUS DEFEATS RAVEN BLADE

Heard **GameCube's *Metroid Prime*** was in trouble? Not as much as another **Retro Studios'** GC project, ***Raven Blade***. The title has been officially axed by the Austin, Texas based first-party **Nintendo** developer. "*Raven Blade* has been cancelled," said a **Nintendo of America** release. "It was a business decision and was made clearly based on the need to focus on *Metroid* and to ensure that it is a great game. We wanted to consolidate the resources that would have been needed to finish *Raven Blade*." Wow, sounds like a real-life Super Smash Bros. Melee has already erupted behind the scenes!

Raven Blade video footage was debuted just prior to this year's **E3**, amongst all the console's high-profile offerings. Although we here at *GI* certainly are encouraged that Nintendo and **Retro** are taking the GameCube edition of *Metroid* seriously enough to sacrifice other games for it, it's a shame to see what looked like a solid action/RPG title go down the drain.

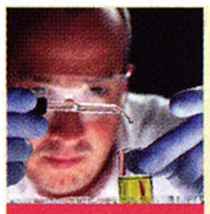


ALICE/CRAZY TAXI INTO FILM WONDERLAND

American McGee's *Alice* is gearing up to be shot through **Wes Craven's** own twisted mind. The disturbing **PC** title scarred gamers' psyches, and a film with Wes as director is already in motion to do much more damage. The movie is now trying out various scripts being written by John August (*Go*, *Charlie's Angels*), but little else is known at the moment.

***The Phantom Menace's* Natalie Portman** is being tipped for the role, and we couldn't be more excited. The movie, similar to the game, takes place in Alice's adult years, where her Wonderland adventures combined with the fiery death of her parents have landed her in an insane asylum. Alice returns to the land, but it has been darkened and misshapen beyond all recognition.

Director/producer **Richard Donner** (*Superman*, *Lethal Weapon* series) also promises a wild ride in his movie adaptation of **Sega's *Crazy Taxi***. The future summer film may be hard-pressed to replicate the video game's thrills, but Donner isn't worried about this at all. "I plan on doing a lot of experimentation with this film, trying things no one's really played around with, to really put the audience in the front or back seat of the taxi during the action sequences. You can do a lot more with the camerawork in a movie to make the action sequences feel like those in the game."



R&D

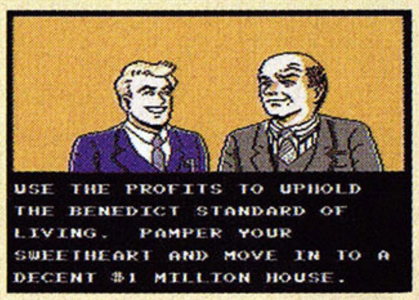
Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

CRAZY GONDOLA

Due to the incredible success of the Crazy Taxi series, it was only a matter of time before the idea spilled over into other types of transportation. Perhaps you think gondolas are a slow, boring, and relatively corny way of getting from here to there. The regular dull old pieces of plywood you see tooling around those fetid and stinking waterways of Venice might be, but Crazy Gondolas have Crazy Rockets attached to them! You'll give newly-wed tourists the ride of their young lives as you race not to get bigger tips, but to see how much terror you can instill in your unwitting tourist passengers. The more felonies filed against you, the more your dark and mysterious employer will pay you. Upgrade your ride to include machine guns and electric seats you can use to shock those who don't look quite frightened enough. Plus, the entire soundtrack will be licensed Frank Sinatra favorites. Salute!

NAME THAT GAME

It was 1990, and the country was still reeling from Reaganomics and the stock market crash of three years earlier. Another in publisher/developer Sofel's "Life Simulation Series," this NES title left Uncle Benedict's billion dollar estate in your hands – provided you lived up to executor Larry the Lofty Lawyer's criteria. Play the stock market, pamper your sugar doll, and maintain the Benedict high-life in order to capture the inheritance. Remember, greed is good.



(Answer on page 21)

TOP 10 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WORKING AT GAME INFORMER

10 We get our games for free. We've actually already traded our first and second borns for them

9 We're professional journalists who always check our sources, quote accurately, and never, ever kick a game when it's down

8 When we talk, the industry listens. Hey, nothing seems to stop the flood of crappy games

7 Kato knows Japanese. Whoops!

6 Justin is a local wrestler of some repute. He actually calls it "Free-Form Tandem Male Body Dancing"

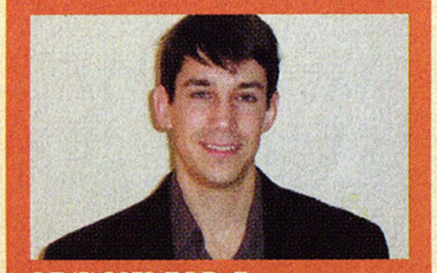
5 We've already sent your subscription out. We can't help it if your postal carrier steals all your copies of Game Informer

4 Paul, the Game Professor, still works here but is now in the circulation department. We haven't seen Paul in the last few months. Anyone who has should contact the authorities immediately

3 All we do is sit around and play video games all day. Hell no, not when we've got the remote controlled fart machine to fiddle with

2 Arthur is our loveable mascot dog. Don't be fooled by those peaceful eyes, he's Andy's attack dog, or "motivational speaker" as he likes to call him

1 Game Informer makes video games. Yeah, we wish!



DEVELOPER **TOP 5**

TED PRICE
PRESIDENT, INSOMNIAC GAMES
(Insomniac is currently working on a top secret PS2 title)

1 Super Metroid – SNES

2 The Legend of Zelda – NES

3 Doom – PC

4 Mario 64 – N64

5 Half-Life – PC

READER **TOP 5**

PHILIP DiSILVESTRO
Scottsdale, AZ

1 Super Mario Bros. 3 – NES

2 Metal Gear Solid – PS-X

3 Resident Evil 2 – PS-X

4 Soul Calibur – DC

5 Castlevania: Symphony of the Night – PS-X

Game Informer is looking for your Top Five favorite games. Please send your Top Fives to:

Game Informer Magazine
Attn: Top Five
10120 West 76th Street
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Everyone that enters every month will be entered in a drawing to win a GI T-Shirt! So get writing!

DEVELOPERS IN DEEP TROUBLE

John Romero and **Tom Hall** (founders of id Software) have left **Ion Storm's** Dallas studio for other interests, effectively leaving it dead in the water. According to an official statement, "Ion Storm will continue as a wholly owned subsidiary of **Eidos** and work on the sequels to the award winning ***Thief*** and ***Deus Ex*** titles as well as *Deus Ex* for the **PlayStation 2**." These remaining games are being handled out of Ion Storm's Austin location, which an Eidos spokesperson confirmed would be unaffected. Reasons for the pairs departure could include the release of **PC's *Anachronox*** and the long development time and subsequent flop of ***Daikatana*** for the **N64** and **PC**.

Sega survived the death of **Dreamcast**, but we can now has add the French company **No Cliché** to the body count. The developer of ***Toy Commander*** has closed it doors and issued this note: "Due to Sega's decision to stop development in Europe, No Cliché stopped its activity. Almost all employees have been made redundant. Agartha, the horror/adventure game, is cancelled. The managing staff is working on the company's rebirth." Good luck, and maybe we'll catch you later.

Finally, news from Japan tells us that the ***Cool Boarders*** cats at **UEP Systems** have filed for bankruptcy. UEP is currently working on **Activision's *Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder*** for the PlayStation 2, but an Activision representative assured us that the project is green-lighted all the way until the end, and will suffer no setbacks due to this turn of events.

EA GETS OWN RING

It took the world's largest third-party publisher to get its hands on what could be the hottest movie trilogy since the original ***Star Wars*** films. **EA** has secured the rights to publish video games based on the ***Lord of the Rings*** film trilogy that begins this December. Beating out the likes of **Activision** and **Codemasters**, EA has already started working on utilizing this multiple title and platform deal.

This agreement is different from a previous one struck by **Vivendi Universal** and **Tolkien Enterprises** that covers the rights to the *Lord of the Rings* books by **J.R.R. Tolkien** which the movies are based on. Vivendi's **Sierra Studios** plans to start its video game treatments in 2002. This battle between EA and Vivendi for the top spot should be as heated as the one between Gandalf and the Balrog Demon, and yield some very *pressscriousss* vids!

SHREK EFFECT FOR XBOX

Xbox fans are quite high on the upcoming console, but one game alone has turned them into a burping, farting mess for the cause. **TDK Mediactive's *Shrek*** title will be on hand at the platform's launch (Nov. 8) in order to both represent the system's power and to let some of the younger set in on the Xbox action. *Shrek* begins where the movie left off courtesy of three new worlds. Platforming and puzzles will be mixed in with combat techniques that include kicking, farting, throwing, and acting like an all-around fat, ugly bastard.

Despite *Shrek's* personal appearance, developer **Sandbox Studios** has made the game a thing of beauty. Textures, lighting effects, and shadowing are all of the highest quality. Great in-engine cutscenes and the lack of pop-up or fogging also contribute to the experience.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

Good – **Sega** is getting out of the hardware business and everything must go! The **Dreamcast** is about to undergo two more price cuts to clear out its inventory. August 12 will see the console go down to $79.99, and on or around the end of the year, you can expect the system to retail for a measly $49.99!

Ugly – Wales' ugliest sovereign, **Prince Charles**, has spoken out against video games, saying that people should instead spend their money on "what can only be described as worthwhile books" and funding for the arts. Hey Chuck, perhaps the best way for British citizens to spend their cash is to stop paying you and your worthless family!

Good – Good vibrations come courtesy of **Mad Catz**. The company has designed a new force-feedback game pad that may just double for in-home shock therapy. The **Bioforce** controller has electrodes that attach to your arms and deliver jolts large enough to make you drop the controller or small enough to give you a tingle. Up the voltage enough and you may never have to heed those epileptic warnings ever again!

Good – The love shown to us recently during *GI's* appearance at **Twin Galaxies' Video Game Festival** at the Mall of America. Six marriage proposals were refused, 4 people fainted, and tens of thousands in the mall were simply too awestruck to even come talk to us. It was like *Spinal Tap* all over again! Actually, the editors appreciated all who came down, and hope it was as good for you as it was for us.

Bad – French company **Sherman Productions** is developing an action/adventure PlayStation 2 game called **AXIS** to be published by **Namco**. It gets better. The vid is to be based on a CG movie of the same name; both of which will come out next Spring. As bad of a movie as it was, at least ***Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*** had a solid game to help it along. *GI* suspects "Made in France" won't do a damn thing for either the film or the vid.

LOOSE TALK

Wherever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, Game Informer experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. Loose Talk exposes inside rumors for all to see. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else!

High on the acclaim given to **PlayStation's *Chrono Cross*** in *Game Informer's* 100th issue, executive producer of **Square Soft**, **Hironobu Sakaguchi**, has decided to go forward with a **PlayStation 2 *Chrono*** title. The game is still a ways off, but the company's Internet service, **Play Online**, beta tests this fall and Square is currently talking about its big multi-platform plans. Don't be surprised to see this upcoming *Chrono* game hit the **Xbox** and **GameCube** as well to make for some awesome online RPG play.

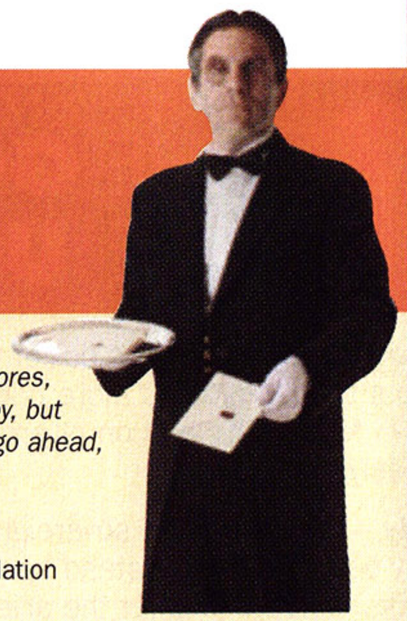
Can't get enough of ***WarHawk*** recently? *Loose Talk* has learned that more flight combat is coming from **Sony/989**. Yes, a new *WarHawk* title is in the works, and will be created by **Incog Inc.**, a development house made up of many ex-**Singletrac** (the company that created the original *WarHawk*) staffers, most recently known for its work on ***Twisted Metal: Black***.

GI was disappointed as anyone when **E3** didn't turn up with a new ***Skies of Arcadia***, but perhaps things are starting to change. **Sega** team **Overworks** actually has the **Xbox** figured into the franchise's plans – a perfect pay-off of Sega's platform-agnostic policy. Load times should be thankfully faster and the console's hard drive could easily store any bonus episodes made available like those that were downloadable for the first *Arcadia*.

Football games usually come out like clockwork, but perhaps **989 Sports** will miss the kick-off this season. *Loose Talk* has learned that the second **PlayStation 2 *GameDay*** may ship later than the other pigskin titles, as the team is still hard at work perfecting it from last year. Hopefully ***GameDay 2002*** doesn't get docked this year like **Konami's *ESPN PrimeTime*** did in 2000.

Konami of America has decided to pass on bringing the **PlayStation 2** action title ***7 Blades*** to the US. The dual-hero gameplay was somewhat reminiscent of the ferocity of ***Dynasty Warriors 2***, but with the mystical Japanese folklore quality of ***Onimusha***. Regardless, a Konami spokesperson told us that part of the reason for KoA's change of heart was the game's poor sales in its native land of Japan.

VIDEO GAME TRIVIA



Through extensive research, we've learned that most gamers aspire to be butlers when they grow up. Sure, you'll have to labor for countless hours completing meaningless chores, but think about it! When the boss is away, it's your time to play! The rich may be snobby, but they have gigantic televisions – which happen to be the perfect vehicle for gaming! So go ahead, take this quiz to see which TV servant's style fits yours!

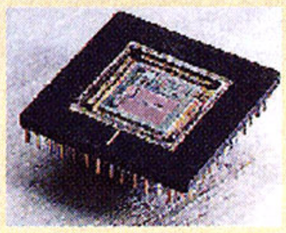
Question 1: Treasure, the Japanese developer of the PlayStation 2 title, Stretch Panic, is notorious for throwing an innovative spin into every one of its games. Which of these obscure releases did Treasure not have a hand in?

A. Mischief Makers
B. Gunstar Heroes
C. Ristar
D. Dynamite Heady

Question 2: As Pitfall Harry soon learned, the life of an adventurer is not as grand as it may seem – especially in the gaming world. With reckless abandon, players subject Harry to countless injuries. He was stung by scorpions, squashed by rolling logs, and even chewed to pieces by alligators. At the end of the day, though, when Pitfall! released on the Atari 2600, Harry received his just desserts. How many copies of Pitfall! did Activision sell worldwide?

A. 550,000
B. 1,000,000
C. 2,500,000
D. 4,000,000

Question 3: In 1997, Garry Kasparov learned a valuable lesson – he's not the best chess player in the world. IBM's computer, Deep Blue, narrowly edged out Kasparov and applied the checkmate TKO. Before losing his pants, Kasparov become the youngest World Champion in the history of chess. How old was he when he accomplished this feat?



Big Blue Chess Chip

A. 22
B. 18
C. 6
D. 15

Question 4: In Square Soft's SNES RPG, Chrono Trigger, what was the name of the aircraft piloted by the Chrono and his lackeys?

A. Tundar Traveler
B. Epoch
C. Janus X-1
D. Time Wing

Question 5: PC legend Sid Meier has contributed to the creation of such hits as Civilization and Alpha Centauri. Before these timeless classics, however, Meier wished to revolutionize the flight simulator market. With this in mind, what was his first game?

A. Flight 747
B. Combat Flight Simulation
C. Flight Simulator
D. Solo Flight

Question 6: Who was the producer of the first MLB for PlayStation? Now, you're probably thinking to yourself, "Who cares! This guy is nobody! Making baseball games is synonymous with working at McDonalds." Contraire! After paying his dues, this esteemed individual went on to form Verant Interactive. So who is he, hotshot?

A. John Smedley
B. Bob Bates
C. Grimace
D. Alex Carloss

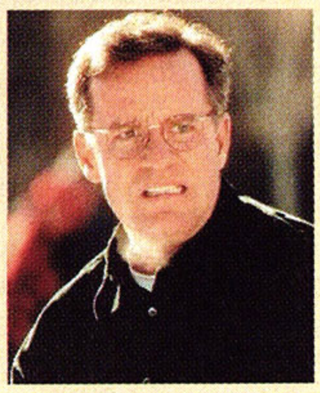
Question 7: Commander Keen is the grandson of what other game's main character?

A. Commando Burn of Contra Force
B. Roman Alexandria of Star Crusader
C. William J. Blazkowicz of Wolfenstein 3-D
D. Master Higgins of Adventure Island

Question 8: What were the four games included in Nintendo's first Game & Watch Gallery for Game Boy?

A. Octopus, Fire, Leaky Faucet, Manhole
B. Fire, Leaky Faucet, Oil Panic, Lemon Madness
C. Fire, Octopus, Oil Panic, Manhole
D. Octopus, Leaky Faucet, Manhole, Lemon Madness

Question 9: The late and great Phil Hartman contributed his voice talents to which one of these games?



A. Captain Quazar
B. General Chaos
C. Blasto
D. Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer: The Game!

Question 10: Which of these puzzle games is not like the other? In other words, which of these puzzle games doesn't belong?

A. Puyo Puyo
B. Poy Poy
C. Kirby's Avalanche
D. Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine

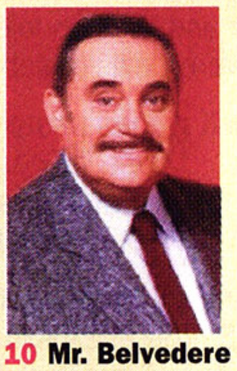
Score and Rank

0 Mr. French

1-3 Geoffrey

4-6 Benson

7-9 Alfred



10 Mr. Belvedere

Video Game Trivia Answers:

1. C 2. D 3. A 4. B 5. D 6. A 7. C 8. C 9. C 10. B

NINTENDO PULLS PETERS

Effective February 1, 2002, **Nintendo's** Vice President of Sales and Marketing, **Peter Main**, will retire and give way to the current President of Nintendo Canada, **Peter MacDougall**. After 15 years with Nintendo, Peter Main had become known for his firm commitment to the company and his mastery at advocating and advancing its goals. President of **Nintendo America**, **Minoru Arakawa**, commented that, "Sometimes the term 'industry legend' is overused, but in the case of Peter Main, it is perfectly appropriate. Many common industry practices were literally invented by Peter over the last 15 years, and we would not have achieved our phenomenal success without him."

For his part, Peter MacDougall has been with Nintendo since 1989, when he brought substantial international experience via his previous postings with **Gillette** and **Seagrams**. Arakawa says this kind of experience makes him a perfect fit. "Peter's unique qualifications make him ideally suited for this job. His breadth of success is a distinct asset given the global nature of Nintendo's business."

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 2 PRICE DETAILS

Sega of America has officially announced pricing details for **Dreamcast's *Phantasy Star Online: Version 2***, hitting stores on September 11. For $15, *PSO Ver. 2* players can experience the game online for three months of unlimited service. This new pay-to-play rule applies to everyone, even those who have already signed up for **SegaNet**. Meanwhile, the first ***Phantasy Star Online*** can still be played for free, and of course, you can also use *Ver. 2* offline for no cost if you so choose.

SegaNet itself has declared that it is dropping out of the ISP business. Customers will automatically, and without interuption, be transferred to **Earthlink** accounts for the same price. SegaNet says that it will stick to providing and concentrating on online game services, including adding titles from the **PlayStation 2**, **Xbox**, and **GameCube**.

BREAK DOWN

76% of this issue was going to be about exclusive, brand-new info for Final Fantasy XIII on PS3, but we changed our minds at the last minute

50% of the office loves to tongue the sometimes sweaty taste of Bawls. But none of us like a sniff more than Reiner

0% of the staff are actually agents for Sony, Microsoft, Sega, Nintendo, or whatever other company you think we whore ourselves out to

88% of us think that the movie Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within blows. This may be because you don't get to actually see actress Ming-Na

5% of emailers to GI this month actually know the difference between "you're" and "your"

DATA FILE

➤ Love is in the air this fall for your ***Sims***. **Electronic Arts** has announced ***The Sims Hot Date*** **Expansion Pack** for the **PC** – the third such add-on for the number one series. Get punch drunk, hit lover's lane, go on a blind date, or whatever works for your Sims.

➤ **Panasonic** is curing the early criticisms of the **GameCube's** low memory card capacity. The official cards, called **Memory Card 59**, have 59 blocks to save on; comprising a total of 1/2 MB of data. By using an **SD adapter**, you can utilize Panasonic's SD memory cards and have stamp-sized inserts that range from sizes of 16MB to 64MB and beyond.

➤ The **PlayStation 2** ship definitely isn't ahoy for **Interplay's *Galleon*** game. The PS2 swashbuckler has been cancelled, although the **Xbox** and **GameCube** games will still go forward with **Confounding Factor** at the developing helm. There's no word from Interplay regarding the reason for the cancellation.

➤ After trumpeting the sales figures of **Game Boy Advance's *Castlevania: Circle of the Moon***, **Konami** has turned around and announced that it is now making a new *Castlevania* game for an as-yet-unnamed system. While speculation is that it will be for the **GBA** (due to its mention alongside *Circle of the Moon*), GI is also Jonesin' for an all-new next-gen adventure.

➤ Without any limbs, **Rayman** can't afford to lose much else, but that's exactly what's happening. **Ubi Soft's PlayStation 2** ***Rayman*** title, ***Rayman M***, will be without an online component when it ships before Christmas. The title is still the first multiplayer game for the platform series.

➤ **Xbox** is planning to invite some of the younger audience into the system's power. Next spring shall see ***Loons***, an **Infogrames**-published action title that allows four-player participation. In the character mix are **Warner Bros**. icons such as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and the Tasmanian Devil. Expect this to be one of many next-gen Looney Tunes titles from Infogrames.

➤ Arnold's ***Terminator*** with a French accent?!! T800, T1000, Sarah Connor, and the rest are being brought to the next-gen consoles courtesy of Infogrames this coming spring. These multiple titles will encompass the first two *Terminator* movies and will adhere to their storylines, characters, and other boundaries.

Name That Game Answer:

Wall Street Kid

SMALL BRAWL AFTER ALL

Calypso is attempting to warp the minds of youth through another destructive contest in **PlayStation's *Twisted Metal: Small Brawl***. **Incog Inc.** is again at the helm of this ***TM*** title, and nothing scares gamers more than a vid involving RC cars! Seriously, though, *Small Brawl* should be a nice primer till the tykes can move up to the big leagues of ***Twisted Metal: Black***. The whole Twisted gang is here, along with 17 cars, 11 levels, and a variety of play modes (including Death Match, Story, Endurance, and Co-op). *Twisted Metal: Small Brawl* comes out in November.

ONLINE DARK CAMELOT SPREADING

Vivendi Universal Publishing has just signed on to publish and distribute **Mythic Entertainment's** massively multiplayer online **PC** title, ***Dark Age of Camelot***, this fall. Take part in epic sieges between legends from Arthurian, Celtic, and Norse mythology. Player vs. player combat is the key, and your character's goal will be to raid and steal the enemies' sacred Relics. Choose from the Albion, Hibernia, or Midgard realms, and take on each kingdom's races and classes. Assemble your crew of fighters, rogues, magicians, clerics, hybrids, etc. and create your own history as you plunder and pillage other realms. *Dark Age of Camelot* is currently undergoing beta testing.

CONTEST

FLEX ON THE PS2 DECKS OF MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 2

Grown up beyond the glow sticks and pacifiers of your local garage, house, or drum n' bass scene? Now you can determine the next electronic music fad yourself from the comfort of your PlayStation 2. Codemasters' MTV Music Generator 2 lets you lay down the tracks every which way, and even gives you choreographed visuals to make the Robitussin go down that much easier. You couldn't ask for more!

Grand Prize (2)
- MTV Music Generator 2 for PlayStation 2
- Funkmaster Flex T-shirt

Second Prize (4)
- MTV Music Generator 2 for PlayStation 2

Third Prize (4)
- Funkmaster Flex T-shirt

There Are Two Ways To Enter:

(1) Send a POSTCARD with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:

GI's MTV Generator 2
10120 W. 76TH ST
EDEN PRAIRIE, MN 55344

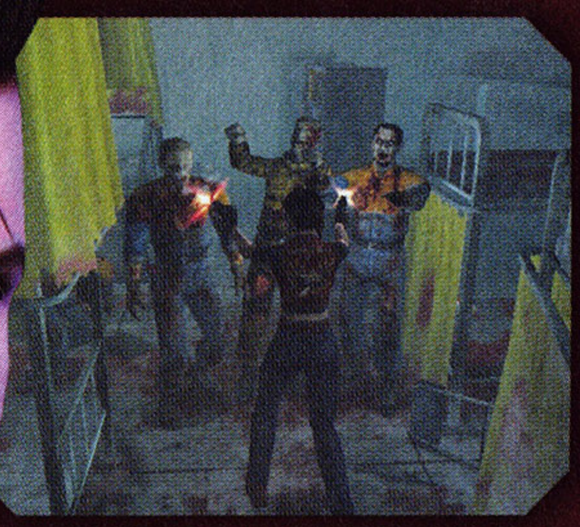
(2) Send an EMAIL with your NAME, ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:
mtv@gameinformer.com

Your name will be placed in a pool of valid entrants for a random drawing to be conducted on October 8, 2001.

GAME INFORMER'S MTV GENERATOR 2 OFFICIAL RULES

1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter, send your name, age, address and phone number on a postcard to: Game Informer's MTV Generator 2, 10120 W. 76TH ST, EDEN PRAIRIE, MN 55344. Or, email your name, age, address, and phone number to: mtv@gameinformer.com. Entries must be received no later than October 8, 2001. One entry per person. Duplicated entries will be disqualified. Game Informer magazine (the "Sponsor") is not responsible for lost, late, mutilated, illegible, incomplete or misdirected entries. 2. PRIZES: Two(2) grand prize winners will receive MTV Music Generator 2 for PlayStation 2 and a Funkmaster Flex T-shirt (approximate retail value $70). Four (4) second prize winners will receive MTV Music Generator 2 for PlayStation 2 (approximate retail value $50) Four (4) third prize winners will receive a Funkmaster Flex T-shirt (approximate retail value $20). Sponsor reserves the right to substitute prize of equal or greater value if prize is unavailable. Prizes are non-transferable and no substitutions allowed. 3. WINNER(S): Winners will be determined by random drawings of all valid entries received by the Sponsor, whose decisions are final. Drawing will be held on or about October 8, 2001. Winners shall be notified by mail and/or telephone. Please allow six to eight weeks for delivery of prizes. 4. ODDS OF WINNING: The odds of winning depend on number of valid entries received. 5. ELIGIBILITY: Promotion open to residents of United States only. Return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Winner may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within 14 days of receipt or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then prize may be awarded to winner's parent or legal guardian. By acceptance of prize, winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Employees of the Sponsor and its parent and affiliated companies and their families are not eligible. Neither the Sponsor nor its affiliates, subsidiaries, division or related companies are responsible for any damages, taxes, or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this sweepstakes or receipt of prize. 6. RESTRICTIONS: Void where prohibited or restricted by law.

FULL-FRONT FEAR.



MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

DISCOVER THE EVIL AT
RECVX.COM

Celebrate the 5th anniversary of the most terrifying game series ever as it mutates onto the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system. Join Claire Redfield, as she searches for her missing brother, Chris, and dig deeper into the evil doings of Umbrella Corporation. Flesh eating zombies and bio-tech monstrosities haunt your every move. As an added bonus, this special edition includes never-before-seen cut scenes and an interactive demo of the highly anticipated, Devil May Cry.

RESIDENT EVIL CODE: Veronica X

CAPCOM PlayStation®2

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TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

With tireless devotion, the programming talent at Neversoft is confidently bridging the gap between the 32- and 128-bit ages of gaming; ensuring that the momentum gained through the first two releases only multiplies with the PlayStation 2 debut. Of course, this is a daunting task, especially considering Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 is the most highly anticipated sequel of the year. Even with an incredibly short development window, and a host of innovations thrown into the mix, Neversoft remains calm...almost too calm. As Neversoft's President, Joel Jewett illustrates, "The first thing we did was to ask ourselves how we were going to do everything we had done over the course of the previous two years (the time it took to do THPS and THPS 2) on a new platform in only one year. Then we decided if that wasn't crazy enough, we should try to make the game playable online. So we put the THPS and Spider-Man teams together and dug in....oh wait, I think we threw in a few parties between October and December, too."

As we've learned, never underestimate Neversoft. Constructing a game of this caliber within a year seems impossible, yet Neversoft has accomplished this feat, and more impressive yet, shattered expectations at the same time. Joel adds, "When we were working on the PlayStation, it was the $%!*. Now, we are working with new hardware, and things are even more fun. We basically do the best game we can with the given hardware."

Before Tony Hawk became the multi-million selling success story it is today, no one had a clue as to how this game would fair. Even at the end of development, retailers didn't support it – thus the shortages early on. In developing the first THPS game, Neversoft took a very simplistic, yet intelligent, approach. "We pretty much made the design up as we went along with the first game," Joel remembers. "The first thing we did was to get the skater (we used a model from another game) into an environment skating around...then we worked on getting mechanics and player control into a state where they were fun. Meanwhile we were bouncing all sorts of ideas around...should you race downhill, should we add adventure elements...that sort of thing. In the end the things we wound up sticking with were pretty simple: doing tricks is fun, people like to compete either with themselves or against each other, and a skateboarding game should be true to the sport of skateboarding."

Even in the embryonic stages of development, wooing Tony Hawk into the mix didn't take much persuading. "Tony signed up after he saw a playable demo that still had the model character in it," Joel says. "About all you could do was ollie and skate off of jumps, but from that, and from talking to some of the people involved with the project, I think he got the feeling that we were into doing a game that would do justice to the sport. That was really important to him." Unlike most celebrities who lend their names to games, Tony has been a vital resource for Neversoft, giving invaluable insight into the sport of skateboarding. Always vocal, Joel comments, "We set Tony up early on with playable versions of the game and he has been helping out ever since. At this point, we listen to his advice on everything from the look and feel of the game to whether he thinks things play well and are fun."

We were curious as to if the Neversoft team actually did field research of their own, and after three years, could hold their own on the ramp. In response, Joel quipped, "[I] guess that depends on who I am holding my own with...I did fall into the fourteen foot halfpipe at E3 a few times just for everyone's entertainment and lived to drink a few beers afterward. Lately, I have been learning to surf. My program for getting THPS 3 done goes like this: Get up at 5, surf, work till after dark, repeat. [My] life kicks ass." Not completely convinced, we prodded further, and asked if any injuries were sustained. A more down-to-earth Joel quipped, "Scott gave me a ride to the ER after I popped my shoulder out of the socket...but our associate producer Jeremy has me beat so far. He has chalked up a torn Achilles tendon and a broken upper arm in the last year. It was worth it, though, because he has footage of Tony doing a frontside Indy air over his head while he does a rock-and-roll on the coping of the big halfpipe at Skatestreet during our Christmas party. That, my friend, is what it is all about."

The transition between the old school Tony Hawk games and the high-end sequels is a smooth one. Both THPS 3 and 2X remain true to the series, yet expand upon everything from the speed of gameplay to the complexity of the learning curve. When THPS 2 hit retail shelves, we honestly felt that the series couldn't grow any more, and outside of obvious graphical improvements, Neversoft had created the perfect skateboarding game. When an alpha build of THPS 3 hit the office, we were floored, and were forced to joyously eat our words. On this note, we asked Joel if he ever thought that Neversoft would run out of ideas. "I don't think this Tony Hawk thing is nearing the end yet. Right now we have millions of people trained up on how the controls worked in THPS 2, and we are going to be giving them a new version which has even more depth. Take the fact that we can always come up with new and entertaining level designs that are going to be fun for new and old players alike, and an entire Internet user base that will increase as Sony and Microsoft and Nintendo begin to push more into that arena; I think we may just be getting started."

As you'll soon see, the enhancements in the PlayStation 2 sequel far exceed those that were inserted into THPS 2. Within one short year, Neversoft has once again created a game that redefines its genre and pushes gameplay to the next level. If you continually waste away your days with the PlayStation Tony Hawk games like we do, you might as well write off any connections you once had with the real world when THPS 3 hits the streets. The experience will take your breath away, and keep you coming back for more. It is, in so many words, the ultimate gaming experience. As you may or may not know, both THPS and THPS 2 have won Game Informer's prestigious Game of the Year award, and thus far, nothing on the horizon comes close to touching the level of brilliance displayed in Neversoft's Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3.

Always curious as to what thoughts pass through the heads of developers, we asked Joel if there was another title he'd eventually like to bring to the video game table. Not expecting a straightforward answer, Joel shocked us by saying, "Big mountain skiing...but don't let any rumors start to fly. We are not getting a ton of sleep right now just trying to keep up with the Hawk franchise." However, if gamers continue to hop onto their digital boards, Neversoft may never make it to the frozen slopes. We can't help but hope that Neversoft supplies us with new virtual thrashing grounds for years to come.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

NOT A PROCESS OF CLONING... BUT REINVENTING

Rather than salvaging the game code from the first two titles, Neversoft started from ground zero. Still, a fine line has been drawn between revolutionizing the series and remaining true to its original roots. With a game like Tony Hawk, a title gamers flock to for its competitive nature, balance is the number one concern. If the controls or physics are just a fraction out of whack, the skills you've spent years perfecting wouldn't apply – a situation similar to mounting a board for the first time after breaking both of your legs. After spending a significant amount of time with THPS 3, we struggled at first, not because of the new coding (Neversoft nailed it), but because the game moves much faster and runs at a constant 60 frames per second.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3's Producer, Scott Peace, breaks it down perfectly. "I'm a bit biased, but I think that running at 60 fps makes a huge difference. You're sampling the control pad at least twice as often as you did in the old game, and that makes tricks fire off quicker and the game feel a bit snappier. To me, the old game feels like a slug in comparison." Once you get over this technical hurdle, it's pure skating Zen, and you'll be pulling off combo strings that make your previous efforts look infantile. One of the reasons for this is the addition of the Revert, a landing trick that allows you to link vert and grind moves with the Manual. By simply pressing R2 at the exact moment your skater lands, he or she will quickly spin, and thus a whole new dimension of comboing is born. One of our concerns, however, is that the implementation of this move further expands upon the learning curve and difficulty. Ever confident, Scott comforts us by saying, "THPS newbies shouldn't have too difficult a time – we've never required you to get all of the Sick scores in Career mode to unlock the levels and move through the game. But we've also added in a Tutorial mode to walk new players through the THPS basics, as well as to prime them on advanced maneuvers like the Revert – it should help bridge the gap in skating skills."

With the gameplay firmly in place, and better than ever before, Neversoft took it upon themselves to broaden the rest of the game from the look to the missions. The skaters within THPS 3 are an impressive ten times more complex than their THPS 2 counterparts. This said, you'll actually see their garments rippling and their articulated fingers wrapping around the board. Every animation is more elaborate, especially the grind animations, which showcase the most realistic re-creation of balance we've ever seen. When a skater starts to lean, you'll clearly see it through a series of lightning quick movements. The environments, which actually play a large role in the objectives, reflect the same dedication to realism. From reflections on water and incredible draw distances, to the smoothest of texturing and crowded streets, you actually feel like you're skating in a real world locale. Furthermore, you'll actually interact with the denizens – who are not all happy about your death defying stunts.

One aspect Neversoft really wanted to expand upon was multiplayer. In a brave move, THPS 3 will actually be one of the first (if not the first) PS2 game to support online functionality. "Multiplayer THPS is a blast, and in previous versions you've always had to have a friend over sitting on your couch in order to play in split-screen mode," Scott enthusiastically comments. "But with online play you get the whole screen to yourself, and once you're hooked up, you'll always have someone to play against. We're going to bring Trick Attack and Graffiti from THPS 2 and add a new game called Slap, and make them fully online playable over the Internet, with up to four players per game. We've also added some new mechanics like head-slapping your opponent to pick up bonus points and trash talking. You can also bring your whacked out Created Skater online to show off your sick sense of fashion humor."

"We want to see people hallucinating about combos and lines as they go about their daily business... "

Touching on this note, Neversoft has fashioned the ultimate Create-A-Skater, allowing players to alter everything right down to whether your skater wears a gray watch on the left or right wrist. The Park Editor has also been fine-tuned, as Scott remarks, "It's less complex in terms of user interface – we're adding a bunch of tweaks to make laying out parks faster and easier. We want more people to use and enjoy the Park Editor this time around."

Put all of this together, and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 is truly the ultimate sequel. Not convinced yet? Well, take a look at our comprehensive breakdown and we're sure you'll soon agree that this is THE PlayStation 2 game to get.

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ■ ACTIVISION **DEVELOPER** NEVERSOFT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

THPS 3 BREAKDOWN

Flatland Maneuvers

With this addition, the name of the game should morph from Tony Hawk's Pro Skater to Rodney Mullen's Insane Land Tricks. When Rodney, who ironically used to live next door to Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin, viewed a demo of the game with Tony performing several of these tricks, he jokingly said, "Tony can't do that!" Not every skater in the game can perform these moves in real life, yet if you allow yourself a slight suspension of disbelief, they can in the game. To perform these flashy maneuvers, you'll need to fill the Special meter, then perform a sequence while on a smooth surface. Much like the Manual, balance is key, and if you are talented enough, they can be used as scoring multipliers.

Flat spaces can now be used to your benefit with moves like the Primo...

...and the daring Handstand Double Flip

G-Turn

Simply kick into a Manual...

...and press R2 to spin

Expanding upon the popular Manual maneuver, Neversoft has inserted the G-Turn. To perform this ballerina-like spin, simply begin with a Manual, then press R2 to switch footing. It doesn't look as spectacular as many of your other moves, but if you have good balance, and continually spin, you can create a hefty G-Turn combo.

Revert

Designed as a landing trick to continue combos, the Revert is just as essential a gameplay tool as the Manual. When performing vert tricks, if you press R2 at the exact moment your character lands, they will perform a Revert spin – a move that can be linked to different tricks. The Revert also comes into play when grinding. Instead of jumping out of a grind, you can quickly zoom down the basin of a pool by hitting R2.

Perform any vert trick...

...then when you skater lands, press R2 to Revert

Grind away...

...then press R2 to smoothly slide down the pipe with the lip Revert

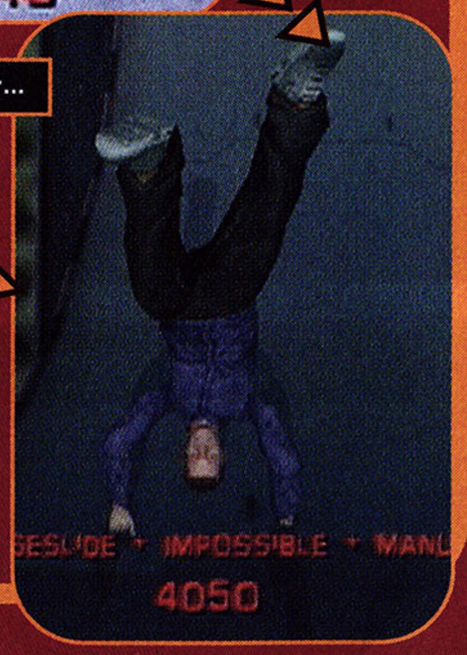
Bails

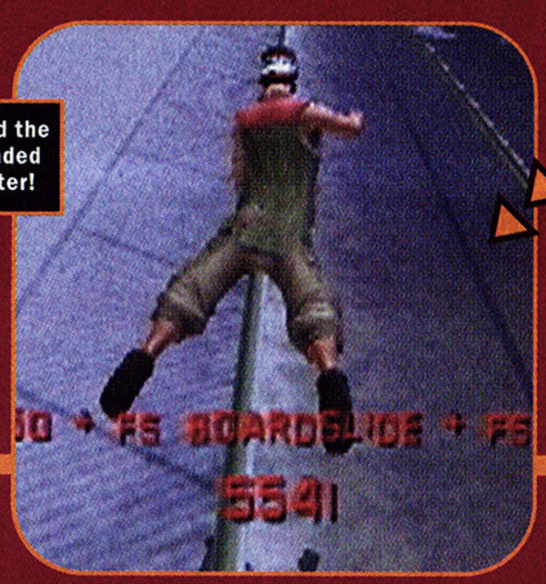
Smash! If you can't seem to keep your skater balanced, or accidentally land sideways, you'll be confronted by a plethora of new bail animations. Unlike the first two THPS games, biffs range from simply losing your board to awkward landings to complete bone-crunching wipeouts. Also noteworthy is the fact that any blood you spill stays on the course until the run ends.

The bails include losing the board...

...landing ungracefully...

...all out disaster...

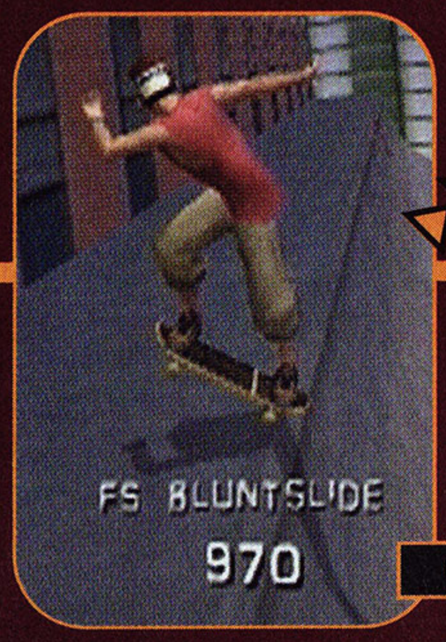




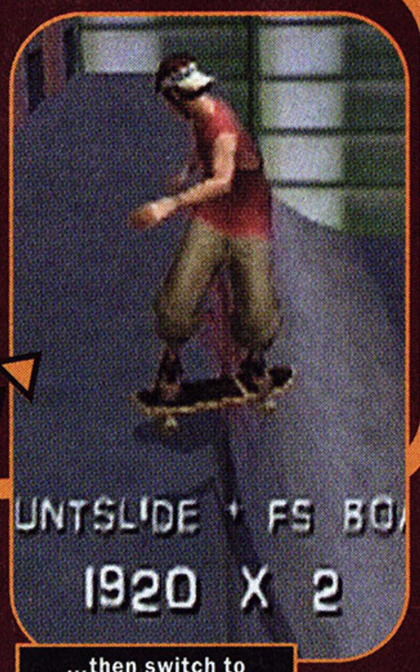
...and the dreaded nutter!

Grinds

Transitions between combined grinds have been smoothed out. Instead of jumping to switch grinds, you can simply slide into the desired grind.



Perform a grind...



...then switch to another

Lip Moves

In the first two THPS titles, the lip moves were little more than novelty. Now, they play just as vital a role as every other trick in the game. Neversoft has done away with the blind balancing and has incorporated a balance gauge for each lip trick. Along with a nice camera technique that zooms up to your skater's back, the tricks can be linked together much like the stalls in Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX.

Each lip move now features a balance meter...

...and can be linked together to create combo strings

Character Interaction

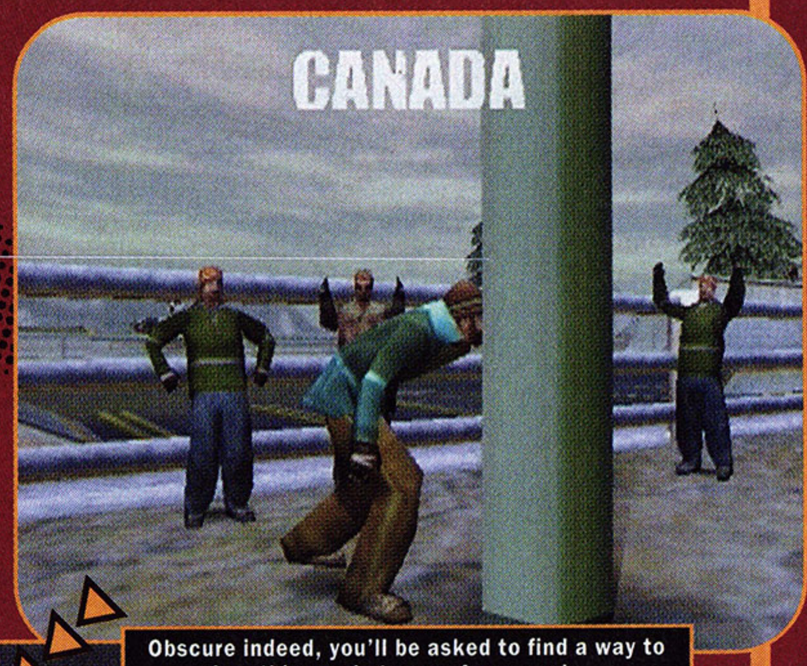
While you may have unintentionally taken a cab ride or two in the previous THPS installments, character interaction has been taken to a whole new level. Along with traffic, which may even stop if you get in their way, ordinary citizens will be walking the streets. They may talk trash, ask for advice, or even take a swing at you. Interestingly, some of these rowdy folks need your help and may ask you to find an item or help someone in trouble.

Some of the civilians are as friendly as can be...

...while others show their displeasure with skaters in the most unfriendly of ways

Level Goals

This aspect hasn't changed too terribly much, yet many of the objectives are all the more exotic. In addition of the High, Pro, and Sick scores, you'll still need to spell S-K-A-T-E, find the Secret Tape, and smash a number of things. On the other hand, you'll be asked to defeat a bully, free a man frozen to a pole, and start an earthquake.

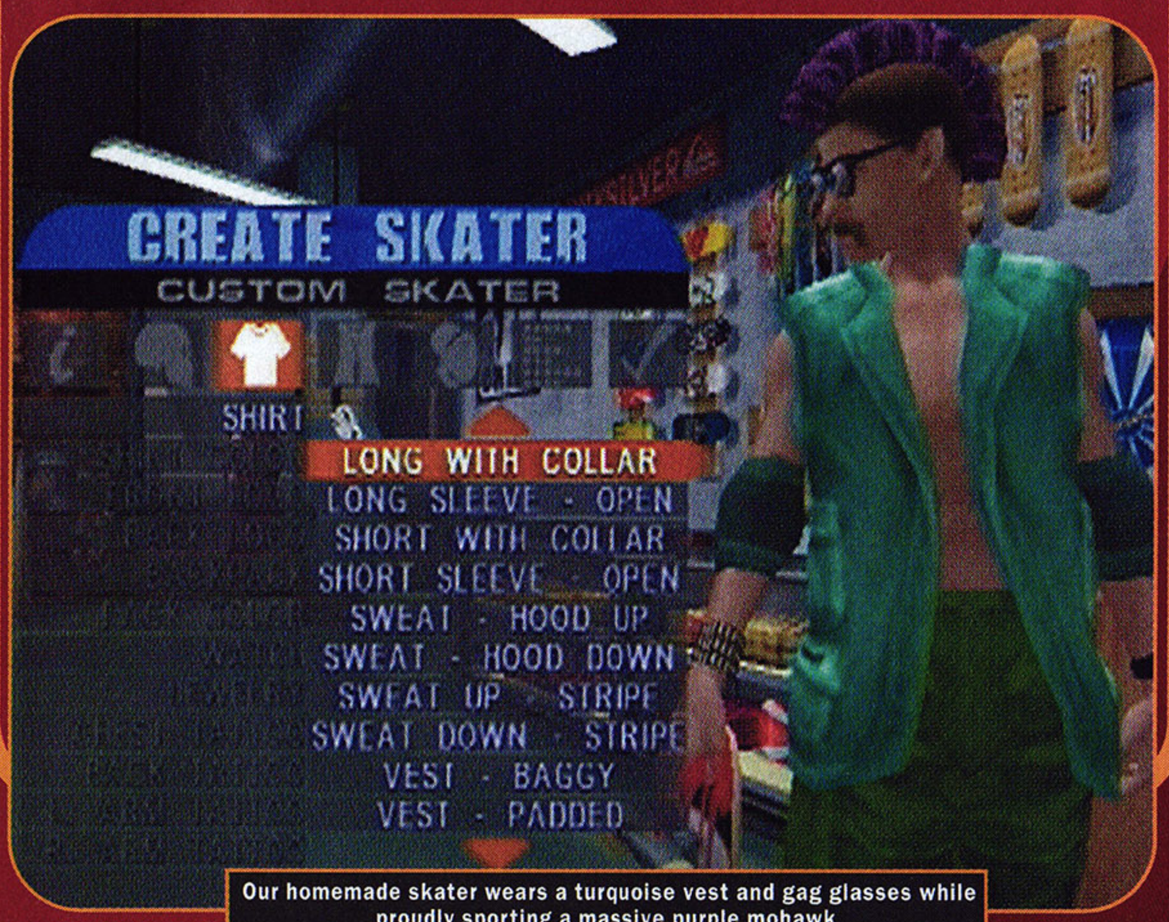


Obscure indeed, you'll be asked to find a way to free this man's tongue from a pole...

...and destroy an LA bridge with an earthquake

Create-A-Skater

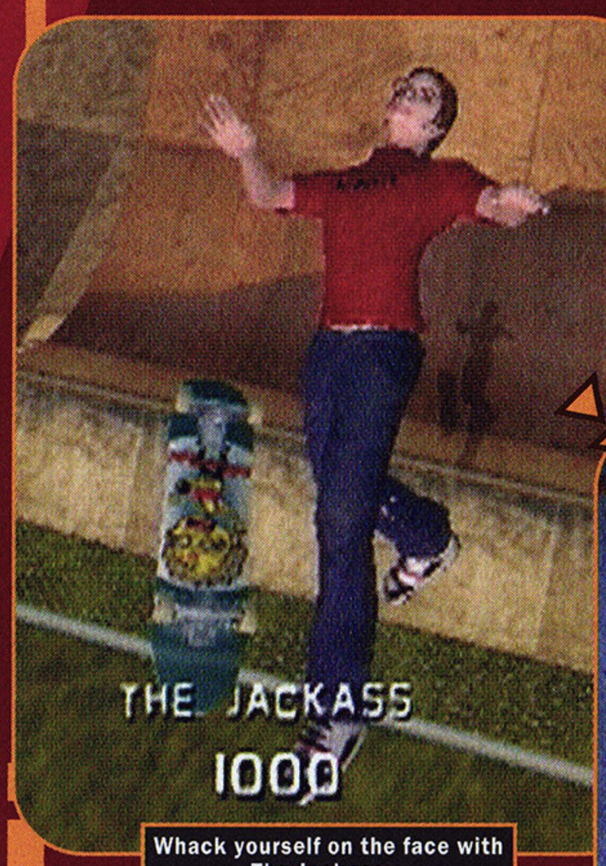
Comparable only to the Create-A-Wrestler in WWF SmackDown 2, the Create-A-Skater in THPS 3 will allow you to artistically render yourself or the most obscure character you can think of. Everything from wristwatches to sock designs can be carefully selected.



Our homemade skater wears a turquoise vest and gag glasses while proudly sporting a massive purple mohawk

Specials

Each skater is decked out with a handful of special moves for both vert and street. With combo strings stretching beyond comprehension, the need to perform these graceful maneuvers has diminished, but they are exciting and more far-fetched than ever before.



Whack yourself on the face with The Jackass...

...or feign death with the FS Coffin

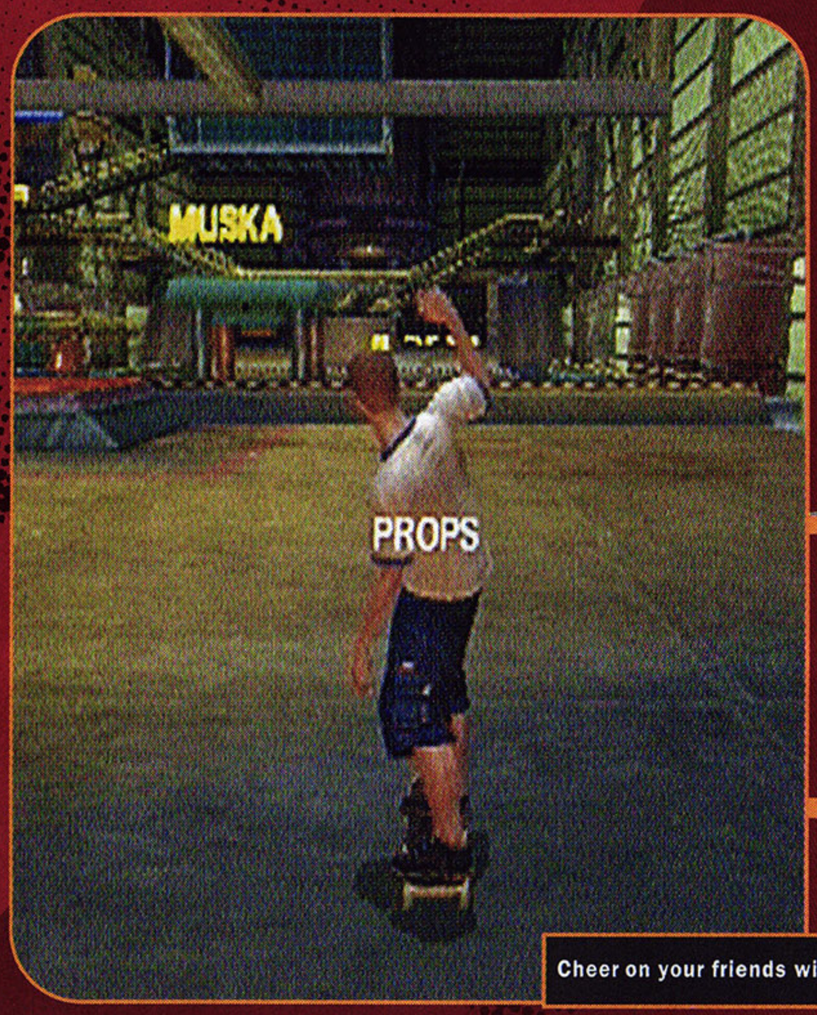
Hidden Combos

Rapidly pressing tricks will form Hidden Combos. For example, if you do two Pop Shove-It's in repetition, you'll create a 360 Shove-It. When you nail one of these tricks, a bell rings out just like it does for a special move.

Quickly tap Heelflip three times to create the Triple Heelflip

Taunts

By pressing L1, then tapping one of the face buttons, your skater will perform one of four different taunt moves.



Cheer on your friends with the new Props taunt

New Decks

This may change in the final version of the game, but for now, it appears as though several of the decks are hidden within the levels.

Board Shop

You won't collect cash this time around, but a Board Shop is installed, allowing you to tweak your board's attributes, color, and accessories.

Roster Changes

Only one change has been made to the list of pro skaters. Bam Margera of MTV's *Jackass* fame has replaced Bob Burnquist. Yes, we loved Bob too, but he wanted to be a part of the larger skating scene and opted to sign with other video game publishers rather than be exclusive in THPS 3. Stupid move, Bob.

Meet THPS 3's rookie sensation, Bam Margera

Manual Camera

By depressing the right analog stick (R3), you'll take control of the camera view. You won't be able to do too much with this, but it does come in handy if you are looking for gaps and rails. It also gives you a good look at the detail that went into each stage.

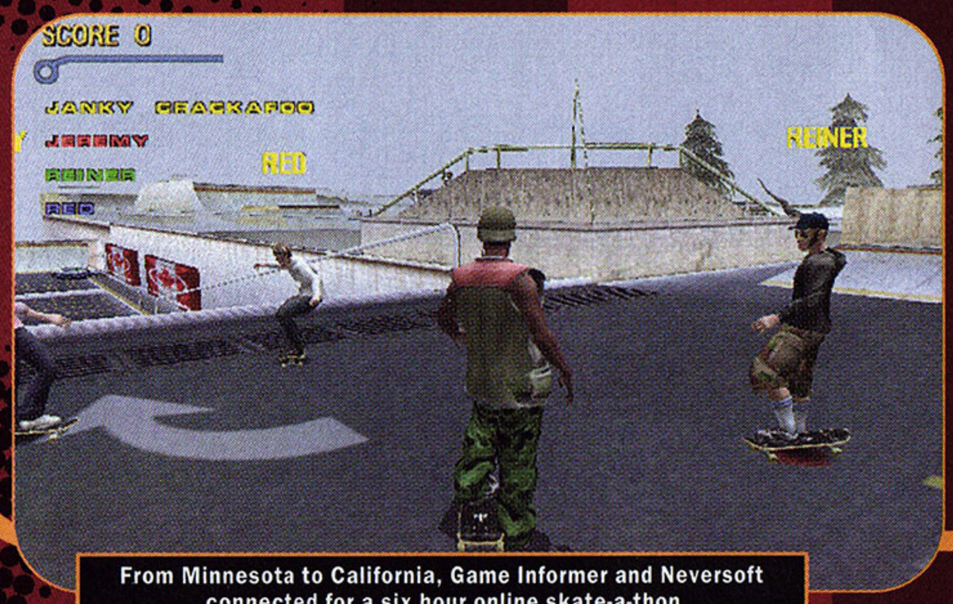
Use the manual camera to bow at Bucky's feet

Spectator Bonus

Another way to rack up the point totals is by impressing the people around you. When a civilian asks to see your moves, dazzle them and they will take a picture of you – which also happens to be a scoring bonus.

Online

If you're sick and tired of split-screen, or can proudly say you have more than one friend, Neversoft has upped the multiplayer aspect with the inclusion of Internet play. Up to four players can compete across the wire in such events as Graffiti, H.O.R.S.E., and Trick Attack. Of course, if you just want to goof around, Free Skate is an option. The online play is as smooth as can be, running at a constant 60 frames per second, and the interaction between the players is perfect. Just like the previous THPS titles, if you run into a skater you'll swing and knock them to their feet. This comes in particularly handy when you see someone stringing together a huge combo. Also, if you have a standard USB keyboard, you can plug it in and taunt the opposition, chat about the football game last night, or simply propose a change of level. If you thought the Dreamcast had wondrous Internet capabilities, wait until you see what Sony and Neversoft have in store for you!



From Minnesota to California, Game Informer and Neversoft connected for a six hour online skate-a-thon

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

COMPLETING THE PS-X TRILOGY

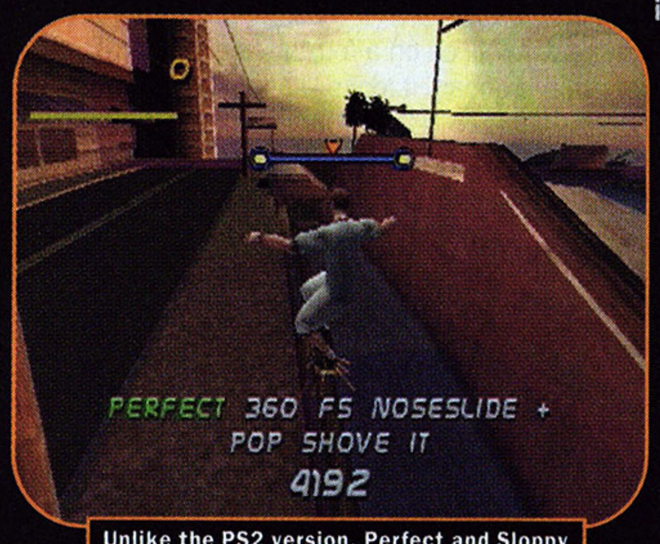
With the PlayStation 2 version crushing its primordial coding, is there still a need for a Tony 3 on PlayStation? On top of this, could the PS-X's hardware limitations truly deliver something remotely close to its big brother? Chris Scholz, Shaba Games' Lead Designer, gave us the skinny. "We wanted to give little Timmy, who doesn't have a PS2 yet, a chance to play Hawk 3, while giving hardcore Hawk fans enough new stuff that they would want to own both. Everyone will recognize the levels from the PS2 version, but once they sit down and play, they'll start finding new lines, really an entirely different way in which they can play the levels."

Combine the Revert with your well-established arsenal of tricks to shoot the score through the roof

So basically, in a sense, you're looking at a spin-off of Tony 3 that stands on its own as an original property. Rockin' good news! If there was anyone competent in pulling this task off, it's Shaba – the creator of Grind Session – the closest thing to Pro Skater since well...Pro Skater. We asked how Shaba got involved with the project, and after playing with our heads and saying that they had a compromising photo of Activision's Vice President, Dave Stohl, Scholz came clean. "Activision felt they could trust us to respect the Hawk good name."

If you don't have a PS2, you'll be pleased to hear that the PS-X version features the Revert – the key to massive trick linkage. The skaters don't have as many maneuvers as they do on the PS2, but the ones that really count are in. Also, Shaba's levels stretch in different ways – more so upwards instead of outwards. "Vertical rules," describes Chris. "This game is going to be all about the wall rides. It opens up a ton of possibilities for skate lines. You won't be able to master the lines in THPS 3 without first mastering the wall rides."

While most of the levels are in fact the same ones from the PS2 version, they will feel different. Take LA for example. In the PS2 game, this stage is full of life. In the PS-X game, its design is more destructive in nature, as you find yourselves skating just after an earthquake levels the town. Even if the stages appear to be carbon copies, new lines have been added, as have different objectives, areas, and secret stuff. Several scripted events, new to the PS-X series, are also in place to turn gamers' heads. If you always wanted to study the environments, Shaba has included a Freelook feature that allows you to sit back and look around before diving headfirst into a stage.



Unlike the PS2 version, Perfect and Sloppy landings are still included

If you play Tony Hawk religiously, there will still be a need to pick up the PS-X version. It may not look as sharp, but the play has been improved over THPS 2, and all of the secret characters will be different. Which makes us wonder, what Marvel characters will Activision license this time around?

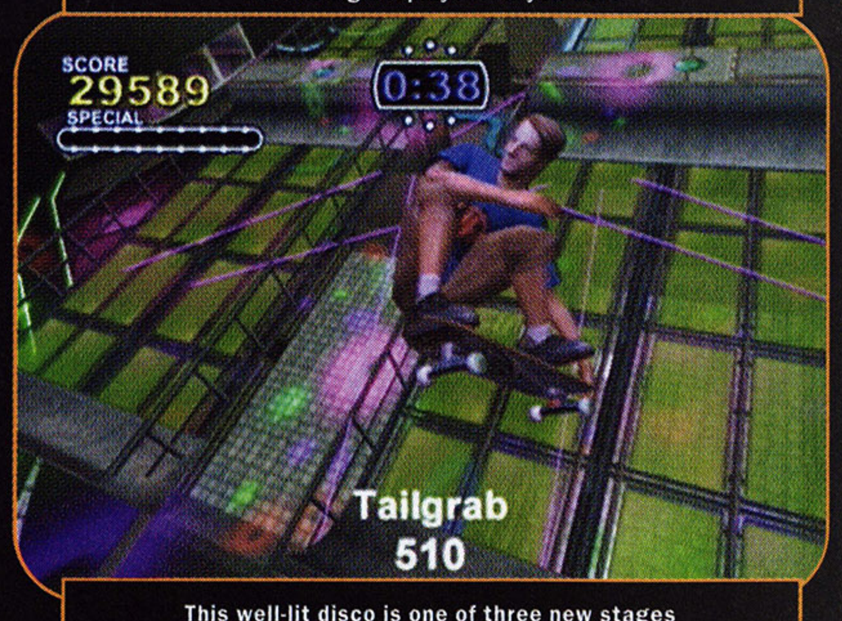
■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
■ **DEVELOPER** SHABA GAMES ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

THRASH MASTERS, INC.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

Just a quick update on the progress of the Xbox port. All of the levels from THPS are now in place, retextured and utilizing the gameplay from THPS 2. Flashing effects like motion-blurring, lens flares, environment mapping, and water and grass fuel a boost in realism. With the power of the Xbox, developer Treyarch managed to push the speed of the play up to 60 frames per second, and in such, the play has been altered slightly. One-upping THPS 3, up to eight players can connect and compete online. Other areas of the game, such as the Park Editor, have also been expanded.

Ever dream of tackling the Warehouse with THPS 2's gameplay? Now you can!



This well-lit disco is one of three new stages

■ **FORMAT** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** TREYARCH
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 8

Paint the parks in the online version of Graffiti

Don't get too cocky, or you'll get knocked on your ass

PLAYSTATION 2

FINAL FANTASY® X

A NEW LEGACY BEGINS

For three generations of video game systems, Square Soft has ruled the role-playing game roost. Final Fantasy, the universally emulated and admired franchise that has practically become synonymous with the RPG genre, first appeared on the NES. Enjoying three parts on that system in Japan, only the first chapter found its way to the States. Fortunately, the American audience began to warm to the series. Enough so that two of the three Final Fantasys for Super Nintendo were released here, and all three PlayStation titles became huge sellers on these shores.

With Final Fantasy X, Square hopes to continue its role-playing dominance on a fourth wave of consoles. From the over 2 million units the game has already sold in Japan, it looks like this goal is well in hand. Game Informer has explored the import copy of FFX as thoroughly as our gaijin gaming skills would allow. On the pages that follow, we share all the info we've gathered in the hours and hours spent with the next part in this classic lineage. Turn the page to see how your quest will continue on PlayStation 2.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT
■ **RELEASE** FIRST QUARTER 2002

A NEW LEGACY BEGINS

THE STORY

Like all previous Final Fantasy games, the fate of the entire world is in your hands. A malign and alien energy known as Sin threatens to destroy Spira, the planet Final Fantasy X takes place on. Unlike other FF games, Sin doesn't take the form of a person, or even a defined thing. Instead it is a shifting, mysterious force of nature, and just trying to understand what exactly Sin is will be a large part of your quest.

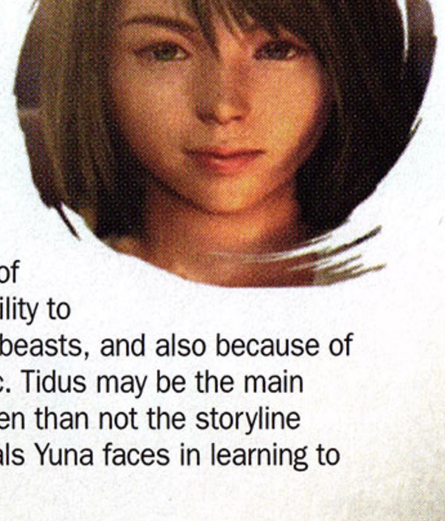
Players have their first run-in with Sin early in the game when Tidus, the main character, arrives in the town of Zanarkand for a game of Blitzball. Sin arrives in the sky over the Blitzball stadium, and promptly begins to suck the entire city into itself. Just as Tidus is about to be absorbed, a stranger (and future party member) named Auron shows up to teach him how to fight, and take him through a portal to safety.

Soon, Tidus meets Yuna and her entourage. Hoping to follow in her father's footsteps, Yuna is about to embark on a journey to learn how to summon powerful beasts known as Aeons. She believes that these creatures may be the key to defeating Sin. The task set before her is fraught with peril, however, and it is the players responsibility to lead the characters to their fate.

Half the party is there to guard Yuna, thus they are always close to her side

THE CHARACTERS

TIDUS



A participant in Spira's extreme underwater sport, Blitzball, Tidus (pronounced tee-dus) has enough trouble in life trying to live up to the legend his father left on the aquatic field, and trying to live down his wardrobe. When he gets thrown against his will into the battle against Sin, the responsibility set upon the young hero's shoulders is almost too much for him to bear. The game opens with a party sitting around a campfire looking defeated, and Tidus beginning to tell his story. From there, the rest of the game is a flashback with Tidus narrating many cutscenes in past tense.

YUNA

Daughter of the great summoner Blaska, Yuna is the requisite troubled and reflective female character of FFX, and the one Tidus has the hots for. Taking it upon herself to learn the summoning of Aeons, Yuna is a key member of the party due to her ability to control these powerful beasts, and also because of her healing white magic. Tidus may be the main character, but more often than not the storyline revolves around the trials Yuna faces in learning to summon the Aeons.

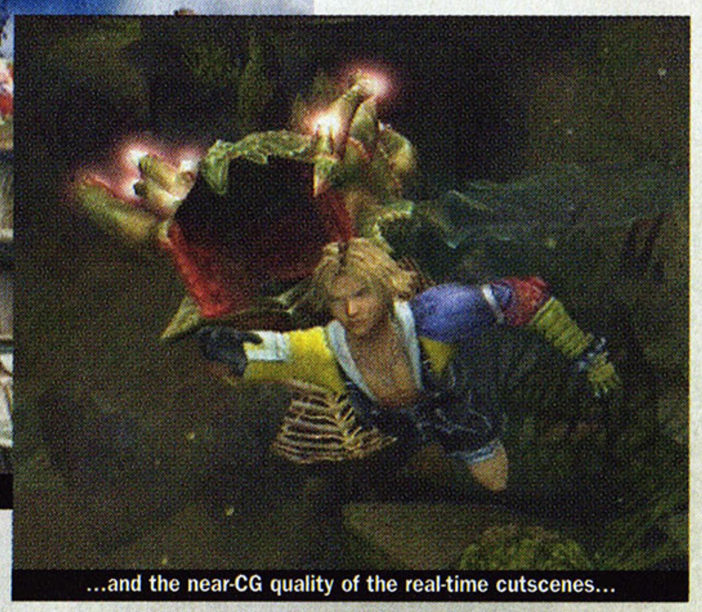
A map of Spira, the world of Final Fantasy X

WAKKA

A veteran Blitzball player and team captain of the Besaid Aurochs, Wakka plans on retiring from the sport to concentrate on his charge of guarding Yuna. Never quite able to let go of his roots, however, Wakka continues to wear his team uniform, and uses a Blitzball as his main weapon. Since Tidus is a fellow sportsmen, the brash Wakka takes a quick liking to him.

Auron shows up in the nick of time to rescue Tidus from the annihilating force that is Sin

Just when you get over the incredible detail of the environments...



...and the near-CG quality of the real-time cutscenes...

GRAPHICS & SOUND

Especially in its PlayStation incarnations, Final Fantasy has always been the series that set the benchmarks in what a console could achieve in graphics and sound. Final Fantasy X upholds this tradition. There is no doubt that heated debates will erupt over this chapter's overall gameplay quality as opposed to previous titles, but the one thing no one will be able to argue is that Square has created something that the eyes and ears will be in awe of.

Character models have been expertly crafted from head to toe. So much so that many of the real-time cutscenes look better than the CG from FFVII. Perhaps due to this very visible technological leap, FFX makes much more use of cutscenes during the game than any other Final Fantasy.

Some may be groaning in agony at hearing this, anticipating frustration at all the reading to be done. Fear not! Although the text is presented at the bottom of the screen, Final Fantasy X has something that's never been in the franchise before – voice-overs. Nearly every movie, cutscene, and character interaction has speaking snippets to go along with it. Only the briefest of chats with unimportant NPCs don't have a person's voice to listen to. This audio overload comes with a price, though. Due to the voice acting needed to bring the game to an English-speaking audience, Final Fantasy X won't be released in North America until early 2002.

Also new to the FF franchise are dynamic camera angles. No longer will you view the environments from just one position. As Tidus moves through cities and wilderness, the camera zooms in and out, pans left and right, and makes dramatic shifts to capture the beauty of the world around you.

With all the extra things going on, one might expect long loading times, but in fact loads are practically non-existent. Should you feel that even a few seconds of load time is too much, however, FFX is one of the first games that gives the option to use the PlayStation 2 hard drive add-on. It takes about 15 minutes of data transfer before you begin playing, and the amount of loading time saved is marginal, but there will be a noticeable difference.

...Final Fantasy X will blow your mind with its trademark movies

Every cutscene is loaded with voice-overs

As an example of FFX's roving camera, here are some shots of Tidus moving about the same room. Notice how the camera shifts and zooms to keep him in the center of the screen

A NEW LEGACY BEGINS

LULU

The character 9 out of 10 goth girls wish they were as cool as, Lulu is a black mage that's overseen the development of Yuna's mystic skills, and is as close to her as a sister. An appointed guardian of Yuna on her quest, Lulu is the most serious member of the party, and the sexiest. Long-time followers of the Final Fantasy franchise will want to keep an eye on the dolls Lulu uses as weapons, since many are creatures from the game's history.

KIMHARI

Huge compared to the rest of the group, Kimhari is actually small for his race, known as the Ronso. Kimhari has protected Yuna since she was a child, but no one knows why. This silent brute has the blue magic ability to learn enemy techniques, and some of the attacks he makes with his polearm are reminiscent of the lancers from past Final Fantasy titles.

AURON

Auron knew both Tidus and Yuna's father, and helped defeat Sin a decade ago. Presumed dead, Auron reappears to teach Tidus combat skills as Sin is absorbing the city they're in. As mysterious as how his collar manages to stay continually suspended, Auron knows more about Sin than he's willing to divulge. Despite his demeanor, his prowess as a swordsman is still much appreciated.

RIKKU

Although you meet her early in the game, Rikku is the last to join your group. Young and brash, she is devoted to the cause nonetheless. Rikku is not only able to steal from enemies, she's also an expert at defeating mechanical foes thanks to the teachings of her father, Cid. Perhaps you've heard of him?

BATTLES

Amongst the changing characters, plots, and places that have been seen in Final Fantasy, there are a few things that fans have come to expect. Where will Cid show up? When will a Chocobo be used as a steed? When will Ifrit be summoned?

As irrefutable proof that Final Fantasy X is indeed different from its predecessors, Square has gotten rid of the one thing most thought they never would – the active time battle system. In its place is the turn-based count time battle system.

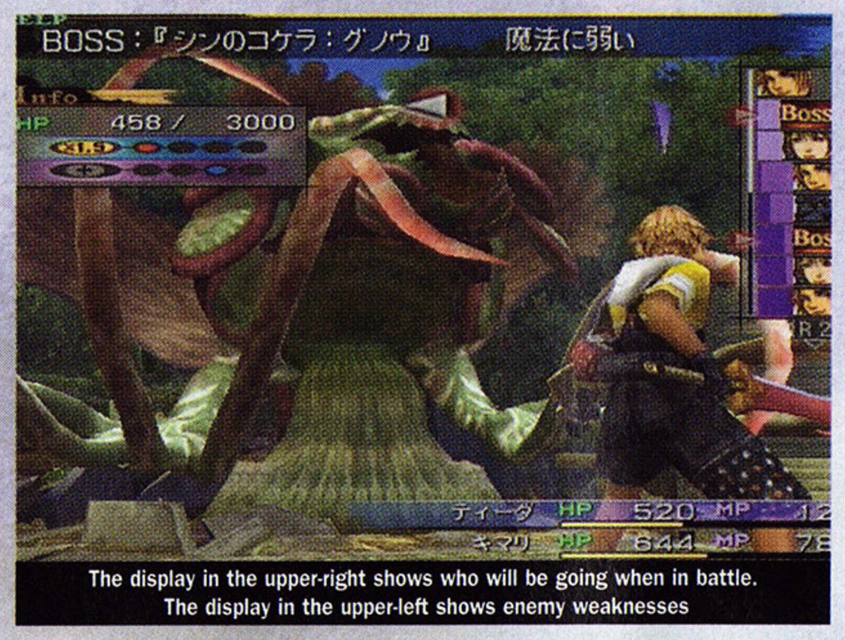
A bar in the upper-right corner of the screen shows exactly what order combatants will take their turn. One can even see how various actions will change the order of battle. Want to see how much a special move will slow you down, or how many extra turns a Haste spell will give you? Go ahead and find out before actually doing it.

Players are also often given information about enemies that used to be only attainable through castings of Scan. If you put the right ability on a piece of equipment, you'll be able to see how many hit points your opponent has and what its weaknesses are in the upper-left corner of the screen. If, through this feature, you find one of your three onscreen characters won't be able to hurt the monster you've stumbled upon, that's not a problem either.

By pressing L1 during a character's turn, you can switch that character with another. Doing so doesn't penalize the player in any way, and in fact, you could trade out party members 100 times and it would still be your turn. Even if the three people you have at the beginning of a fight can do the job, you still may want to do some trade offs. Characters only earn experience if they're in battles, and the amount they receive is prorated according to how long they're in the mix. Remembering this is especially crucial during boss battles.

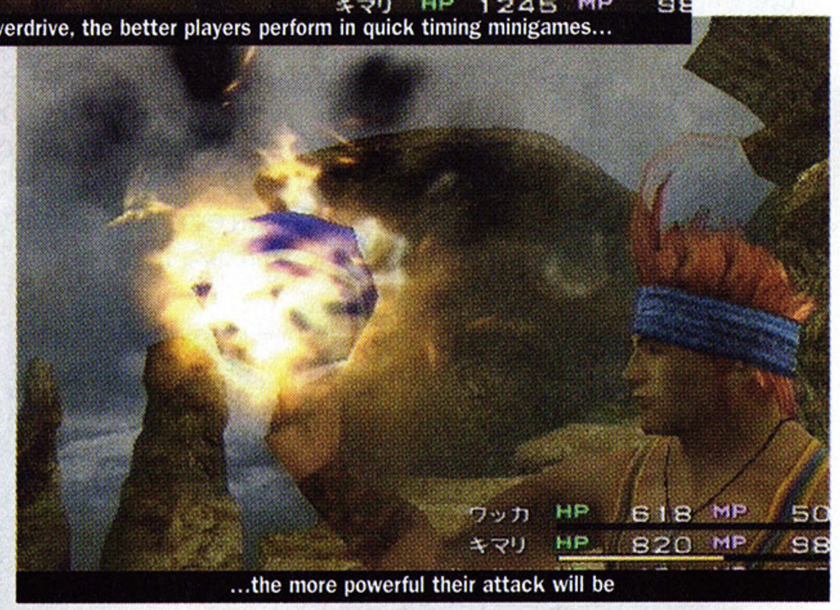
With these major changes, fights in Final Fantasy X are more thought out and strategic than they were before. If Tidus is poisoned, should you swap him out so he won't take any more damage, or should you trade in Yuna with another character so she can heal him? Should you take out the last creature with Lulu, or bring in Wakka to conserve magic points?

Adding a final tidbit of thought to fights is Overdrive. Like Trance from FFIX, a meter below the character stats goes up every time they deliver or receive damage. When the meter is full, they can go into Overdrive, delivering powerful attacks. Unlike Trance, though, Overdrive doesn't happen automatically when the meter is full, and players can save it for when they feel it's necessary to pull out the big guns.



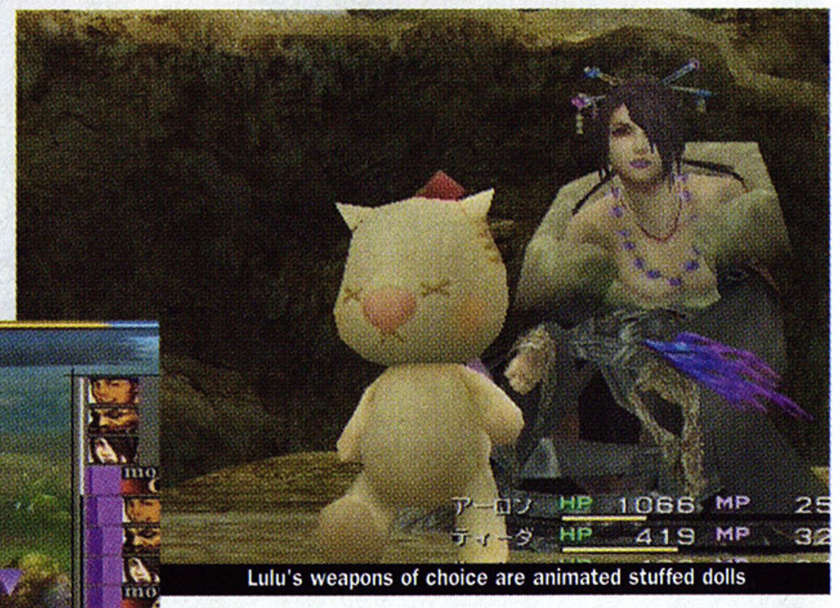
The display in the upper-right shows who will be going when in battle. The display in the upper-left shows enemy weaknesses

In Overdrive, the better players perform in quick timing minigames...



...the more powerful their attack will be

As Blitzball players, Tidus and Wakka can hold their breath for nearly an hour, and handle any enemies below sea level



Lulu's weapons of choice are animated stuffed dolls

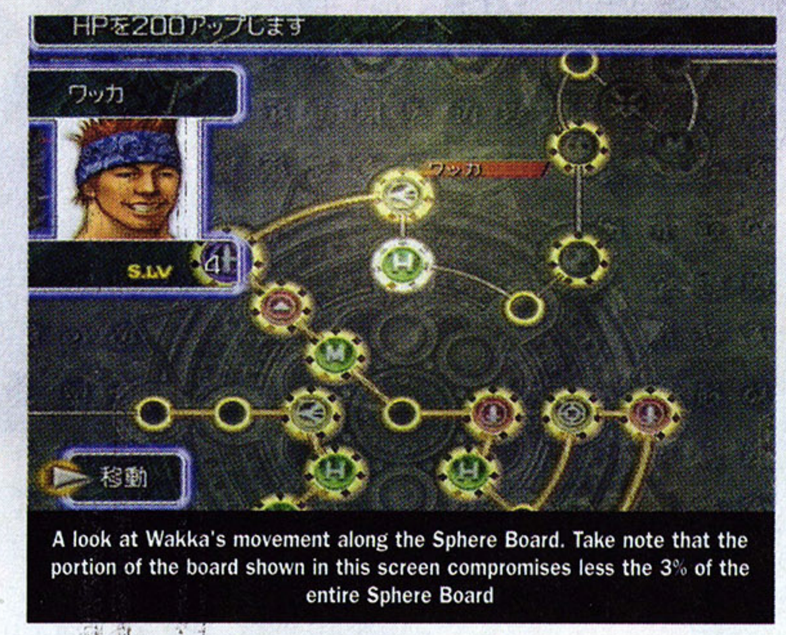
If you feel another character would be better suited for a battle, press L1...

...to bring in someone else

THE SPHERE BOARD

In a bold move that goes against every role-playing game tradition in the book, characters do not go up levels in Final Fantasy X. Instead, the party finds spheres along with Gil and items after battles, and experience earns characters movement along the Sphere Board.

The Sphere Board is a giant web of power-ups and abilities. Each character begins in a different place, but all are on the same board. Characters spend collected movement to progress along the board, then place the found spheres in the holes along their path. New spells, extra attack power, and more hit points are just a few of the things characters can find on the Sphere Board. One must plan ahead, however, for backtracking costs valuable movement points, and many powerful abilities lie at the end of long dead ends.



A look at Wakka's movement along the Sphere Board. Take note that the portion of the board shown in this screen compromises less the 3% of the entire Sphere Board

Since all characters use the same board, it's theoretically possible to have your group go on paths that definitely aren't their forte. Wish Lulu were a white mage rather than a black one? With enough sphere movement, you can do just that. FFX doesn't make wild character customization impossible, just a bit difficult.

BLITZBALL

Card battles are just too wussy for the residents of Spira. They need extreme excitement. They need underwater action. They need Blitzball!

The main minigame in Final Fantasy X, Blitzball is kind of like rugby played in a sphere of anti-gravity water. Players form a team of five, then pass and kick – both ball and opposing players – to score goals. Unlike the main game, Blitzball players actually go up levels, improving their stats as they do.

After Blitzball is first played in FFX, players have the option to partake in a game at every save point. FFX even allows for team management when a match isn't underway. Free agents can be found and signed, players can be dropped, and starting positions adjusted. And you thought Tetra Master was complicated!

The success of passing and catching is based on player stats

Before he can go for the goal, the two blocking players will take a swing

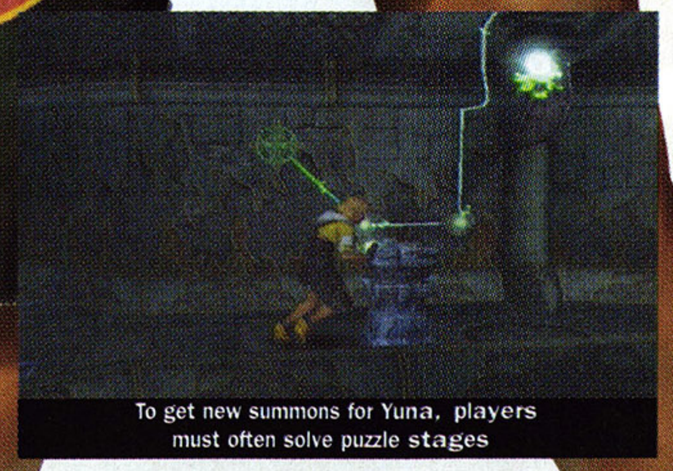
SUMMONS

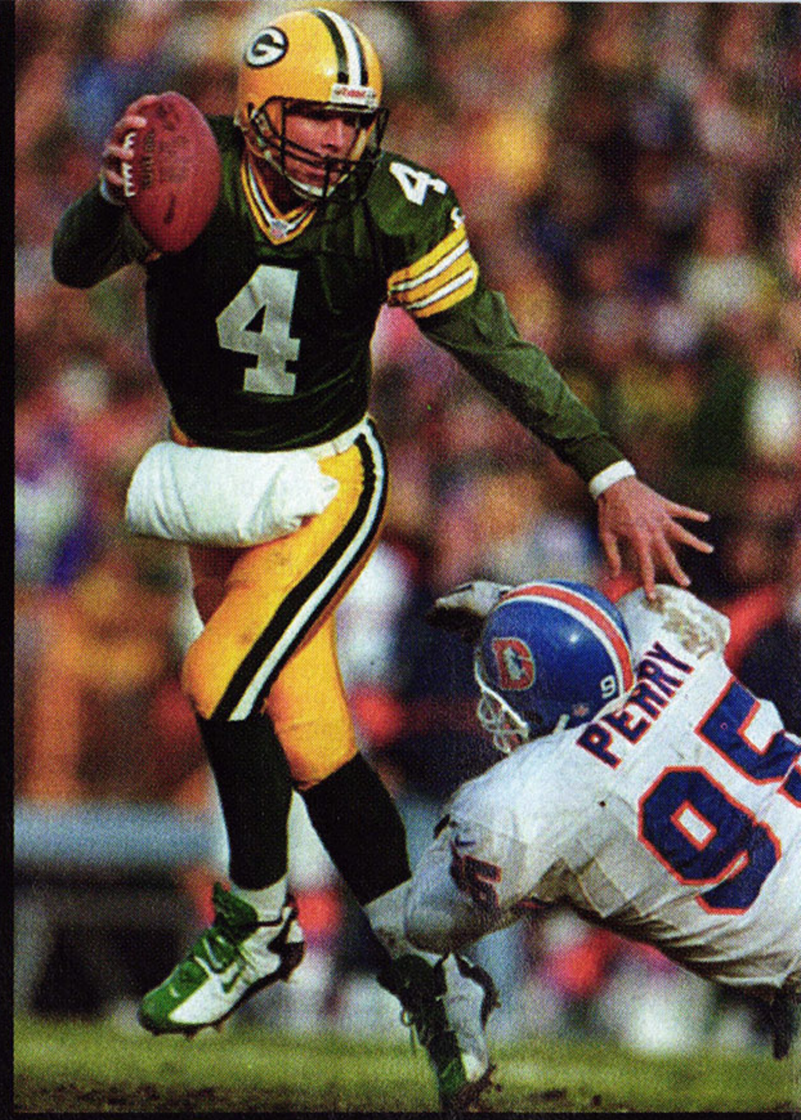
In many ways, summoning in Final Fantasy X works much like it did in FFVIII. When Yuna calls for an Aeon, other party members leave the screen as the summoning animation begins. Even though Yuna is still onscreen, the Aeon is the only creature under player control, taking and dealing all the damage until it is dismissed or defeated.

Like other characters, summoned beasts can go into Overdrive, and their attacks in this state are compromised of the most impressive animations in the game. Performing these massive assaults must be used with caution, though, for if the opponent survives the blast, it will often get three or more counterattacks while the Aeon recovers.

Should an Aeon be defeated in battle, it disappears as the other characters return to the screen, and it may not be summoned again until the party rests at an inn. To prevent such defeat, it is wise to power-up Yuna's beasts. By sacrificing spheres found after fights, players can power-up their Aeons and give them new abilities.

THE SUMMONING OF IFRIT


To get new summons for Yuna, players must often solve puzzle stages



THE FUTURE OF THE FRANCHISES

THE NEXT-GEN FOOTBALL FIELD BECOMES A BATTLEGROUND

Autumn is nearly upon us, and once again the stage is set for the drama of an unpredictable year in the NFL. Last year the Baltimore Ravens captured the Lombardi Trophy with a defense that was one of the best in history. In the previous Super Bowl, it was the Rams' worst to first Cinderella story and quick-strike offense that took everyone by storm. Each year has its share of surprises, and the only certainty is that there can be but one champion at the end of the season.

For this year's next-gen video game consoles, the situation couldn't be more similar. Microsoft is introducing the Xbox with its much-hyped launch title NFL Fever 2002. Both Konami's ESPN PrimeTime 2002 and Acclaim's QB Club 2002 will attempt to make strong showings after a year on injured reserve. These new contenders for the crown aren't going to lay down and die any more than Brett Favre would give up on a close game late in the fourth quarter. NFL 2K2 and Madden NFL 2002's one weakness may be that things went well for them last year. Success often breeds complacency, and overconfidence is a sure way to get upset by a hungry underdog.

With so many football games vying for the title, these next few years may become the greatest era in the sport's history. Whether it's a divisional contest between Madden and QB Club on the GameCube or a cross-console battle involving NFL 2K2 and NFL Fever, football will definitely be in the air. The stakes are high in this fierce competition, as consoles are often judged by the quality of their football games.

Making sense of the action on the field is the sort of Xs and Os talk that you can only rely on Game Informer to deliver. Consider this your scouting report for the upcoming video football season, and a playbook on how to pick your way through the ins and outs of each title – complete with exclusive screen shots. Come and break down film on Xbox's inaugural effort, NFL Fever 2002. See how an improved Madden is trying to build a polygonal pigskin dynasty, and what off-season moves Sega has made to ensure this doesn't happen. Plus, GI sits down and talks video game shop with Minnesota Vikings' star quarterback and Madden NFL 2002 cover star Daunte Culpepper, and gives you our expert prediction on who'll come out on top of the digital pile this season.

Note: 989's franchise NFL GameDay could not be included due to the title's developmental timeline.

MADDEN NFL 2002

SCOUTING REPORT

Madden NFL 2001 wasn't just the first football game released for the PS2 – it was the best Madden game ever. As such, it became one of the very few must-own titles for the system – a distinction that still remains. EA Tiburon's General Manager and Vice President John Schappert bases Madden 2001's championship on this observation: "We basically had a second-generation quality product ship in year one."

Coach Schappert knows that the 2002 season is a whole new ballgame. Despite Madden 2001's massive success, Shappert insists that his development team has its work cut out for it this offseason. "We know we didn't get to the Two-Minute Drill last year on the PS2. We know we weren't happy with how our faces looked and some other small details."

This time around, every major NFL star's face will be accurately mapped, and there will be 36 generic face types used for the league's lesser-known players. Also, features that were missing in Madden 2001, like team and player create modes, are back, along with a few new surprises on both sides of the ball.

OFFENSE

On offense, look for your receivers' yards-after-the-catch numbers to increase this season. New pass catching animations will produce more over-the-shoulder grabs, which should make for fewer stop n' go receptions. However, downfield passing will be a more difficult task. Madden 2002's accurate physics will hamper your quarterback's ability to throw on the run, and smarter defensive linemen will create havoc by jarring balls from careless QBs.

DEFENSE

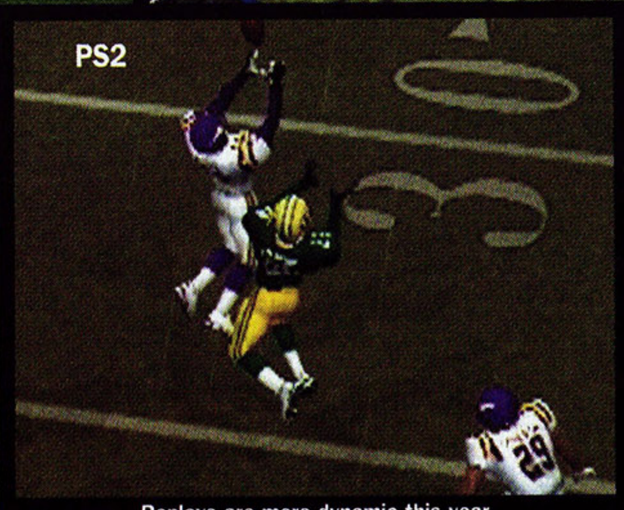
Last year's ball stripping moves bolstered the defense, and this year, new ball swatting abilities allow the secondary to knock down errant passes. Producer Jeremy Strauser told us, "We re-wrote a lot of pass coverage AI and implemented a lot of cool new animations, so we wanted to allow the user to have the risk vs. reward of trying for the interception and the ability to trigger the animations."

INTANGIBLES

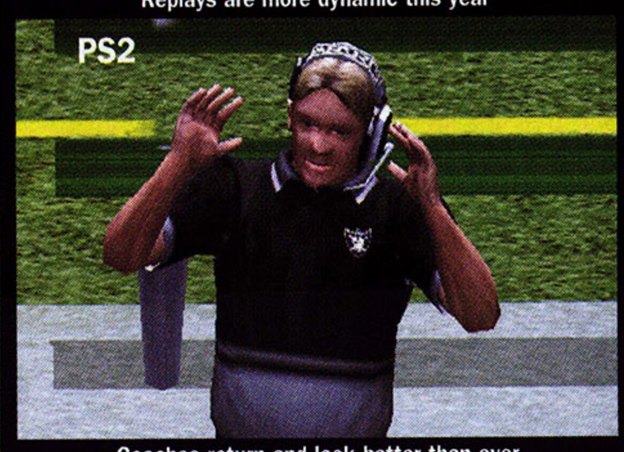
Cheerleaders; Interactive Coaches' Challenges; Draft and Play the Houston Texans; Save Games In-Progress

THE OUTLOOK

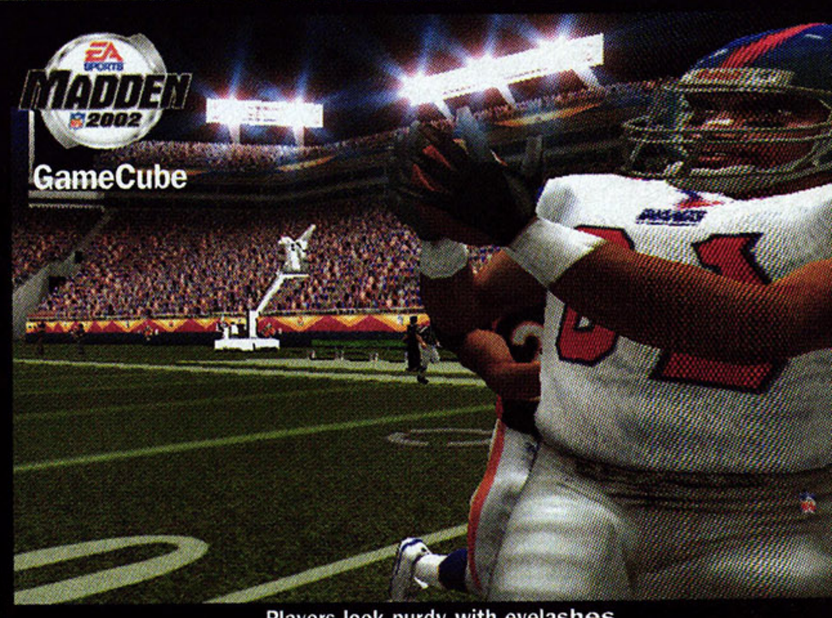
Faced with hungry competition, and a public that has grown accustom to next-gen graphics, EA needs to continue to build on its already strong base. Every other football game out there will be gunning for Madden, so shoring up problem areas and making key additions are important in proving that last year's success against a soft schedule was no fluke.



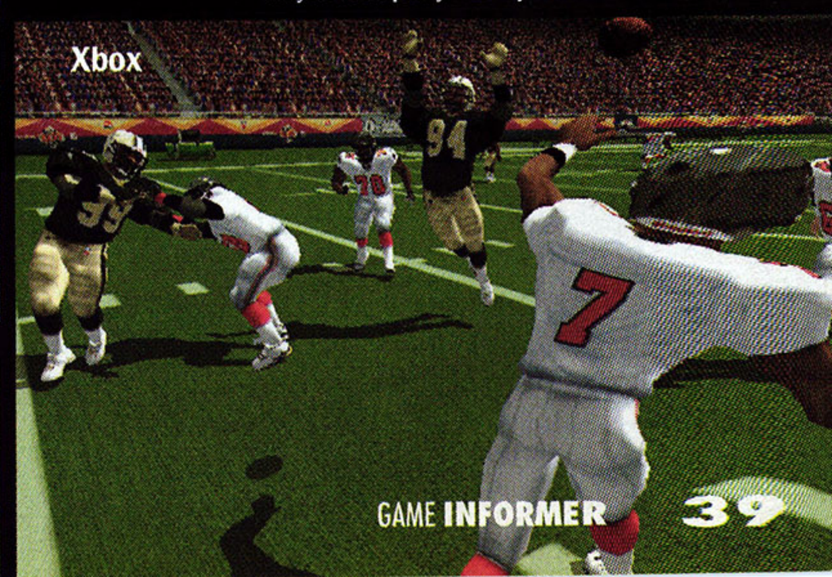
Replays are more dynamic this year



Coaches return and look better than ever



Players look purdy with eyelashes



■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX/PC ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
■ **DEVELOPER** TIBURON ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 21 (PS2/PC), NOVEMBER (XBOX, GC)

All pictures shown are from the Dreamcast version

NFL 2K2

SCOUTING REPORT

NFL 2K1 had revolutionary online play, but it also featured a depth of gameplay that went well beyond just chucking the ball up and down the field. In fact, Visual Concepts opted to re-establish its running game in 2K1, a strategy that continues this year. The passing game hasn't been overlooked, however, as tighter passing controls will improve the strength of your aerial attack. Whatever your game plan, VC's President Greg Thomas has been pacing the sideline to make sure everything's just right. "We have spent a lot of time refining key elements of our game. Our AI has gone through a major revision and many new features have been added. We have added completely new systems to control our camera, overlays, and commentary."

Perhaps an even bigger boost to NFL 2K2's chances will be the series' debut on the PlayStation 2 and Xbox, exposing non-Dreamcast owners to its thrills for the first time. The spotlight should now shine brightly on this underappreciated game, giving Visual Concepts a great opportunity to take EA out of the top spot.

Speed kills and also scores quick touchdowns

OFFENSE

Coming into its third season, 2K2 is taking on more of the offense with a larger selection of plays. Not only are there a lot of additions, but team playbooks can now be arranged in set packages – just like the pros do. The running game, which some felt was too easy last year, has been tightened up a bit. Hopefully, this should add some much-needed balance between the defensive and offensive sides of the ball.

DEFENSE

The new QB Logic feature could give defenses fits this year. Like their real-life counterparts, 2K2's Rich Gannon and Donavan McNabb will have a greater tendency to burn you with their passing or scrambling. Similarly, give the AI version of Kurt Warner too much time and he'll pick your secondary apart.

INTANGIBLES

Still the Only Game With Online Play; Online Win/Loss Records; Situation-Specific Commentary; Play as the Houston Texans

THE OUTLOOK

Being the only game that is network-ready out of the box is a huge advantage for NFL 2K2, but don't underestimate NFL 2K2 by thinking online play is the only star on this team. It's been augmented by an off-season overhaul that will only add depth and reliability to an already solid franchise. If Visual Concepts can finally perfect its gameplay chemistry, we wouldn't be surprised to see 2K2 go all the way.

2K2's QB Logic feature makes for smarter, more competitive signal callers

Despite raising his hand and politely asking for the ball, this Bronco did not get an interception

■ **PLATFORM** DREAMCAST/PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
■ **DEVELOPER** VISUAL CONCEPTS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 9 (DREAMCAST), NOVEMBER (PS2, XBOX)

NFL FEVER 2002

SCOUTING REPORT

Can an expansion team make a difference? Both the Jacksonville Jaguars and Carolina Panthers came within one game of the Super Bowl in the 1996 season, only the second year of play for both teams. Could the fact that this is the second incarnation of NFL Fever (a version was released for PC in 1999) be an omen that it could go deep into the gaming playoffs?

Initial scouting reports reveal that this game is as sharp as they come. Beautifully bump-mapped textures are evident in jerseys, ripped-up fields, and gleaming stadiums. Under the pads, Fever is no less dedicated. There is a huge degree of customization available, allowing users to create their own plays, teams, and players from scratch. Hardcore fanatics can play through 25 consecutive franchise seasons, and induct players into the NFL Hall of Fame. Microsoft's Kathy Flood and David Ortiz promise to deliver the perfect combination of gameplay and simulation, saying, "Our game will provide a more intuitive, less frustrating experience than is available in other games, while still providing great depth."

OFFENSE

Team speed is always a concern, but insiders tell GI that the Xbox's ample processing power should keep the framerate high and the action fast. Fever's quarterbacks can make adjustments at the line and assign one of eight hot reads on the spot. The game's Dynamic Player Performance Model changes player's stats from week-to-week based on experience and on-field performance. Throw your rookie QB in the frying pan in hopes that he catches fire and leads you into the playoffs.

DEFENSE

Any coach will tell you it's important to break down film. The Xbox's hard drive enables you save any replay for future viewing or analysis. That's not all it can do. Says Ortiz, "The horsepower and hard drive on Xbox are what make it possible for us to include more detailed, less-repetitive, and better performing graphics and audio."

INTANGIBLES

Hall of Fame Trophy Case; Play Vs. Super Bowl Teams in All-Star Challenge Mode; Training Camp Drills

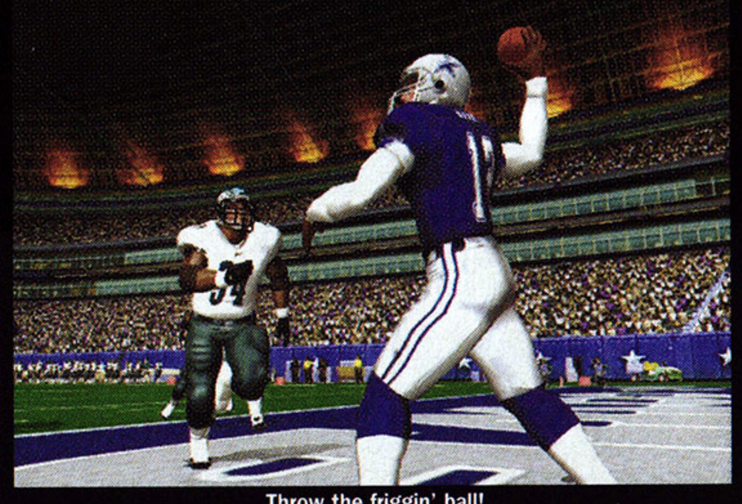
THE OUTLOOK

Microsoft may be the new franchise in town, but that just means football fans will be that much more excited to get it out onto the field. The biggest challenge for NFL Fever 2002 will be transcending the pre-season hype and delivering the top-quality gameplay that football fans expect. Can this title make its way past the Wild Card round? Only time will tell.

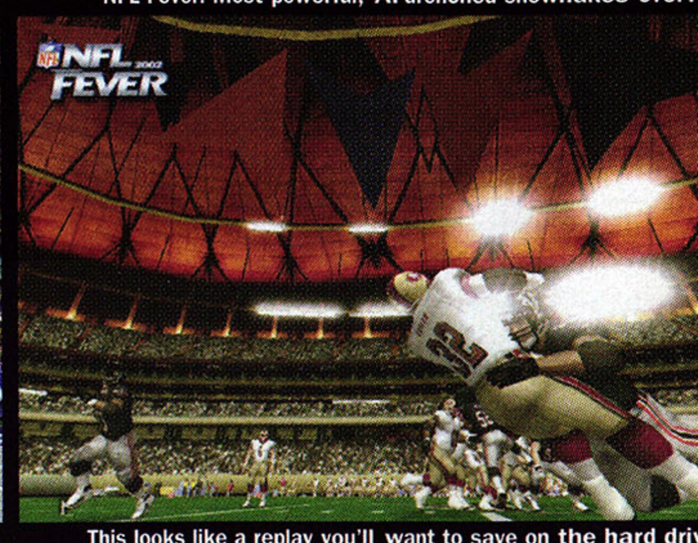
■ **PLATFORM** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** MICROSOFT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 8

Textures here, there, and everywhere

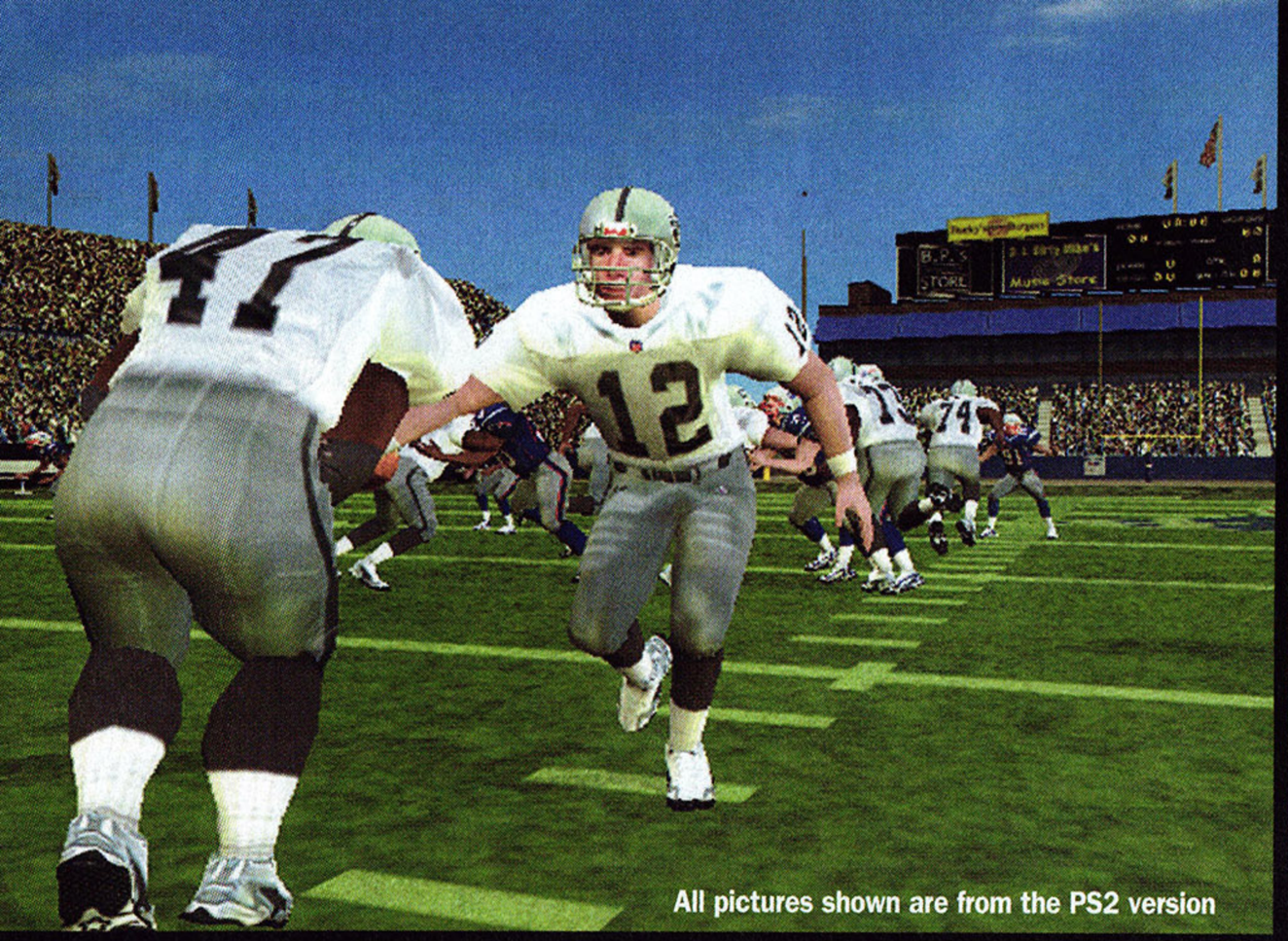
NFL Fever: Most powerful, AI-drenched snowflakes ever?



Throw the friggin' ball!



This looks like a replay you'll want to save on the hard dri



All pictures shown are from the PS2 version

NFL QB CLUB 2002

SCOUTING REPORT

Sometimes even gifted players just don't fit into a squad's system. The Quarterback Club franchise and its cover boy Brett Favre have faltered in recent years, but are now looking to the PlayStation 2 for a fresh start. The game has been reunited with Acclaim's Austin studio (QB Club 2001 was developed by High Voltage Software), which should hopefully recapture some of the series' former magic. Dan Baker, lead designer at Acclaim Austin, knows the secret to coaching Brett to victory – fundamentals. "We decided to get back to the basics to create a fun, intelligent, and intuitive football game this year."

Past QB Clubs have had trouble getting all their elements working together smoothly, especially pass catching. Again, Coach Baker knows how to get better results. "We basically started writing this year's version of the AI from scratch. We have all new run blocking code, pass blocking code, quarterback logic, and the defense was also written from the ground up."

OFFENSE

Joining #4 will be other football legends like John Elway, Steve Young, Dan Marino, and Jim Kelly, among other unlockable veterans. Also returning is the NFL Quarterback Challenge mode, allowing you to compete and practice in four events: Speed and Mobility, Accuracy, Long-Distance Throwing, and Read and Recognition.

DEFENSE

Don't know a Cover 2 from a 2-Gap scheme? A whole new defensive play calling method has been implemented to guarantee both simplicity and results. Instead of hitting or missing with defensive plays that you don't understand, QB Club lets you separately choose what you want your D-line, linebackers, and D-backs to do. Call in stunts and blitzes with coverage packages and turn yourself into a defensive guru.

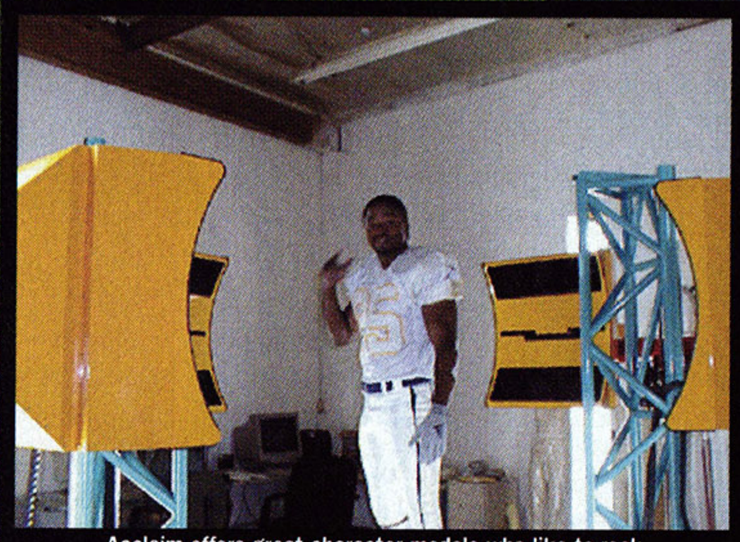
INTANGIBLES

Facial Textures for 350+ Starting Players; NFL Quarterback Challenge Mode; Removable Helmets

THE OUTLOOK

Despite the lack of a Franchise mode, which is out for the season, QB Club 2002 should give this aging series a chance to reclaim its former glory. A new gameplay system complete with better receivers and fluid animations should provide a foundation that will allow Acclaim to contend for the playoffs while continuing to build for the future.

■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN
■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 28 (PS2), 4TH QUARTER (GC)

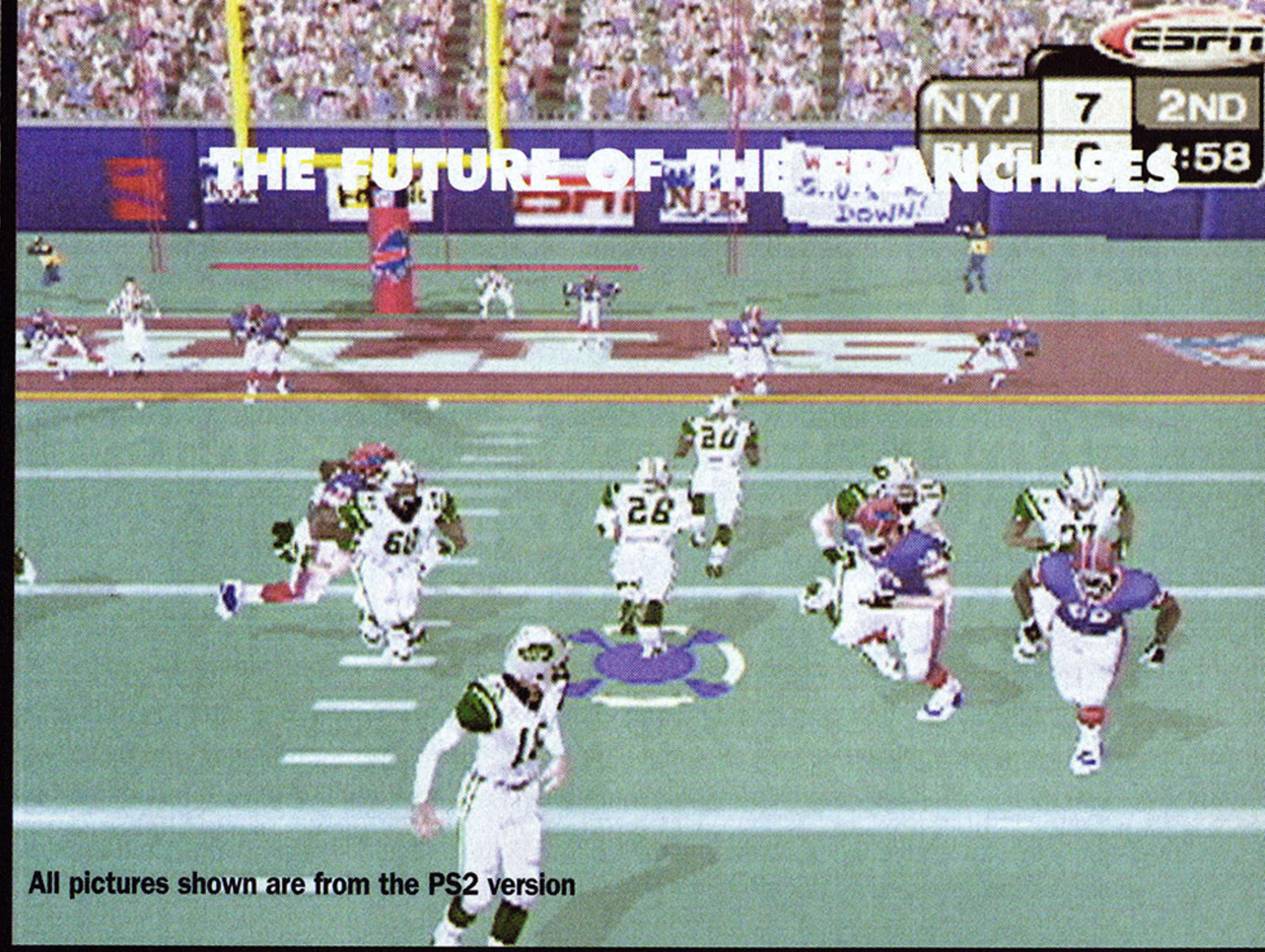


Acclaim offers great character models who like to rock

Hopefully QBs release the ball quicker in this QB Club

Quarterback Challenge mode makes a triumphant return

Pile on!



All pictures shown are from the PS2 version

ESPN NFL PRIMETIME 2002

SCOUTING REPORT

Konami's pigskin title has literally gone through a rebuilding year after the cancellation of PrimeTime 2001, which was scheduled to release as a launch title for the PlayStation 2. Instead of taking the field with a half-hearted team, the company decided to wait, bulk up its graphics and play, and better prepare itself for this season.

NFL teams often build around a core member, and PrimeTime is no different. The ESPN logo on the front is more than just a license, its a whole philosophy of how to run this organization. Featuring the commentary of Chris Berman and Tom Jackson, Konami has attempted to tap into a network that has come to epitomize football. GI had a chance to scrimmage with PrimeTime, and found that it still needed some work in training camp. Producer Jason Ray acknowledges this, saying, "We're still a rookie, since this is NFL PrimeTime's first offering, but don't be fooled by that label."

OFFENSE

Mastering an NFL offense has hindered the development of many QBs, but ESPN's playbooks are tight and efficient. They can be designed around both personnel and situation. Separate sets of plays exist for your specific offensive weapons, and the game will also bring up a different selection of plays based on how many yards you need. Third and five demands a pass to Cris Carter. Now you have all the ways to make that happen in front you. Not only that, but PrimeTime's sleek gameplay is capable of putting some nice touch on the ball to get it there, no matter the distance.

DEFENSE

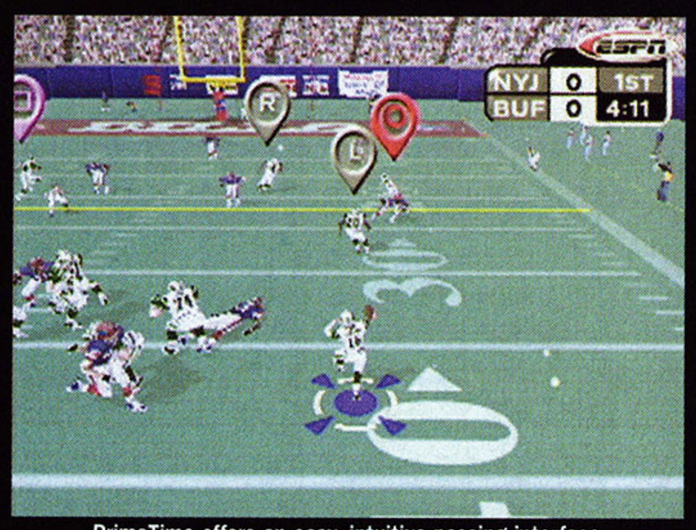
Berman and Jackson have seen their share of hits, and PrimeTime should bring the bone-crushing action to life in brilliant fashion. There are some nice tackle animations that include tripped up runners and out-of-bounds tackles that take out players standing on the sidelines. Blitzing is also dangerous for those foolish enough to think that a play-action pass can fool the Raven's Ray Lewis.

INTANGIBLES

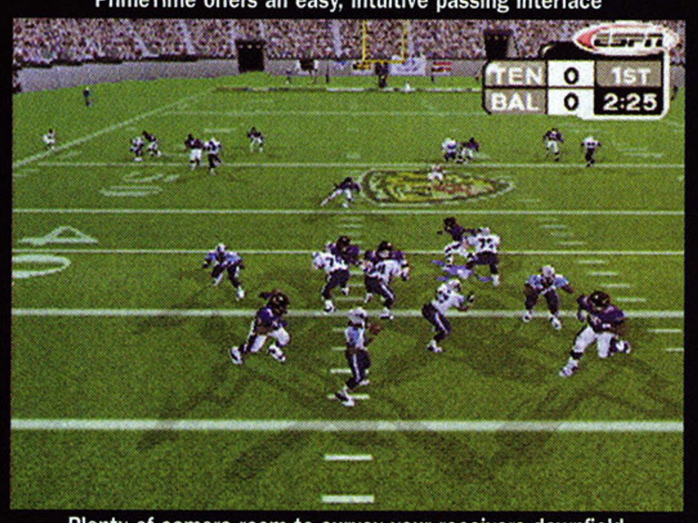
ESPN Commentary, Stats & Presentation; Cheerleaders; Situational Play Mode

THE OUTLOOK

Is ESPN a year behind, or has it been able to skip the mistakes of its rookie year? The game's engaging TV-style presentation lives up to its prime time namesake, but more work is in order before a serious playoff run can begin.



PrimeTime offers an easy, intuitive passing interface



Plenty of camera room to survey your receivers downfield

Seymour Butts!

■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
■ **DEVELOPER** FARSIDE ■ **RELEASE** LATE OCTOBER (PS2), NOVEMBER (XBOX, PC)

THE NEXT-GEN QUARTERBACK

GI INTERVIEWS VIKINGS QUARTERBACK DAUNTE CULPEPPER

Minnesota Vikings quarterback Daunte Culpepper isn't just another player appearing on a video game cover this year, he's a player of the future. At 6'4", 266 lbs, running a 4.6 40-yard dash and looking more like a linebacker, Culpepper is a prototype passer who can kill teams through the air or on the ground. In only his second year with the Vikings (after being selected as the 11th overall pick in the first round of 1999's draft) and his first year as a starting QB in the 2000 season, Culpepper earned a ticket to the Pro Bowl. This is a feat that is unheard of for a first year starter, but one fans expect will be repeated. Game Informer had an opportunity to talk to Daunte about video games and his work with Tiburon for Madden NFL 2002.

Game Informer: What first got you into playing video games?

Danute Culpepper: I've always played games since I was a kid. I grew up playing NES, SNES, and stuff like that, so that's how it all started, when I was a kid.

GI: Do you have any favorite games?

DC: I've always been into sports games, but early I did play things like Contra and stuff on Nintendo. But other than that, when the PlayStation came out, all I got involved with were sports games. I mainly play football and basketball, with a little bit of baseball, but mostly football.

GI: Any particular football and basketball games?

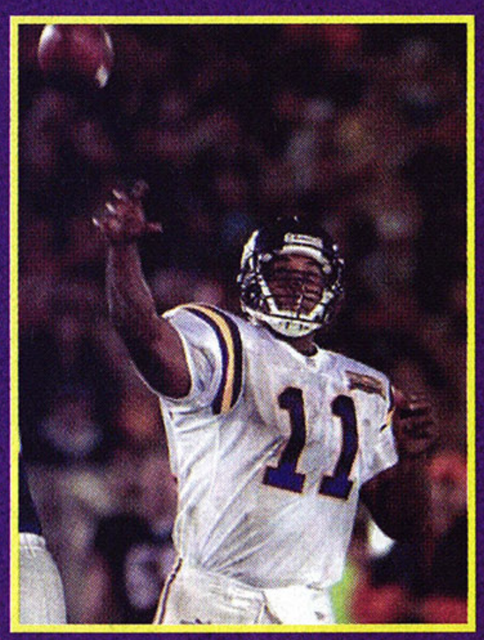
DC: My favorite football game is Madden. For basketball it's NBA Live. I haven't played a lot of basketball, lately it's been a lot of football.

GI: How did the deal with EA Sports to appear on the cover of Madden come about?

DC: They approached me. I had talked with some of the people out there, and then they got my agent involved to get the deal done. I'm glad they thought of me in that high of a regard, and I want to just continue to do what I'm doing. It's a great honor to be on the cover of that game 'cause so many people get to see it, it's great exposure.

GI: Did you ever think you'd be on the cover of a video game?

DC: No, I didn't! I kind of thought about it, but I never did think I would. It's great. I'm just having a lot of fun.



GI: What influence do you think it'll have on kids?

DC: When I was a kid, I played Madden and they had different guys on the cover. I look back on that, and I looked up to them. It has a huge effect on them 'cause kids are gonna play that game all across America and all over the world. To see me on it, it makes me feel very good. Hopefully I can set an example to them and show them that it can be done. Through hard work and dedication you can achieve anything.

GI: How was working with developers Tiburon in Florida?

DC: Man, I didn't know it, but they get very technical about that game, almost getting it down to a science. They got like a hundred guys down there whose job is to just play the game. That's not a bad job to have, but I think that's great that they put the effort to it, 'cause it shows in the game – it's so good. It's like the real thing almost. I did voice-overs and stuff just to put my input into the game. It was a great experience.

"...they [Tiburon] get very technical about that game, almost getting it down to a science."

GI: Was there anything you specifically asked to put in?

DC: I just wanted to make sure that my skill level was really good, ya know what I'm saying!? Other than that, I think everything is great. They had me pretty accurate anyways. I thought it should have been a little bit faster, but other than that it's pretty accurate.

GI: We noticed that last year the Vikings' playbook was pretty basic. How close is it to the playbooks you guys really run?

DC: Ya know what? It's got a couple of our plays, but really it's not that accurate. Really, I don't think it should be. 'Cause if it was, then somebody could know our plays and what we're doing.

GI: Is it inaccurate because it's too basic, or is it more about run vs. pass plays?

DC: I don't know, I think it's a little of both. I think they could have had a little more passing, shotgun plays, 'cause we do a lot of shotgun. I think in 2002 there will be, 'cause they mentioned that to me.

GI: So, have you played any of the other football games out there like GameDay or NFL 2K1 for the Dreamcast?

DC: Nah, I don't play none of that.

GI: Do you think that video game football will come close to the real thing?

DC: They make it very, very real. I think [Madden] 2002 is very real. The graphics these days are so real. I mean, think about 10-Yard Fight or something like that a long time ago, and you think about the graphics now with computers, it's so real. I'm not going to doubt anything with the people we have today and computers, I think anything's possible.

GI: Do you ever think they'll be using it in training camp or anything?

DC: Uhhmm, I don't know about that. It's hard for me to say that because for one, there are a lot of emotions and stuff that goes along with football. I don't know if they could ever simulate that.

GI: Randy Moss is on the cover of NFL 2K2 for the Dreamcast. Do guys ever trash talk with each other on who's cover is better?

DC: Nah, I don't say that. In fact, we don't even talk about it.

GI: What do you think of Madden NFL 2002 being predicted to be the winner in GI's football preview?

DC: I think it is. The graphics are awesome and it's so real, so I can agree with that. I agree with that totally. Madden's the best – and it don't hurt that I'm on the cover!

THE PRE-GAME REPORT

	NFL 2K2	NFL Fever 2002	NFL QB Club 2002	Madden NFL 2002	ESPN NFL PrimeTime
Season Mode	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Franchise Mode	Yes	Yes	Career Stats Only	Yes	Yes
Practice Mode	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tournament Mode	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Fantasy League	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Online Play	Yes	No	No	No	No
Create-A-Player	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Create-A-Team	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Create-A-Play	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Control Passing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Customizable AI	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Defense Special Moves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Receiver Hot Routes	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	No
Old Uniforms	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Classic Teams	Yes	No	Classic Players	Yes	No
Pro Bowl	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Season Awards	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
# of Plays	100+ per Team	N/A	375 per Team	300 per Team	N/A
# of Polys per Player	1,500	5,000	3,200+	2,000+	4,000
# of Mo-Cap Animations	2,000	N/A	1,500	1,600+	N/A
# of Face-Mapped Players	N/A	N/A	350+	200+	300
# of Stat Categories	60+	N/A	100	80	N/A
Animated Sidelines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commentary	Dan Stevens & Peter O'Keefe	Dick Stockton & Ron Pitts	Kevin Harlan & Bill Maas	John Madden & Pat Summerall	Chris Berman & Tom Jackson
Cover Star	Randy Moss	Peyton Manning	Brett Favre	Daunte Culpepper	Edgerrin James

GI'S PLAYOFF PROGNOSTICATION

The Road to the GI Super Bowl Goes Through Kato

At the start of a season, everyone's got a zero in the loss column and every reason to believe they'll be the last team standing. Regardless, a successful season is built by taking it one week at a time, and each of these games certainly has what it takes to win their share of battles.

I've been a fan of QB Club's player models, and despite its flaws, it was a game that had its good points. Its new defensive play calling system not only corrects past problems, but is an innovation I hope others will imitate. Also looking for a fresh start will be NFL GameDay. However, the fact that Sony refused to share any screenshots or information about the game gives me cause for skepticism. Perhaps Konami's NFL PrimeTime got a chance to watch GameDay 2001's film, and will have a good idea of what it needs to do in its first year out. The company is bent on making it playable above all else, and I think it can win a few by doing this, but the game's still in its early stages. The New York Giants were a shade under .500 in 1999 before making it to the Super Bowl last season. PrimeTime's baseline of talent could make the same progression, but that's next year.

This brings us to the AFC Central of video game football, with top prospects NFL Fever, NFL 2K2, and Madden causing a bottleneck at the top of the standings. NFL Fever's showing at E3 had its flaws, but I think it's a definite example of how a system's specs can make a clear difference. If the gameplay can keep pace with the amazing graphics and deep front-end features, Fever should do just fine. As a stat and franchise junkie, I'll be hooked by the replay saves and 25-season Franchise mode made possible by the hard drive.

Even with all these promising rookies, the marquee match-up this season is between Madden and NFL 2K2. The latter's online play is more than just a fad, it's a trash-typing way of life. I'm glad that Visual Concepts is improving things like the character models, the running game, and play calling. This should ensure that Sega's big-ticket online player is a great one-player experience as well. Will this be enough to defeat Madden? Maybe, but I still see this as Madden's game to lose. If EA can avoid the pitfalls of hype and not become the 2000 Washington Redskins of video games, then I believe Madden will hoist the trophy aloft once again. Madden's cumulative progress (shown in its improved collision, catches, player faces, and expanded gameplay options), coupled with the other titles on the market struggling to find their next-gen football feet, should give EA a clear road to victory – but it will by no means be an easy ride.

HANDS-ON WITH THE BEST OF XBOX

Dead or Alive 3 could be the most important title for Xbox. It is one of the few high profile third-party games, and is receiving more interest and excitement than any other piece of software for Microsoft's console. DOA3 is also an exclusive third-party title to Xbox, which is something that is lacking in the machine's upcoming software library. Both Tecmo and Microsoft see it as a game with mass appeal, which will draw consumers to Xbox.

Game Informer has always been anxious to find out more about this fighting tour-de-force. When we were invited by both Microsoft and Tecmo to be the first magazine to receive a hands-on peek at DOA3, as well as talk shop with the game's lead producer, Tomonobu Itagaki, we jumped at the chance. Read our impressions and find out exactly why you should believe the hype.

Looks Aren't Deceiving

In this age of doctored photos and touched-up video, we were understandably skeptical when we saw past screens and movies of DOA3. It just looked too good to be true. With total certainty, we can tell you the game itself does, in fact, look that good. We stood with mouths gaping and palms sweating when we witnessed the plain truth that Dead or Alive 3 looks better than anything seen on a video game system before, real-time or CG.

Dead or Alive 2 was a benchmark for graphical excellence, with its fluid movement and detailed characters, but DOA3 usurps it in every respect. The line between pre-rendered graphics and in-game models is now nonexistent. Faces show emotion, and every limb flails with definite purpose. Still other additions, like specific muscle animation and more particle effects, have yet to be included.

■ **FORMAT** XBOX ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** TEAM NINJA
■ **DEVELOPER** TECMO ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 8

Ryu emerges from a tornado of leaves – ninja style!

Real-time graphics never looked so good

Getting Some Play With The Ladies Of DOA3

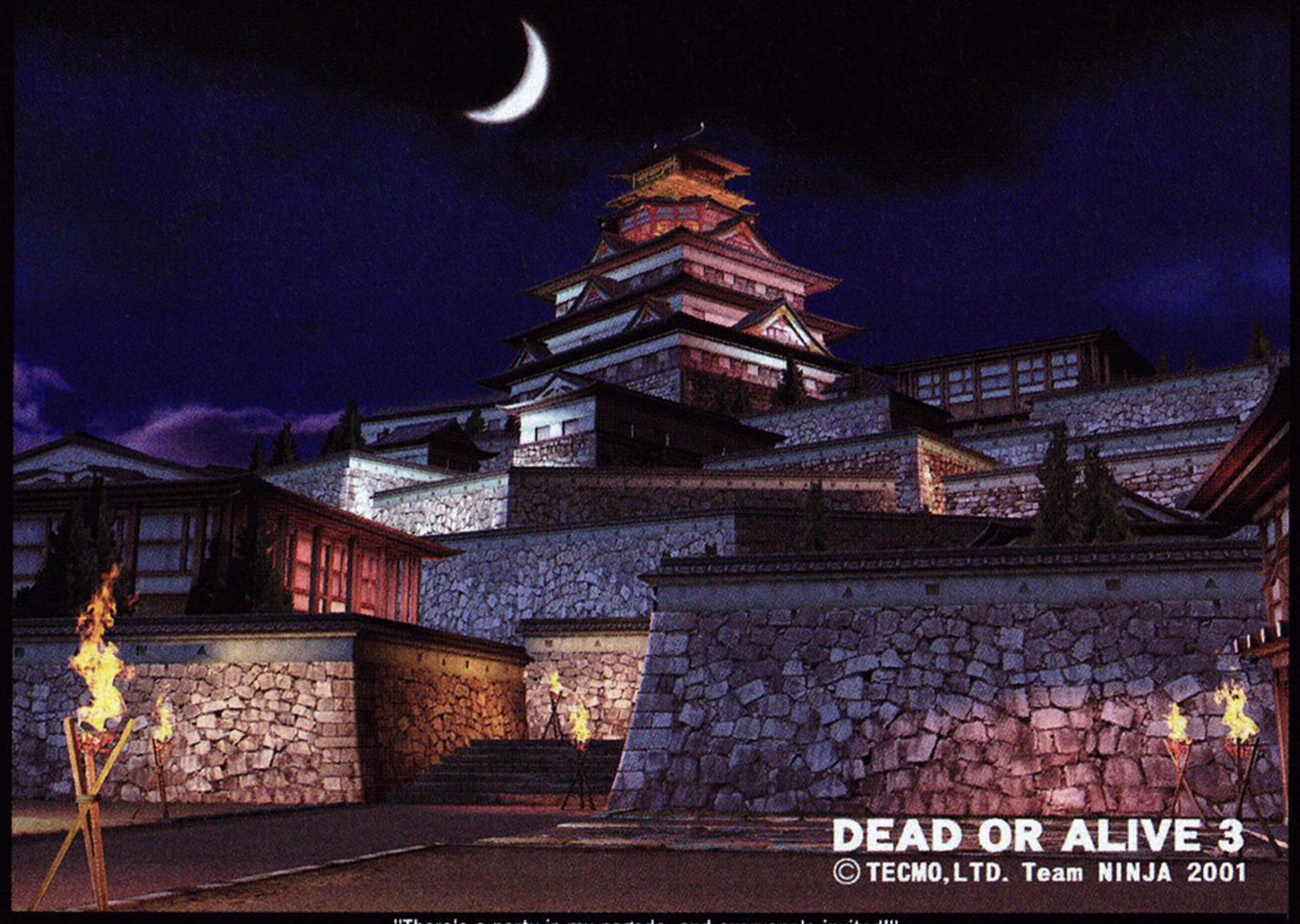
Environmentally Sound

The environments are the jewel in the crown that identifies DOA3 as the fighting game king. Square platforms and flat backgrounds are mere child's play. These stages are full-blown, real-time 3D worlds seemingly designed for a sprawling action game rather than a one-on-one fighter. We got to layeth the smacketh down on two stages – the beach and the forest. In both levels, you can roam around at your leisure, and come to the realization that there is what seems like a square mile of terrain as your battlefield.

On the beach, the shoreline is constantly moving with the ocean's tide. Frothy sea foam forms where sand and surf meet. As fighters face off, the sun is setting with a brilliant display in the west, and dozens of gulls fly off to avoid the impending destruction. The scene would be sublimely serene if it weren't for the martial artists attempting to beat each other unconscious. Palm trees are scattered about, making for more realism than the flat, lifeless plains featured in most fighters. These trees aren't just for show, as you can knock your enemy into them, and watch coconuts rain down upon them. How's that for insult to injury?

The forest level has a soft bed of multi-colored leaves on the ground, as well as many more falling from above. They will all react to your movements, and blow about in the cyclonic chaos. These leaves obviously had to come from somewhere, so a large group of trees litter the landscape, complete with mossy trunks. Much like the above-mentioned palms, things will fly out of the trees if a body collides with them. Rays of sunlight peek through the branches like divine intervention. Also highlighting the level is a flowing creek, which you can splash around in when the rigors of combat start to make you feel unfresh.

Ninjas and woods go together like apple pie and Mom



"There's a party in my pagoda, and everyone's invited!"

The scenic forest, pre-beatdown

She's Pretty, But How Does She Handle?

Many Xbox titles have shown much in the way of graphics, but little in the gameplay department. We have witnessed that this area, too, has seen a lot of attention. Running around the environments is easier than before, as is pulling off most moves. The number of non-attack maneuvers seems to have been increased as well, so you can leap out of harm's way.

The Xbox controller has been a point of concern with people who have held it in their grubby hands. Some say it's too big. Others gripe that the buttons are too close together. All of those complaints seem to melt away once you play DOA3. Our opinion on this peripheral increased tenfold thanks to a few games of Dead or Alive 3.

Hyabusa dodges a hook kick by Christy indoors...

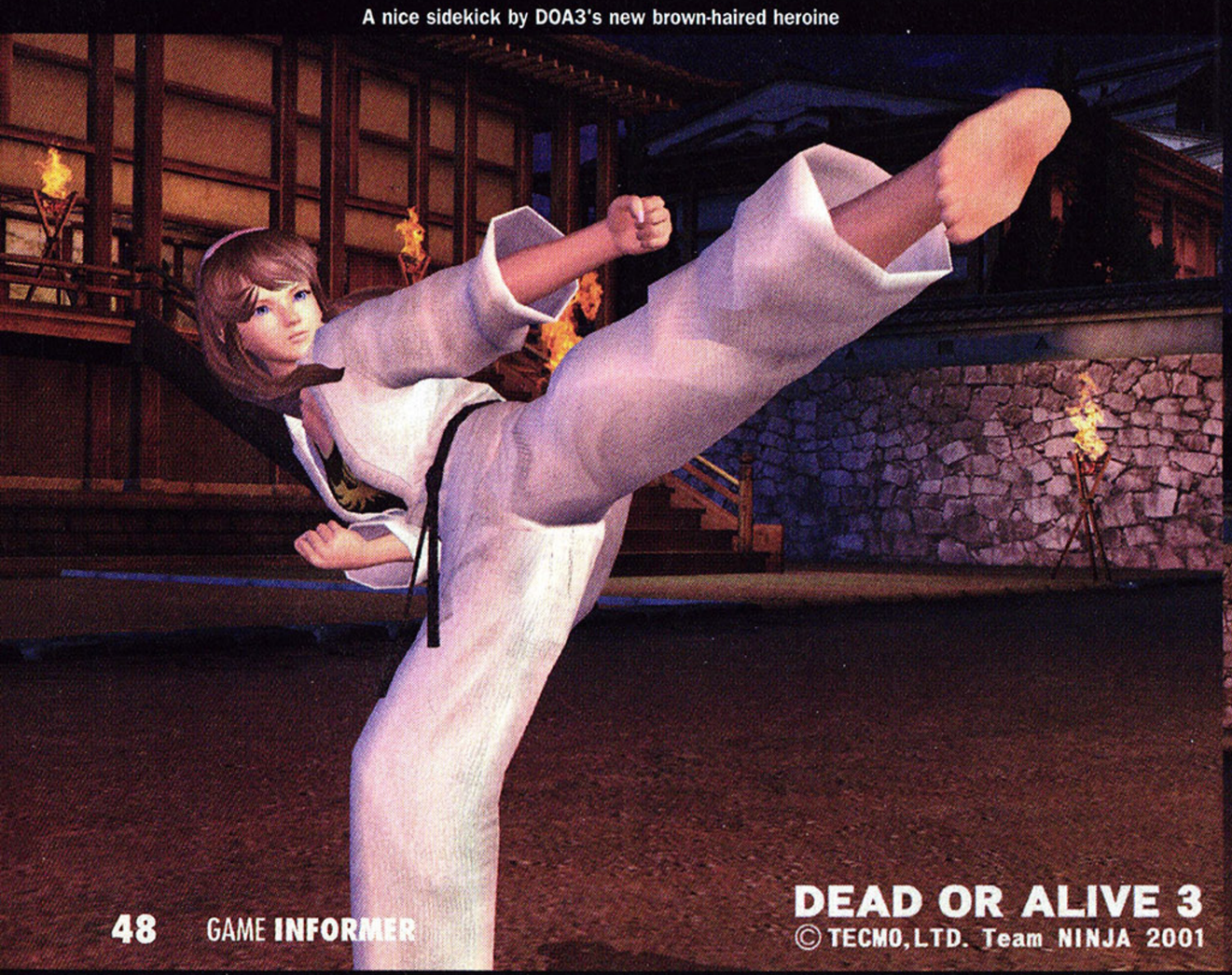
...and Leifang escapes a knee while outside

Lineup Changes

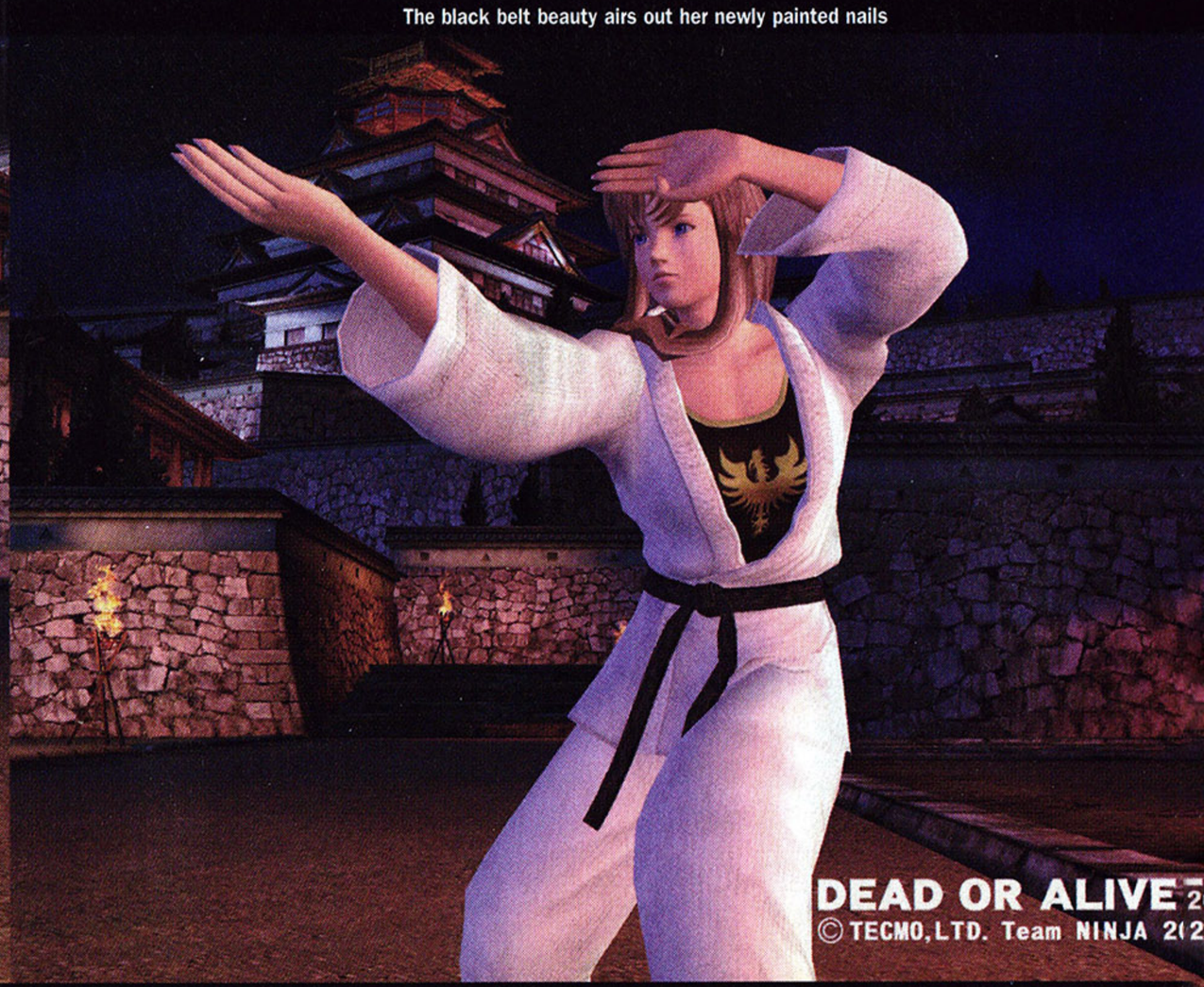
Since our June feature, another new character has been revealed. She's a formally dressed karate student, conspicuous by her plain appearance. The strange black shirt she wears beneath her gi (uniform) may give a hint to her wilder side, which we hope to see more of. By the kata (demonstration) we witnessed, she definitely possesses the skills to defend herself. We have been assured there are other new characters besides the three we've seen thus far, but it may be up to us to figure them out, as Team Ninja's not showing all of its hand just yet.

Big changes are afoot for existing fighters, too – mainly Ein, the game's male lead. He has abandoned his old, traditional martial art of choice in favor of the ninja style. His DOA2 bio stated he learned karate surprisingly fast, so it's not inconceivable that he picked up ninjitsu at an alarming rate, as well. This will lead to a revamped offense, with a bit more flash and mystique to it. You go, boy!

A nice sidekick by DOA3's new brown-haired heroine

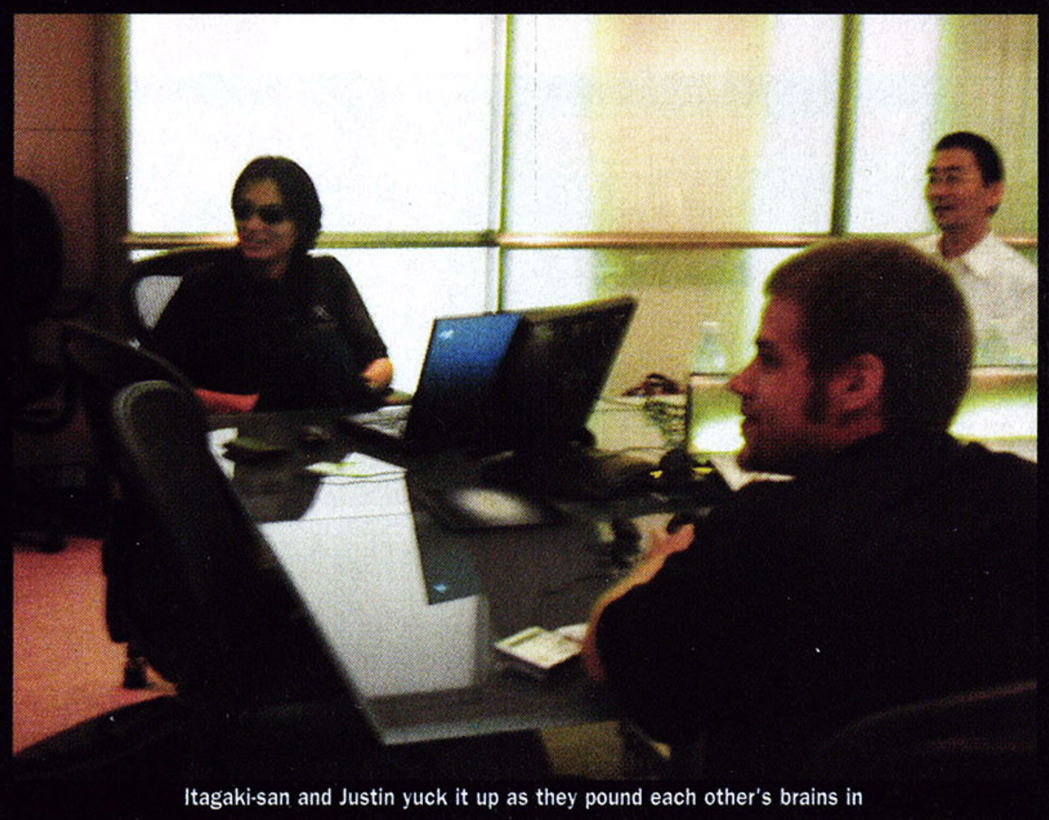


The black belt beauty airs out her newly painted nails



TOMONOBU ITAGAKI INTERVIEW

Itagaki-san is the driving force behind Team Ninja's Dead or Alive series. He is a meticulous perfectionist, and it shows in the mastery of this series. Dead or Alive 3 is his most ambitious project yet, and every step is being taken to ensure the game lives up to – and surpasses – the precedent set by its predecessors. We sat down in Microsoft's green glowing Xbox conference room, and talked to Itagaki about the series, fighting games, and even Ninja Gaiden.



Itagaki-san and Justin yuck it up as they pound each other's brains in

Game Informer: The Dead or Alive series has evolved a lot in its three installments. Could you explain this process?

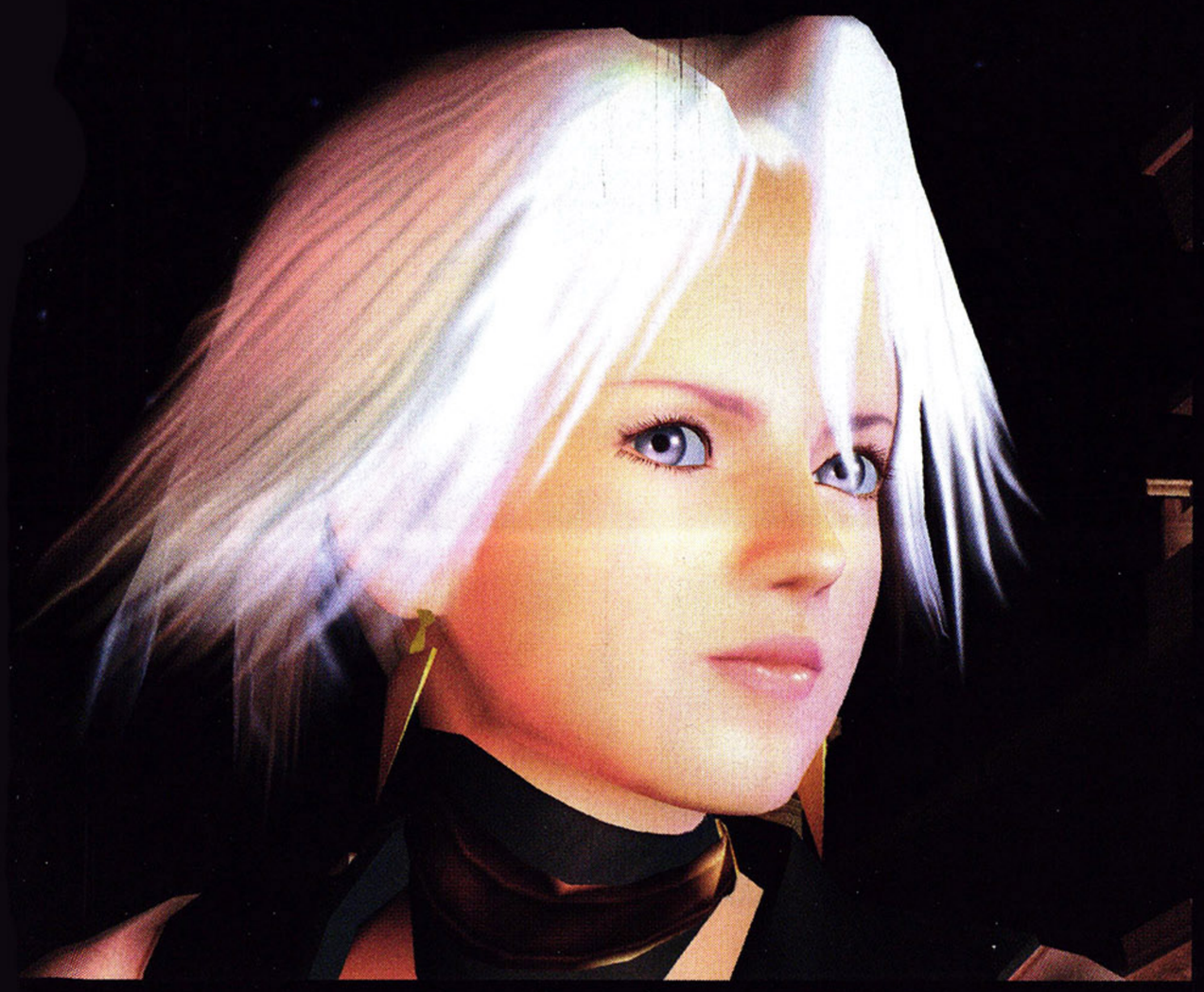
Itagaki: With DOA2, we achieved the highest quality. In the 20th century, Team Ninja was following other companies and other games. Now, in the 21st century, games like Tekken 4 and Virtua Fighter 4 are following us.

GI: The environments in Dead or Alive 3 are stunning. What did Team Ninja do to improve over DOA2's intricate stages?

Itagaki: We wanted to really expand the stages, and make them much wider. There are also many breakthrough areas that will be surprising.

GI: How do you approach character design on the Xbox?

"For DOA3 on Xbox, we can make characters' faces look very distinct and emotional, and portray the image of their inner self."



Itagaki: With past systems, characters got their personality through their costumes, because the faces had to basically be mush. For DOA3 on Xbox, we can make characters' faces look very distinct and emotional, and portray the image of their inner self. Costumes will still play a part in each fighter's identity, also. The whole process is much easier.

GI: Poly count is a big draw for gamers. What is the polygon count for the character models?

Itagaki: These are not important, and in the past, polygons have been counted inaccurately. What matters is not the polygon count, but how the graphics look overall in the game, which is something we have worked hard on.

GI: Will Dead or Alive 3 definitely launch with the Xbox?

Itagaki: Yes. We are working very hard to have it completed in time.

GI: What is the future of fighting games?

Itagaki: Fighting games need to be easier to play in order to reach a broader audience. The system isn't the major factor, because it exists to support the games being made. Of course, developers can do more with a superior system, but it is the games that must reach out to the players.

GI: What are your thoughts on the Xbox controller?

Itagaki: The American controller, which is named Duke, is a little big for me, but I think American gamers will like it. The Japanese controller, called Akebono [also a famous sumo – Ed.], is very nice for the Japanese market. People must remember that gameplay comes not just from the controller, but in the game's design.

GI: How is the Xbox to develop for?

Itagaki: I have made games for many systems, including PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast. Xbox is the best.

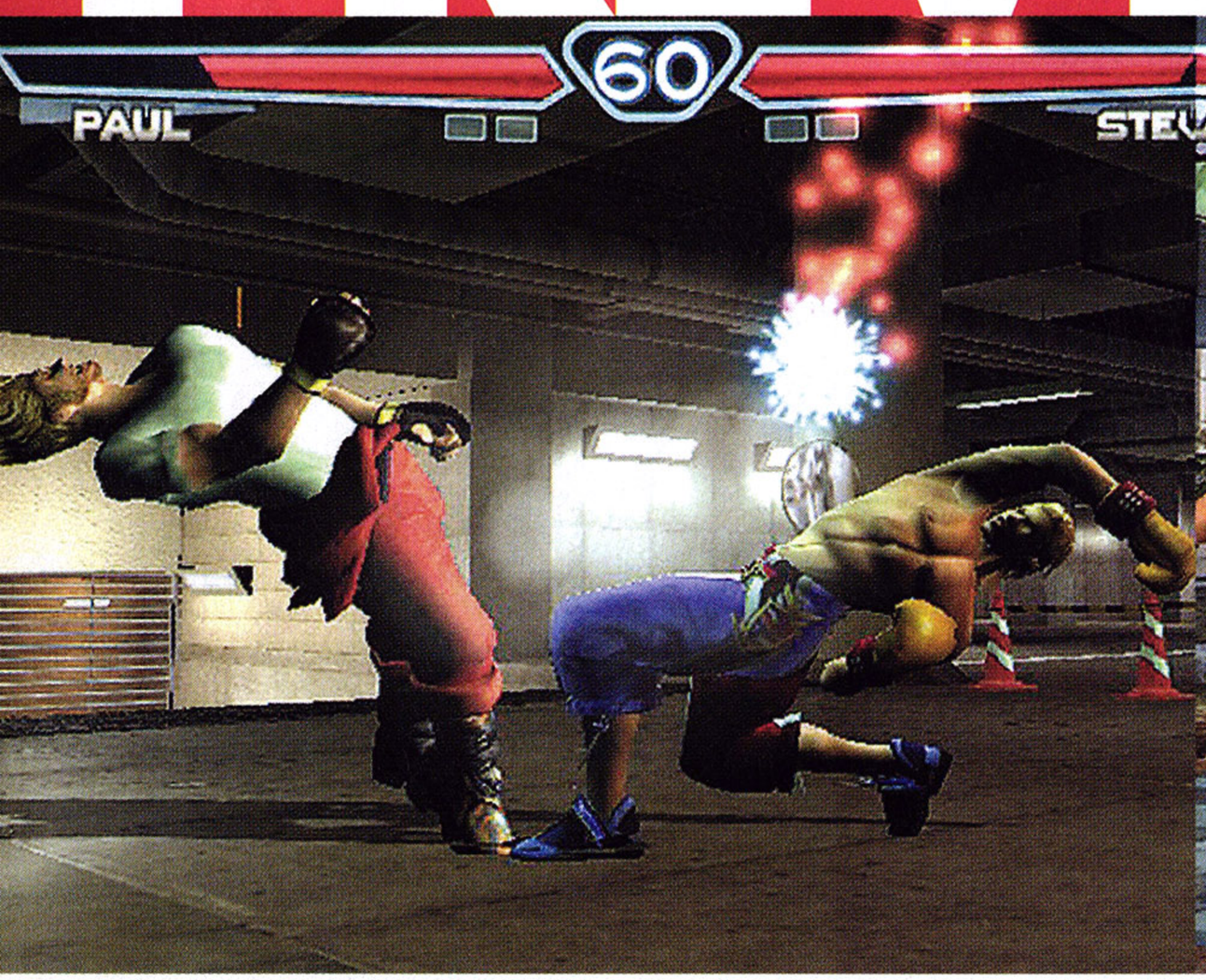
GI: One of DOA's characters, Ryu Hyabusa, is best known for starring in Tecmo's Ninja Gaiden series. What can you tell us about any continuation of that popular series?

Itagaki: We hope to have the next Ninja Gaiden game out next year. We aren't ready to give details on it yet. The system hasn't been decided – we will have to make that decision this fall. Tenchu was a good game, but it was lacking in story. I want to bring America the true meaning of ninja.

GI: What other game projects would you like to work on?

Itagaki: I would really like to make an action/fighting game in the future.

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2/ARCADE

TEKKEN 4

FIGHT 4 LIFE

Led by Namco's Iron First tournament, a fighting renaissance is heading to the digital domain this winter. Every noteworthy martial arts franchise is in attendance and competing for the consumer dollar. Even with such heavyweights as Virtua Fighter 4 and Dead or Alive 3 in the fray, all eyes are on the upcoming installment of the Tekken series. With Sega and Tecmo issuing standard sequels, Namco is drastically altering the genealogy within its fighting franchise. The rebirth and continuation of this series focuses heavily on realism – which translates into a major evolution. Some of the arcade qualities are still embedded within its code, yet many of the modifications are so severe that it seems almost transformed into a completely different game.

Built on the System 246 board, which is based on the PlayStation 2's architecture, Tekken 4's biggest change is the dismissal of infinite distance stages – the floors that would continually scroll underneath your characters, but oddly, the objects in the distance would never move. Each arena has boundaries and you'll have the ability to use them to your advantage. Much like Street Fighter, trapping an opponent in the corner is a devastating maneuver that is nearly impossible to escape from. Some of the objects you'll interact with may be breakable and may inflict damage. Rather than turning every match into a wall-mounted splattering, where players continually try to pin an opponent into a corner, Namco has inserted a number of techniques to counter this melee style. For instance, placement-change moves instantly switch character positions with one click of the button. Sidestepping also plays a much larger role. In the previous Tekkens, the battle basically took place on a tightrope – with most of the attacks exchanged on one plane. In Tekken 4, the battle unfolds with combatants dancing all over the arena – circling one another and ducking out of the way of incoming assaults. The enhanced sidestep is quick enough to dodge a jab or a kick, which in turn may fully expose an opponent's dead angle – an uncontested attack zone.

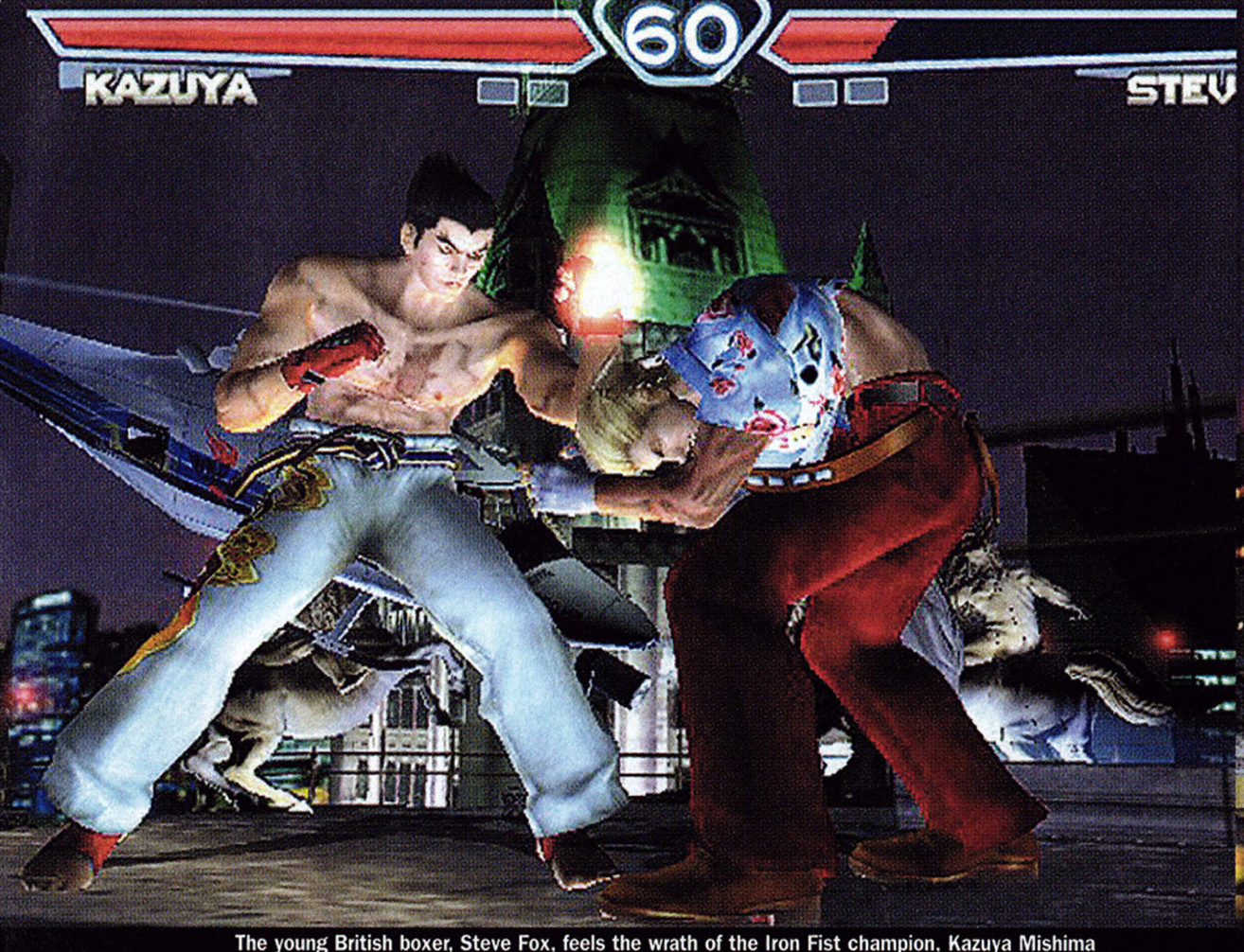
With each passing Tekken game, the roster of characters has continually grown. In Tekken 4, however, the list of playable characters has been shaved down to 20. For fans of the series, the story picks up right where the last game left off, with Kazuya inheriting the True Ogre's Devil Gene. Many of the popular characters look much different, yet their fighting prowess is virtually the same. When Paul is knocked around, his gravity-defying hair will be messed up and flattened (shown right).

Fighting games appeared as though they were going the way of the two-dimensional platformer, but this resurgence may revitalize the genre. On the horizon, Midway has a new Mortal Kombat in the works, and rumor has it that Namco will follow up Tekken 4 with Soul Calibur 2.

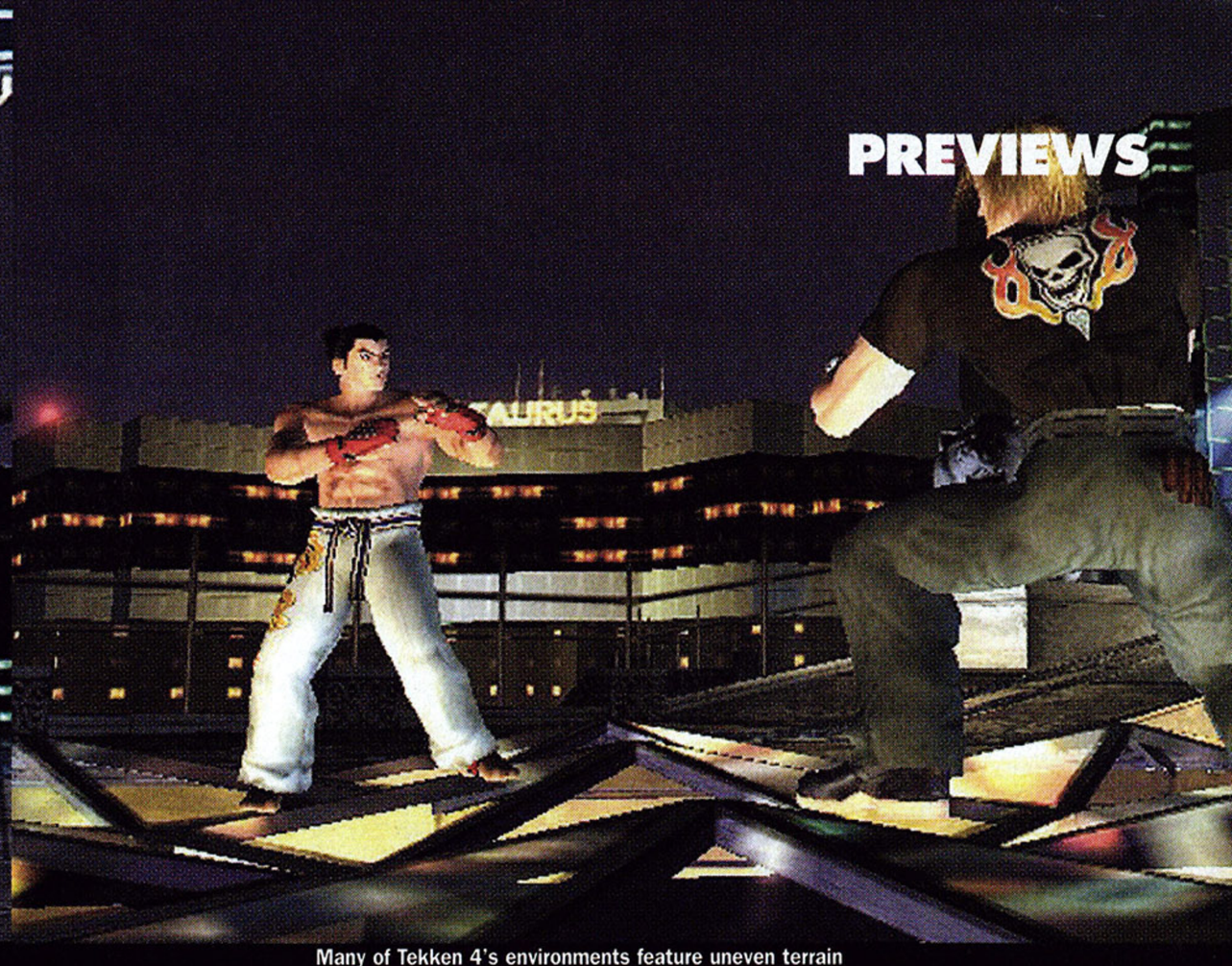
Side movement is greatly enhanced, allowing players to freely circle the opponent and step out of the way of an incoming blow. Perfecting the dodge maneuver will give you a clear shot at the opponents' dead angle

Infinite distance stages are now a thing of the past. Each stage has boundaries that can be used to your advantage. Whomever controls the wall, controls the match

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



The young British boxer, Steve Fox, feels the wrath of the Iron Fist champion, Kazuya Mishima



Many of Tekken 4's environments feature uneven terrain

Animated onlookers cheer on the swift-footed Hwoarang

Paul is just as deadly as he has always been

The lightning-fast combat is overhauled with improved physics, animation, and collision fields

"Oh jeez, girl! You ever hear of toilet paper?"

PLAYSTATION 2

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

NAUGHTY DOG RAISES THE BAR

On a recent journey to Naughty Dog's Santa Monica studios, we had the pleasure of getting some serious hands-on time with Jak and Daxter, and came away duly impressed with the graphic artistry and finely-tuned gameplay the J&D team has created.

Painstakingly modeled from hand-drawn blueprints, the first thing that grabs your attention is the environments, which contain an unprecedented level of detail and ambient life. Unlike 3D platformers of the past, which largely featured barren plains, J&D teems with fully animated flora and fauna. Naughty Dog claims that each environment is made up of 4 to 6 million polygons; and it shows. No platformer to date has worlds that even hold a candle to these, kiddies. Even better, players will never encounter a second of loading time in this journey, a technological feat that boggles the mind.

A subtle, but substantial, graphical nuance lies within the camera system, which Naughty Dog developed from scratch using its own AI protocols. Implemented with the intention of making the player feel totally comfortable, this system is a huge leap over 3D cameras of the past. Instead of staying fixed behind the player, and whipping around turns, J&D's camera instinctively knows when to pan out, when to move behind the player, and when to switch to a more traditional side-scrolling view. In fact, it will even move through tight spaces or swerve to avoid obstacles like trees and rock outcroppings. Due to the amount of detail in the environments, this was absolutely necessary to ensure playability.

Speaking of playability, J&D delivers massive gameplay. The overall mission structure revolves around power orbs, which function as batteries that can run the machinery left behind by the Precursors, a now-extinct race that once populated the land. These machines are usually needed to progress to the next region of the world. Each power orb is obtained in a different manner, often by completing a task for a character you meet in the villages. Think of a scaled-down (and saner) version of the missions in Tomba and you'll get an idea of what we're talking about. The team promises there will be over 100 orbs in the game, so expect a total gameplay experience that is two to three times longer than any of the Crash games.

In addition to traditional platform and exploration, we had a chance to sample some levels that incorporated a hoverbike vehicle, and a dangerously addictive arcade-style fishing minigame. Word has it that later levels will have a few more curveballs in store for the player.

Naughty Dog has always prided itself on great control, and J&D follows in this tradition. Jak can turn on a dime, perform jump-rolls, and execute more complex combos, like uppercuts, with ease. All these movements are melded together with a supremely smooth animation system. Jak is agile, and he better be, as the enemies demonstrate a savvy that defies tradition. Unlike platformers of the past, enemies have a keen AI, and will pursue Jak well beyond the area he encounters them in, even jumping over obstacles and gaps. To make himself even more powerful, Jak can utilize three Eco forces (Blue, Yellow, and Green) to grant him new powers. Blue is an electrical substance that makes Jak faster and allows him to use various pads that open doors or launch him to high areas. Green is basically a life power-up, and Yellow Eco lets him shoot off a fireball projectile at enemies. Another Eco force, Dark Eco, is poisonous to Jak and must be avoided like the plague.

The game's storyline, which sends our heroes and their female friend, Keira, on a quest to return Daxter to his non-vermin form, is fleshed out with over one hour of animated speech and real-time cutscenes. The dialogue is sometimes silly, often hilarious, as Daxter (voiced by ex-*Doogie Houser* star Max Casella) rattles off one-liners for the silent Jak.

Space prevents us from going on, but even in unpolished form, Jak and Daxter exhibits all the hallmarks of a blockbuster title. As great as Crash was, the Naughty Dogs we talked to felt that J&D is the company's greatest accomplishment yet, and, after having played it, it's easy to see why.

Misty Island features a moody, overcast look

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
■ **DEVELOPER** NAUGHTY DOG ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER

If these birds were any more lifelike, they'd poop on you!

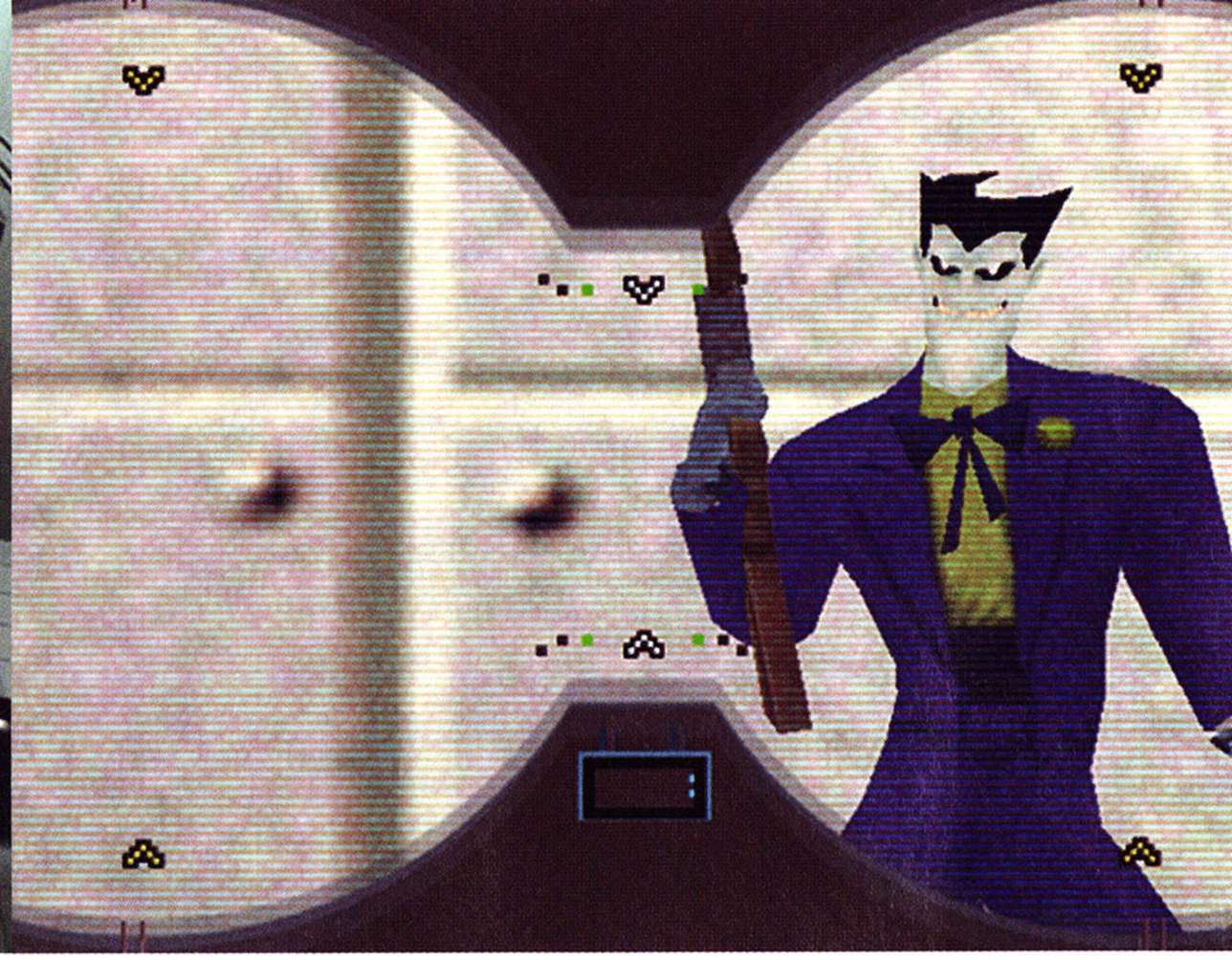
Hope Jak doesn't end up like Jonah

While Jak and Daxter features a lot more exploration than Crash, there is a lot of good old-fashioned platforming

Unclogging these Green Eco fountains will earn you a power orb

Jak's dive attack is a great way to lay the smackdown on enemies

The story is told through real-time cutscenes



PLAYSTATION 2

BATMAN: VENGEANCE

JOKER! JOKER!! JOKER!!!

As Frank Miller slaves away at the eagerly anticipated follow-up to The Dark Knight Returns, and George Clooney prepares to rectify his past mistakes in the upcoming Batman film, Ubi Soft is assembling Batman's first PlayStation 2 adventure. Much as Neversoft has done with Marvel's Spider-Man, Ubi Soft is doing everything in its power to incorporate every little detail from the caped crusader's animated universe. Rather than just making a game that plays out like a lengthy episode of the show, Ubi Soft has created a handful of stories that give it the feeling of an entire season stuffed onto one disc.

In a freak turn of events, it would seem that every wacko from Arkham Asylum is on the loose and running amok in Gotham. Along with The Joker and his mistress Harley Quinn, you'll confront Poison Ivy, Mr. Freeze, and several mystery guests. For those of you who love The Joker's wacky cartoon persona, you'll be tickled to hear that Mark Hamill has signed on to do the voices for the game. Ubi Soft has also successfully re-created Batman's dark world so it looks just as it appears within the animated series. Everything from the red sky to the darkest of tones is used perfectly.

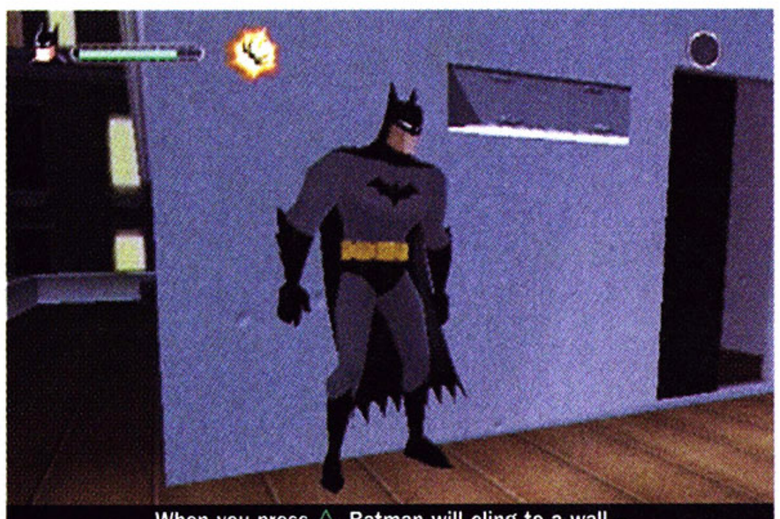
Utilizing 500 unique animations, the Dark Knight is more agile than he's ever been. Through smooth animations with amazing cape dynamics, Batman can leap into the air, then grab his cape and glide, quickly cling to a wall, quietly sidestep, then peer around the corner to see if evil is afoot. He can even dig into his utility belt and use every gadget imaginable. Interestingly, when you do use one of his "wonderful toys," the viewpoint changes to first-person perspective. This comes in handy when trying to target a gun within an enemy's hand, or attempting to pinpoint a location to shoot your Batgrapple. While action takes center stage, as it should, players will also be required to fill the shoes of a detective and actually solve cases through thinking, rather than brute force.

Of course, Ubi Soft has also incorporated stages for the Batmobile and Batwing. There's even a stage devoted to a building-top free fall with Batman wearing an armor-enhanced cape.

In total, you'll set foot on 22 different stages, and view over 30 minutes of real-time and FMV cutscenes. Right now, the game is coming together very nicely. The action is executed perfectly, and the graphics, especially the cape effects and lighting, are worthy of spilling buckets of drool over. The game was scheduled for a September release, but has now slid to October.

Within the Batcave, you'll undergo extensive training before taking to the field

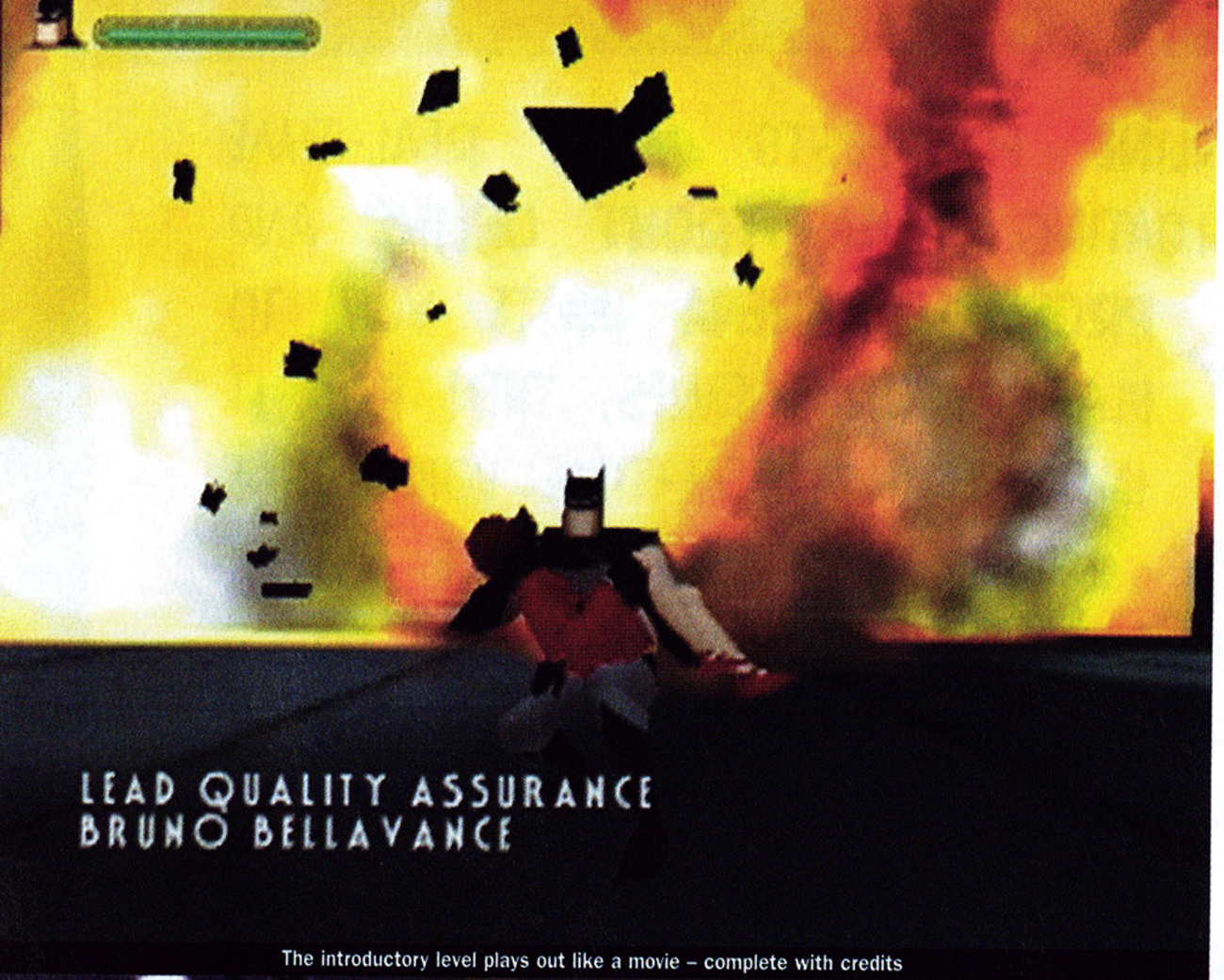
When using gadgets like the Batarang, Net, or Stunner, the perspective changes to first-person



When you press △, Batman will cling to a wall – allowing you to sneak quietly along the perimeter...

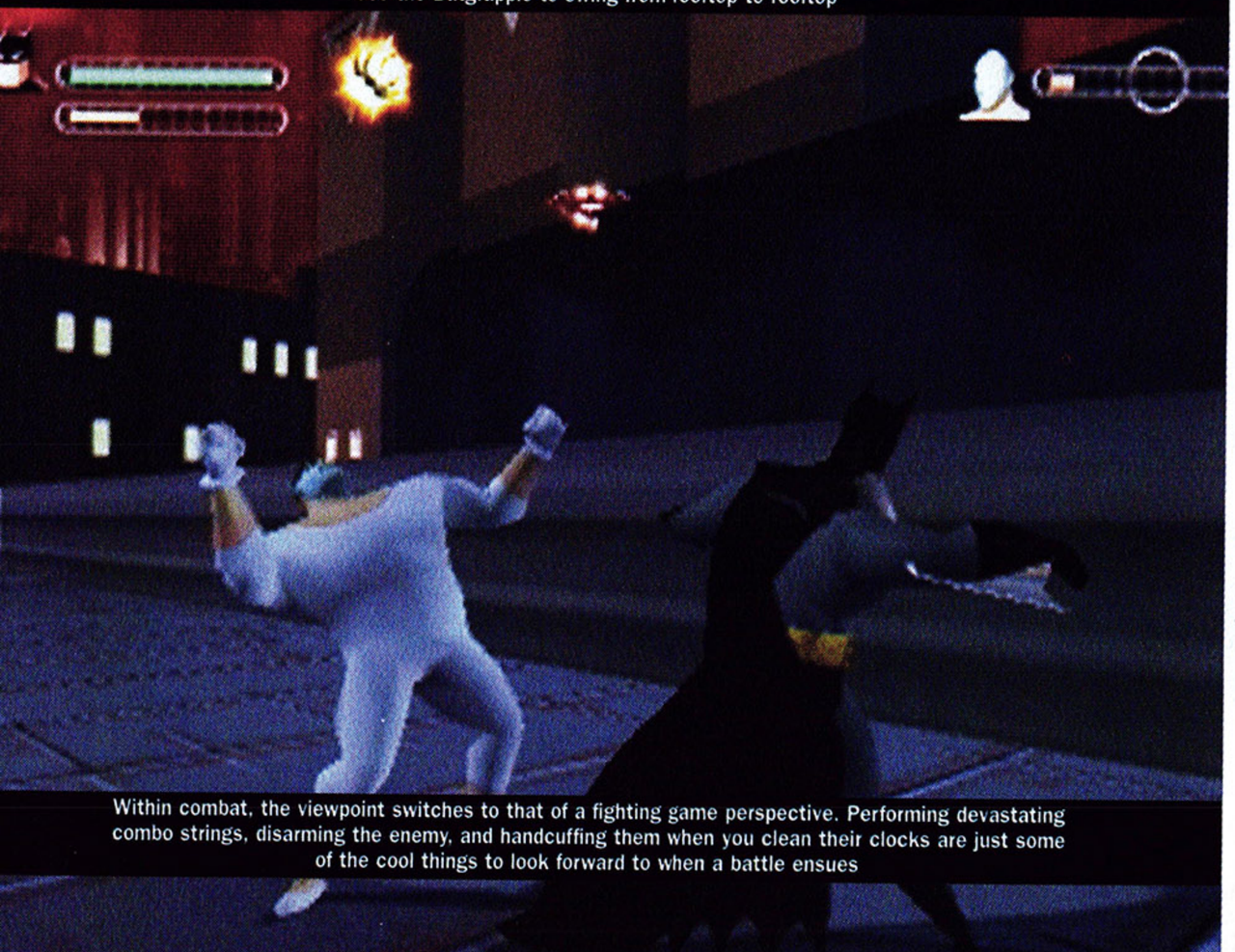
...and peek around corners to see if the coast is clear

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 9



The introductory level plays out like a movie – complete with credits

Use the Batgrapple to swing from rooftop to rooftop



Within combat, the viewpoint switches to that of a fighting game perspective. Performing devastating combo strings, disarming the enemy, and handcuffing them when you clean their clocks are just some of the cool things to look forward to when a battle ensues

PLAYSTATION 2

KA

YOU SUCK!

Leave it to the Japanese to make even the lowliest, scum-suckingest piece of trash on Earth, the mosquito, into a likeable cartoon creation. Can the game Ka (Japanese for mosquito) make the pests our best friends? Maybe not, but this title does help you understand their side of the story.

Being is believing in this game as you fly around the Yamada's two-story abode and suck sweet nectar from their bodies. The analog sticks control your flight and blood suction, and make for easy play. Become too entranced in circling the right stick round-and-round to fill your belly and you'll risk getting smacked when you least expect it. Even when you're just buzzing around there is danger at hand. Battle events occur when one of the family sees you and goes into a motion-blurred fury to stomp you out. The only way to calm them down is by stinging specified body points. You won't find escape too hard, but interactive environments (like phones or light switches) can be used to strategically divert an attacker's attention.

Ka's gameplay doesn't equal the originality of it's concept, but we think its quirky fun is enough of a reason for Sony to publish it over here. After all, it sure beats Fantavision.

You can strategically manipulate room objects

Infiltrate daily lives and be sure to avoid the citronella clouds

Awaken the sleeping giant and there could be hell to pay

Plug in and fill up. Just make sure to pull out in time

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN
■ **DEVELOPER** ZOOM INC. ■ **RELEASE** TBA (JULY 2 IN JAPAN)

MICROPHONE & WEAPONS INCLUDED!!

ONLINE FRAGFESTS WITH REAL-TIME GLOATING. **ALIEN FRONT ONLINE** AND **PROPELLER ARENA** INVITE YOU TO BLAST YOUR ENEMIES, THEN RUB IT IN. INTRODUCING REAL-TIME VOICE CHAT THAT LETS YOU STRATEGIZE WITH TEAMMATES OR RIDICULE FOES. JUST PRESS A BUTTON AND TALK THE TALK. OH YEAH, YOU GET THE MICROPHONE FOR FREE. ONLY ON DREAMCAST.

THE TRICLOPS HAVE INVADED THE EARTH AND THEY HAVE A SIMPLE PLAN: ERADICATE ALL HUMAN LIFE!

THE INVASION HAS BEGUN!

THE CHOICE OF SIDES IS YOURS: EITHER ARMY OR ALIEN. ONE TEAM WILL DECIDE THE FATE OF THE EARTH!

UP TO 4 VS. 4 ONLINE PLAY

60 MISSIONS AND BRANCHING STORY PATHS WITH MULTIPLE ENDINGS

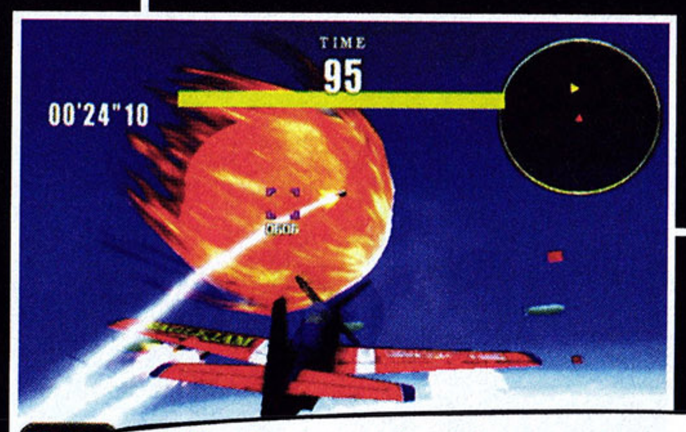
BECOME A TANK COMMANDER AND OBLITERATE THE ALIEN INVADERS, OR JOIN THE ELITE TRICLOPS GUARD AND CRUSH ANY HUMAN SCUM THAT STAND IN YOUR WAY.

TAKE CONTROL OF ARMY TANKS OR FUTURISTIC ALIEN TECHNOLOGY - EACH WITH DEVASTATING POWER-UPS

PROPELLER ARENA BRINGS HIGH-ADRENALINE DOGFIGHTING TO THE MASSES.

INTENSE ACTION AWAITS AS YOU TAKE ON TEAM AFTER TEAM OF MERCILESS PILOTS!

UP TO 4 PLAYERS CAN COMPETE OFFLINE IN HEATED SPLIT-SCREEN DUELS!



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THE FIRST FLIGHT GAME FOR FIGHTING GAME FANS!

PROPELLER ARENA FILLS THE SKIES WITH EXPLOSIVE ACTION–ONLINE AND OFF.

IN THE YEAR 2045, THE 40TH AVIATION BATTLE HAS INVITED THE WORLD'S BEST PILOTS TO FLY RESTORED BATTLE PLANES IN THE MOST MEMORABLE SERIES OF DOGFIGHTS IN HISTORY.

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM RATING PENDING TO TEEN
RP-T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

ALSO AVAILABLE ON Dreamcast™

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PLAYSTATION 2

FINAL FANTASY XI

LIMIT YOUR FINAL FANTASY BREAK

Is it just us, or does it seem as though Square Soft is treating the Final Fantasy license like a lab rat? As you've just seen in our extensive Final Fantasy X preview (page 32), mind-altering changes have been made to the classic formula. With the game already achieving 2 million units sold in Japan, this appears to be a successful experiment by Square – one that should leave a similar imprint on the US market. Trekking further into uncharted territories, Square's formula for Final Fantasy XI is online only. Much like Sega's successful Phantasy Star Online release, Final Fantasy XI, which is destined to ship next March in Japan, asks players from around the globe to unite and tackle the quest at hand.

To Square's benefit, we always wanted to play a multiplayer Final Fantasy game, but limiting it to the Internet? We'll have to see. No official word has been given as to how many players will be able to embark on a quest at once, but if you use Sega's Phantasy Star Online as a template, we'd assume at least four. Of course, this doesn't take into account the increased power of the PS2 and the possibilities that the hard drive has to offer. We may even be looking at an online community as large as those within the PC smash EverQuest. Through Square's well-established PlayOnline service, players won't necessarily need a PlayStation 2 to connect and play. Square plans to broaden the online experience and break the platform-exclusive barrier with a proposed PC version. Rumor has it that both Microsoft and Nintendo are also in negotiations to bring FF XI to their respective systems. We can already see what most of the chat will be like. A PC user: "My game is lagging horribly!" An Xbox user: "Oh man, you should get an Xbox! It's smoother than any game I've ever played!"

Hironobu Sakaguchi is aware of the problem online role-playing games have with telling a story, and says, "Final Fantasy XI will be different in that regard." Sakaguchi is a storyteller through and through, and we can't imagine playing a Final Fantasy title that is lacking in this area. This, of course, leads us to believe the quest will be more linear in structure than most of the online games you're familiar with. After all, who says an online game can't break into a cutscene when your party approaches a dungeon? It's possible. From the brief video footage we've witnessed thus far, it appears as though Final Fantasy will remain true to the turn-based melee, yet will incorporate a greater freedom of movement. In one sequence, against three bats, the player strikes, then one of the bats swoops down and takes a nibble. Whether this is an early representation of what combat may be like, or is in fact exactly how it is fashioned, we were impressed nonetheless.

The stylization of Final Fantasy XI clearly reflects that of the original Final Fantasy – where swords and sorcery outweigh technology. Chocobos, Moogles, and other familiar FF creatures are all part of a package. Interestingly, it appears as though Square is delivering a message to Miyamoto. If you look at the picture in the upper right hand corner, it would appears as though that this butt-ugly creature is devouring a swarm of Pikmin.

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT
■ **RELEASE** 2002

Tetra Master will be available for play

The artistic angle is simplistic and not as flashy as the material found within the recent Final Fantasy adventures

Magic attack!

Lush environments await you

Gathering your party for adventure will be part of your experience

PLAYSTATION 2

APE ESCAPE 2001

SUCK THE PANTS OFF YOUR MONKEY

Were you offended by this headline? Why you dirty-minded little scamps! This headline is perfectly innocent! After all, it's just a description of the wholesome gameplay found in Ape Escape 2001, a spin-off of the classic PS-X platformer from a couple of years ago. That's right – nobody slipped you anything funny in your drink. This game is really about chasing around monkeys with a vacuum cleaner so you can suck their little trousers off and put the dirty dungarees in a gigantic washing machine. Yes, Virginia, the world IS a strange and confusing place.

When our import copy of Ape Escape 2001 first arrived at the office, the initial feeling among the staff was one of disappointment. We must stress the fact that this is not a full-fledged sequel to Ape Escape (the 2001 in the title actually refers to the number of monkeys in the game); but rather, what we would classify as one extremely long minigame. Eschewing both the expansive action/adventuring and the complex dual-analog control scheme that made the first such a critical hit, Ape Escape 2001 is a much simpler game in terms of both concept and gameplay. Although both analog sticks are still used, the right is now only used to target power-ups.

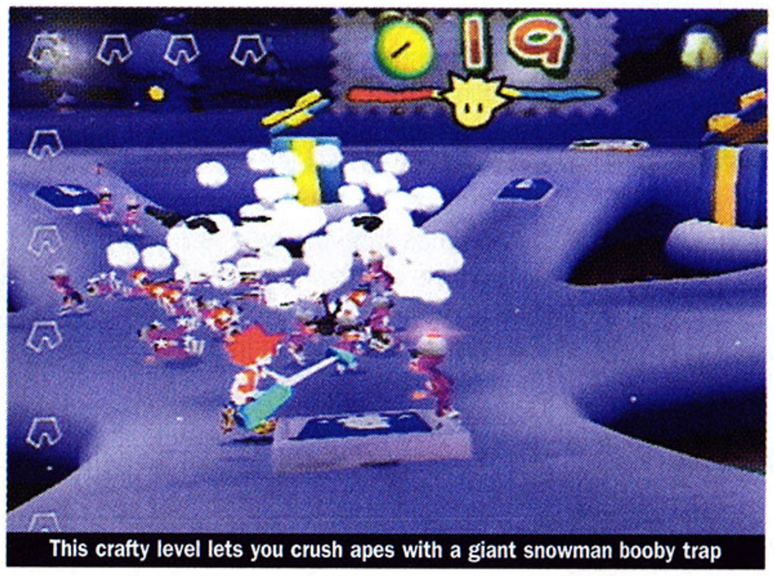
The basic premise sends you running rampant through an endless series of small arenas, frantically vacuuming up pants, and using various level-specific power-ups and traps to capture the monkeys' precious booty. The pants you've collected are dragged behind you on a line, much like the tail of a kite. After gathering a suitable number of trousers, you must then head to the washing machine and deposit the pants in it, where they are added to your total. You complete levels by reaching a specified number of pants. Along the way, you'll meet your old enemy Specter for some boss battles, as well as many new types of monkeys. There's even a weird monkey bathhouse mode that we couldn't quite figure out, but that leaves us something to look forward to on the American version.

Graphically, Ape Escape 2001 doesn't look much better than its last-gen predecessor, and we suspect this project may have started on PS-X using the old game engine, then was merely ported to the PS2. It probably won't be the simian-clubbing magnum opus we were hoping for, but nonetheless, it's a nice trip back to the whimsical world of Ape Escape, and should satisfy our appetite until a proper sequel comes around.

Tough monkey poo-poo stains bringing you down? Shout it out!

This neat tornado effect is one of the only times that you'll realize you're playing PS2

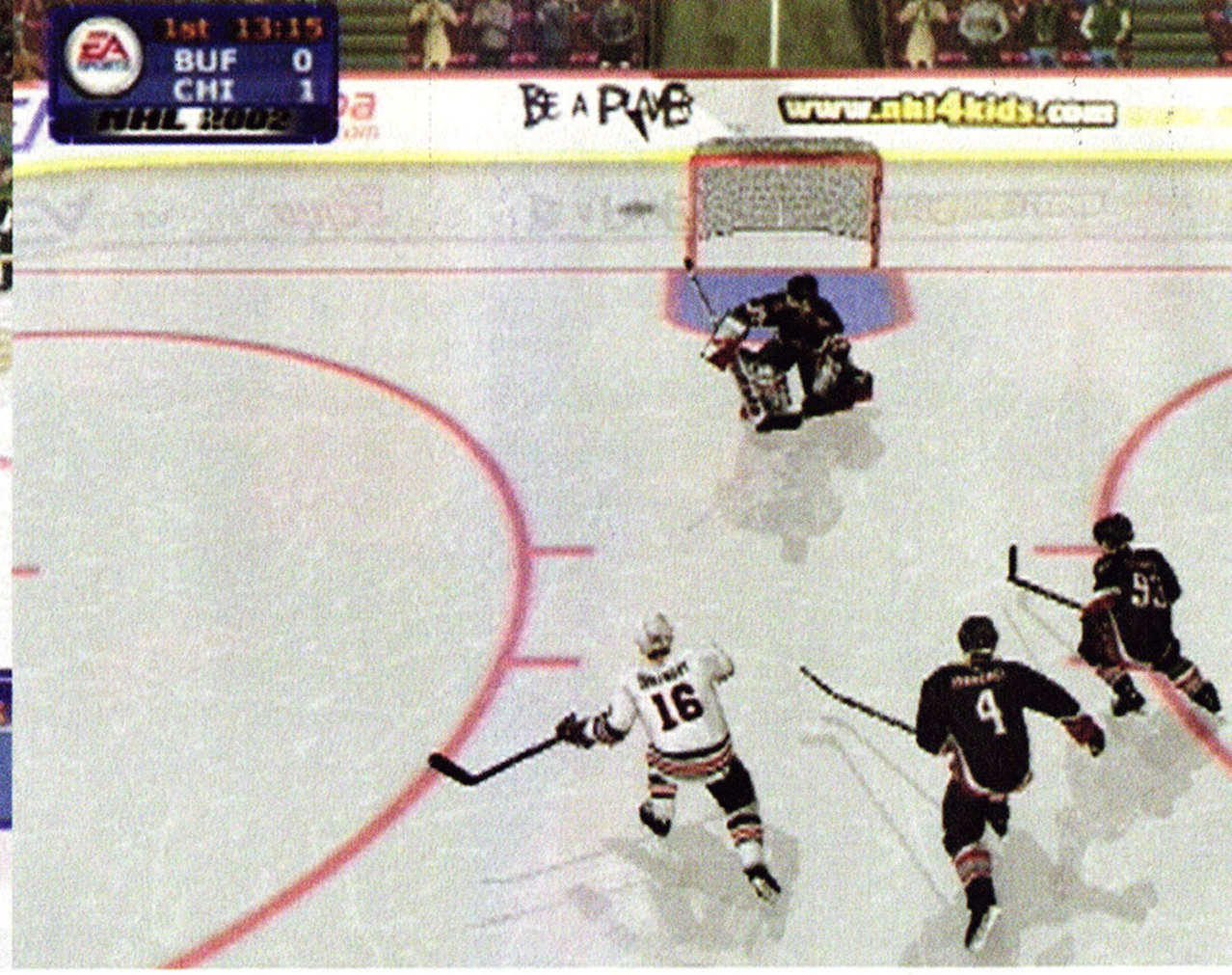
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ **RELEASE** JULY 5 IN JAPAN, TBA IN US

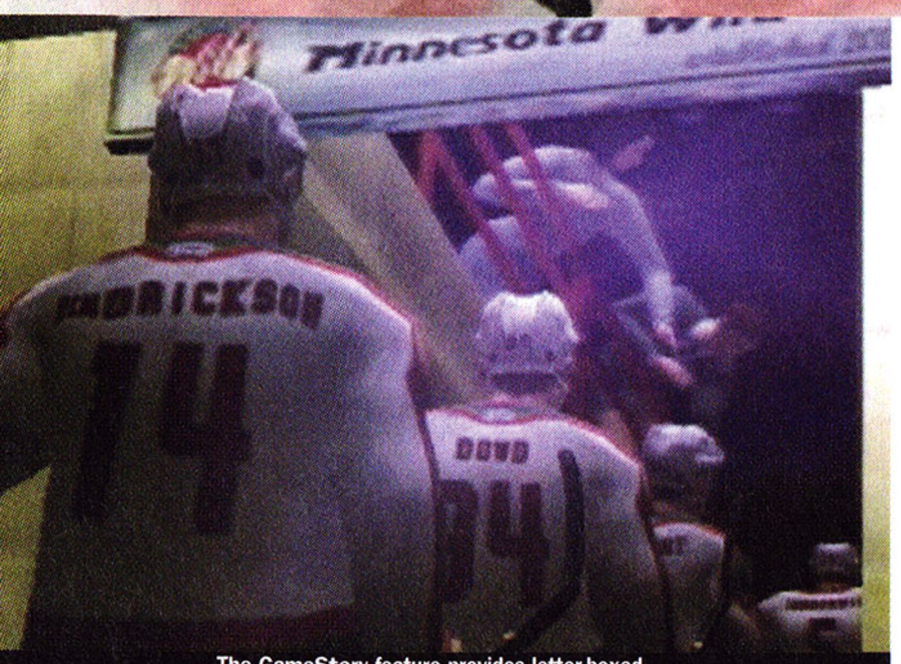


This crafty level lets you crush apes with a giant snowman booby trap

Features more new types of apes than you can shake a stick at

Specter is back for some new boss battles





The GameStory feature provides letter-boxed cutscenes that flesh out the on-ice action

EA has added collectable NHL Cards to the mix

"Take a seat, chump."

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC

NHL 2002

THE DYNASTY CONTINUES

Hockey fans the world over rejoiced this year as they watched legendary defenseman Ray Bourque cap off his storied 22-year career with a Stanley Cup victory as a member of the Colorado Avalanche. In a bittersweet turn, Bourque retired soon after; leaving a void that may never be filled in the world of hockey. Fortunately for us, EA Sports' NHL series, another legend of the sport, is back for another season of CG cross checks and digital dekes.

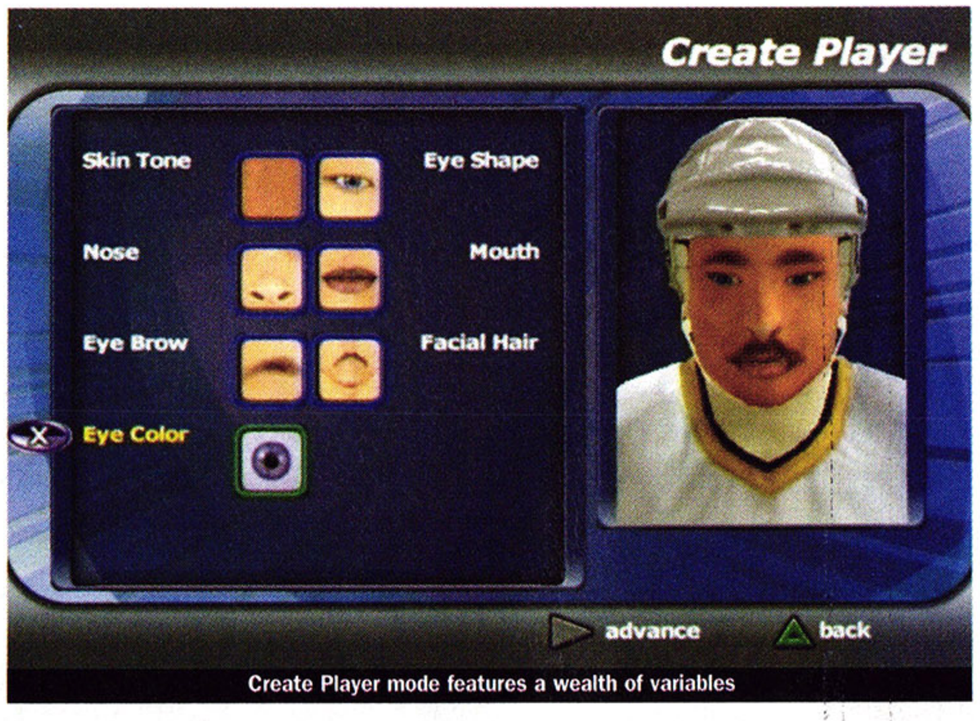
As dominant as EA's Madden, NBA Live, and FIFA franchises are in their respective fields, NHL is still, in many ways, the true superstar on the EA roster. Last year's NHL 2001 had a fantastic debut on the PS2, but like most rookies, it struggled a bit with the more subtle elements of the game. This time around, EA Canada has added a load of new features that should make NHL 2002 every bit the classic that Madden NFL 2001 was last year.

Taking a cue from its gridiron sibling, the game has added an NHL Card collecting element to the game, which allows players to acquire cards and trade them amongst their fellow gamers just like the ultra-popular Madden Cards. Points to buy the cards are earned by reaching statistical goals or performing special in-game moves. The cards give players boosts, cheats, and a plethora of other goodies.

Adding a cinematic edge to the proceedings will be EA's new GameStory presentation. These are basically letter-boxed cutscenes that depict the drama that surrounds a hotly contested NHL game. In these scenes, you'll see players celebrating, rowdy NHL crowds elating over a hat trick, players chatting on the bench, and talking trash on the ice. GameStory vignettes will be narrated by veteran play-by-play man Jim Hughson and his new partner, color commentary expert Don Taylor. If that wasn't enough fancy camerawork, EA has also implemented a Breakaway Cam, which instantly switches to a behind-the-player perspective in the event of a particularly hot wingman and goalie confrontation.

The frontend features are bursting at the seams with depth, allowing puckheads to play Career mode over ten consecutive seasons, complete with NHL drafts, trades, and free agent acquisitions. Responding to fan requests, a new Create Player mode has been added. This comprehensive mode allows you to select from seven facial feature parameters, including eye shape, nose, and facial hair, as well as select your player's height, weight, skills, and position. Also, there are two new player designations, Sniper and Hero, to go with Big Hitter and Big Shooter.

As always, the gameplay is simply spectacular, and stays close to the tradition of its predecessors. If anything, it has been made even more fluid due to the improved animation system that has been implemented into the game engine. Everything you expect, from one-timers to bone-crushing crosschecks, is in the game. As Vanilla Ice once said, "Anything less than the best is a felony." Based on the preview version of NHL 2002 we just received, we don't expect to see the gang at EA Sports to be locked in the clink anytime in the foreseeable future.



Create Player mode features a wealth of variables

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA ■ **RELEASE** FALL

PLAYSTATION 2

NHL HITZ

MIDWAY SEZ: PUCK OFF!

Arcade basketball titles may be an annual occurrence, but, aside from 1996's NHL Open Ice and last year's Rock the Rink, hockey has rarely seen the arcade spotlight. The rink is a much better realm for this type of game anyway, with its angst-filled behemoths carrying sticks around, slamming into one another. Hitz stays true to this thug-life mentality, and adapts it for the new gaming technology.

Hitz is equally as fun, whether you're on offense or defense. You won't see any triple toe loops, but that doesn't mean these skaters don't have some finesse. Deking out the opposition is a great way to put nothing but ice between you and the goalie. One-timers are your best bet at seeing that flashing red light, but the goalies are immovable objects to meet your irresistible force. Get your goal-scoring groove on, though, and your body will be ablaze with flame. You're on fire, baby!

The one-timer in action

Don't melt the ice, big shooter

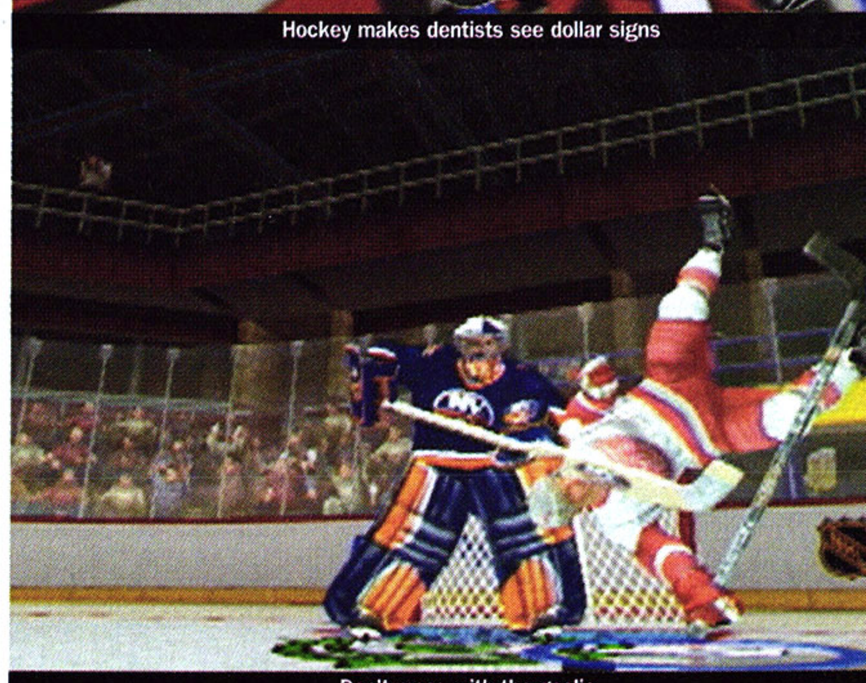
Checking is what defense is all about, and there are some amazing animations here. Sure, you can attempt to steal the puck, but what fun is that? Instead, use turbo and slam into the opposition, and they'll go flying, landing in ways that will make you grimace worse than watching those nutshot clips on *America's Funniest Home Videos*. Helmets rocket off heads, and stay on the ice for the rest of the period. With all these beat-downs, someone's bound to take it personal. Fights in Hitz are a great break in the action, as you block, grab, and slug your way to the penalty box. There are even Mortal Kombat-style uppercuts.

Graphically, Hitz has examples of the good, bad, and ugly. The rinks are well done, with the most minute details. The crowds look great, being made up of five rows of animated polygonal fans. The ice surface's reflections are a bit too subtle, but the models give off some nice real-time shadows. Player models themselves look great – from the neck down. Faces are still very putty-like in appearance, but at least there is some mouth movement. Every skater also looks way too similar.

You like minigames, right? Hitz has those, too. These skill-building drills give you time goals for all the entertaining aspects of the game, from flooring three guys to slapping the snot out of a foe in hand-to-hand combat. You'll perfect the act of pass-and-shoot, or zig and zag around broken-ankled defenders.

Seeing how amazing EA Big's NBA Street was may have motivated Midway to work harder on its arcade titles. Hitz could knock silly all other games in this genre, and even take EA's NHL down a notch or two. Remember how cool Jam was the first time you played it? How about NFL Blitz? Get on at the ground floor with NHL Hitz, and flash that toothless grin with pride.

Hockey makes dentists see dollar signs



Don't mess with the goalie

"You're Wild, man. WILD!"

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 25

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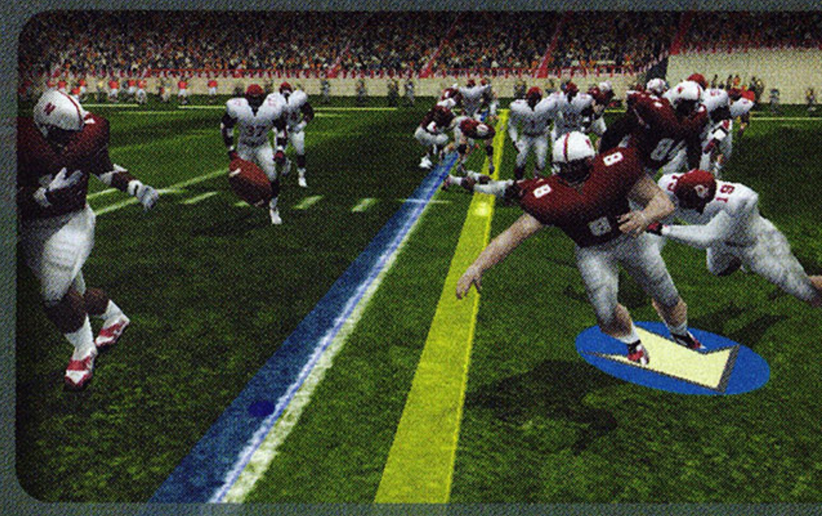
ROAD TO THE ROSE BOWL

Six truly collegiate modes of play including online.



Team specific playbooks with dream-shattering option plays.

Use the home crowd's rabid enthusiasm to gain momentum.

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ROSE BOWL 2002 AT&T NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

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RP
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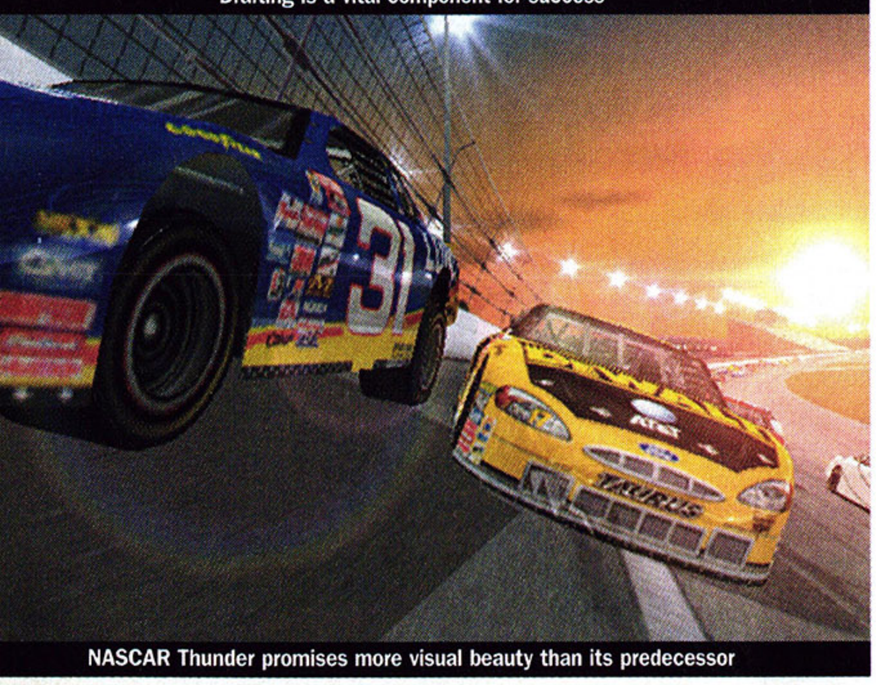
Experience a full field of 43 cars with no slowdown

Drafting is a vital component for success



NASCAR Thunder promises more visual beauty than its predecessor

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

NASCAR THUNDER 2002

NASCAR RACING RESTARTED

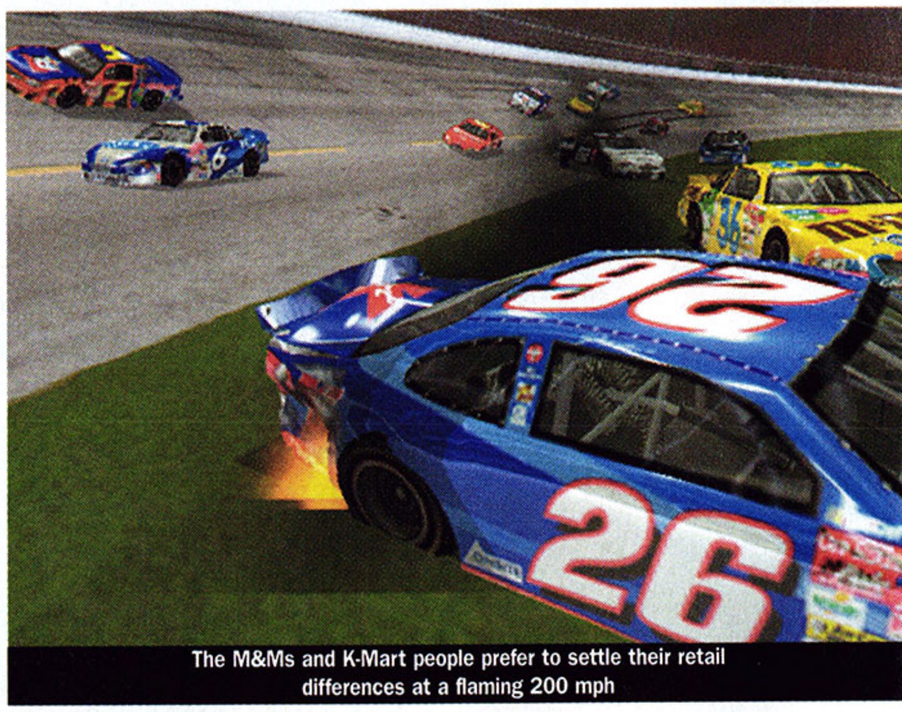
We don't have to tell you NASCAR is big business these days. You can't even spend a lazy Sunday sitting in your undies, sipping a cold brew, without coming across a moment of silence for the late Dale Earnhardt. More tributes are in store, but this time the PlayStation 2 and Xbox will be honored. NASCAR 2001 was a PS2 NASCAR game in name only, due to its astronomically high number of jaggies, but there are advances on the horizon.

Since 2001, EA has entrusted the series to its sports golden boy, Tiburon, maker of Madden. The result is a glorious relaunch of the franchise as marked by its new name, NASCAR Thunder. Says Tiburon's director of all things NASCAR, Ed Martin, "From the outset, Tiburon's goal was to break the stagnant mold that EA's NASCAR games had gotten into. Back of the envelope math says that our best-selling NASCAR game has reached 5 to 8% of the NASCAR console fan-base. So we're killing ourselves to appeal to the [remaining 95% of] NASCAR fans." Game Informer has gotten a grip on Thunder, and we can say that he ain't gonna fail.

For a start, the graphical glitches that were so evident in 2001 have been cleared up, especially along the fence where the problems were the most apparent. Should you clip the wall, you'll light up the crowd with more realistic, dynamic, and detailed crashes than before. You can also lay down rubber that can be revisited in later laps (the Xbox edition is especially good at such persistent effects). Particularly cool was how the CPU's AI creates crashes of its own, meaning that pileups are lurking behind every corner. Par for the Tiburon course, Thunder excels in its Career features. Create your own car to attract real NASCAR sponsors, win all the cash and awards you can carry, unlock alternate paint schemes as well as Busch drivers, and more. As Martin puts it, "You're Rick Hendrick and Jeff Gordon all rolled into one!" Given that the title already is the first to give you a full 43-car field and all 23 Winston tracks, it's only natural the Career mode is just as deep. Equally exciting are the reflections painting all the cars – especially when it's night and the real-time lighting effects play with the bright track lights on the top of your vehicle.

Starting down that long road himself is up-and-coming NASCAR driver and Thunder advisor Ryan Newman. He told GI that the game's acceleration and lines into the turns were just as he'd take them, and was also impressed with the accuracy of the tracks' lap times. He even went so far as to say that Tiburon's renditions of the tracks prepared him for race day, whether on the super speedways or the tighter courses. NBC does a similar run-through with the title on its ThunderMotion pre-race show every week.

With NBC and Fox letting more and more viewers get a look in on NASCAR's escalating popularity, it's only right that us gamers should get a proper taste of it, too. EA's appointment of NASCAR Thunder to Tiburon is a draft we'll gladly follow to the top of the pack.



The M&Ms and K-Mart people prefer to settle their retail differences at a flaming 200 mph

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** TIBURON ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER

PLAYSTATION 2

SHAUN PALMER'S PRO SNOWBOARDER

CHILLING THE SPORTS REVOLUTION

Much like Electronic Arts did with mainstream sports, Activision is attempting to monopolize the action sports genre. Through rapid expansion, by the end of 2002 Activision will have released games based on skateboarding, BMX, surfing, snowboarding, and wakeboarding. To ensure each release can stand on its own, attract gamers, and simply crush the competition, Activision has enlisted the top developers within the respective fields to create product of Pro Skater caliber. For Shaun Palmer's video game debut, UEP Systems, the snowboarding masters who brought us Cool Boarders, have been signed, and even with the title in the early Alpha stages, it looks outstanding. Interestingly, UEP Systems has creative freedom in many aspects of development, but as we're seeing, Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder follows Neversoft's control schematic and overall design.

While we wouldn't want it any other way, we have noticed one problem with this process. With Tony Hawk leading the way, from what we've seen thus far, developers are using Neversoft's last game, not the one they're working on now, as a template. For example, Mat Hoffman felt more like Tony Hawk 1 than it did Tony Hawk 2. When a Tony Hawk fan ventures into the world of BMX, it doesn't feel new, but rather a spin-off of a classic game. While Shaun Palmer takes full advantage of the PlayStation 2's graphical capabilities to create such effects as rippling clothing, the design closely mimics that of Tony 2. In such, the Manual is in place, as are Sloppy and Perfect landings. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but when Tony 3 releases a month later and one-ups its predecessor, where does that leave Shaun Palmer?

In UEP's quest to mimic Tony, one of the major hurdles it had to tackle was that the player is always going downhill – opposed to the go any-which-way flatland of Pro Skater. Early on, we speculated that you'd have to complete your goals in one swoop. This is not the case. All throughout the stages, UEP has littered snowmobiles and lifts that will bring you back to the mountain top. Veering away from Tony's module ever so slightly, every snowboarder is fitted with accurate attributes. In the Pro Skater games, the statistics can be maxed for every athlete. In Shaun Palmer, the max levels are different for each boarder and are based on their skills.

While the gameplay does have more of an arcade, not-so-authentic feel to it, UEP hasn't gone to the extreme like EA did with SSX. All of the stages are somewhat accurate re-creations of real-world locations like Aspen, Kirkwood, and Donner Ski Ranch. The levels are filled with grindable areas, hidden routes, and objects that can be smashed – just like...well...you know the game.

One particular aspect we were floored by was multiplayer. Along with the mandatory Horse, UEP has created a truly revolutionary game called Push. As you compete against a player in horizontal or vertical split-screen, when you land a trick, the size of the opponents' screen shrinks, and yours expands. Much like a tug-o-war, the advantage switches hands countless times, with players surviving even with their window being just a sliver. The game is won when a player captures the entire screen.

We were actually quite pleased with the progress of Pro Snowboarder, and were amazed at how closely it follows its four-wheeled father. Activision says the game is right on track to release sometime in October.

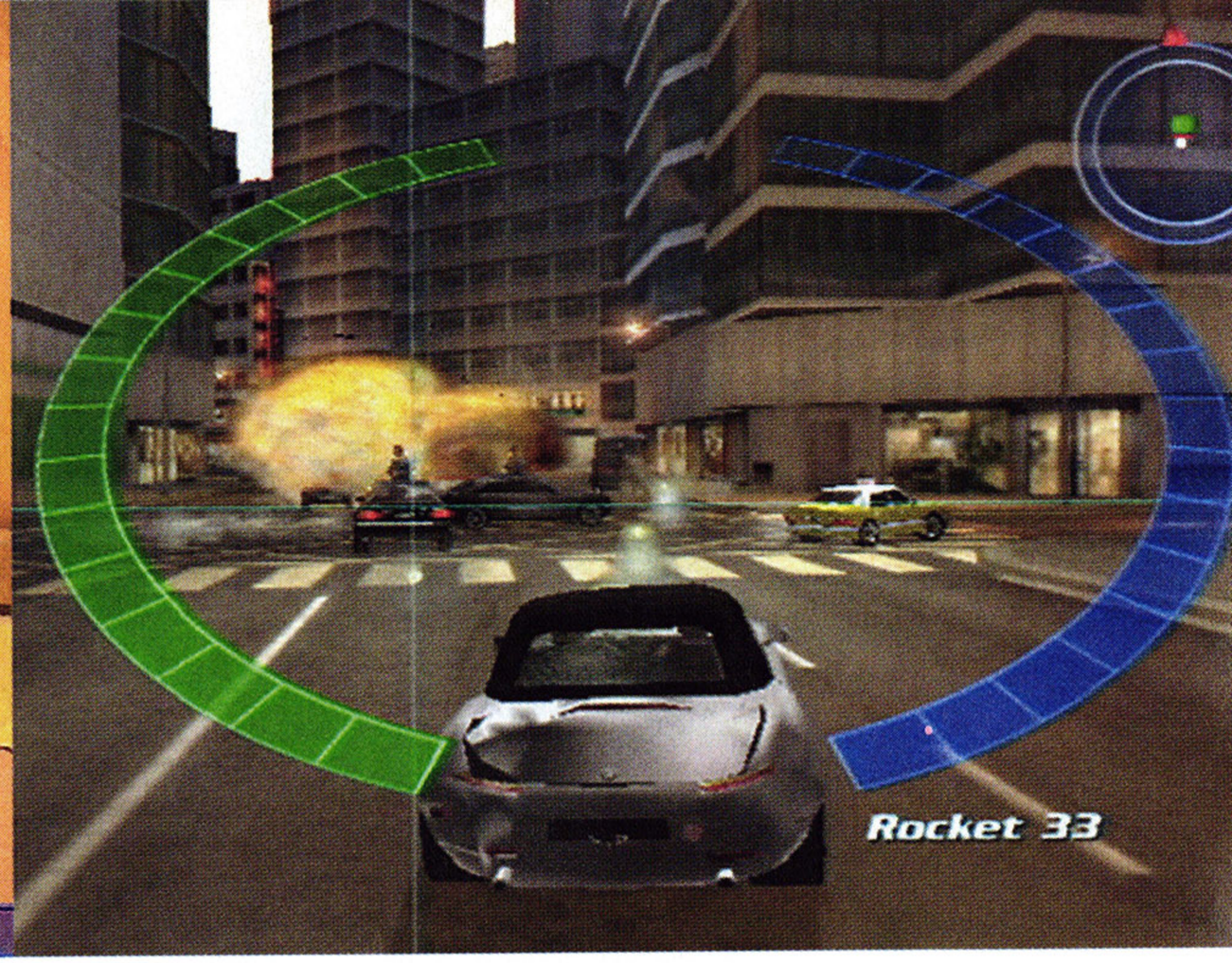
Vehicles are placed throughout to bring you back to the top of the hill

Break into the lodge and grind your little heart out

What would a Tony Hawk spin-off be without the Manual?

The new multiplayer game, Push, is innovative and incredibly fun

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** UEP SYSTEMS ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER



This electromagnetic pulse weapon can disable enemy vehicles

James infiltrates the Rebel base on Hoth

"She's breathtaking: it's a pity she has to die."

PLAYSTATION 2

JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE

WHERE'S GEORGE LAZENBY?

Although it didn't make our E3 Best of Show list, Agent Under Fire made a big impression among the GI staff, and whet our appetite for more details on this upcoming blockbuster. The storied Bond legacy, built on such masterpieces as GoldenEye and The World Is Not Enough, comes with a lot of expectations from the gaming public. Fortunately for us, Agent Under Fire should deliver the top drawer first-person action we've come to expect, while adding some well-done driving stages to the mix.

Agent Under Fire is not based on any specific Bond movie, leaving the developers free to construct their own plot from scratch. The press kit even goes so far as to call the storyline "completely new and original." So...what have these creative geniuses come up with? Well, you'll be surprised to learn that James is – get this – on a mission to take down an evil criminal mastermind named Malprave who plans to take over the world with an army of clones. Sounds pretty much like every Bond movie ever made to us, but who's counting? Derivative or not, the story will offer up all the witty repartee and innuendo that is the hallmark of the series, and provide a break from the hectic combat.

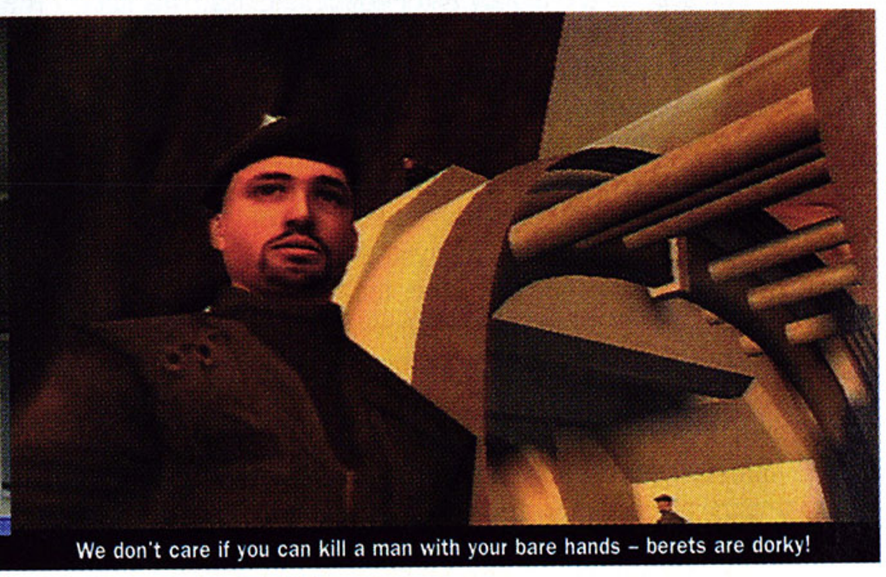
All told, there are 12 multiple-stage missions, encompassing every element of the Bond tradition, from stealth to gunplay to the use of various Q gadgets like the grappling hook and night vision glasses. The first-person levels, which are the bulk of the gameplay experience, look rock solid and make the most of the PlayStation 2's power to render fast and complex action. The only qualm we have with the game at press time is a rather clumsy default control scheme, which EA promises is not final. In any case, the controls will be totally customizable by the player in the final build, so this shouldn't be much of an issue.

While we knew the first-person levels would be hot, we were very impressed by the driving ones. Looking to achieve the highest level of gameplay possible, the Bond team farmed out the development of the vehicle-based levels to EA Canada, the people responsible for the Need for Speed series. These able racing veterans have crafted a very playable driving engine, and implemented missions that combine the best elements of Driver with the car combat of the Twisted Metal series. To add even more variety to the already-diverse package, there are some levels that allow you take the gunner position on a tank, while your companion drives. These stages morph the game into a track-based shooter, suggestive of playing a heavy artillery version of Pokémon Snap. If all goes to plan, the developers estimate that about 40 percent of the game will be vehicle-based.

As you can see, Agent Under Fire is looking better by the day, and might even surpass the standard set by its storied forbears. Unless the developers are shaken off this path to greatness, we expect to see this one cause quite a stir at retail this Christmas.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** WINTER 2001

When dot-com layoffs turn ugly



We don't care if you can kill a man with your bare hands – berets are dorky!

PC

GLOBAL OPS

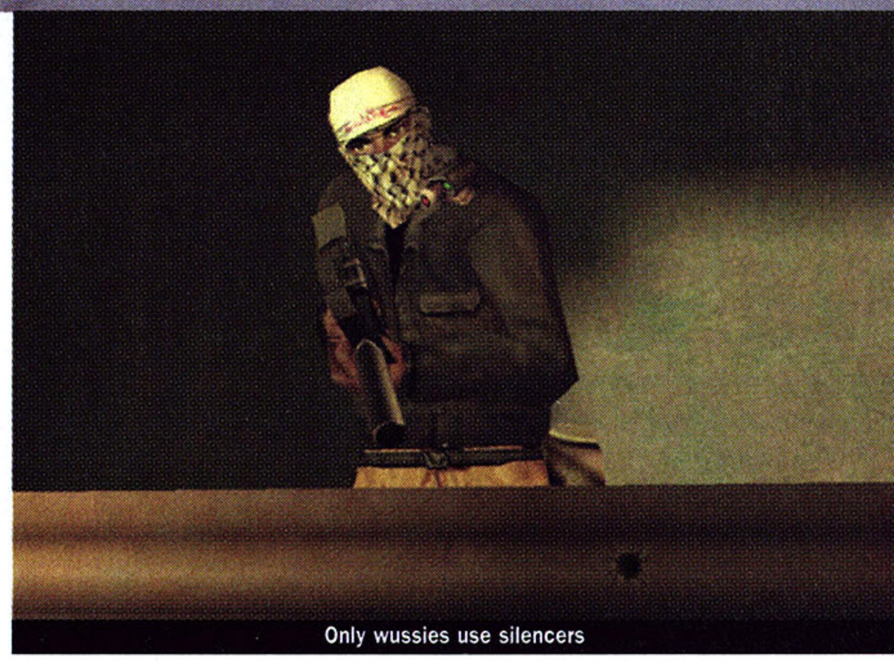
TIME FOR BLASTIN'

It's hard to deny that online first-person shooter games don't come much better than Counter-Strike. Luckily for everyone who has ever played and loved that wonderful game, Electronic Arts realized this as well. In a shrewd move, EA was able to persuade the team responsible for creating the original Counter-Strike mod to make a similar game for them. During a recent visit to Camp EA in San Francisco, Game Informer was able to take in the progress made by Barking Dog on this gigantic undertaking.

Much like CS, Global Ops will pit two teams of 12 against each other amid real-world hot spots such as Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Beirut, and the South China Seas. Each of the ten-plus locations will feature seamless integration between building interiors and terrain, as well as highly detailed model and structure rendering. There will be over 25 elite fighting forces based on authentic groups from around the world ranging from special forces units to guerilla factions. Also featured will be a specialty class system which will offer gamers the opportunity to choose from six customizable units including sniper, recon, medic, and heavy gunner positions. Each player will be able to use any weapon in the game, but there may be penalties for using a piece that isn't in your selected range of knowledge. For example, you may choose to be a sniper, and in the heat of battle you're forced to commandeer a machine gun. You'll be much less effective with it than your heavy gunner partner who is laying at your feet bleeding.

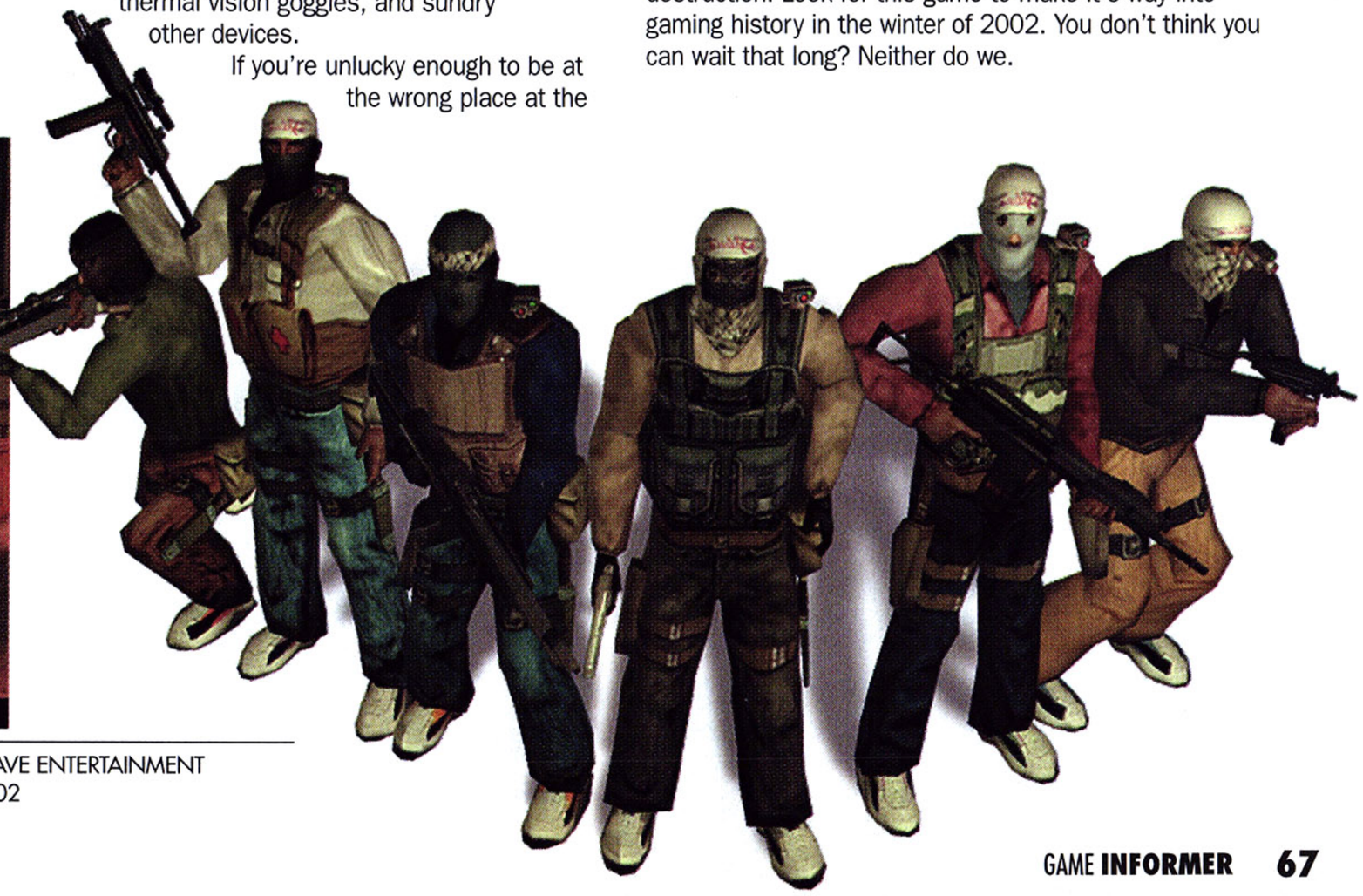
To make sure there are plenty of choices for everyone when it comes to weapons selection, Barking Dog has included over 30 real weapons including hand guns, sub-machine guns, shotguns, sniper rifles, anti-tank weaponry, and more. As an added bonus to all of this firepower, weapon ballistics are accurately modeled, allowing troopers to shoot through walls and ceilings depending on the distance to the target and the caliber of the weapon they're carrying. Impressive. The fun doesn't stop there, however. You'll also be given the option to use grenades, night and thermal vision goggles, and sundry other devices.

If you're unlucky enough to be at the wrong place at the wrong time and get yourself killed, you'll be placed in on a troop transport of sorts which will reinsert you into the game at a predetermined time – be that 30 seconds or three minutes – it's up to the sysop of the server. The way you're inserted will depend on the type of map you're playing. In some areas you'll arrive via parachute or helicopter, others may reinforce using APC or beach assault craft. There will be plenty of ways to find yourself on the troop transport with other resurrected teammates. Mission types will range from the familiar bomb diffusing to base destruction. Look for this game to make it's way into gaming history in the winter of 2002. You don't think you can wait that long? Neither do we.



Only wussies use silencers

There will be some great environments



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 24-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS/CRAVE ENTERTAINMENT
■ **DEVELOPER** BARKING DOG STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** FIRST QUARTER 2002

PLAYSTATION 2

OKAGE: SHADOW KING

WE WANT SOME OF WHAT THEY'RE SMOKING

Okage: Shadow King, an odd-looking RPG, has been flying under the radar for a few months now, but is catching some glances from the gaming press with its very unique graphical look and turn-based battle system. Taking obvious inspiration from Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before *Christmas*, Okage's outrageous character designs are an intriguing mix of the whimsical and macabre, presenting gamers with a welcome alternative to the familiar anime visual style of most role-playing games.

The game's protagonist is Ari, a young boy who must do the bidding of Stan, an unlikely-named evil king who was accidentally unleashed from the underworld by Ari's father. In order to save Ari's sister from a ghost, Ari gives Stan his shadow, and thus is enslaved to the evil monarch. Stan then sends Ari on a quest to vanquish the seven rival demon kings that occupy the land. This intriguing premise will surely lead to some surprising plot twists, as Ari and his group traverse the land, engaging in more traditional turn-based enemy encounters. Along the way, Ari will learn hundreds of new attacks, spells, and weapons, and search for more than 150 items hidden across the landscape. RPG fans looking for a little something different should keep an eye out for this strange game.

We have no idea what's going on in this picture, but it sure looks suspicious

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ **RELEASE** FALL

DREAMCAST

PROPELLER ARENA AVIATION BATTLE CHAMPIONSHIP

GIVING PROPS TO DREAMCAST SUPPORTERS

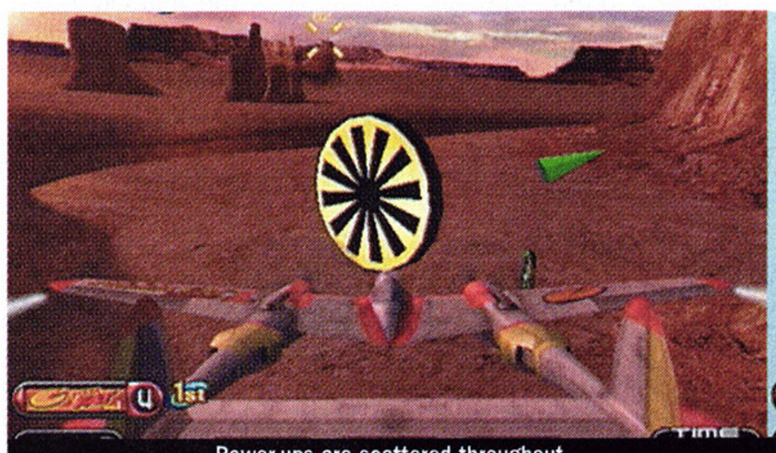
Put an ordinary flight game in front of console gamers and they'll turn around and run, become short of breath, and cry until they pass out. Thankfully, Sega's Propeller Arena is not an ordinary flight game. Rather, it is an intense arcade shooting experience, loaded with all the bells and whistles that make AM2 games great.

At its base, Propeller Arena is a vehicular combat title featuring dogfighting aircraft in a frenzied deathmatch. The teams to choose from are some of the most bizarre you could possibly imagine, such as the Shameless Cats, Hex Candy, and the husky Pizza Fat. Voiceovers accompany every action, and lend even more personality to the crews.

Gameplay is similar to most driving games on Dreamcast, with the addition of weaponry. Machine guns are your main means of attack. These planes must be built of balsa wood, because they collapse after five or so direct hits. Power-ups are located all over, floating ominously and defying gravity. They're more for screwing with your opponent's head than blowing him to bits, though.

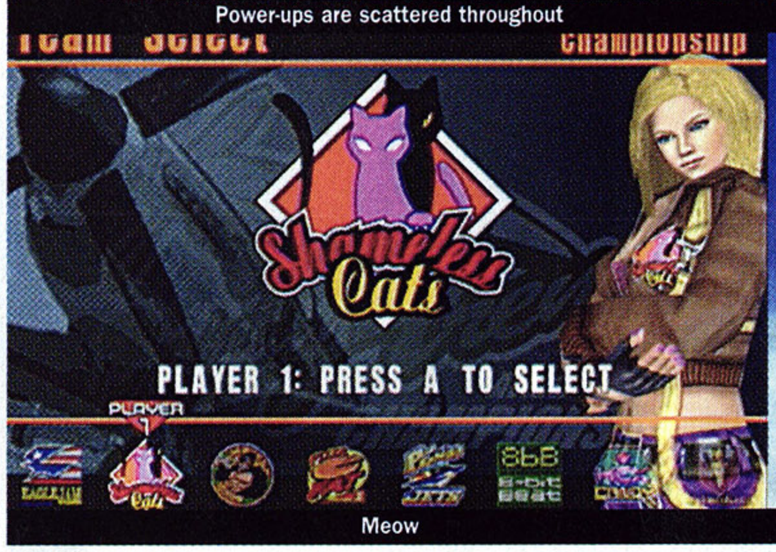
Adding legs to this arcade title are a plethora of bonus rounds. These dozens of tasks are extremely varied, from the typical "fly through all the rings before time is up" mission, to Simon Says with the plane's tricks. You also get to play hero by destroying missiles aimed straight at nuclear plants, or shooting down a doomsday comet.

One of Propeller Arena's most exciting features is the promise of online play. It's an ideal Internet game, since you can sneak up on your enemies from any angle. It's a shame it wasn't released while Dreamcast was more of a console contender, because Propeller Arena has the potential to be a blockbuster fun title. As is, though, it stands as a great gift to those who have stuck with Dreamcast to the end.



Power-ups are scattered throughout

Pizza Fat floats home a failure



Meow

Hopefully it will break up to the size of a Chihuahua's head

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** AM2 ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 19

PC

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC IV

MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

There's always room for a well made Might and Magic title. Even the extremely slow and load-laden PlayStation version saw a modicum of success. Thus, it seems the stage is perfectly set for this offering which will feature updated graphics, gameplay, and control. The game will utilize an entirely new engine to help players tear around giant new maps with their armies as they fight enemies, capture towns, cultivate resources, and track down artifacts in their mission to rule the world.

The story opens as Erathia is destroyed by an enormous disaster, and Emilia Nighthaven loses everything. She finds herself an orphan in a strange world, and begins to organize other survivors in an effort to defend against marauders who would hunt down and demolish the weak. As her influence spreads, King Magnus appears and demands Nighthaven's allegiance. It seems the king has the capability to enslave the minds of those near him. How can Emilia defend herself and her kingdom? That's where you'll come in.

With 11 Hero classes to choose from at the onset, you'll begin building your armies and gathering other Heroes as you attempt to push back the evil forces of King Magnus and his allies. You'll notice from the shots provided that the landscapes are jam-packed with different interactive items. Over 300 structures will be made available to explore, as well as more than 60 creature types to control.

Featuring seven intricate campaigns, a skill system for improving your Heroes, a new magic system, and the option of running the game at a resolution of 1200x1080, this Might and Magic sequel seems to have all the right moves. Barring an appearance from Tom Cruise, we should be seeing this one on shelves right around Turkey Day.

You'll be in several different climates

This battle looks to be about over

Heroes will be active participants in each conflict

Inside a town

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO ■ **DEVELOPER** NEW WORLD COMPUTING ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 25

PC

ROGUE SPEAR: BLACK THORN

FIRE IN YOUR HOLE

A fad has begun, if you hadn't noticed. It's a fad that shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. The military sim first-person shooter is all the rage, and there's nothing you can do about it. Not that you'd want to, unless you have serious problems with gun-toting crazy people wandering around assorted maps while blowing people away. What's wrong with that? Not one little thing, and Black Thorn is here to show you why.

As what is essentially an add-on to the wildly popular Rogue Spear series, Black Thorn is being heralded as the most complete mission pack for this close-quarters simulation series to date. When the game unfolds, you'll find there has been a rash of copycat terrorism exploding around the globe. As part of the elite RAINBOW team (whose mission it is to stop terrorists worldwide) it is learned that these are not random acts – there is actually one mastermind behind everything, and you must unravel his secrets to bring him to justice.

Ten new single-player missions will await your discerning eye, as well as six new exclusively multiplayer maps. To help you in your exploits, 13 new weapons have been put at your disposal which will include the deadly M60 machine gun. Get ready to dust off your thinking cap and exercise your trigger finger, because Black Thorn will be looking you in the face before you can say, "I love the smell of napalm in the morning."

"Don't run. I know you smelled up the bathroom again."

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 9

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10 - Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

9 - Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

8 - Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

7 - Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

6 - Limited appeal. There are always a few people that will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

5 & BELOW - Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT
What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS
How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND
Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY
Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

ENTERTAINMENT
Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE
The longevity of the title.
- **High** - You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** - Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** - Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** - After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** - You'll quit playing before you complete the game.

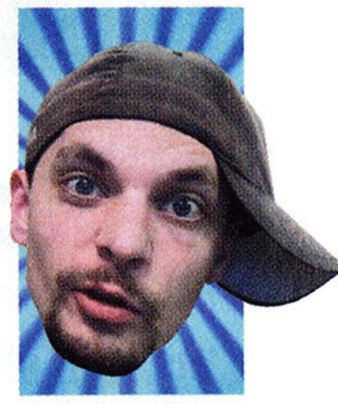
EC — Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.
E — Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.
T — Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.
M — Content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.
AO — Content suitable only for adults.
RP — Product is awaiting final rating.

ANDY
Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, Strategy **Interests:** New Furniture, New Computers, Sleep, Hangover Cures **Dislikes:** Built To Spill's New Album (Despite All Expectations), Qwest DSL Service, Real Estate **Current Favorite Games:** EverQuest, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, ICO, Advance Wars

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

REINER
Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Sports **Interests:** Star Wars, Comic Books, Casually Hanging Out With George Lucas At Skywalker Ranch (OH MY GOD!!!!) **Dislikes:** Skywalker Ranch's Overabundance Of Security, Lucas Leaving To Pen Episode III **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Phantasy Star Online: Version 2, Gran Turismo 3

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 522 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



JAY
Handle: The Gonzo Gamer **Expertise:** Strategy, Puzzle, RPGs **Interests:** Dungeons & Dragons, Comic Books, Wrestling, Final Fantasy Games **Dislikes:** Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within (Stick To Games, Sakaguchi!) **Current Favorite Game:** Saiyuki: Journey West, Final Fantasy V, Advance Wars

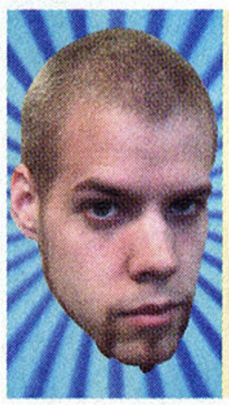
Jay lives in his mom's basement just like you. Adding further fuel to his archetypal nerd fire is his love for comic books, metal miniature painting, and twice weekly pencil-and-paper RPG sessions. In fact, he's such a D&D fanatic, he hates professional football simply because it interrupts his Sunday gaming schedule. Par for the course, his favorite games are often obscure ones. He is also one damn handsome man.

KRISTIAN
Handle: The Game Dawg **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** The Crystal Method, Snatch, Herbalizer, Nova **Dislikes:** His Roommate's Shoes, OPEC, Canadian Accents, Highway 62 East Between France Ave. And Portland Ave. **Current Favorite Games:** WWII Online, Tetris, Ikari Warriors

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop–ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.

MATT
Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** Racing, Puzzle, Action/Adventure **Interests:** Legally Blonde, Watching HBO In Hotel Rooms, Free Continental Breakfasts, Drinking **Dislikes:** Early Morning Flights, Chain Restaurants, Expense Reports, Nicotine **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Jak and Daxter, Escape From Monkey Island, Desperados

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.



JUSTIN
Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Platform, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Columbia House, Saunas, Reverse Springboard Moonsaults, NOFX **Dislikes:** Crowded Pools, Bad Bumps, Expired Gas Station Milk **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, NBA Street, Final Fantasy IX, Mario Kart Super Circuit, Dead or Alive 3

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He doubles as wrestler Helmut Von Strauss in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Though the youngest on staff, Justin's tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.

KATO
Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Action/Adventure, RPGs **Interests:** A Lambretta Li 150 Series II, Not Living By Noisy College Poop-Heads **Dislikes:** Companies That Don't Want Their Game Included In The Football Feature, Customer Service Monkeys **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Gran Turismo 3, Alien Front Online, Tron

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out at as reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

action – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet

adventure – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent

board – A term we use for games like Jeopardy! and Mario Party

CG – Computer-Generated Graphics

crunktastic – Really good

DC – Sega Dreamcast

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games

fighting – A term we use for games like Street Fighter and Dead or Alive

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like Doom, GoldenEye, & Unreal Tournament

framerate – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement

frontend – A game's menus and options

GB – Game Boy

GBA – Game Boy Advance

GBC – Game Boy Color

GC – GameCube

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like StarCraft or Red Alert 2

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet

jaggies – Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay

minigame – A small, simple game within a larger one

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap

N64 – Nintendo 64

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

platform – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

PS-X – Sony PlayStation

puzzle – A term we use for games like Tetris and Chu Chu Rocket

racing – A term we use for games like Gran Turismo and Mario Kart

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior

SG – Sega Genesis

shooter – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradius

SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

sports – A term we use for games like Madden NFL

SS – Sega Saturn

strategy – A term we use for games like Command & Conquer and Fallout Tactics

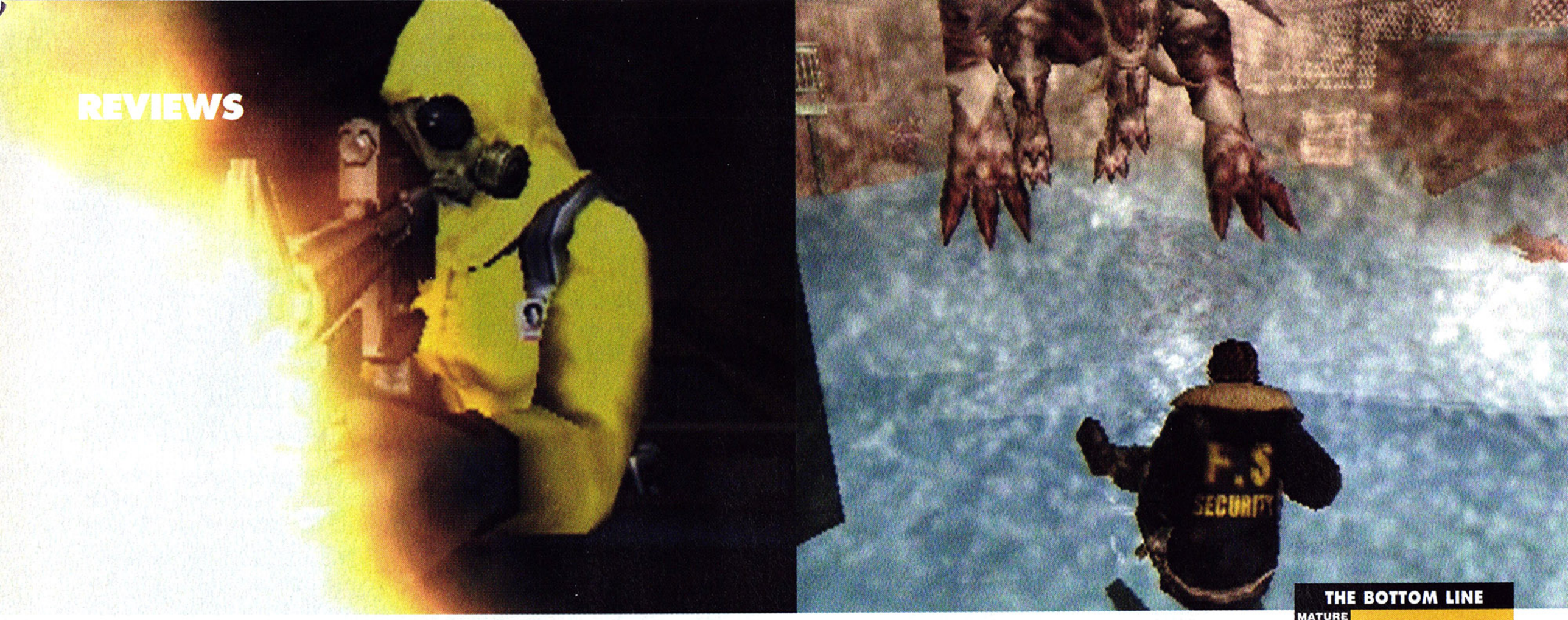
third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer

GAME OF THE MONTH

MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Game Boy Advance already has a power-packed lineup, but none of the titles have been able to bring Game of the Month honors to the system until now. Mario Kart Super Circuit transports everything you love about kart racing to a portable, and leaves out everything you don't. Take the banana out of your tailpipe and read our review on GBA's most stunning achievement. The king of kart is back, baby. Page 93

MARIO KART™ SUPER CIRCUIT™



PLAYSTATION 2

EXTERMINATION

YOU WANT BLOOD, YOU GOT IT

"...you should play Extermination. You'll like it, at least until something better comes along."

It would be pretty easy to lambaste Extermination as a Resident Evil rip-off, since the game clings as tightly to the Capcom family jewels as a pair of Speedos. However, this would force me to ignore the enjoyable hours that I squandered playing this title. Another mitigating factor is that the game's creator, Tokuro Fujiwara, was involved in the original Resident Evil project back when he was a Capcom employee. Still, a clone is a clone, so Extermination will stand in history alongside such other sturdy, but ultimately forgettable, survival horror Xeroxes as Covert Ops, Fear Effect, and Galerians.

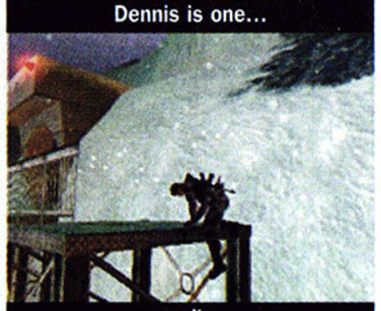
The one element that was to set Extermination apart from the pack, the "panic action" events, proves to be a bit less groundbreaking than we had been led to believe. These sequences, which were supposedly similar to Shenmue's Quick Time Events, are actually little more than timed jumps. There aren't any that require complex button combos, and usually the timing isn't really difficult either. It's a nice break from the static nature of Resident Evil, but hardly a revelation.

Graphically, Extermination isn't a grand slam, and resembles early PS2 titles like X-Squad and Oni in its rather drab industrial environments. Now, it's a good bit prettier than those titles, but there's only so much you can do with gray hallways and warehouses. Likewise, the character models are not particularly impressive or unique. A visual bright spot is the character animations, which are very fluid, especially during the panic action sequences.

The gameplay is solid, although I do think every developer should make a pledge to use the power of the PS2, ensuring that characters can run and shoot at the same time. We HAVE the technology, people. Control is good enough not to be a problem, which is as good as it gets in these types of games. One really cool new element is your character's modular machine gun, which has upgrade slots for a flamethrower and other secondary fire functions, as well as the choice of single shot or three-shot burst trigger settings.

Now, I realize I might sound overly critical, so let me reassure you that the score above isn't a misprint. Extermination is a good game. It's fun, and had me staying at work late to see how much more of the adventure I could unravel. Sure it's pedestrian and predictable, but who cares? It delivers the goods as promised; nothing more, nothing less. You want blood? You got it. You want door and key puzzles? Soup's on. Scary aliens? Natch. It's like a well made summer movie. You buy your ticket for big scares and bloody action, not innovation. If you love survival horror, you should play Extermination. You'll like it, at least until something better comes along. – **MATT**

Dennis is one...

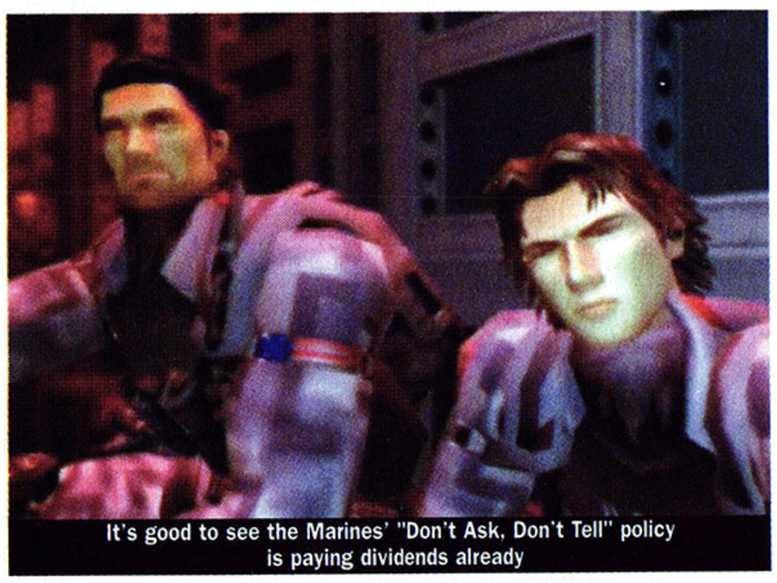


...agile...

...dude

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** DEEP SPACE/SCEA ■ **RELEASE** JULY 24

Dennis is attacked by a cast member of *Fraggle Rock*



It's good to see the Marines' "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is paying dividends already

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.25

- **Concept:** It's not survival horror – it's panic adventure, err...horror action...scary crazy...no... survival panic...umm...panic action! Yeah, that's the ticket!
- **Graphics:** Tight, yet generic
- **Sound:** Features dialogue so wooden I swear they must have hired out-of-work soap actors to do voice-overs
- **Playability:** Maintains the status quo, but I still hate not being able to run and shoot at the same time
- **Entertainment:** If you've already played Onimusha and Code: Veronica X, here's your next game
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Mixing the styles of Syphon Filter, Tomb Raider, and Resident Evil, Extermination doesn't quite evoke the emotion that those titles did. It's a sweet game nonetheless, and playing is far from a chore. Extermination's control is dead-on, and the story holds your interest. As lame as these alien cockroaches may be, there's a bit of nervous tension behind the noise they make and the large numbers they appear in. Not survival horror tension, mind you, but it still gets the heart beating at an accelerated rate. The gun-mounted light is a good idea, and the PS2 helps create some nice effects with it. Solid is probably the best word to describe Extermination. If your pockets are deep enough for a solid game, then I say go for it – it won't disappoint. If you have a bit more discriminating taste, you won't lose sleep passing up this one while waiting a few months for Metal Gear Solid 2.

JUSTIN – 8

"Talking to yourself in a dark room is always a sign of a good game in my book, and ICO delivers just this kind of experience."

PLAYSTATION 2

ICO

MUST...SAVE...PRINCESS...

Over the last couple of months, the princess and I have become close friends. I have put in some serious time on this title, and even though its gameplay and puzzle solving isn't terribly complex, ICO is addicting nonetheless.

The gameplay will be fairly straightforward and familiar to fans of Tomb Raider, as Ico has the ability to climb up various objects, pick stuff up, pull switches, jump, wield a sword or stick, and call the princess. Combining these various skills enables you to work through wave after wave of puzzles where the basic goal is to get the princess and yourself out of the castle of the evil queen.

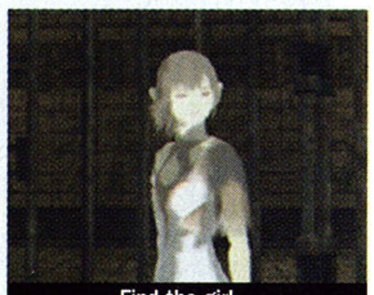
Obviously, saving the princess is the most compelling part of the game, and it's easy to find yourself enjoying her company as you cruise around. There were a couple of times where I was stymied by a puzzle, then turned around to see the princess had wandered off. This was followed by me asking, out loud, where she had run off to. Now I don't know about you, but I normally don't speak to my TV screen, and ICO had me talking to my television for hours on end. The game is that engrossing.

Even better than me speaking to the screen, though, is the fact that when she wandered off, she had gone to find the block I needed to solve the puzzle. To say the least, I was quite pleased with the princess.

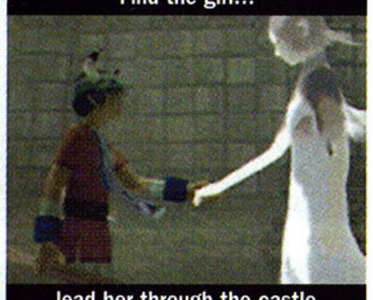
Talking to yourself in a dark room is always a sign of a good game in my book, and ICO delivers just this kind of experience.

That said, the game is really all about the journey, since once you know how to conquer an area you can fly through ICO fairly quickly. A seasoned gamer might even be able to get through this game in five hours or less on a first attempt, though it's not likely. For the average gamer, ICO is a 15-hour adventure and perhaps even longer if you're less expericed with adventure games. But whatever your skill level, ICO is definitely a game you should check out. There are just so many great aspects to the story, and there are anime-inspired graphics that you will enjoy almost every moment while you are playing this treasure.

In the end, I found this game compelling and highly entertaining, even though the puzzles are rather average and lack variety. Even if you don't like adventure games, ICO delivers a top-notch experience. Sure, if may borrow some from the Tomb Raider series, but it certainly isn't as tedious and is well worth playing. – **ANDY**



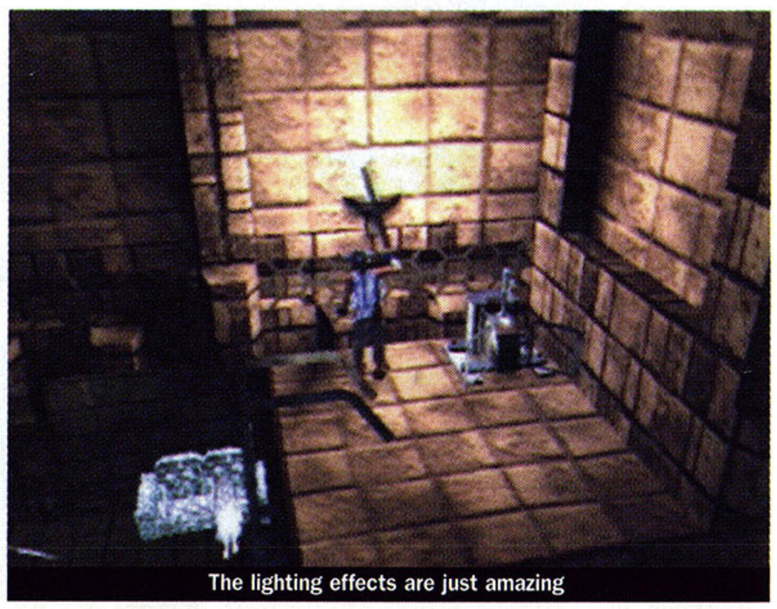
Find the girl...



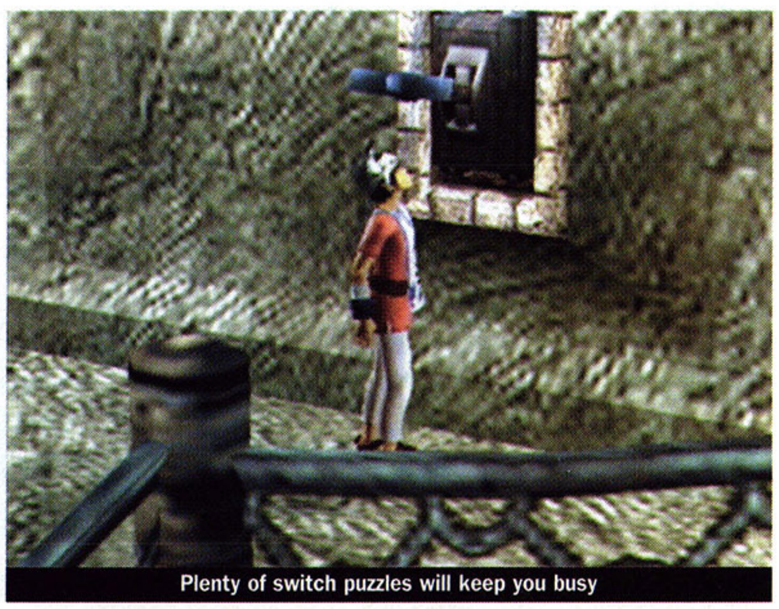
...lead her through the castle...

...to save her from the evil queen

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT INC ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 25



The lighting effects are just amazing



Plenty of switch puzzles will keep you busy

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

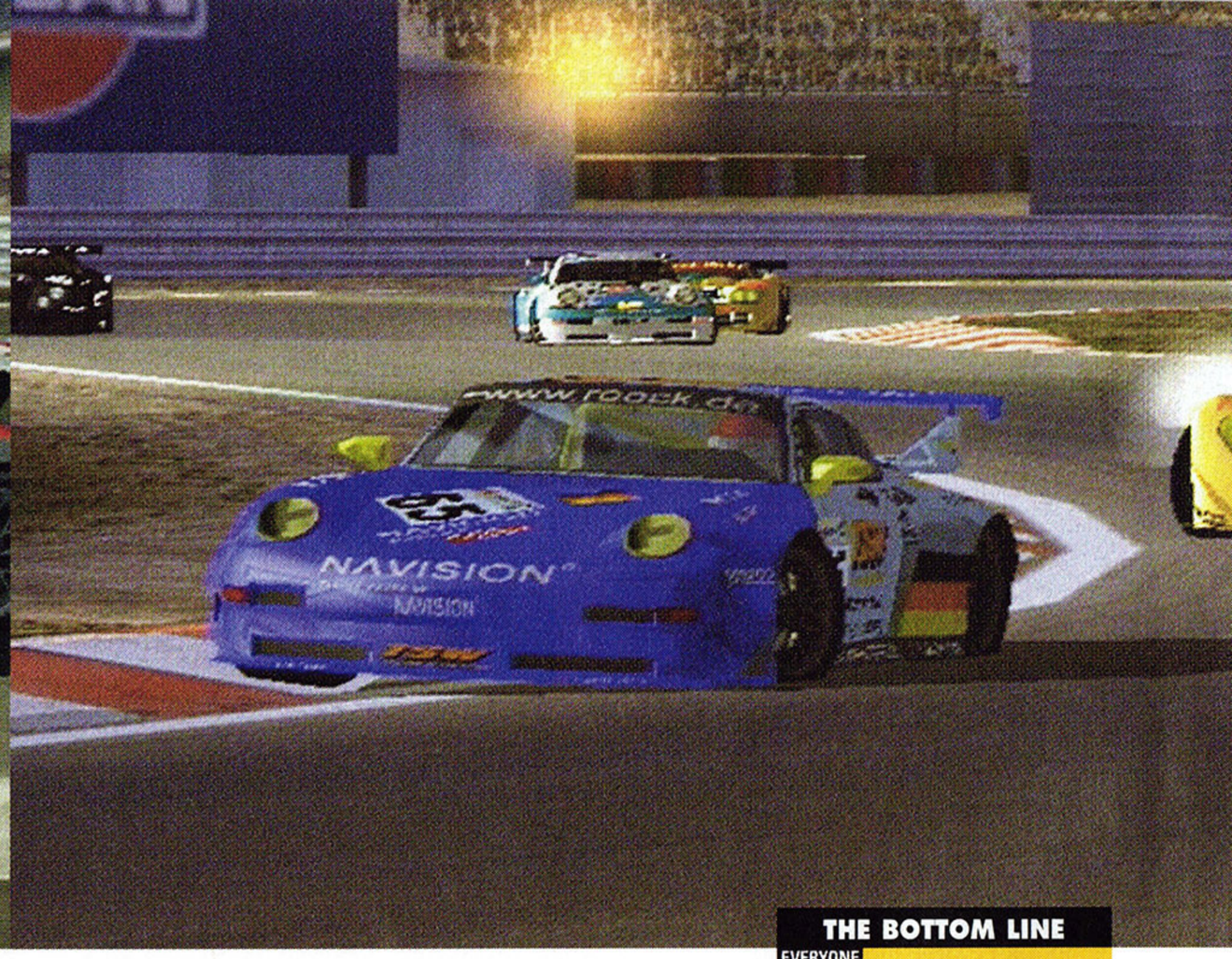
9

- **Concept:** Take Tomb Raider, remove the cumbersome controls, and add a beautiful princess to lead around the levels
- **Graphics:** The screenshots of this game don't do it justice. The use of motion blur and lighting creates some breathtaking environments
- **Sound:** Just enough to keep the mood mysterious
- **Playability:** Super easy controls that make it fun to explore
- **Entertainment:** Leading the princess around the level is a blast, and it gives the game a personality that is rare in the world of video gaming
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

ICO is Tomb Raider with an artistic flair. For those of you who are familiar with Lara Croft's exploits, the gameplay within ICO, primarily the puzzles, will seem very well acquainted. Rather than following in Eidos' footsteps, originality comes into play through the incorporation of the princess, a character who follows Ico throughout the stages. Much like calling a dog, Ico must summon the princess to follow him. Sometimes you'll need to grab her hand and run, yell out to her to jump, or pull her up onto a ledge. Through these actions, a host of innovative (and perplexing) gameplay elements are born. Thankfully, the character movements are incredibly smooth and environment interaction is seamless. Presentation wise, the animation is very lifelike, the effects are revolutionary, and the ambient sounds set the tone for the great adventure at hand.

REINER – 8.5



THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

PLAYSTATION 2

LE MANS 24 HOURS

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

"Le Mans 24 Hours is not a racing sim. Get over it, and enjoy it for the great racer it is."

First off, let me address the question that's on everyone's mind, and will pop up for every PlayStation 2 racer from here to the apocalypse: Yes, Gran Turismo 3 is the better race game. However, do not be a fool and let that fact prevent you from owning Le Mans 24 Hours. It's a worthwhile addition to any gamer's library.

I don't know much about the famous 24-hour race, but I once drove 21 hours straight from Key West to Greensboro, NC, and I was really freaking tired afterwards. I guess bleacher-loads of spectators would've enjoyed watching it at the end, as I vainly attempted to keep my car off of the gravel shoulder and my eyelids separated. Stick a few dozen more red-eyed drivers on the road, and things would get real interesting real quick.

Le Mans 24 Hours is not a racing sim. Get over it, and enjoy it for the great racer it is. You won't repeat the same race to pick up cash, or have a garage full of grocery grabbers. What this game has is horsepower. The sense of speed is remarkable, but you can't just gun it all the way to the finish. I don't think I've used my brakes so much in a game. Most racers are rather uneventful, as you just work your way to the front of the pack and try to hold onto your position. In Le Mans, you're battling hard just to keep the cars behind you from whipping past. Sure, there are plenty of dead spots where it's just you and the open road, but with 24 other cars (and great AI), you've constantly got someone breathing down your neck.

Believe it or not, Le Mans 24 Hours is true to its title. If your heart desires, you can race for a full 24 hours. The Le Mans race itself can be broken up into increments of 10, 24, or 240 minutes, or the whole shebang. Pit stops allow you to save your progress, so you don't have to fill your body with Bawls and No-Doz to sustain consciousness. If you're not ambitious enough, there are also quick races and tournaments.

Having a race that encompasses a full day creates the opportunity for lots of eye candy. Enter the big show, and you'll see day turn to night, then back into day, with all the effects these changes entail. Weather conditions evolve, as well. A light shower turns into a full-on storm as water hits the screen, and lights have an eerie, reflective glow. Perhaps the most impressive – and most subtle – of the graphical techniques is the sky itself. While not as photo-quality as GT 3's, clouds move independent of the rest of the environment.

I like my racers with gimmicks, such as San Francisco Rush and Destruction Derby. Le Mans is about as no-frills as a racer can be, but I still really enjoyed it. While 24 Hours won't topple GT 3, I still strongly urge that you to check it out. – **JUSTIN**

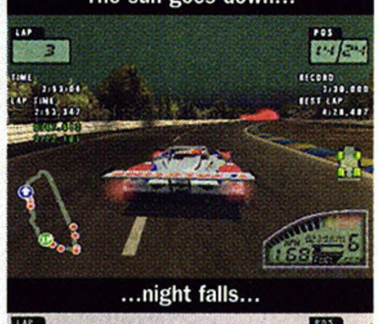
- **Concept:** A full day of racing, literally
- **Graphics:** Beautiful lighting and weather effects, and faboo car models. Still a bit inferior to GT3
- **Sound:** If your car's struggling, you'll hear your engine moan its disapproval. Average music
- **Playability:** One word: tight
- **Entertainment:** The battles for position are intense, and the entire package is a very worthy one
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

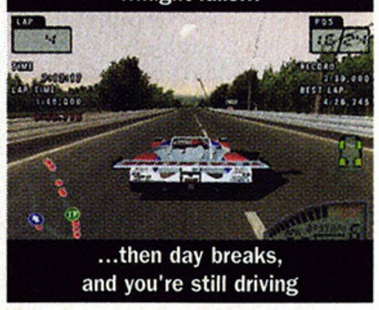
Who enjoys racing for 24 hours? Practically nobody, unless you're from Europe and used to putting in that kind of time just to get to a Kraftwerk show halfway across the continent. I care not for that kind of a drive, but that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy Le Mans 24 Hours. Do the game's long races compete with what Gran Turismo 3 brings to the table? Of course not, but Le Mans is more than just the gimmick of competing for extended periods of time. Infogrames has created a comfortable racing experience that is put over the top by some ferocious speeds. Besides, you'll never be lulled to sleep due to the deadly, twisted turns. Le Mans' car models show good reflections, but take a back seat to GT3's hyper-realistic showboats. All in all, I found the game to be a well-built ride – something that made going the distance much more palatable.

KATO – 7.75

The sun goes down...



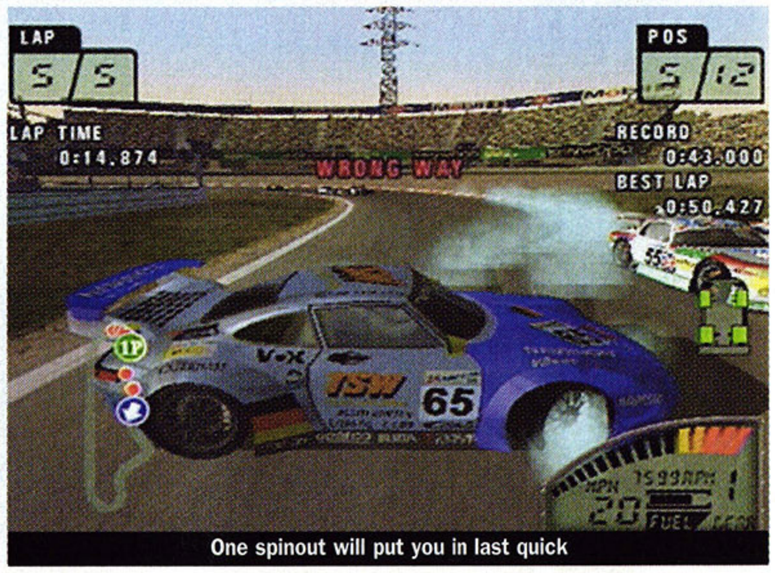
...night falls...



...then day breaks, and you're still driving

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** INFOGRAMES ■ **RELEASE** JULY 17

Your pit crew only works a few seconds per race



One spinout will put you in last quick

PLAYSTATION 2

RUNE: VIKING WARLORD

DOES RAGNAR ROCK?

"...it shines in the most unlikely of places – platforming and puzzles."

Handpicked by Odin as the sole defender of humanity, the young Viking warrior, Ragnar, must do everything in his power to ensure that the shadow creatures of the netherworld don't bring about Ragnarok – a war that will destroy the world. An exciting premise indeed, Rune's introductory moments leave you on the edge of your seat in eager anticipation as to what twists the next story break will render. Rather than fulfilling your desires, however, the game leaves you high and dry – almost completely forgetting that a story was ever attached. Storytelling, a curse upon the action genre no matter now crucial it may be, always takes the backseat to the gameplay. Rune's tale, although lacking a dynamic cinematic front, is terribly fascinating, yet after the first scene comes to a close, you won't catch a whiff of another crucial plot point for hours.

While it would be nice to be brought up to speed as to where or what may happen next, spending a significant amount of time with Rune's gameplay isn't such a bad thing. Ragnar's movements are very lifelike, consisting of over 7,000 frames of animation. Controlling these actions is an effortless task. Even though Rune is a third-person game, it runs on the Unreal engine, and its control configuration is constructed much like that within a first-person shooter. Unfortunately, this mechanic doesn't translate well when combat erupts. Just like a typical FPS, battles unfold with the player running in circles around the enemy, then jabbing in and attacking. While the battles create impressive visuals, like blood-soaked swords and torn garments, manhandling the action is a lackluster experience. Seeing that this is a Viking action game, I thought for sure combat would be Rune's strong suit. Oddly, as it struggles to deliver this aspect, it shines in the most unlikely of places – platforming and puzzles.

All the environments, several of which are exclusive to the PS2 version, are harrowing in design. If you're not stressing about the jump you're about to make onto a swinging plank, then you're probably sitting back, thinking, "How do I open that door?" Much like Tomb Raider, Rune loves to stump players with its perplexing switch puzzles. Don't worry, though, you won't be required to push a single box.

Along with the explicit gore, which even goes so far as to allow you to decapitate a foe then use the head as a weapon, Rune's graphical appeal is dark and decrepit, yet beautiful. Even though it doesn't live up to expectations, Rune has a bewitching charm to it. Action fans will surely get into it, but as a whole, Rune truly is the personification of mediocrity. — **REINER**

A plethora of weapons can be obtained...

...yet sometimes, a sword is no match for rune magic

Up to four players can compete in split-screen multiplayer

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION **■ PUBLISHER** TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE **■ DEVELOPER** HUMANHEAD STUDIOS **■ RELEASE** JULY 27

The Unreal engine delivers incredibly smooth movement

In addition to the hack n' slash tactics is expansive exploration – rivaling the likes of Tomb Raider

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M

7.25

- **Concept:** An enhanced PC port featuring exclusive levels and monsters
- **Graphics:** The texturing and resolution lack the sharpness of the PC version. The animation and lighting are just as gorgeous
- **Sound:** Tries to be evil and sadistic, but comes off as just plain sad
- **Playability:** FPS controls with a beautiful camera system
- **Entertainment:** The undistinguished action is nauseating, but quickly gets buried by the arduous platforming and tricky puzzles
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Perhaps my favorite part of Rune: Viking Warlord is the fact that you can basically work your way through the adventure without many hang-ups like hard monsters to fight or impossible puzzles. At the same time, however, this is one of the game's drawbacks. I was one of the rare folks who liked Warriors of Might & Magic, and one of the reasons I enjoyed it was the various quests you encountered and people you talked with during the adventure. Rune is basically all action – albeit very bloody and well-executed action. If you are looking for a fun action game without a whole lot of story to get in the way of the bloodshed, Viking Warlord definitely delivers. If you are looking for a little more brains with your brawn, there are better alternatives. Personally, I would rent this game and play until I got bored.

ANDY – 7

PLAYSTATION 2

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

CAN STORYTELLING OUTPLAY ACTION?

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

- **Concept:** The resuscitation of a lost gaming art
- **Graphics:** Nearly identical to the PC version, yet the loading times are longer and the framerate occasionally jumps
- **Sound:** The voice talent is perfect and the soundtrack fits the theme
- **Playability:** Basic user movement with a point-and-click interface
- **Entertainment:** If you can live without button mashing, the story within will keep you engrossed from beginning to end
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

Before developers could freely implement full-motion video and cinematic cutscenes into their games, the graphic adventure genre was the primordial storyteller. Even though the gameplay elements were crude and elementary, consisting of little more than point-and-click procedures, the story and vivid imagery were a notch above everything else on the market. While Sierra invested the most into this gaming genus, LucasArts tried its hand as well, eventually persevering with originality. Still clinging tightly to the prehistoric formula that put it on the map, LucasArts' resurrection of the Monkey Island series simply asks one question: Can storytelling rise above the need for action?

My answer is yes. If you know what you're getting into, the wacky dialogue, tongue-in-cheek innuendo, and dementia within Monkey Island's script will keep you thoroughly entertained and busting at the seams with laughter. Even though most of your time is spent conversing with swashbucklers and watching story breaks, challenge rears its head within hundreds of logic-defying puzzles. Monkey Island may not deliver a high level of interaction, but there's no denying that it's a great game and a nice change of pace. If you want to laugh, this title will keep you rolling.

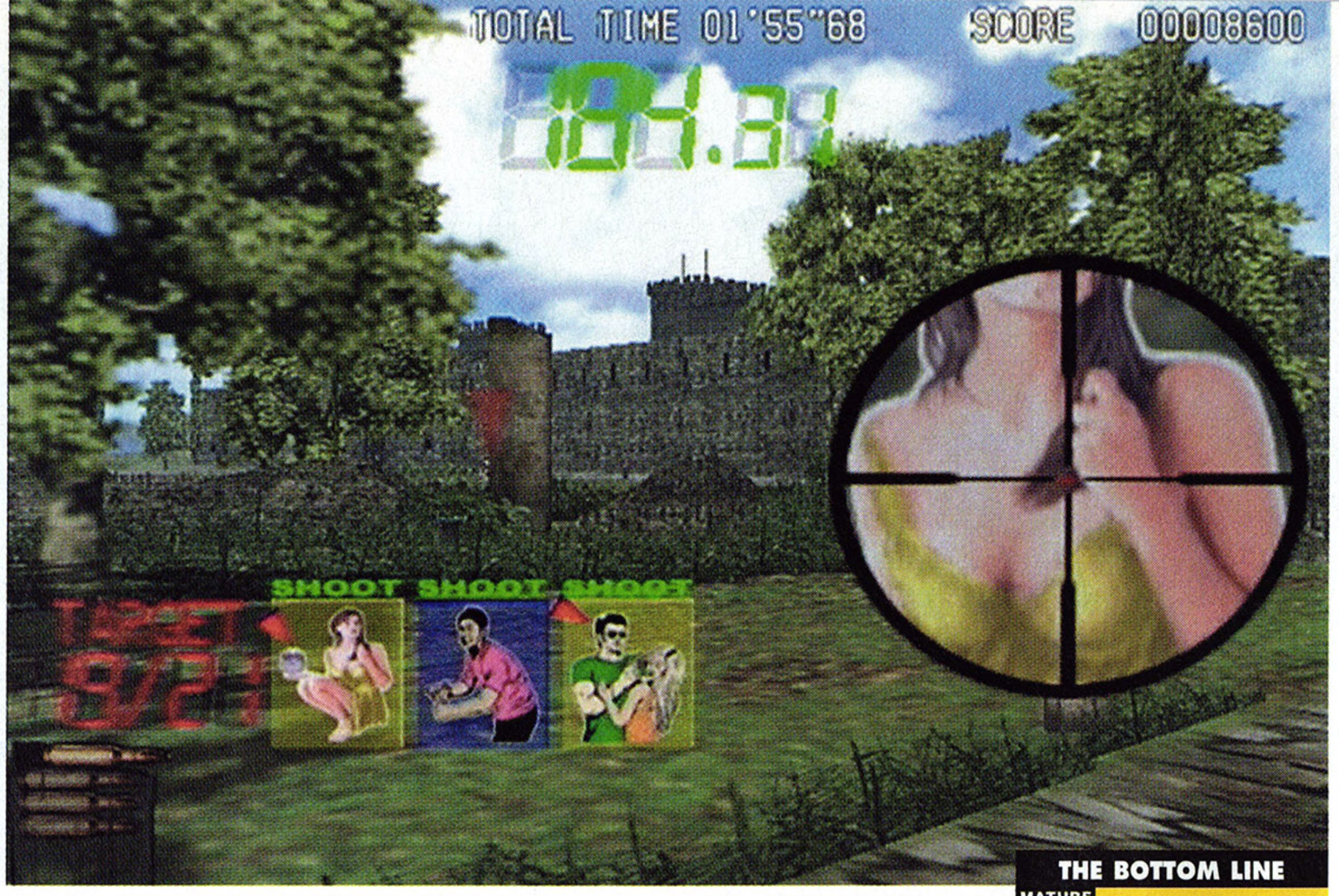
– **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Myst has always struck me as the video game equivalent of an art film – it's beautiful, pretentious, none too entertaining, and appeals to a rabid cult that fancies themselves more sophisticated than the average person. Think of Monkey Island as the adventure game for the rest of us – one that requires both a quick mind AND a sense of humor.

MATT – 8

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS
■ **DEVELOPER** LUCASARTS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 20



PLAYSTATION 2

SILENT SCOPE 2: DARK SILHOUETTE

VIEW TO A KILL

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** The game's scope is a little wider, but the view's pretty much the same
- **Graphics:** SS2's heat sensor and x-ray scopes are nice novelties, but that's about all that's new here
- **Sound:** I know it's a port, but I don't like the arcade voice-overs – and no, I won't "calm down"
- **Playability:** I love Scope 2's minutia of controls and how they keep up with the title's demanding accuracy
- **Entertainment:** Fans of the original will find more to explore here – but you've got to have the will to kill first
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

The original Silent Scope's premise as a shooter constrained it, but that wasn't its problem, size was. Does Silent Scope 2 break away from its arcade roots? No. In fact, Konami has made more room for that style of fun. These extras are the smoke and mirrors that allow Silent Scope 2 to better itself, despite the genre.

The controls remain unchanged, and turning it on exudes the warm embrace of an NRA meeting. The camera angles, moving targets, and tight shots won't disappoint vets of the first, although the fact that the new multiplayer requires an i-link might. If you're an old soldier, then Scope 2's Original mode will present you with a challenge or two. Take on ten tight missions, each with a ten-second limit and constraints such as headshots only. My sweaty palms, however, did me no justice in Duel mode, where I faced off with my opposite sniper number in a race to see who could locate and liquidate who the fastest.

I liked how my achievements, whether in the arcade portion or Original mode, were tracked in the Status section. Here you can see what you've unlocked after getting a good score or advancing further in the story. Rewards include getting extra lives and other helping hands. All these additions won't better the arcade cabinet itself or expand your mind, but then again, PS2 owners now have their own 21-gun salute that's a blast.

– **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

Lacking Guncon compatibility, Silent Scope has never really reached the heights of Time Crisis or Point Blank, two of its chief competitors in the shooting game sweepstakes. However, even though the home Silent Scope experience can never be quite as cool as the awesome arcade original, part deux does add some impressive new levels, like Duel and a boss battle training mode, that should give SS fanatics good reason to take the plunge on the sequel. That said, my problems with the first haven't been corrected. Fine targeting can still be a pain with the analog stick; the game is not especially long or deep; and the different playmodes are still organized in a rather slapdash fashion. Not quite the perfect headshot, but a killer none-theless.

MATT – 7.75

"Body heat? I'll give you plenty of heat"

Spy in on some private moments

The outdoor shooting range gets harder and harder

The DNR takes a hard-line stance against those without fishing licenses

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** ■ KONAMI **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 18

PLAYSTATION 2

GALLOP RACER 2001

HORSE D'OEUVRES, ANYONE?

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

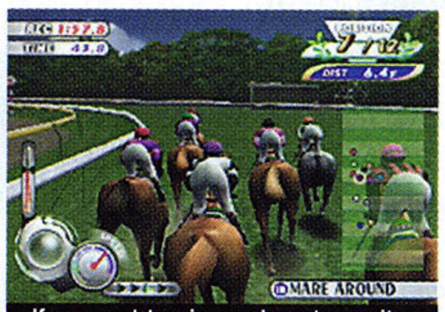
7.5

The amount of people excited about a horse racing game on PlayStation 2 number even fewer than those looking forward to the coming of the *Monkeybone: Special Edition* DVD. Yes, Brendan Frasier is a pox upon mankind, but be not so hasty to judge Gallop Racer 2001.

When we were first shown the game, the presenters described it as the Gran Turismo of horse racing games, and after playing it extensively, I find it difficult to disagree. On the track, winning requires exacting control. One must get a good start out of the gates, maneuver and pace the horse in its favored pack position, then pick the right time to crack the whip and race to the finish. The required button presses are minimal, but timing is crucial, and often nerve-wracking.

Off the track, transactions even more important than the races transpire. In classic Tecmo style, players buy, raise, and breed horses, then pick and choose when and where to play the ponies. You can even bet on races that you're not participating in if you want a break from the rigors of running a stable.

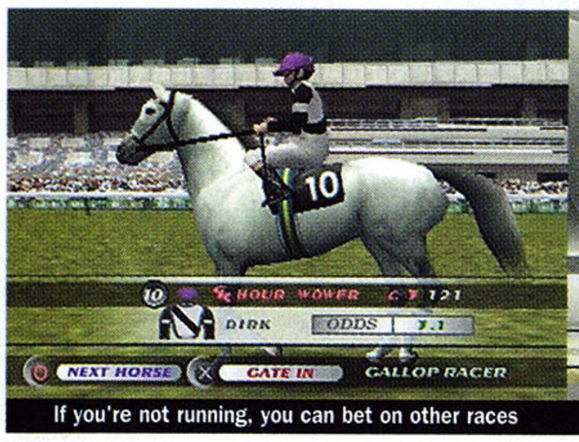
Gallop Racer 2001 isn't for everyone, and it can get monotonous during extended play sessions. If, however, you have an interest in the sport of kings, this game will last you for years. – **JAY**



If you want to win, you have to monitor the track type...

...the length of the track and the weather...

...and know when to whip horse ass in the home stretch



If you're not running, you can bet on other races

Off-track management plays a key role in success

■ **Concept:** Combine Monster Rancher and Gran Turismo into a game that is all things horse racing

■ **Graphics:** Overall the graphics are everything one could hope for in a game like this. The horse models are exquisite

■ **Sound:** Repetitive. You get the same song and voice-overs again and again

■ **Playability:** There's more weight on the player's shoulders than at first apparent

■ **Entertainment:** Easy to get sucked into, you may find yourself playing a couple hours a day for months

■ **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Just thinking about releasing a horse racing simulator in America requires King Kong-sized coconuts. Seriously, the number of people excited about this release could be stuffed into a port-a-potty with plenty of breathing room to spare. Trust me, though, Gallop Racer may be offbeat, but it will hold your interest and keep you thoroughly amused. I wouldn't say it'll open your eyes and change the way you think about horse racing, but it is a nice diversion to the testosterone-driven racers on the market. The horse management is somewhat shallow, but the racing aspect is intense and executed beautifully. The graphical appeal is just as gorgeous. Each horse consists of roughly 40,000 polygons – whereas the cars in GT3 house 4,000. More control in the training of the stable would have been nice (à la Monster Rancher), but other than this, I really couldn't ask for more.

REINER – 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** TECMO ■ **DEVELOPER** TECMO
■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 21

PLAYSTATION 2

CITY CRISIS

WITHSTANDING THE HEAT

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

I can see the horror unfolding before my eyes. "Wow, dad! Thanks! This is the best birthday ever! I really wanted Gran Turismo 3, but this airborne fire-fighting simulator is so much cooler!" What could possibly be next? A crop-dusting simulator, perhaps? Maybe a game based on a street sweeper? Oddly, even though City Crisis' conceptual basis sounds just as exciting as watching your grandma adjust her dentures before applying a kiss to your forehead, the gameplay is respectable. I'd even go as far to say that it's nothing short of fascinating.

As a pilot of a rescue helicopter, it's your job to combat blazing rooftop fires, save injured civilians, and trail getaway cars. All these concepts come together under an arcade design where you are required to complete a series of objectives before time expires. Simple in theory, sure, yet the execution couldn't be more taxing on your patience and gaming prowess. Manhandling the helicopter with the PS2's dual analog sticks is extremely tricky – especially when you must keep it steady to harness people and accurately spray water on flaming debris. Frustrating indeed, yet strangely amusing.

Even though it drove me nuts, I couldn't put it down. It's not a must have, but it's well worth a look. – **REINER**

■ **Concept:** Airborne fire fighting with an arcade twist

■ **Graphics:** The top-down camera view is irritating, especially since the city terrain is greatly varied in height

■ **Sound:** Thankfully, the awful rock soundtrack is drowned out by the sounds of whirling blades and innocents screaming for help

■ **Playability:** Dual analog action that demands exactness in movement and the quickest of reflexes

■ **Entertainment:** Simplistic arcade action similar to Crazy Taxi and Sky Odyssey

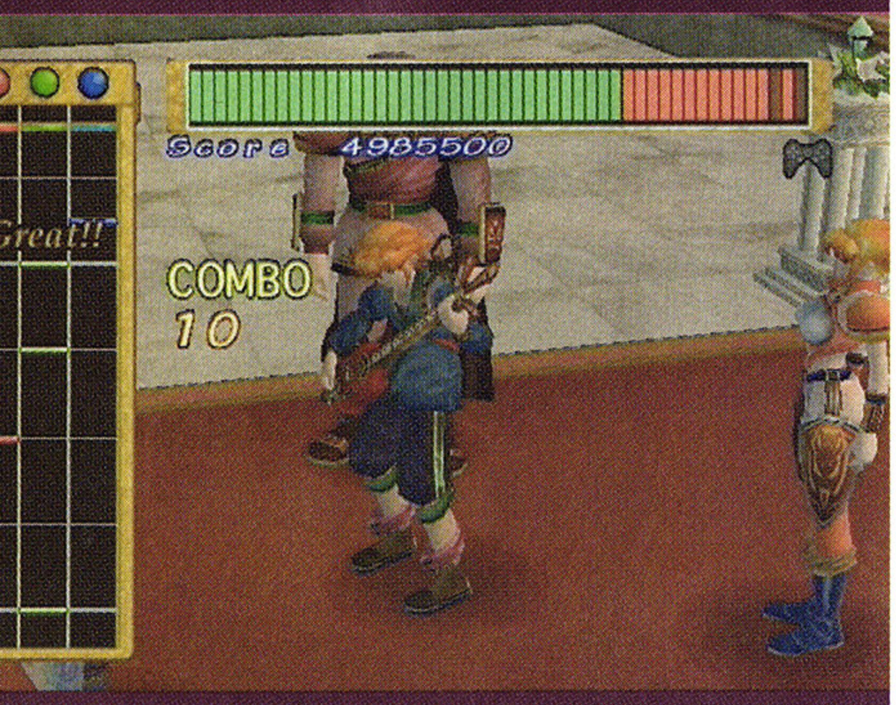
■ **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Is this a way for Take-Two to undo the civic damage done by subsidiary Rockstar's State of Emergency? If so, it just might work – and us gamers get something, too! Using both analog sticks is pleasingly frustrating, and I actually gave enough of a damn about other people's lives to want to keep on with the missions. Crazy Taxi with a conscience.

KATO – 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** SYSCOM ENTERTAINMENT INC.
■ **RELEASE** JULY 27



PLAYSTATION 2

EPHEMERAL FANTASIA

NOT AGAIN!

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

4

Known as Reiselied when it came out in Japan nearly a year ago, this Konami RPG has now found its way to the States with the no-less-confusing name of Ephemeral Fantasia. The plot revolves around Mouse, a thief with an intelligent instrument. Posing as a bard for an island monarch's wedding, his goal is to steal riches from revelers and royalty alike. Soon he discovers that he's stumbled into an inescapable trap, for on the fifth day he gets killed by the king, and then travels back in time to the beginning of the game.

Like Majora's Mask, players must repeat the same days over and over again, hoping to save the land and their life. To accomplish these things, you must level up as much as possible, and be at certain places at specific times as in Shenmue. It's a fine setup for a good story. Unfortunately, the gameplay surrounding it is so incredibly boring, you'll be glad when the king kills you.

Really, the only good thing concerning this title is the wedding song minigame. It's about the closest thing to a home release of Guitar Freaks we'll get in America, but with no song selection options or special controller, even this gets old fast. – **JAY**

- **Concept:** Shenmue meets Zelda: Ocarina of Time meets Guitar Freaks with completely unspectacular results
- **Graphics:** It would have looked okay on Dreamcast
- **Sound:** The same music over and over except for the sitar-playing interludes
- **Playability:** The best part of the game, although I'm still confused by the character level vs. party level advancement system
- **Entertainment:** It gets mildly interesting after six hours of play, then gets really boring again
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

It's rare that I'll play a game for a couple of hours and still have no clue as to what the story is about. That isn't necessarily a bad thing, but being bored to death in the process is when problems arise. Not only does EF not make good use of the PS2's power, but it doesn't make up for it with any semblance of good gameplay. Just say no.

KRISTIAN – 4.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** JULY 10

PLAYSTATION 2

STRETCH PANIC

THE SILICONE ASSASSIN

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

Music and movie buffs have it much easier than gamers when it comes to obscure selections. Thank God for Treasure. In its first next-gen effort, Treasure combines its trademark wackiness with the concept of grabbing and pulling objects (remember the face-tugging in Super Mario 64?) for a very odd game starring a little girl and her phantom cape/glove/thing.

You control Linda and her scarf with the left and right analog, respectively. The grabby clothing can snag almost anything and yank on it, pick it up, or use it to fling its wearer to new places. Stretch Panic's main game is boss battles. These foes can be hit in various ways for different damage, and each requires some strategy. In other levels, your attack focuses on huge-breasted foes, which we can only describe as Boob Ladies. I'm not joking.

As far as my tastes go, the weirder the better. For those who share my mantra, Stretch Panic is an oddity that must be experienced. Unfortunately, everybody else will likely shrug their shoulders and go play something more conventional. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

What the *&$#?! If being a "hardcore gamer" means liking games just because they're weird and from Japan, count me out. This is a unique idea, but a buggy camera, repetitive gameplay, and poor control sinks it quick. Strange, yet really boring.

MATT – 5

- **Concept:** A girl and her scarf make for one of the most surreal concepts ever
- **Graphics:** Colorful and imaginative, like most Treasure titles
- **Sound:** Funkier than the average score, but not as original as the rest of the game
- **Playability:** While simplified, controls require ambidextrous hands
- **Entertainment:** May be too obscure for many gamers, but weirdos will relish it
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CONSPIRACY ENTERTAINMENT/CRAVE
■ **DEVELOPER** TREASURE ■ **RELEASE** JULY 31

PLAYSTATION 2

ESPN X GAMES: SKATEBOARDING

SKATEBOARDING IS A CRIME AFTER ALL

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

5

Hey, Neversoft! You think you're pretty hot stuff with that Tony Hawk's Pro Skater game, huh? Well, does your game have all kinds of tricks mapped out on different buttons? Oh it does, does it? What's that? Pro Skater has more tricks, and X Games: Skateboarding stole your layout? No way! You know how I know? Because X Games isn't hard like your game. You can just jam out in the air and get crazy good scores.

You know what else is cool about X Games: Skateboarding? Instead of distracting you with distant objects, it only starts drawing them when you're near. Even better, instead of a predictable camera, it has one that constantly surprises you.

Wait…what? No this game's on PlayStation 2. Oh, you thought we were comparing it to the first Tony Hawk. No, no…this one…huh? You mean, you've got Pro Skater 3 coming out in a couple months? Well then, forget this piece of wannabe trash. Sorry about that, Neversoft. I know it must be embarrassing to even be compared to a game like this. – **JAY**

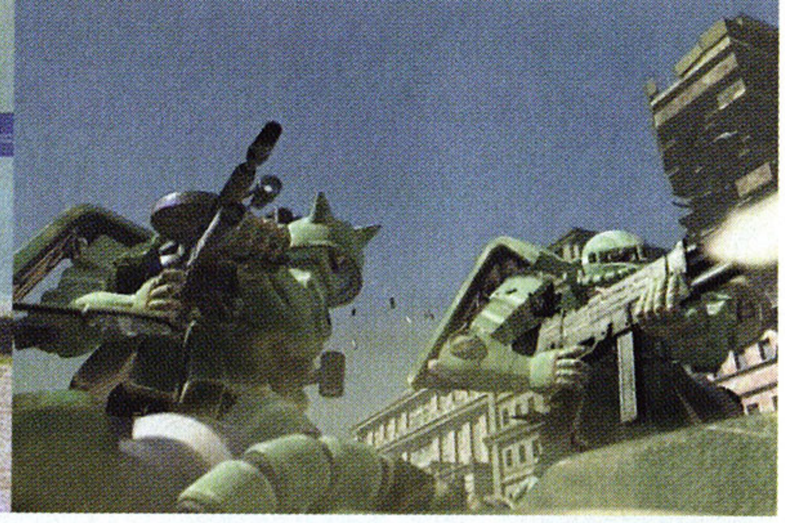
SECOND OPINION

Without the ability to accurately bash this game with the deserving expletives, I can only improvise. You'd be a ducking moron if you buy this ship pile of a game.

REINER – 3.5

- **Concept:** Beat Activision to the PS2 skateboarding punch, no matter the cost
- **Graphics:** Ever been annoyed by distant objects distracting you? Thanks to fogging, you won't have that problem here
- **Sound:** Quite possibly lifted from Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
- **Playability:** See above
- **Entertainment:** So easy compared to Pro Skater, it makes you feel really good about yourself
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 11



PLAYSTATION 2

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: JOURNEY TO JABURO

GUNDAM'S SHOWCASE SHOWDOWN

Imagine *The Price is Right* as a vid. You'd run down the aisle and gush over Bob Barker's hair, willing to neuter or spay any pet in sight. But what if playing Plinko turned out to be a dud?! That would NEVER happen, but bear with me here. Journey to Jaburo does follow such a pattern.

Gundam fans will drool over the animated story interludes taken from the 0079 TV series (as Amuro stumbles upon the RX-78 and Zeon forces ambush White Base at Side 7). This includes the accuracy of the game's sounds, whether it's the actors' voices during battle or the whine from the joints of your mobile suit. Gundam is replicated to a tee here, but that doesn't necessarily make for good gameplay.

The RX-78's slow pace means that you aren't going to keep up with your quicker foes. Jaburo's lock-on could be tweaked for better results, too. In the end, I wanted to pass the gameplay so I could get to the footage – which made me wonder why I didn't just watch the show instead! Unless you're a big fan, Journey to Jaburo makes even Bob shout "Sieg Zeon!" in defiance. – **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

Gundam fans will get exactly what they expect – a high-octane action game with plenty of fireworks and amazing anime cutscenes. It doesn't hold a candle to Armored Core 2, but it is decent.

REINER – 7.5

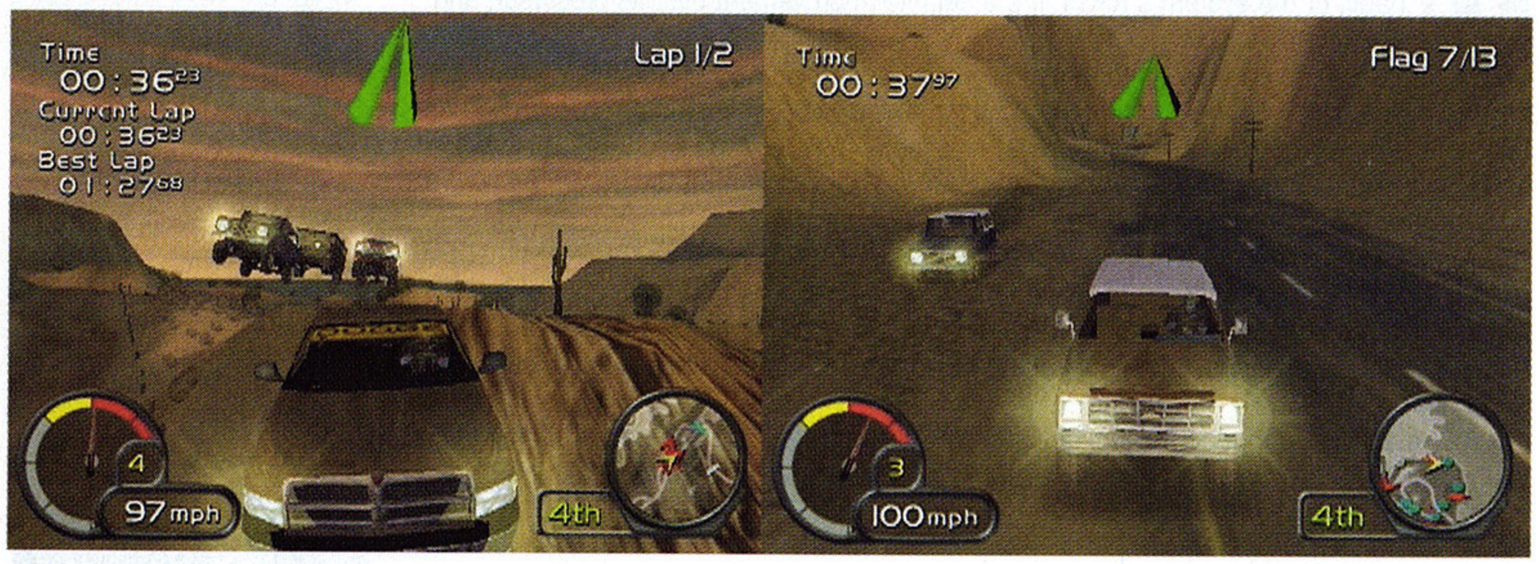
THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.5

- **Concept:** Use the PS2's DVD capabilities to present the show in the shell of a vid
- **Graphics:** Mission cutscenes are nice, if brief, but in-game backgrounds are bland
- **Sound:** Gundam fans should pay attention – the audio is almost flawless
- **Playability:** Quicker, more intuitive controls would be better, like Z.O.E.
- **Entertainment:** You'll eat up the show clips and other Gundam goodies, but playing it won't be as fun
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** BANDAI ■ **DEVELOPER** BANDAI
■ **RELEASE** JULY 25



PLAYSTATION 2

TEST DRIVE OFF-ROAD: WIDE OPEN

RHYMES WITH TRUCK THIS

Where to start. Let's talk about the game's finer points first, shall we? It's interesting to upgrade your vehicle with new parts (although that's already been done better by numerous other games). Ummm, hmm. Oh yeah! The levels are nice and big, that's good. There are shortcuts…I suppose that's really more of a requisite than it is a nice feature. Well, I think that about takes care of that. First, this game exhibits the worst bug in any finished racing release I've ever witnessed: Each and every time I hit a bump or landed a jump or ran into another racer, my mini-map flashed onscreen for a split second and my ride pulled violently to the left. What fun! A built-in seizure inducer! Aside from that, the graphics are poor to the point of being silly and the sounds…Well, frankly, they suck. I'm not sure how else to say that without being censored. If you're in the market for a good off-road racer for PS2, go with 4x4 Evo or Smuggler's Run before you dole out your hard-earned bills for this toilet rust. – **KRISTIAN**

SECOND OPINION

The gameplay is fun, but there isn't much challenge here. Unlike Kristian, I thought the graphics were adequate, it's just that the experience didn't leave me wanting more. An average racer, which loses a couple of points for being of the off-road variety.

ANDY – 6.5

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

3.5

- **Concept:** A really bad imitation of 4x4 Evolution with fewer vehicles and upgrades
- **Graphics:** This could probably pass for a nice-looking PS-X title
- **Sound:** Terrible music and monotonous effects are first on the list of things to forget about this game
- **Playability:** You press a button and steer. Sometimes you brake
- **Entertainment:** If you've never played an off-road game before, you'd still hate this game
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** ANGEL STUDIOS
■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 21

PLAYSTATION 2

WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE: WARJETZ

VIDEO GAMES' GREATEST FRANCHISE RETURNS!

Somebody out there must think 3DO's World Destruction League is cool, because the Thunder Tanks formula of driving and shooting buildings has now been taken to the friendly skies. So what do we have here? Not much, but this bare-bones flight-combat title is somewhat entertaining, which isn't bad for a 3DO game.

Graphically, this won't blow any minds. In fact, when compared to LucasArts' similarly-themed Star Wars: Starfighter, WarJetz looks like an N64 game in high-resolution. However, the explosion effects are cool, and there is always a little bit of childish satisfaction to be derived from seeing buildings blown up in spectacular fashion.

Outside of that, there are few things about WarJetz that really stand out. The degree to which enemies can blast you with uncanny accuracy is a bit frustrating, and the barrel roll is the silliest thing I've seen a developer do in a while. Does BattleTanx with airplanes sound like a great idea to you? It does? Well, bless your heart. You'll be flying solo on this mission, Maverick. – **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

5.5

- **Concept:** Simplistic vehicular combat takes flight
- **Graphics:** Not the worst we've seen on PS2, and them buildings do blow up real good
- **Sound:** I don't really want to get into it
- **Playability:** Gets the job done, but Colony Wars has nothing to worry about
- **Entertainment:** I put the over/under on how long you'll play at 30 minutes
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

With WarJetz, 3DO continues its tradition of games where everything must be destroyed. This game ultimately proves more frustrating than BattleTanx due to the inability of aircraft to remain stationary while shooting at required targets. Thus, it's even less fun – if you can believe that.

JAY – 6

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO
■ **DEVELOPER** 3DO ■ **RELEASE** MAY 28

PLAYSTATION

BATTLE HUNTER

THE WORST OF BOTH WORLDS

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

5

When you first pop Battle Hunter into your PlayStation, you get tricked into thinking that, because you actually create your character, it's a deep game. But after an hour or so of random map exploration, you realize how pointless the whole opening exercise really is.

Your job in the game is to find a specific treasure hidden within a box on a randomly generated map, and get to the exit before the three other characters do. Cards are played on your turn to boost movement, set traps, and bolster defense against traps. There are hidden monsters to battle on the map, and characters can also fight each other to steal desired treasures.

Battle Hunter could have been a good strategy title at a bargain price, but the admixture of board-game elements brings too much randomness to gameplay. Rather than winning by outmaneuvering opponents, victory is often claimed purely through luck. Level advancement is especially a joke since opponents will always be at the same power level as you. At a mere ten spot, Battle Hunters could be a game you might get some multiplayer enjoyment out of, but forget about it as a solo act. – **JAY**

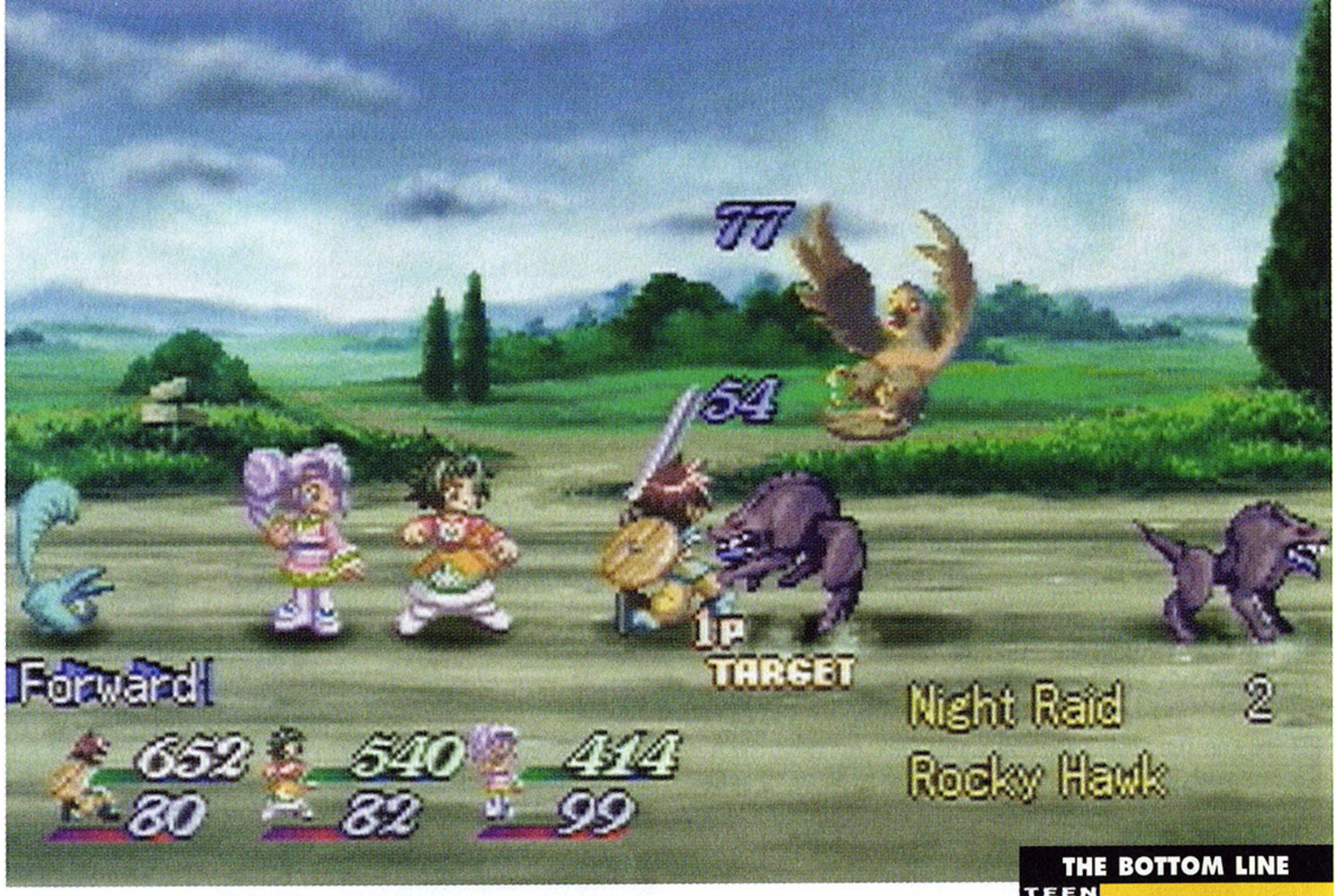
- **Concept:** A Vandal Hearts-like title with a board game style
- **Graphics:** Not great, but what did you expect for ten bucks?
- **Sound:** Mostly just blasting and background music
- **Playability:** Easy to play, but ultimately frustrating due to the inconsistent character parameters
- **Entertainment:** After an hour or so, you'll have seen all the game has to offer
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

With its monotonous gameplay and utter lack of storyline, Battle Hunter could probably be renamed "Boredom Maker." You'd get more enjoyment out of using the disc as a Frisbee than you would playing the game. On the upside, it didn't cost you much if you've already made the mistake of buying this game. Next!

KRISTIAN – 4.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER BOARD/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC ■ **DEVELOPER** SUCCESS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 20



PLAYSTATION

TALES OF DESTINY II

ANOTHER DECENT PS-X RPG? YOU BET!

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.75

Hoping to make up for the poor original, Namco gives us Tales of Destiny II before PlayStation gives up the ghost. While this sequel may not make it to the upper echelon of the system's RPGs, it's a definite improvement over its precursor, and a nifty game overall.

Tales II tosses the strange visitor angle at you as seen in Lunar: Eternal Blue, but gives it more moxie. This interloper is a funny, cute girl who speaks in a strange alien tongue. In fact, all the cast has their own quirky traits, and the game's voice-overs, while cheese-filled at first, do a good job of conveying their personality. The path is a bit too linear, but you're never sure what to expect once you get to where you're going.

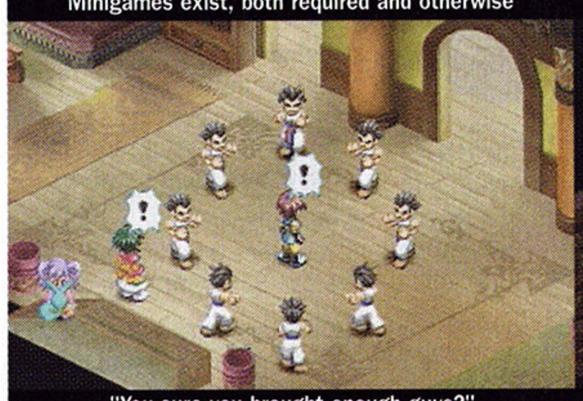
The real-time combat gave me mixed feelings. You get caught up in fights, but you seem to lose sight of your computer allies, and strategy is little more than executing combos. I'm still a sprite supporter, so the graphics did me just fine. Emotion was portrayed through facial expressions, as well as standard Japanese magna references (ellipses, sweat drops, etc.).

If you're an RPG aficionado, Tales of Destiny II is a good buy. It's got all the elements you want, and a few clever additions. It isn't Final Fantasy or Chrono Cross, but it's a quest worth undertaking. – **JUSTIN**

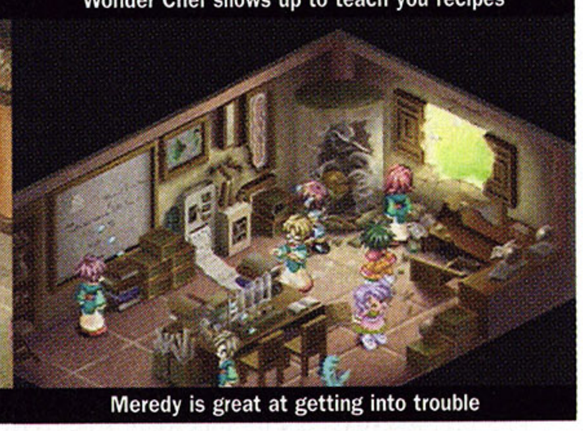
- **Concept:** A real-time action RPG that provides one more reason to keep playing your PS-X
- **Graphics:** Sprites and pre-rendered pastel backgrounds probably won't be seen much after this
- **Sound:** The voice-overs are weak at first, but really grow on you in time
- **Playability:** The combat is original, but you don't use many items or spells
- **Entertainment:** The quest is extremely linear, yet the characters and story keep you immersed. Multiplayer is a nice gimmick
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

Minigames exist, both required and otherwise

Wonder Chef shows up to teach you recipes



"You sure you brought enough guys?"



Meredy is great at getting into trouble

SECOND OPINION

Sticking to its guns, Namco hasn't altered the gameplay formula in the slightest, but rather, expanded upon it. The combat, which was once unresponsive and slow, is now lightning quick and overflowing with interesting play mechanics (although button flailing often overpowers strategy). Countering the repetition of dungeon exploration are a handful of interesting minigames and beautifully animated FMV cutscenes. As far as translations go, Namco did a phenomenal job. The spoken dialogue fits perfectly, and the story flows from point to point. The one thing Namco didn't stay true to is the look of the game. Although the graphics are in the anime fashion, realism is dispersed throughout. In every conceivable way, Tales of Destiny II transcends its problematic predecessor and stands as a well thought out old-school RPG.

REINER – 8

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 13

That's not a DQ cool treat

There's a lot going on in this game

PLAYSTATION

DIGIMON DIGITAL CARD BATTLE

DIGITAL DEVIANT TURNS DIGITAL MONSTER?

Card games are a new sub-genre for RPGs. With their popular children's licenses, it's easy for older role-players to pass them up. Believe you me, I wouldn't buy a game with Digimon on it and brag to my friends about how cool it is. But the fact of the matter is, this game did pique my interest quite a bit.

At first, I couldn't believe how complex everything was. What kid would have the attention span to get into this? I was equally surprised when I had my first match, and everything came together smoothly. Each turn has you drawing cards, picking a battler, sacrificing cards to raise your points, evolving your Digimon if possible, then attacking. You can also assign a support card when you battle to either help you, or hurt your foe. Quite a mouthful, isn't it? But as I said above, it's like butter.

Card Battle is in a class all its own on PS-X. The Digimon name may steer you away at first, but don't be afraid to try a hand or two. You may become hooked. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

I was shocked at the amount of detail crammed into this game. If you're a card battle fanatic, or even just an interested observer, there's plenty here to keep you in your seat for hours on end. Mega-kabu-tari-Kristian-mon!!!

KRISTIAN – 7.75

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** A license-copying Pokémon with a game-copying Pokémon Trading Card
- **Graphics:** Very low-rent polygonal battles, though the odd attacks are fun to watch
- **Sound:** Criminally catchy theme song
- **Playability:** Appears complicated at first, but plays beautifully after your first game
- **Entertainment:** Digimon fan or not, strategists of all ages will get something out of this
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** BANDAI ■ **DEVELOPER** BANDAI
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 20

PLAYSTATION

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION: DISNEY MIX

M-I-C-K-E-WHY, GOD, WHY?!

Perhaps your dance pad is gathering dust. Maybe you've mastered the foot-flying stylings of Dance Dance Revolution. I doubt it, but anything is possible. Well, now you have a reason to take the peripheral out of your closet. Mickey and friends are calling you out.

Songs are this series' bread and butter, and the weak point of Disney Mix. While you have well-known tunes, like It's A Small World and Supercalifragi-blah-blah, they aren't the originals. Rather, they're mostly badly remixed Eurodisco cuts. Did you just make a horrified face at that? If so, I'm proud of you. They don't all suck, but I surely wouldn't blast them from my hooptie.

Dance Dance is a niche game in the US, and adding an unnecessary Disney license does nothing to aid matters. It turns a series that was a cult classic into the antithesis of one. I love Dance Dance Revolution, but Disney Mix can take Mr. Toad's Wild Ride down the toilet. My kingdom for a DrumMania or Guitar Freaks port! – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

If your parents are complaining that you never get any exercise because you sit on your butt all day playing video games, here's the perfect game for you. It's mediocre as far as dancing games go, but it gets the job done.

KRISTIAN – 6.75

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.25

- **Concept:** Groove to the beats of Euro Disney with your dance pad
- **Graphics:** Putting funky fresh gear on Mickey doesn't make him cool. Hard to see the arrows
- **Sound:** Songs are mostly European dance at its worst. Small song list, too
- **Playability:** The gameplay is still as intuitive as ever, challenging you to step it up
- **Entertainment:** Easier and inferior to the original, it'll still keep your pad out of the closet and burn some calories
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER 9

PLAYSTATION

MOTOCROSS MANIA

THE BEATIN' TRACK

I've got nothing against giving people their ten dollars' worth on a budget game, but I do take exception when it's tried under the guise of Motocross Mania. Now, you may think of me as the anti-Ricky Carmichael/Gonzo Gamer from issue 100, but after this I only hope you thank me for passing my wisdom onto you, the consumer. In my sessions with MM, I feared for my life, not due to the reckless motocross speeds, but from the awful, random collision. Coming into a turn fast meant that I was never quite sure if the track barriers were going to throw me off or let me continue on my way. Similarly, the tracks' jumps meant that landing at an angle was par for the course – even if the outcome could never be counted on. I guess this aspect gives MM the devil-may-care attitude of the sport, but it's not the sort of unpredictability you like in a game.

Freestyle courses are as bland as an evening with Barry Manilow, and supercross tracks only demand that you endure a few extra laps. I did enjoy the different speeds of the bike classes, but that's similar to liking a turd sandwich because of the bread. – **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

5

- **Concept:** Devalue the US dollar with a third-rate motocross game so your ten bucks isn't worth the CD this is burned on
- **Graphics:** Is the game fast, or are frames just cut out every few seconds?
- **Sound:** Wouldn't it be great if you could upgrade your muffler to render the bike silent?
- **Playability:** If there's a God, rest assured it's busy manipulating MM's collision
- **Entertainment:** Only if you like your games truly unleaded
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Motocross Mania gives me what I've come to expect from a PS-X motorcycle game. In other words, it kinda sucks. At least, in this case, you get what you pay for since it's only ten bucks. Whiny sound, choppy animations, and iffy physics simply touch on the negatives of this title. In closing, I'd like to say that I love Kato.

JAY – 6

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** DEIBUS STUDIOS
■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 7

PLAYSTATION

NFL GAMEDAY 2002

UNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E ESRB **6**

In the off-season, football franchises are expected to make changes to ensure that last year's failures aren't repeated. This makes me wonder how 989 thought it could compete on the grizzled turf of the PlayStation with what amounts to last year's GameDay team. I'll leave out any criticism of the kicker, however, as he now has a great new meter. Still, I personally agree with most NFL coaches when they say you should never have to have the kicker win a game for you – 'cause then you're not doing enough in its other areas.

GameDay has some good animations and controls; my gripe is that it doesn't seem to all go together very well. Sometimes I don't even know if I've caught the ball or not. Speaking of detecting things, I also had a beef with how damn far away my "nearest player" always seemed to be. I'd have a linebacker right about to stuff a RB, but the computer would instead assign me to the safety 15 yards away. The best thing I can say about this PS-X GameDay is that I enjoyed playing it more than the PS2 version, but that's another system and another time my friends. – **KATO**

- **Concept:** GameDay makes the football retirement of the PS-X less like John Elway and more like Steve Young
- **Graphics:** Everything is so similar, 989 still has Daunte Culpepper's number wrong from last year
- **Sound:** In an attempt to escape from Dennis Miller, Dan Fouts meets Dick Enberg in the booth
- **Playability:** The same money plays still work – time for a whole new coaching staff
- **Entertainment:** The rut this series is in gives even Bengals fans hope
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

There are so many things wrong with this game I think I'll just start and end with the same point. The starting quarterback for the Vikings (Culpepper) is wearing No. 12. Unfortunately, his jersey number is 11. From there, things just go from bad to worse. Why is it my players can't change direction without stopping? This game sucks, that's why.

KRISTIAN – 3.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** 989 SPORTS ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 7

PLAYSTATION

MADDEN NFL 2002

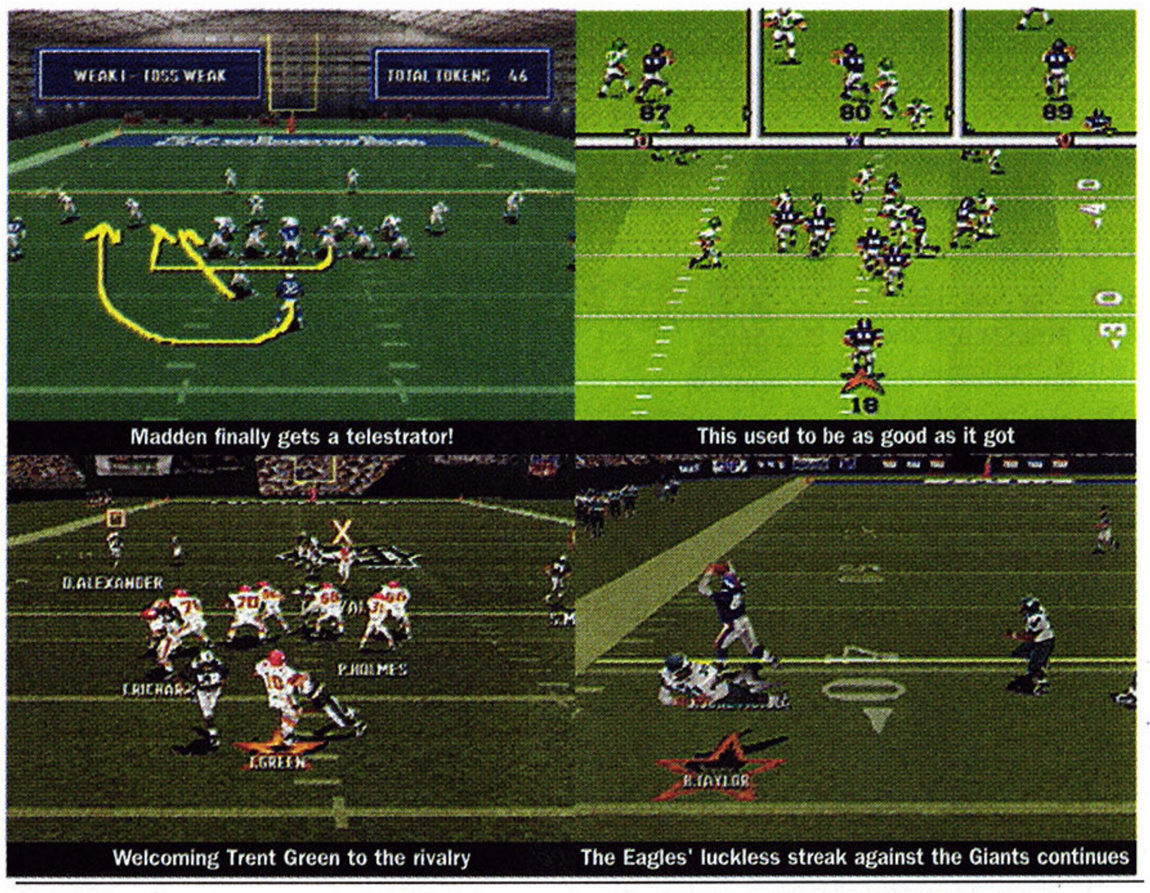
CANTON HERE IT COMES

When Dolphins QB Dan Marino left the game, they made a shrine of his locker; sealing it off as an example of greatness. On the other hand, Dan-o's last few seasons saw time catch up with the star. Likewise, you can't deny this 2002 incarnation reminds us the Madden series is one of the best, but it's also clear the franchise itself has simply passed the original PlayStation by.

This title gives you the Madden cards, Madden Challenge, and gameplay of last year, but augments it with the return of the Two-Minute Drill, Mulligans (a do-over feature), and the chance to play 16-bit Madden. Interestingly enough, this blast from the past is what makes the game worth a look from old fans, because who doesn't have fond memories of late-night 16-bit Madden sessions?

Tiburon could have made more tweaks to the PlayStation gameplay, but it's obvious that its focus was on the PlayStaton 2. Besides, the controls were as tight as they were going to get on PS-X, even if you still wince because there are situations where the AI will cause a jumbled mess of ball, receiver, and defensive back.

Those without the benefit of the PS2 Madden still won't find too much that's eye-opening new, but the Two-Minute Drill and Classic Madden will at least make this the best PS-X Madden you've ever seen. I, for one, would even consider this version better than many next-gen football games out there. – **KATO**



Madden finally gets a telestrator!

This used to be as good as it got

Welcoming Trent Green to the rivalry

The Eagles' luckless streak against the Giants continues

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** TIBURON ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 21

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E ESRB **8**

- **Concept:** The ultimate PlayStation Madden experience, and a nice farewell
- **Graphics:** After playing Madden on PS2 there is just no going back
- **Sound:** Who's more senile, Madden or Summerall – you make the call!
- **Playability:** The unchanging controls are a testament to how rock solid they've become
- **Entertainment:** 16-bit Madden is nostalgically entertaining, but this title as a whole is more an ode to fans than an evolution
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Only when you lose something do you realize how much you love it. I really missed the PS2 as I was playing this version of Madden 2002, but I must say I was just as addicted – even if the graphics were seriously lacking. However, I was able to beat most teams with only two offensive plays...troubling. The old HB Off Tackle coupled with the Cross Left passing play is a combination that stymied the computer for an entire game. At the end of the first half, Daunte Culpepper was 26 for 31 with 327 yards, and Jake Reed had 19 receptions for 234 yards. Not a bad little combination. Aside from my clever offensive tactics, defense called for a little more finesse. Though the opponent AI was clever enough to call an audible when I put my punt block unit in the game on first down, it seemed they didn't quite know how to conquer a dime defense with a two man blitz. Long story short – this is a fun game if you want to obliterate the computer with the same plays time after time.

KRISTIAN – 7

WHO WANTS TO BE A

sit-at-home contestant who faces mind bending questions, orders in Chinese food and then, while taking a bathroom break to ponder the advantages of certain lifelines over others, realizes that you could always just push pause and look up the answer on the Internet, but knows that because you're at home, there's no need to worry about making a fool of yourself on national TV and besides, just like on the actual show, you really don't stand a chance of ever becoming a

MILLIONAIRE

PlayStation

BUENA VISTA INTERACTIVE

EVERYONE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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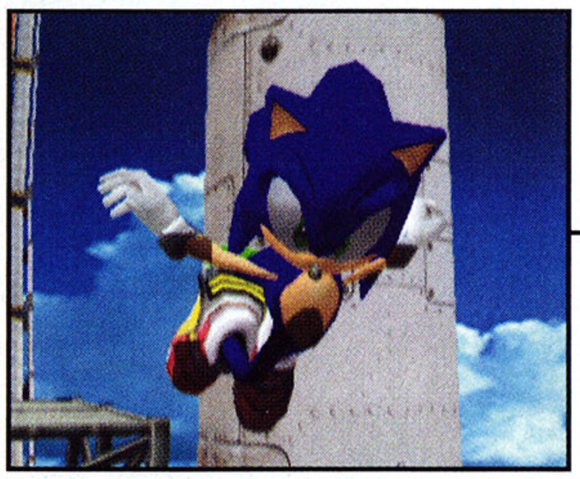
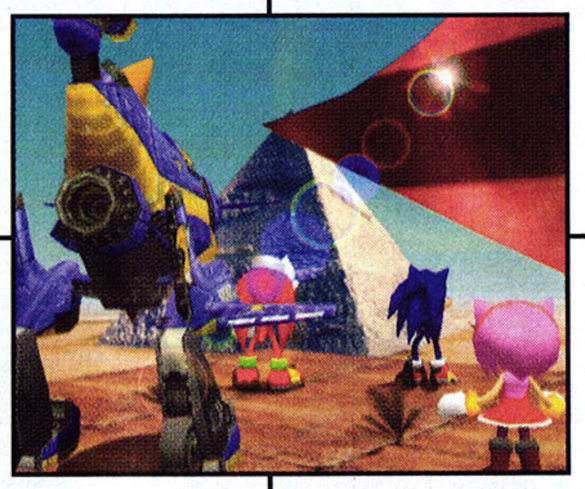
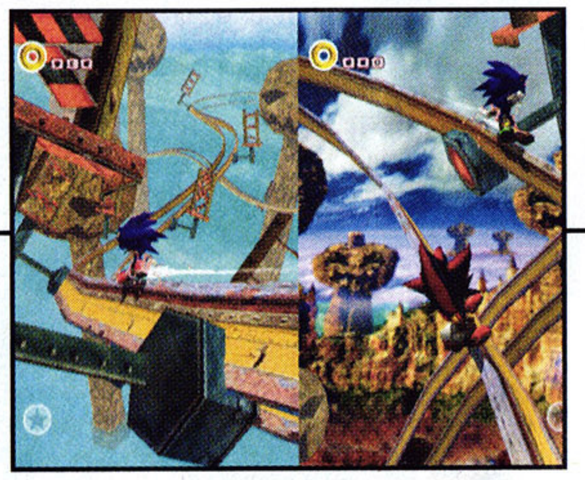
GOOD HEDGEHOG.







SEGA.COM/SONICADV2

Play as Sonic and board, swing and grind to save the world.

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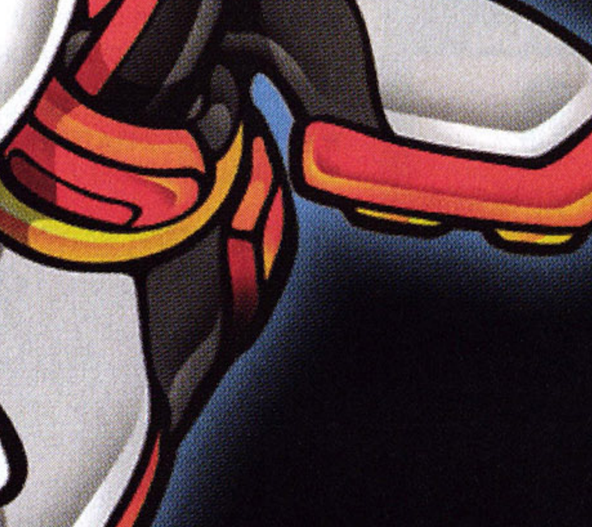
EVIL, SINISTER, MALCONTENT HEDGEHOG.



SONIC ADVENTURE 2™

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

Play as Shadow, Sonic's evil double, and conquer the world.

Dreamcast™

DREAMCAST

ALIEN FRONT ONLINE

SEE THE WORLD, MEET NEW PEOPLE, AND OBLITERATE THEM

If there's one fact that rules the fun in Alien Front Online, it's not necessarily that the Dreamcast is the only console in town with Internet play. It's probably more that Sega and WOW Entertainment know how to churn out a thrashing good time through extensive arcade experience. The controls are at a minimum – so simple even a child could easily direct an alien cruiser through its onslaught of Army forces. Actually, forget I said that bit about children learning how to shoot weapons, and instead focus on the fact that Sega has distilled a quick-paced kill 'em all.

Originally, I was a little turned off by AFO's small-sized maps, but once in the thick of online combat, you realize the last thing you want to do is run away from a good fight. Instead, navigate the tight streets of Tokyo and outflank an opponent with two of your buddies by your side. I was so invigorated by the online capture-the-flag sessions that I didn't want to hide away and hold on to it – I wanted to wave it in the enemies' faces while I pummeled them with my guns and trash talked via the included microphone. All of this happens with no fuss, and is made all the more sweet by its cheap price. – **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **8**

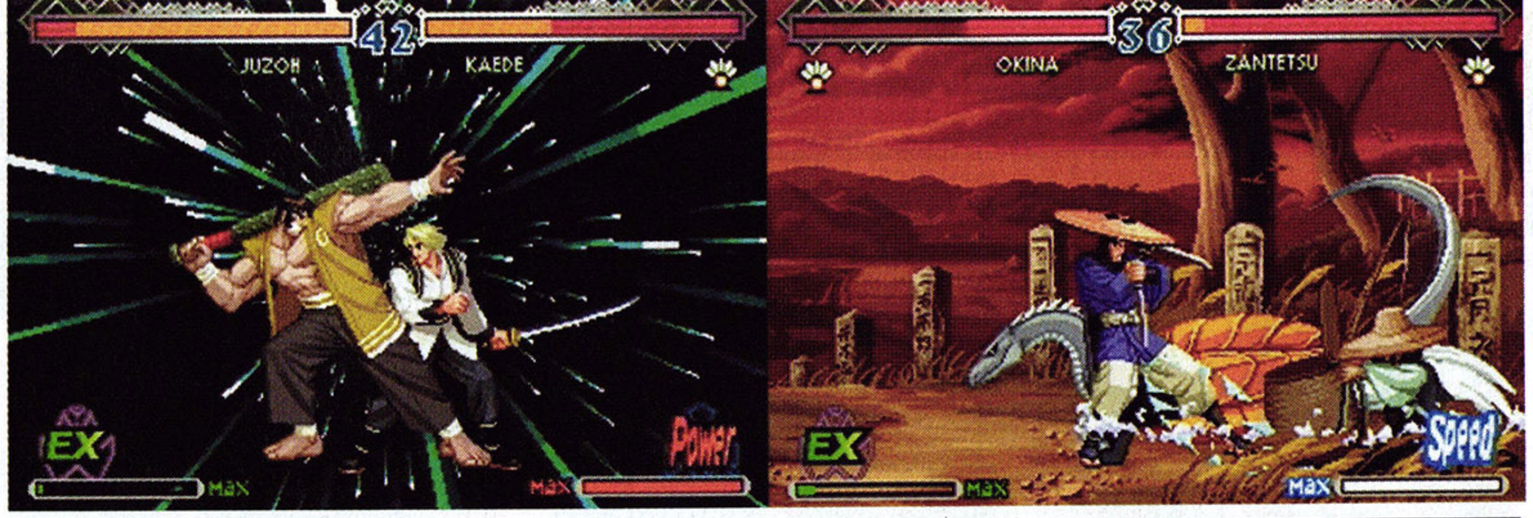
- **Concept:** Settle intergalactic discontent through the online discharge of mounted artillery cannons and such
- **Graphics:** Tokyo's the place to experience all the rich colors and see the buildings implode and crumble
- **Sound:** A cacophony of explosions, falling debris, and alien chatter
- **Playability:** AFO's easy controls help execute the much-needed quick decisions
- **Entertainment:** Online's a blast, and makes a damn good case for keepin' your Dreamcast around
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

It's a shame Dreamcast is toilet bound because good games keep getting shot out as it makes its death rattles. AFO is a decent little arcade title that will give you a lot of bang for your buck. The Aliens seem to be a bit more powerful than their Terran adversaries, but what Earthlings lack in power they make up for in maneuverability. Have at it!

KRISTIAN – 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
■ **DEVELOPER** WOW ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 8



DREAMCAST

THE LAST BLADE 2: HEART OF THE SAMURAI

THE FINAL RESURRECTION

As any fighting game fanatic will tell you, this release is of great importance, but it's a tad strange – almost like seeing a ghost. You see, The Last Blade 2 made its North American arcade debut four years ago. Through complex play and awe-inspiring, hand-drawn animation, this coin-op was highly regarded…four years ago.

Even though The Last Blade 2's console debut is somewhat dated, the deep gameplay still makes an impact, thrilling those who play with its insane learning curve, amazing parry system, and highly intelligent AI opponents. Hardcore fighters will feast upon the slew of gameplay intricacies. As far as presentation is concerned, nothing really stands out. The playful flutes and violas within the orchestrated soundtrack are a perfect fit for the Teletubbies, not a fighting game. Of course, SNK's hand-drawn animation is a sight to behold, but it's not as smooth as you'd like it to be.

Even with its archaic arcade roots, The Last Blade 2 is still very impressive – especially for fighting game enthusiasts who thrive off of combat dynamics not flashy visuals. – **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Not flashy, but it cuts deep. I loved the array of moves, and was pleased with the custom combat styles (Power, Speed, or EX) which basically create three different fighters for each character.

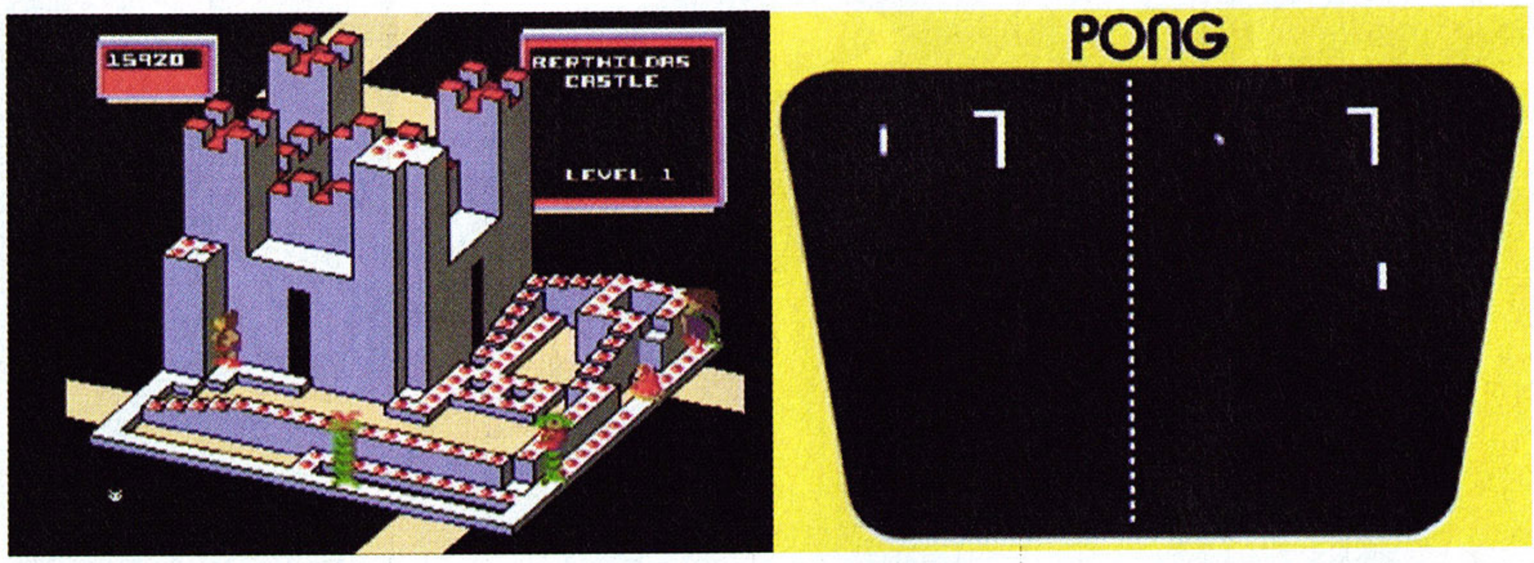
KATO – 7.5

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **8**

- **Concept:** A near perfect arcade port with all of the fixings
- **Graphics:** The Slice effects are lacking, especially in comparison to the hand-drawn animations
- **Sound:** Decent voice-overs, nauseating soundtrack
- **Playability:** Insanely deep and stylized to give experienced gamers the fight of their life
- **Entertainment:** Not a lot of extras, but the superb play should be more than enough
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC ■ **DEVELOPER** SNK
■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 7



DREAMCAST

ATARI ANNIVERSARY EDITION

CLASSICUS REGURGITUS

Classic compilations have been a popular item in the last few years, and now Infogrames is throwing its recently acquired Atari hits into the mix with this bargain-priced gathering. Also available on PlayStation and PC, Atari Anniversary Edition gives access to Asteroids, Asteroids Deluxe, Battlezone, Centipede, Crystal Castles, Gravitar, Millipede, Missile Command, Pong, Super Breakout, Tempest, and Warlords. Every game is extremely faithful to the original, even going so far as to allow players to have an arcade cabinet-like overlay displayed around the screen. There's also an Archive section with tons of promotional items to gander at, and over half an hour's worth of interviews with Atari founder Nolan Bushnell.

Controls are what hold this admirable compilation back. Many of the games used trackballs or dials. Players can customize the controller any way they see fit, but nothing can compensate for the loss of these interface devices. You get what you pay for, I guess. – **JAY**

SECOND OPINION

A decent compilation of 12 classic games with an interesting Archive segment. Per usual, the controls are not as responsive as they once were, but the graphics are right on the money.

REINER – 7

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB **6**

- **Concept:** 12 arcade classics, with a load of bonus info and a Nolan Bushnell interview
- **Graphics:** Way outdated…on purpose!
- **Sound:** May actually sound better than the arcades since there aren't kids begging for tokens in the background
- **Playability:** Some games don't work on the Dreamcast controller, no matter how you configure it
- **Entertainment:** At $15, this is an inexpensive blast from the past
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER COMPILATION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** ATARI
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 26

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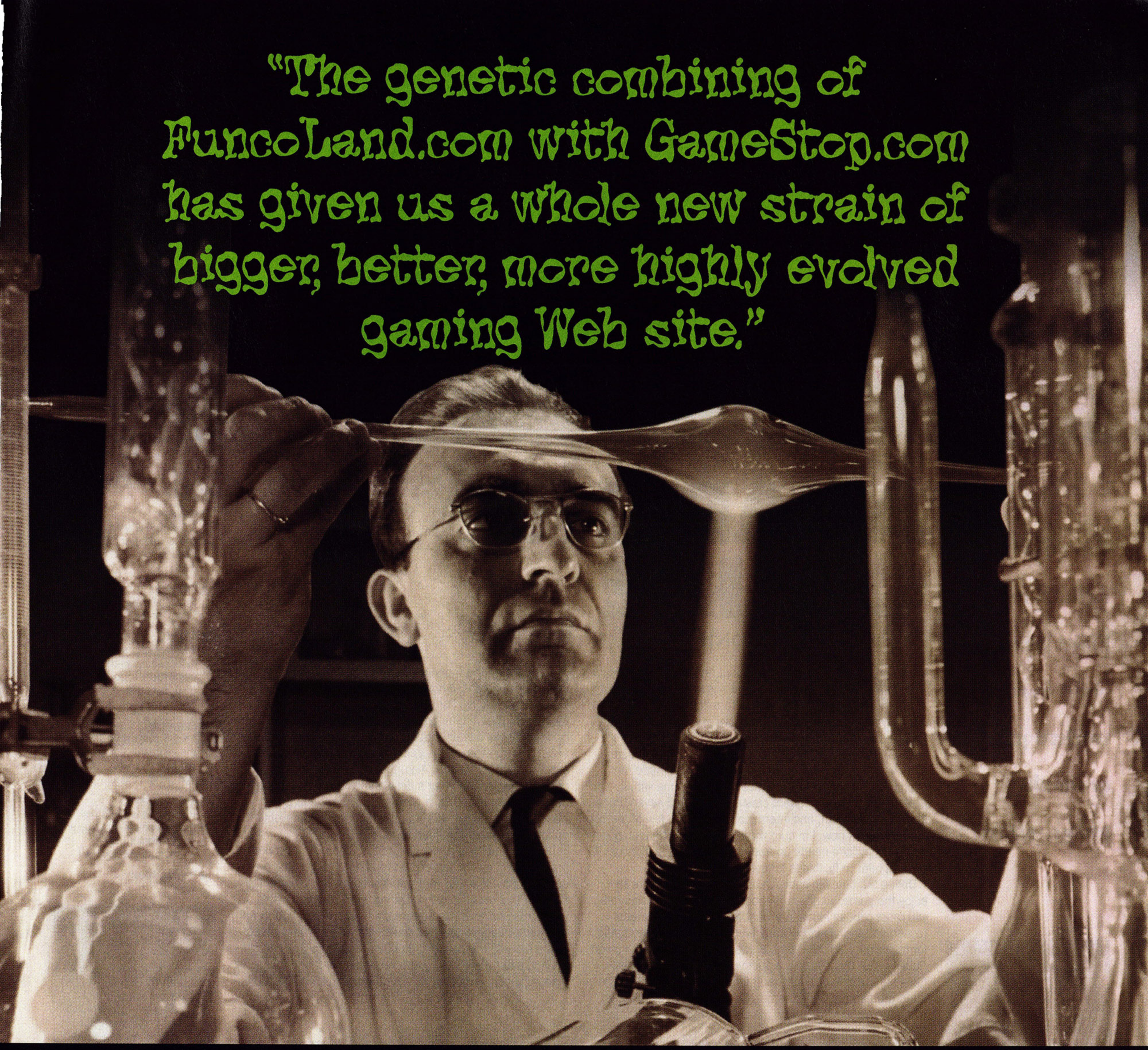

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PC

ANARCHY ONLINE

STOP THE MADNESS!!

"The quest options aren't limited to those poor, over-worked pro-gramming pukes, either."

What's so maddening about Anarchy Online? Well, as every online game of this style has shown, it is evidently impossible to release your product without bugs plentiful enough to choke a woolly mammoth (believe me, those suckers are hard to choke).

AO is no exception. However, as far as buggy games go, this one is not too bad – which is to say it only made me pound the keyboard once or twice during my time with it. Collision problems, frequent crashes (I crashed seven times in about five hours), and interminable lag are a few of the big problems right now. I'm sure there will be others which pop their stumpy little heads up from time to time, but Funcom is working hard to fix things for everyone.

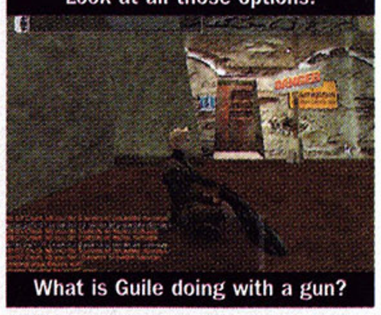
During the times in-between bugs, when you're able to enjoy the game, you'll learn about the backstory. Essentially, you must choose sides in a war brewing between a rebel faction and the almighty Omni-Tek corporation as they battle for supremacy 30,000 years in the future on a planet named Rubi-Ka. Get this: There's a substance on this world which fuels nanotechnology, and can't be found anywhere else in the universe (cue Dune theme). So, of course, Omni-Tek is ruling the world with an iron fist and the rebels aren't having it. You get the gist.

In any event, the story may not be the most interesting one you've heard, but how you're able to interact in this world is fascinating. For starters, the game will only last for four years. The story is progressive and the outcome will be decided by the players, not the programmers. That's reason enough for me to buy this game right there. What an excellent and gutsy idea. Also, there is a virtual ocean of options for your character's development. You can choose to become everything from a contracted assassin to a weaponsmith. As you level up, the number of improvement options will make your head spin.

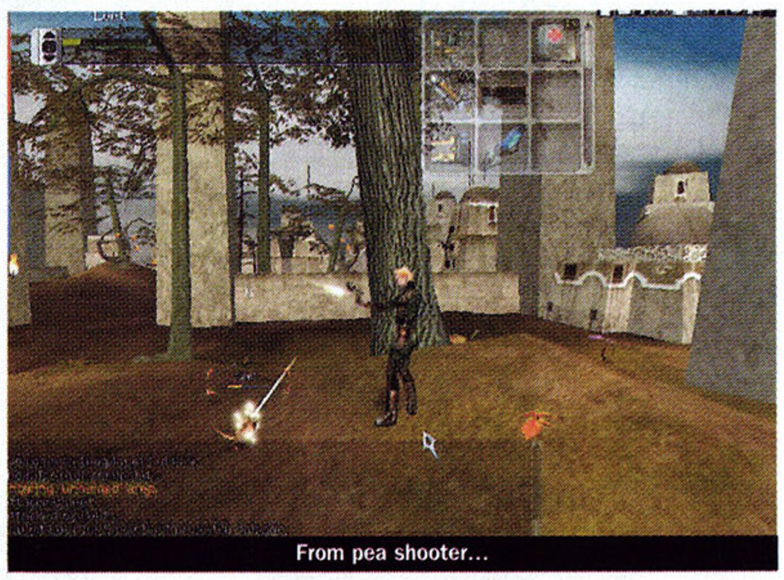
The quest options aren't limited to those poor, overworked programming pukes, either. You're able to create your own quests, and assemble your own teams as you traverse the lands of this massive world. During team play, you'll split each defeated enemy's experience between you, but he with the fastest fingers gets the items from the bodies. I guess that's the way the cookie crumbles. This game has enough ins and outs where it will keep you interested for a long, long time – Funcom is hoping for about four years. – **KRISTIAN**

Probably not someone you want to mess with

Look at all those options!


What is Guile doing with a gun?

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** FUNCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** FUNCOM
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 27


From pea shooter...

...to ass kicker

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

- **Concept:** An MMORPG where you choose sides and fight for freedom, or whatever you want
- **Graphics:** Not bad for a game with this kind of ambition
- **Sound:** The character setup surprised me with some intermittent speech, but other than that, everything else is pretty much average
- **Playability:** I highly suggest you study the keyboard commands in the options menu – you'll be lost without them
- **Entertainment:** It's fun in the same way most games of this type are – you invest in your character's development
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

As a seasoned online RPGer, I thought I would have an easy time picking up AO and getting the show on the road. Unfortunately, I was quite mistaken. After a couple of hours of making a fool out of myself in the newbie zone and the rather ingenious newbie clan chat, I had gotten down the basics. There are a number of things about the interface that are incredibly nice (like timed buffs and tons of player skills), but other aspects are just plain bad. Changing weapons and moving items in your inventory is a chore, and with no strafe, the player movement is odd. However, the game is quite breathtaking to look at, and to a lot of people, that's enough. For me, I think AO has definitely got the right idea, but missed the boat on a number of key aspects to make it a real challenger to EverQuest.

ANDY – 8.5

PC

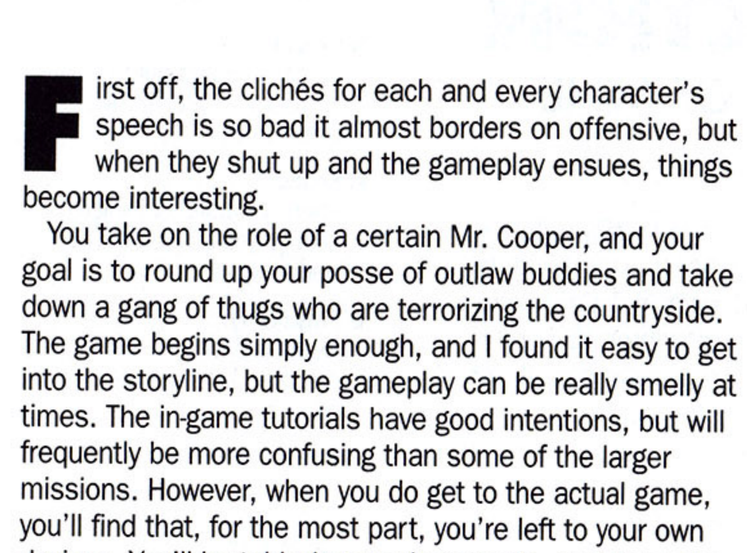
DESPERADOS

I'M YOUR HUCKLEBERRY

First off, the clichés for each and every character's speech is so bad it almost borders on offensive, but when they shut up and the gameplay ensues, things become interesting.

You take on the role of a certain Mr. Cooper, and your goal is to round up your posse of outlaw buddies and take down a gang of thugs who are terrorizing the countryside. The game begins simply enough, and I found it easy to get into the storyline, but the gameplay can be really smelly at times. The in-game tutorials have good intentions, but will frequently be more confusing than some of the larger missions. However, when you do get to the actual game, you'll find that, for the most part, you're left to your own devices. You'll be told what you have to do, and given the tools to do it, but how you execute your mission is all up to you.

That's fine and dandy, but believe you me – you'll become very familiar with the quick-save and quick-load hot keys. If you're able to get though an entire mission without dying or committing some play-ending gaffe, then you're probably the Gaming Messiah. This is a game for the patient and the obsessed. If you're not typically susceptible to these traits, I would suggest saving your money, and your temper, for another game. – **KRISTIAN**



Swingin' on the gallows pole

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.25

- **Concept:** It's like Fallout, but with a twang and a Colt Peacemaker
- **Graphics:** I wasn't expecting much, but I was pleasantly surprised
- **Sound:** Spellbound does a good job of covering all the bases. There's just enough to keep things interesting and engaging
- **Playability:** As you encounter new characters and situations, mini-tutorials will pop up to keep you in the know
- **Entertainment:** It's not a bad little game as long as you don't take it too seriously
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

Apparently named after an icky Eagles tune, Desperados puts a clever wild west spin on the Commandos formula. Given the game's theme, you'd think that its emphasis was on blazing shootouts, but it's really more akin to a strategy-intensive, isometric Tenchu. In fact, you'll rarely use your six-shooter, because its report will often result in a posse of lawmen shooting you dead. Desperados' brand of sneaky strategy is pretty addictive, even though the game is essentially just a complex version of hide-and-seek. Desperados' flaws include some rather arbitrary obstacles (characters can't climb over three-foot fences; some characters can't punch) and a very high degree of difficulty. Other than that, this game is hotter'n a two-peckered billy goat.

MATT – 8

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** SPELLBOUND ■ **RELEASE** JULY 24

PC

HOSTILE WATERS: ANTAEUS RISING

A PAIR OF CHOPPERS

I had no idea what to expect going into this game. I knew it had to do with helicopters, and it was an Interplay product (which was encouraging), but that was about it. When the opening sequence started I began to fret — it looked like utter crap. How is it possible to have slowdown on a PC game? I can understand if it's an FMV sequence, but a real-time cutscene should have no problem. In any case, when I finally got through the menus and into the actual gameplay, I was pleasantly surprised by a well-constructed, engaging, and highly addicting title that became more intriguing and beguiling as the missions went on. Cutscenes notwithstanding, this is an excellent game.

The game opens as you take control of an old warship dubbed the Antaeus. The Earth is at peace, and leaders from the old regime of now-defunct governments want to bring back the idea of money and power by waging war on the planet's citizens (all of these concepts are now a thing of the past since the inception of micro-technology). You'll need the Antaeus to build your units – combat, transport, or utility – and as more systems come online, you'll have more and more automated control over all of them. In terms of your virtual pilots engaging the enemy, or performing their duties, ensuring they're in the right place at the right time is important. As a cross between a strategy game and an action title, this is a superb offering. – **KRISTIAN**

Making good use of your resources is a must

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

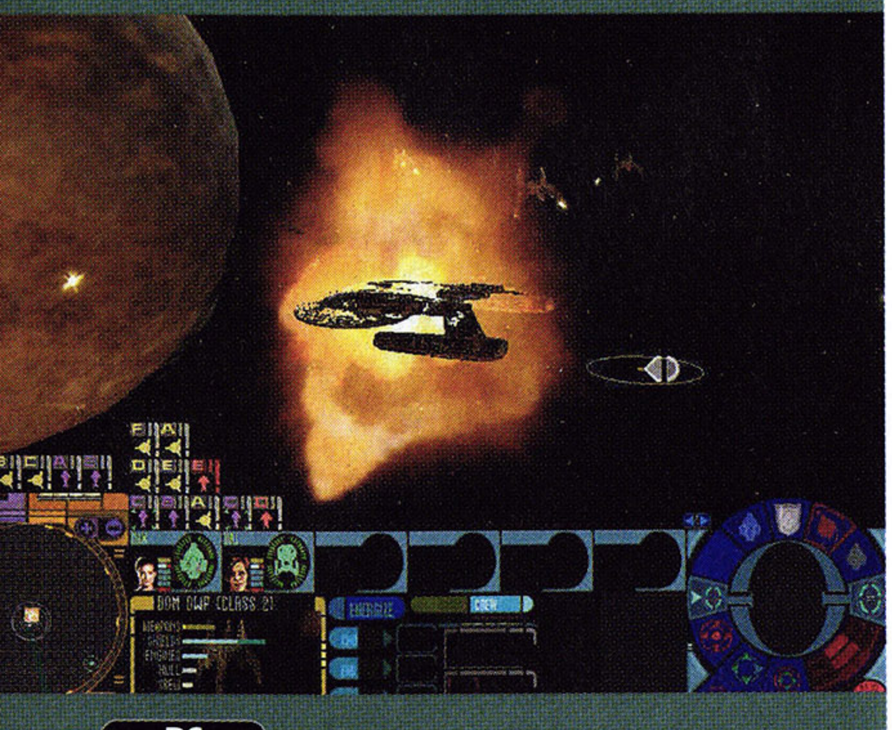
- **Concept:** Take command of a long-forgotten super-ship and kick some arse
- **Graphics:** Blocky, but the gameplay more than makes up for it
- **Sound:** Lots of great explosion effects, as well as a host of voice acting and environmental sounds
- **Playability:** The built-in tutorials are a nice way to get your bearings before you jump into the more complex missions
- **Entertainment:** It doesn't look like it should be fun, but lo and behold, it is
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

Antaeus Rising defies convention with its amalgamated gameplay formula – which begs the question, is it a real-time strategy game, or an action game? The RTS angle is expressed through the cannibalization of Westwood's resource gathering, vehicle manufacturing, and mission structuring. As for the action, rather than just issuing orders to units, you actually take control of them. Of course, even with picture-in-picture screens, the third-person perspective does leave you blinded. For instances like this, it can also be played from a top-down view. Both modes are constructed beautifully. On the outskirts, however, the story, which is penned by Warren Ellis, is extremely boring. Worst of all is the absence of multiplayer. Thankfully, though, Antaeus has it where it counts — within the play.

REINER — 8

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY ■ **DEVELOPER** RAGE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 12



PC

STAR TREK DEEP SPACE NINE: DOMINION WARS

DEEP SIX GAME: NOW

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

4.25

I'm going to invent a word. The word is: Nutch. Nutch will henceforth refer to anything which portrays itself as a finished product, but in actuality is not. Okay, so we have the groundwork done.

That being said, I now feel comfortable telling you that this game is the biggest piece of nutch I have seen in a long, long time. The boxed copy of the game was shipped to me along with a 52 meg patch on a separate disc. Even after I installed the entire patch, things were appallingly buggy. The sound was spotty, the tutorial system was completely broken, the game crashed numerous times, and the mission structure was awful.

As a space combat sim, this title doesn't really have much to offer. You buy your ships, fill them with crew, equip them with assorted items, then point and click them around a map until they start to engage what you hope is the enemy. This might be fun if the game worked halfway decently, but any patch is going to be too little too late. There's really no excuse for things to be as buggy as they are for a Star Trek game of this type. As a title which isn't bringing anything new to the table, I would at least expect it to be finished by the time it's released. – **KRISTIAN**

- **Concept:** Sit back and gaze at a game that's being released in what is probably its beta form
- **Graphics:** There's certainly nothing spectacular here. I've seen comparable graphics on titles released a year ago
- **Sound:** Well, when there is sound, it's alright, but usually it's too buggy to be useful
- **Playability:** The game's entire tutorial system is bugged, so it's trial and error time, boys and girls
- **Entertainment:** I think there might be a fun game hiding in here somewhere, but it's impossible to get to right now
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Assuming you get it to work at all, what one experiences during Dominion Wars is space combat of the most simplistic proportions. Man your ships, fly to a point on the minimap, and click on enemies to shoot sums up the game. Compared with such intricate Star Trek titles as Starfleet Command, this game is a total joke.

JAY – 5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** SIMON AND SCHUSTER ■ **DEVELOPER** GIZMO GAMES ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.25

PC

DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION

A FRIEND OF THE DEVIL IS A FRIEND OF MINE

It will be a cold day in Hell when a Diablo expansion doesn't sell well. Why is that? I would have to say because our friends over at Blizzard know what they're doing. It seems the company has the isometric world wrapped around its little finger (okay, it shares that honor with Interplay) and this expansion will wind it even tighter. You don't even have to be a Diablo veteran to jump in and start having fun right away. It's all rather self-explanatory, really. You click, you attack. The rest is window dressing.

Of course, it's really interesting window dressing. The new character classes open up numerous avenues for varied multiplayer experiences. And, of course, multiplayer is where Diablo really shines. Believe me, there are plenty of additions across the board from items to armor – you'll be hard-pressed to find all of them.

However, the lack of an on-demand save function is quite obnoxious. If you're unlucky enough to get yourself killed, you'll need to retrace your steps from the nearest town to get all of your equipment back. Bummer. Oh well, whaddya gonna do? Buy it anyway, of course. – **KRISTIAN**

Stats, anyone?

Whatever was here is now quite dead

A whole lot of killin' went on here

Someone just gave up the ghost in this cave

- **Concept:** Kill as much as you can as quickly as you can
- **Graphics:** A much-needed bump into the 800x600 realm has been added
- **Sound:** There's a bunch of voice acting, and a whole lot of battle noise
- **Playability:** See monster, click on monster, kill monster, move on
- **Entertainment:** Diablo has a formula that works, and now it works better
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

The goal of an expansion pack should always be to make the original game fresh enough to play all over again. Lord of Destruction adds plenty of components, but doesn't really offer any reason to give Diablo II another go, other than curiosity. The most noteworthy amongst the new features are two new character classes and a new Act to adventure in after Diablo is defeated. Is this enough to put me back on the trail of Deckard Cain again? Not really. Unless you haven't tired of multiplayer on Battle.net, all the new characters, skills, and items don't take away the been there, done that feeling. This is especially true if, like many, you've gone through the game a couple times already to try out different classes. Buy Lord of Destruction if you're exploring Diablo II for the first time. Skip it if you've already had your fill.

JAY – 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** BLIZZARD NORTH ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 28

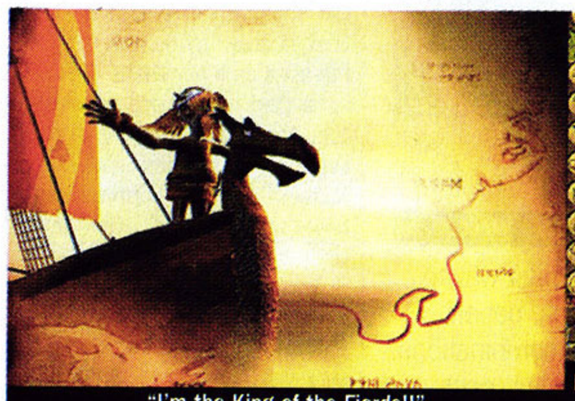
PC

CULTURES

ARCTIC TURDLINGS

There's something not quite right about this game. First of all, I don't think I'm too far off base when I say this is a game about Vikings. Vikings, as some of you may know, were a bunch of marauding Scandenavians who kicked a lot of ass between 793 and 1066 A.D.. With that in mind, I found it very interesting that the German developers decided to give the Viking narrator an English accent. Odd, wouldn't you say? In any event, as I was playing, I was never really disinterested in what I was doing, but whatever interest I did have was limited, at best.

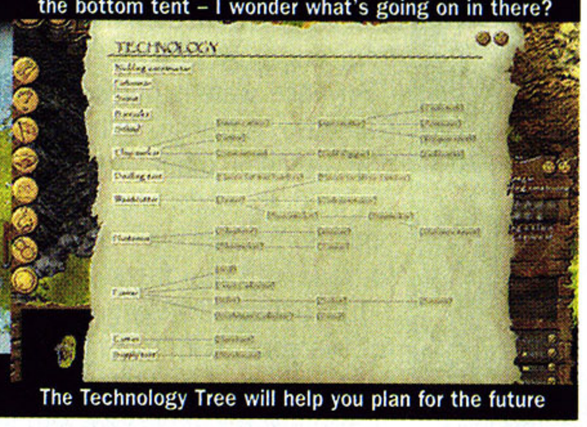
Cultures is, for all intents and purposes (you used to think it was intensive purposes didn't you?), an RTS. You've got resource gathering, unit production, structure building, and blah, blah, blah. True, there's a certain amount of fun to be had in training your population in certain skills, then watching them go about their business, or watching your citizens retire to their abode to make <ahem!> more citizens, but it's not that entertaining. I think Cultures is a good idea, but it's just not very engaging in the long term. Plus, the camera control is rotten and the speed of the entire game can be downright boring at times. If you find this one in a bargain bin, go for it. It is fun, but not $35 worth of fun. – **KRISTIAN**



"I'm the King of the Fjords!!"

If you look closely, you can see little hearts coming from the bottom tent – I wonder what's going on in there?

Trading with different races, in this case the Inuit, will aid you in building your economy



The Technology Tree will help you plan for the future

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** FUNATICS DEVELOPMENT ■ **RELEASE** JULY 24

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

7.5

■ **Concept:**
It's basically SimViking, but without Randy Moss gumming up the works

■ **Graphics:**
The cartoony characters and limited camera control are earmarks of a game that has been in development for a while

■ **Sound:**
Pleasant music and engaging ambient sounds were a welcome addition to this fairly linear title

■ **Playability:**
Going through the tutorials isn't a bad idea – there's a lot to learn

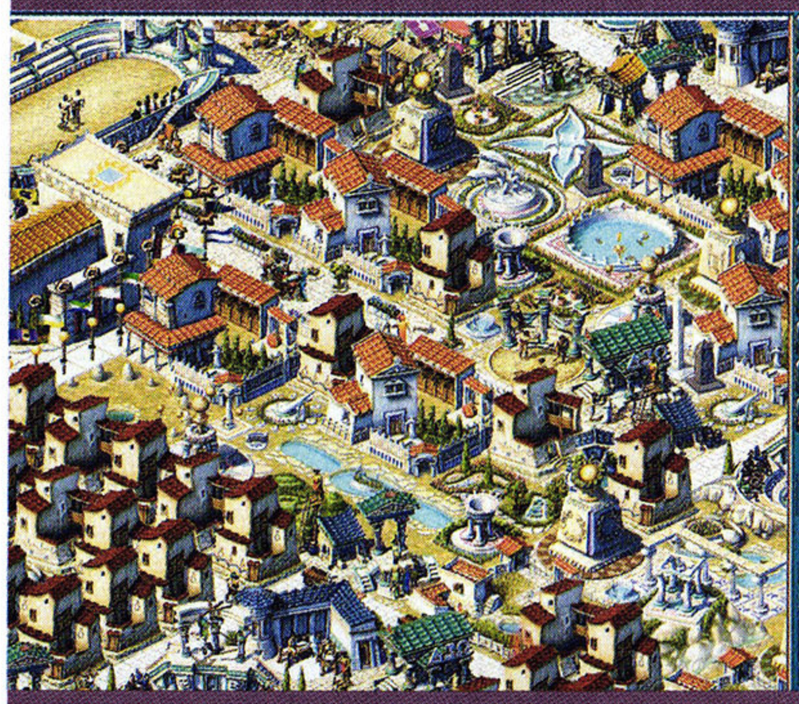
■ **Entertainment:**
This would be a great game if it sold for $9.95

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I'm far from an RTS guru, but I had a good time with Cultures. How can you not like Vikings? While you must keep an eye on your citizens, it isn't a do-or-die situation. Needy folk will generally feed and care for themselves, unlike more hostile RTS titles where taking your eyes off your clan ends in mass slaughter (as opposed to glam rocker Mark Slaughter, which is just as bad). Your job is mostly to tell your people what to do, and make the settlement grow. The in-game progression from a society of hunter/gatherers to a sophisticated, self-sufficient utopia was subtle enough that you can let it all sink in and not be overwhelmed by your new tasks. And if you run out of workers, just play Dr. Love and have a couple make some nookie. In no time at all you have a few more drones at your disposal! Ahhhh, sookie sookie now!

JUSTIN – 7.5



PC

POSEIDON

MEDUSA IS UGLY

I know what you're thinking right now. You're thinking, "My God. That's the best title to any article I've ever seen in my entire life. I think I'll cut this page out and have it blown up to poster size for my bedroom wall." Right? NO?! You obviously have no taste in literary...stuff. In any event, Poseidon is a little like my incredible title – there's not a lot of depth, but it gets the job done.

This release offers a lot to its fans: Six new adventures, new civilizations, new gods, heroes, and monsters, and an Adventure Editor which allows you to set your own goals and missions. That's all wonderful, but it could be compared to upgrading from a '98 Camry to a 2000 Camry – you'll get a few new functions and such, but it's basically the same thing. However, there's no denying this game is fun to play. Zeus is an incredibly elaborate game, and Poseidon maintains that level of detail. You'll spend hours and hours trying to get your version of Atlantis just right, and making sure your people are wiping their butts and eating well.

Definitely get this game if you're done with Zeus and looking to expand on the knowledge you've garnered thus far. You'll find yourself blissfully throwing away your free time once again. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8

■ **Concept:**
If you're a Zeus aficionado, you're going to love what this game has to offer

■ **Graphics:**
Well, over here you've got Zeus, and over here you've got Poseidon – there ain't a whole lot of difference

■ **Sound:**
It's all very grandiose and inspiring, especially that rushing wind sound I've come to love so much

■ **Playability:**
If you're buying this game, you've played Zeus. Newbies need not apply

■ **Entertainment:**
I hate to state the obvious, but here it goes: If you liked Zeus you'll like this

■ **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Considering that you can play a single episode for eight hours only to find out that you must start over, the fact that Poseidon doesn't truly add much to the Zeus formula seems more of a blessing than anything else. Players of Zeus, and those who think SimCity doesn't have enough micromanagement, should check it out.

JAY – 7

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** IMPRESSIONS GAMES ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 24

GAME BOY COLOR

DRAGON WARRIOR III

BIGGER IS BETTER

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

Not one to cut corners when it comes to its landmark franchise, Enix has given Dragon Warrior III a complete overhaul for its release on Game Boy Color. Not only has this gigantic role-playing game been retranslated to retain the story and risqué humor of the source material, but many new features have been added. There are personality tests to take that can slightly alter your lead character, monster medals to collect and trade that can unlock a new dungeon, and the ability to save anywhere is included.

The game itself is somewhat stereotypical, but done very well. Starting off with a group of four characters, each one of eight different classes, you go out in classic Dragon Warrior fashion to fight slimes around your hometown. As the story unfolds, you explore more of the gargantuan world.

Not an RPG for beginners, DWIII will often leave you with little clue of what to do next, and much of your party will die if you don't do some extended leveling up. At an estimated 60 hours of gameplay, RPGs don't come more intricate or lengthy on Game Boy. If you're a fan of the genre in its most classic form, you really can't do much better on a handheld than Dragon Warrior III. – **JAY**

- **Concept:** The NES classic completely reworked and pumped up, making it almost an entirely new game
- **Graphics:** Pretty good, considering the source material. New monster and magic animations add a little spice to battles
- **Sound:** Repetitive yet catchy tunes will stick in your brain
- **Playability:** The menus could have been easier to navigate, but they are workable once you learn them
- **Entertainment:** An RPG that will steal your life away for weeks
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I find myself agreeing with Jay. No, not on outdated poseur hairstyles, but on the fact that DWIII is a must-have role-playing game. I was enthralled by the quest, actually enjoyed the frequent combat, and found the personality test and ally creation ingenious. It breaks few molds, but follows the RPG to-do list to a tee.

JUSTIN – 8.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** ENIX
■ **DEVELOPER** ENIX ■ **RELEASE** JULY 17

GAME BOY ADVANCE

ADVANCE WARS

SOOOO MUCH GAME

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

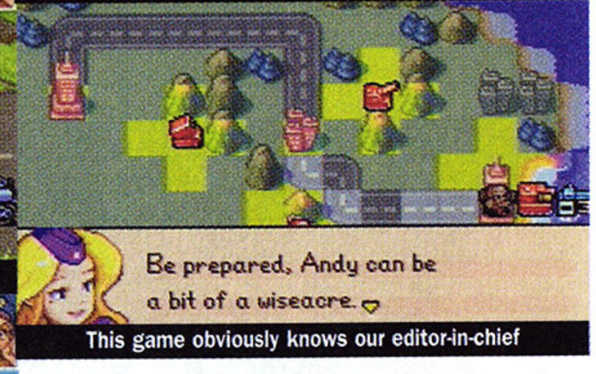
9.25

When the Nintendo representative handed over a copy of Advance Wars for me to review, and said there are about three hours of tutorial I should go through before playing, I giggled. I mean come on. I have spent literally tens of thousands of hours playing video games – what Game Boy game is gonna take me three hours to learn?

I soon learned Advance Wars is easily the deepest handheld game I have ever seen, and while it seems quite overwhelming at times, it's also one of the most entertaining. Using a turn-based system similar to Military Madness, each side gets a turn to move each of its pieces and usually, depending on its type, execute some form of an operation. The best way to describe it is a giant game of rock, paper, scissors — but with many more combinations. There are air, land, and sea vehicles, each with various attributes and abilities that range from long-range attacks to troop supply.

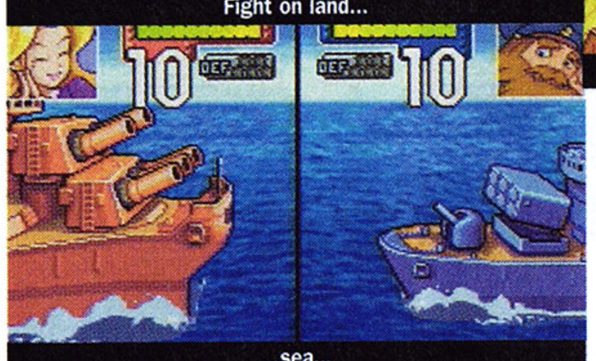
Conquer new lands

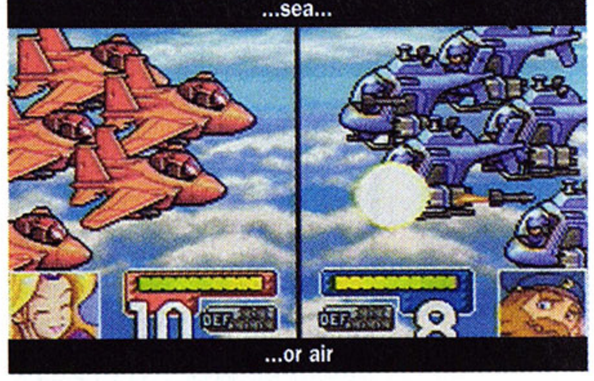
Create your own maps for multiplayer



This game obviously knows our editor-in-chief

Fight on land...


...sea...


...or air

Advance Wars is perfectly built for the Game Boy Advance, with nice vibrant colors that are easy to see, and both a long single-player story mode and a variety of multiplayer options. You can even design your own levels to trade with your friends.

Turn-based strategy games certainly aren't for everyone, but I'm sure if you can make it past Advance Wars' three-hour training session, you'll fall in love with this handheld epic. – **ANDY**

- **Concept:** Turn-based warfare on a massive scale
- **Graphics:** Easy-to-see icons with nice big battlefields
- **Sound:** I didn't even notice because I was concentrating so much on playing the game
- **Playability:** A simple interface, but lots of rules make this one difficult to master
- **Entertainment:** Addictive campaigns that will burn through GBA batteries like a burrito through your digestive track
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Bar none, Advance Wars is the best strategy game ever released on a handheld. This small cart holds more gameplay time than many PC titles of the same genre, and the tutorial alone will take you around four hours to get through. There are tons of units and terrain nuances to get accustomed to. If you think you're a master of the battlefield, you can test your mettle against three other human opponents. Even if you were to make it through all of this monumental title, however, you could begin designing your own scenarios and trading them with friends. About the only complaint I have with Advance Wars is that a unit's turn is over when it attacks, but this is really just nitpicking. This game puts me in awe of what the Game Boy Advance is capable of, and if you are at all a strategy fan, I can't recommend Advance Wars enough.

JAY – 9.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** ■ NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 10

GAME OF THE MONTH

MARIO KART ADVANCE

"Everything about this game blows my mind, especially the fact that I was playing it on a system the size of a flat guinea pig"

GAME BOY ADVANCE

MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

THE WINNER, AND STILL KART CHAMPION

After playing so many craptacular knock-offs of Mario Kart (Super Bombad, South Park Rally, Smurf Racer, etc.), you'd think I would be sour to the kart racing genre as a whole. Nay, for I am not. Mario Kart Super Circuit may be the best and most entertaining entry in this hit-or-miss category yet. Everything about this game blows my mind, especially the fact that I was playing it on a system the size of a flat guinea pig.

Essentially, Super Circuit expands on the SNES classic, which we called the 35th best video game of all time. The banana-colored man you love to hate, Wario, replaces Koopa in the field, and Donkey Kong takes his son's place. Instead of just having varying rates of acceleration and top speed, your racers have a weight rating, which affects their handling immensely.

A full five cups await your racing expertise, each with a quartet of courses. These are all new levels, and are up to par with the previous Mario Kart tracks. Rainbow Road and Bowser Castle stages are back with redesigns, and are joined by the rainy Luigi Circuit, the aptly named Sunset Wilds, and the strange Cheese Land. You can tackle these in 50, 100, or 150cc classes. The standard weapons are back, save for the high-jumping feather. What would a Mario Kart game be without multiplayer? On the GBA, you can go at it with up to three other people, and your screen size never changes from the full-screen view (remember how SNES Kart used a half view, even in one-player?). With one cartridge, everybody is a different colored Yoshi, which is my character of choice anyway. You race across four levels from the original Mario Kart, complete with the same music. This brings the course tally up to a whopping 24! If everyone's got their pak packed, you have carte blanche to use any and every GBA track, and even four new battle courses. No squinting, no slowdown, and all the self-esteem lowering disses you can come up with.

Wario battles the elements in Time Trial

How this game could possibly look or sound better is beyond me. Weather effects, stunning animated backgrounds, and changing lighting were unexpected eye candy, and I was actually rocking out to the music from a portable cartridge! I love a lot of the existing GBA games, but screw them – Mario Kart Super Circuit is tops.

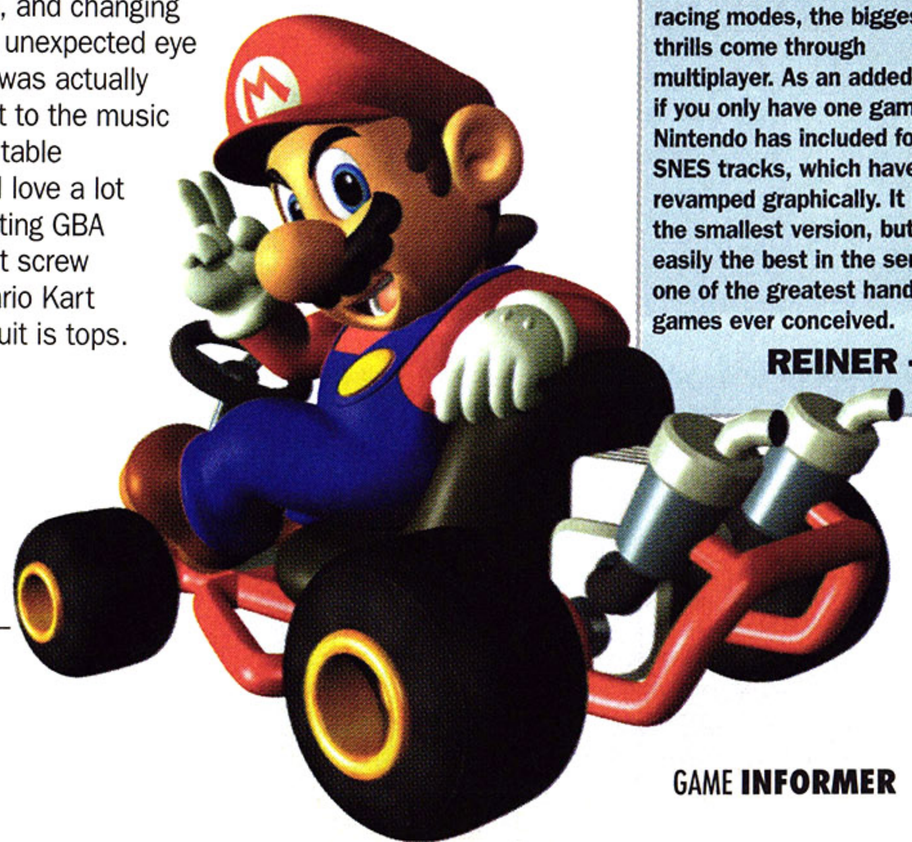
– **JUSTIN**

Yoshi is first. Everyone else is the worst

Bowser's badly aimed shells may come back to haunt him

New Rainbow Road, same lack of railings

A well-timed button push gives you a boost out of the starting gate



THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

9.5

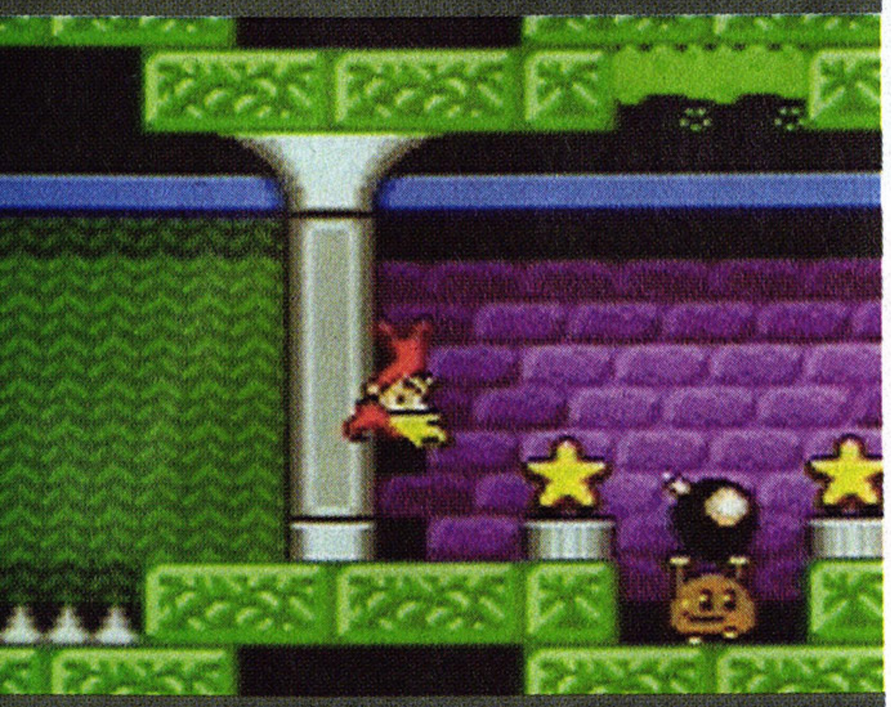
- **Concept:** The master of kart racing hits the road again to put all imitators to shame
- **Graphics:** I'd be surprised if any GBA game ends up topping this
- **Sound:** Great speech and music, including Theme From A Summer Place
- **Playability:** Same classic Mario Kart feel, with a few control alterations
- **Entertainment:** No trip is too long to get sick of playing this game, and multiplayer is peachy keen
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

I really didn't know what to expect from this release. Would Nintendo fashion it as a sequel to the Super Nintendo game, or model it after the high-end Nintendo 64 offering? Even though the Mode 7 effects veer closer to the 16-bit incarnation, Super Circuit is actually a perfect hybrid of both. Within the 20 tracks, which all feature amazing scrolling background details, all the classic gameplay elements are intact, as are the 64-bit enhancements. In both battle and racing modes, the biggest thrills come through multiplayer. As an added bonus, if you only have one game pak, Nintendo has included four SNES tracks, which have been revamped graphically. It may be the smallest version, but it's easily the best in the series and one of the greatest handheld games ever conceived.

REINER – 9.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 27



GAME BOY COLOR/GAME BOY ADVANCE

WENDY: EVERY WITCH WAY

DANCING ON THE CEILING

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

Wendy the Witch isn't up there with Shrek in terms of commercial clout, but TDK and Wayforward have managed to turn the little enchantress into a pretty cool GBC/GBA title, something it couldn't accomplish with the putrid Shrek: Fairytale Freakdown a few months back.

Essentially, Wendy: Every Witch Way is a standard platformer with one really cool twist – it allows the player to reverse gravity at will. With gravity (and all the attending gameplay physics) reversed, Wendy happily continues her quest upside-down. It's pretty ingenious, especially when the levels begin to resemble vertical mazes that require gravity to negotiate. Save for some tame flying levels, the game is pretty much a one-trick pony, but what a cool trick it is. This isn't a gaming first, but it hasn't been seen in quite some time.

Sadly, the fantastic little adventure is over all too soon. Anyone with even a modicum of gaming skill should easily be able to beat Every Witch Way in a single afternoon, with some time left over to mow the lawn. There are only about a dozen levels, not counting the bonus rounds and a few GBA-only levels that have been tacked on. There's something to be said for not overstaying your welcome, but this is ridiculous. – **MATT**

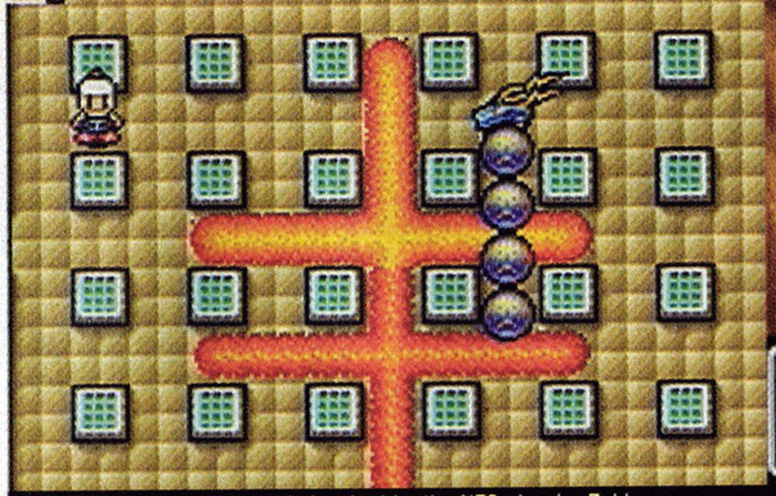
- **Concept:** A gravity-defying new platformer from TDK Mediactive
- **Graphics:** Better than the average load that drops out of the GBC cute chute
- **Sound:** Really good, provided you have the sound turned off and are listening to a CD
- **Playability:** Excellent
- **Entertainment:** Cool, but needs to be twice as long
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

Every Witch Way is a fantastic, fun, and original platformer that gets held back by its extreme brevity. A Game Boy Advance will unlock extra levels, but even that won't give you enough of this good thing. I think a larger sequel is in order from TDK. How about giving us more than a few hours of gameplay next time?

JAY – 7

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** TDK MEDIACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** WAYFORWARD TECHNOLOGIES ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 18



The adventure is inspired by the NES classic, Zelda

Minigames range from turn-based battles to fishing

GAME BOY ADVANCE

BOMBERMAN TOURNAMENT

THE EXPLOSIVES EXPERT

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

Bomberman Tournament? Not exactly. Much like Hudson Soft's high-end releases of late, this Bomberman focuses more on the adventure aspect than on multiplayer combat. A perfect hybrid of two of the greatest games of all time, Bomberman Tournament's Quest mode is constructed just like the NES classic, Zelda, yet the gameplay still holds true to the family roots, proving to be as explosive as ever.

The ties to Zelda are a tad obvious. You'll bomb a wall to unearth a secret chamber, defeat a dungeon boss to obtain another Heart Container, and use a myriad of tools to solve puzzles. On the Bomberman side, strategically placing explosives is still the name of the game; however, you'll also search for 25 different Karabon creatures – beasts that aid in your quest and compete in minigame battles.

A shame indeed, the multiplayer aspect, which has always been the heart and soul of the series, only offers eight arenas. The Quest however, makes it worth checking out. – **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

This was unexpected. You don't just get your one-screen multi-player battles, but also an epic adventure with lots of depth as well. Imitation is the highest form of flattery. Somebody set Zelda up the bomb.

JUSTIN – 8

- **Concept:** The Quest is structured like Zelda, whereas the multiplayer is straight-up Bomberman
- **Graphics:** As vibrant as any other system. The enemy animation is especially noteworthy
- **Sound:** Typical Bomberman techno with a splash of jungle beats
- **Playability:** Explosive as always, but now you'll collect monsters, battle bosses, and explore dungeons
- **Entertainment:** The multiplayer is only eight zones, but the Quest couldn't be any more engrossing
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** HUDSON SOFT ■ **RELEASE** JULY 12

GAME BOY ADVANCE

ESPN FINAL ROUND GOLF 2002

HAVE CLUB, WILL TRAVEL

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

I've learned it doesn't take much to make a title that can satiate your golf cravings. Final Round is testament to this – an unspectacular title that still does the job well enough to keep you playing.

I can't complain about the character count and course list. Fourteen golfers and five courses seems meaty for a portable. The characters are unbalanced, though, so you'll probably just stick with your favorite. The courses must be unlocked, but all you have to do is win a tournament. Final Round's difficulty is toned down compared to other golf titles. I had no problem breaking par, aside from minor gameplay frustrations. Strokes utilize the three-click interface, familiar to anyone who's played a golf game before.

Henry Rollins frequently refers to pro golfing as a lame profession. While I can't argue that, sometimes you get the urge to hit some balls. If golf's your appetite, you'll dig on Final Round. If you want a decent GBA cart in general, though, there are much wiser choices. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

People frequently refer to Henry Rollins as a jackass. While I can't argue with them, I can say this golf offering from Konami is the perfect fit for the traveling golf nut.

KRISTIAN – 7.5

- **Concept:** Golf on the go, plain and simple
- **Graphics:** Aside from a few nice backgrounds, very Game Boy Color
- **Sound:** The clapping approval of the fans is satisfying
- **Playability:** Swinging and putting are simple, almost to a fault
- **Entertainment:** Golf games are a good time killer, but you probably won't sit down and play this at your leisure
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 24

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SPIDER-MAN: MYSTERIO'S MENACE

SLING-A-DING-DING

Initially, Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace seems like the greatest comic book game to ever appear on a handheld. Spidey can do it all – swing around, web up villains, and climb on any surface. The animations and graphics, brought to you by the same team responsible for Tony Hawk on GBA, are sharp and smooth as can be. The comic frames that make up the cutscenes are drawn well, and are perfect for the game. Heck, you even get to select which missions you want to take from an overhead map of New York City.

Indeed, the first half hour or so of Mysterio's Menace is quite pleasant. However, after the visual thrill of the game wears off, you start to realize how the whole thing is kind of mindless. All you really do is beat up thug after thug, eventually getting to a boss that may stymie you for a life or two, but is easily defeated once the pattern is figured out. This isn't a game everyone has to own. It's more like one of those okay games that gets passed around a lot between a group of friends. – **JAY**

SECOND OPINION

More of the same from Vicarious. Apart from the GBA using fore/background effects that are cool when you're web slinging, this is very similar to last month's GBC game.

KATO – 7.25

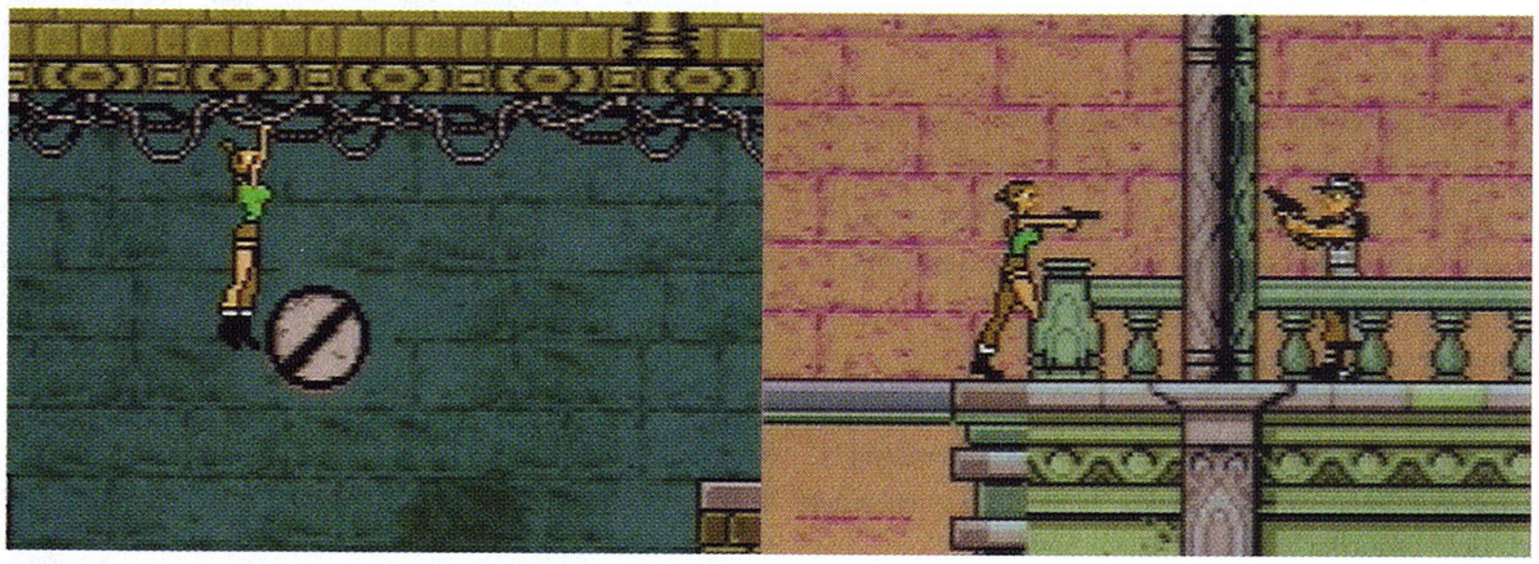
THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE – CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** Side-scrolling Spidey reminiscent of the Genesis titles, with plenty of action to be had
- **Graphics:** The animation is great, and transitions smoothly from web-swinging to wall-crawling
- **Sound:** Not so great. Barely above GBC quality
- **Playability:** The controls work very well, allowing for a variety of moves
- **Entertainment:** Once the magic is over, an average platformer
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** VICARIOUS VISIONS ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 18



GAME BOY COLOR

TOMB RAIDER: CURSE OF THE SWORD

LARA'S LAST GBC ADVENTURE

Tomb Raider was always just Prince of Persia in 3D, so the similarities between the two series are even more apparent in this 2D incarnation. I felt Prince of Persia was unjustly left off our 100 Greatest Games of All Time, so you know this mini-Raider is aces in my book.

As with every previous Tomb Raider adventure, you have to take the good with the bad. With the intricate level designs comes the repetitive "find-the-switch-to-open-the-door" gameplay formula. With the fluid character animations comes the frustration of repeatedly falling off a ledge you've been trying to jump off. The fact that the developers have tried to incorporate a great variety of character moves into GBC's two-button configuration doesn't help matters, either. Still, this and Dragon Warrior III are probably two of the last notable GBC games that will ever be released, and I'd wager that Tomb Raider could still give most Game Boy Advance games a run for their money. – **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

Are Lara's two GBC assets the same size? Yes, and this one from Activision plays exactly like last year's from THQ. It's not the real thing, but a rental roll in the hay is a good idea.

KATO – 7

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE – CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

- **Concept:** Prince of Persia with boobies
- **Graphics:** Very nice, an example of how great art direction can make up for a lack of processing power
- **Sound:** Almost none, which is a good thing for a GBC game
- **Playability:** You're either used to TR's quirks by now or probably already hate this series
- **Entertainment:** Although it's essentially the same as last year's GBC Tomb Raider, this game still beats most other GBC action/adventure titles
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** CORE/EIDOS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 25

GAME BOY COLOR

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

THE REALLY, REALLY LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

First off, let me salute Pocket Studios for the obvious effort that went into bringing a full-fledged survival horror title to the archaic Game Boy Color. It couldn't have been easy. It's even more noteworthy when you recall that Capcom, the masters of the genre, tried and failed to create a GBC version of Resident Evil. Despite the odds, Pocket Studios brings fixed camera angles and ornate backdrops to the confines of the Game Boy Color with a graphical flair that is astonishing.

Unfortunately, the overall gameplay experience fails to reach the heights achieved by the graphics. Survival horror games are primarily driven by creepy atmospherics that depend heavily upon sound and graphics, as well as a compelling storyline. As good as this game looks, it's difficult to be scared by your Game Boy Color, especially when the monsters sound like flatulent calculators and the story is fleshed out through static cutscenes. Take the cinematic ambiance from the equation, and you're left with basically a scavenger hunt for keys interspersed with clumsy battles. Hopefully this will sell well enough to give Pocket Studios a chance to try this on the Game Boy Advance. – **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN – CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** A daring attempt at bringing the Alone in the Dark franchise to Nintendo's aging handheld
- **Graphics:** Pretty damn impressive
- **Sound:** Not so impressive
- **Playability:** The basic control is passable, but the combat is a new nightmare indeed
- **Entertainment:** Not as fun as I wanted it to be
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

You won't jump in fright, as it's not nearly as spooky as PS-X's AitD, but you will leap in the air when you see this GBC Dark's graphics. Unfortunately, the title is bogged down by an awful combat system which has you shooting at enemies from weird angles. It's a trade-off – one that you may not be prepared to make.

KATO – 7

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** POCKET STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 27

CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.

NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For June 2001 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	**Super Mario Advance**	GBA	Jun-01	$29

Ladies and gentlemen, let us celebrate the fact that there are no Pokémon games in the Top 5! Woo-hoo! Look at those little turds sucking it up way down at the 13th and 14th slots! Suckers! While you laugh at the decline of Pokémania, pay some respects to the real Nintendo superstar, Mario, who is holding it down at the number one slot.

2	N/A	**Twisted Metal: Black**	PS2	Jun-01	$51

Despite an M rating and some very disturbing plot points, Twisted Metal: Black's amazing gameplay has rocketed the franchise back to the top of the charts. Frankly, we think the gang at Incog Inc. are some sick puppies, but that doesn't stop our addiction to this groundbreaking game. We even hear that Marilyn Manson is a big fan.

3	N/A	**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2**	GBA	May-01	$40

Over 10 months after its release, the 900° master is still riding high on the charts. Expect Tony's reign of terror in the video game industry to continue this fall, when THPS 3 hits the PS2 like a ton of ball bearings. In fact, we're sick of talking to you; we're going to play Tony 3 right now. Ha ha!

4	N/A	**NBA Street**	PS2	Jun-01	$52

It's no secret that the GI staff loves big sweaty men in shorts, but that's not the only reason we love NBA Street. It's def, it's dope, it's like hot butter on your breakfast toast. If you haven't picked up this innovative roundball game yet, go get a late pass, then go directly to your local video game store and pick one up.

5	1	**The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons**	GBC	May-01	$31

Even without the guidance of the its legendary creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, the Zelda series continues to shine on the Game Boy Color. The only mystery is why Oracle of Seasons is selling better than its superior counterpart Oracle of Ages. C'mon, folks! It's like the whole Pokémon Silver outselling Pokémon Gold controversy all over again. Sheesh!

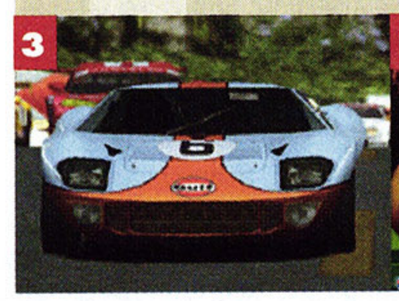
RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	2	**The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages**	GBC	May-01	$31
7	N/A	**Sonic Adventure 2**	DC	Jun-01	$41
8	N/A	**Castlevania: Circle of the Moon**	GBA	Jun-01	$40
9	N/A	**F-Zero: Maximum Velocity**	GBA	Jun-01	$29
10	3	**Mario Party 3**	N64	May-01	$50
11	9	**Dark Cloud**	PS2	May-01	$50
12	4	**Red Faction**	PS2	May-01	$51
13	5	**Pokémon Silver**	GBC	Oct-00	$29
14	7	**Pokémon Gold**	GBC	Oct-00	$29
15	N/A	**Rayman Advance**	GBA	Jun-01	$39
16	N/A	**Namco Museum**	GBA	Jun-01	$30
17	16	**Gran Turismo 2**	PS-X	Dec-99	$20
18	15	**Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX**	PS-X	May-01	$40
19	N/A	**GT Advance**	GBA	Jun-01	$39
20	N/A	**Final Fantasy Chronicles**	PS-X	Jun-01	$42

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan
Based On Monthly Units Sold

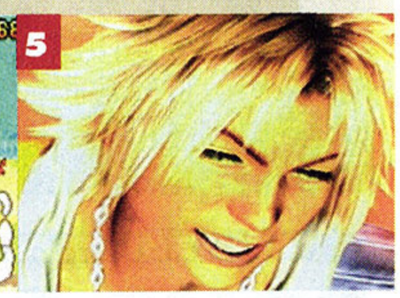
POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Culdcept II**	DC
2	N/A	**Yi-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters 5 Expert 1**	GBA
3	N/A	**Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec**	PS2
4	N/A	**Ka (Mosquito)**	PS2
5	2	**Jikkyo Powerful Pro Baseball 2001**	PS2
6	N/A	**Ape Escape 2001**	PS2
7	N/A	**Hitsusatsu Pachinko Station V2**	PS2
8	N/A	**Digimon Trainers Digimon Medley**	WSC
9	N/A	**Breath of Fire: Dragon War**	GBA
10	N/A	**Super Street Fighter II: Turbo Revival**	GBA



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3**	PS2
2	2	**Gran Turismo 3**	PS2
3	N/A	**Mario Kart: Super Circuit**	GBA
4	3	**NBA Street**	PS2
5	N/A	**Final Fantasy X**	PS2
6	N/A	**Baldur's Gate: Throne of Bhaal**	PC
7	N/A	**Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder**	PS2
8	5	**The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages**	GBA
9	6	**The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons**	GBA
10	N/A	**Saiyuki: Journey West**	PS-X



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Sevice Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	**Diablo 2: Lord of Destruction**	Jun-01	$35
2	2	**The Sims**	Feb-00	$41
3	1	**The Sims: House Party**	Mar-01	$29
4	4	**Myst 3: Exile**	May-01	$41
5	3	**Black & White**	Mar-01	$42
6	5	**The Sims: Livin' Large**	Sep-00	$29
7	6	**Roller Coaster Tycoon**	Mar-99	$27
8	10	**Diablo 2**	Jun-00	$38
9	N/A	**Train Simulator**	Jun-01	$42
10	N/A	**Half-Life: Blue Shift**	Jun-01	$27

Best RPG of E3
- Computer Gaming World

Top 20 Games of E3
- GameSpot

#1 Xbox Game of E3
-Gamesmania

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-GameSpy Hall of Fame

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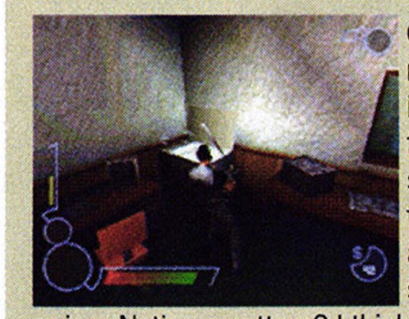
REVIEWS ARCHIVE SEPTEMBER 2001

BLADE

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **REVIEWED** JAN-01



Observant GI fans may have noticed some subtle changes in our coverage of Blade. Our first look at the game was a six-page feature. The next time around, it had shrunk to a half-page preview. Now it's sunk to a lowly one-third page review. Notice a pattern? I think it's time to admit that we were suckered by the advance hype on this game. Mistakes were made. Fortunately, we make mistakes so you don't have to – and you most definitely don't have to buy this annoying, ugly piece of crap. Think of this as Blade's return to its roots as one of Marvel's worst franchises. – **MATT**

MATURE M ESRB **4**

PLAYSTATION 2

4X4 Evolution	8	May-01
Adventures of Cookie & Cream, The	8.75	Mar-01
All-Star Baseball 2002	8	May-01
Aqua Aqua	6	Mar-01
Army Men: Air Attack 2	3.5	Jun-01
Army Men: Green Rogue	1	Jun-01
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	5.5	Jun-01
ATV Offroad Fury	8.5	Mar-01
Bloody Roar 3	8	Aug-01
Bouncer, The	8.5	Feb-01
CART Fury Championship Racing	8	Aug-01
Championship Surfer	7	Jan-01
Crazy Taxi	8.25	Jun-01
Dark Cloud	9	Jul-01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7.5	Mar-01
Driving Emotion Type-S	8	Feb-01
ESPN International Track & Field	6.75	Dec-00
ESPN MLS Extratime	6	Jun-01
ESPN NBA 2night	4.25	May-01
ESPN NHL National Hockey Night	6.25	May-01
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	8.25	Jan–01
F1 Championship Season 2000	7.75	Feb-01
F1 Racing Championship	8.75	Apr-01
Fantavision	6.75	Dec-00
FIFA 2001	8	Dec-00
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	6.5	Jul-01
Gauntlet Dark Legacy	7.75	Jun-01
Gradius III & IV	5	Dec-00
Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	9	Aug-01
Heroes of Might and Magic	4.5	Jul-01
High Heat Baseball 2002	7.75	May-01
Kengo: Master of Bushido	7.25	Mar-01
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	8.25	Aug-01
Knockout Kings 2001	9	Mar-01
MDK2: Armageddon	7.5	May-01
Midnight Club	7.5	Dec-00
Moto GP	7.5	Dec-00
Motor Mayhem	7	Aug-01
MTV Music Generator 2	8.5	Jun-01
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	7	Aug-01
NASCAR 2001	8.5	Dec-00
NASCAR Heat	8.5	Aug-01
NBA Hoopz	5.75	May-01
NBA Live 2001	8.25	Feb-01
NBA ShootOut 2001	6.5	Apr-01
NBA Street	9.25	Aug-01
NCAA Final Four 2001	3	Feb-01
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	3.25	Feb-01
NFL GameDay 2001	3	Dec-00
NHL FaceOff 2001	1	Apr-01
Oni	6.5	Mar-01
Onimusha: Warlords	8.75	Mar-01
Orphen	4.25	Dec-00
Q-Ball: Billiards Master	4.5	Jan-01
Quake III Revolution	7.75	May-01
Rayman 2: Revolution	8	Apr-01
RC Revenge Pro	5.5	Feb-01
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	7.25	Dec-00
Real Pool	5.25	Dec-00
Red Faction	9	Jun-01
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	9.25	Aug-01
Ring of Red	9	Apr-01
Rugby	7.5	Aug-01
Rumble Racing	7.75	May-01
Shadow of Destiny	6.75	Mar-01
Silent Scope	7.75	Nov-00
Silpheed	6	Nov-00
Sky Odyssey	7.75	Dec-00
Smuggler's Run	8.5	Nov-00
SSX	9.25	Nov-00
Star Wars: Starfighter	9.25	Mar-01
Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing	2.5	May-01
Street Fighter EX3	6	Nov-00
Summoner	8	Dec-00
Super Bust-A-Move	7	Nov-00
Surfing H3O	3	Jan-01
Swing Away Golf	7.75	Nov-00
Tekken Tag Tournament	8.5	Nov-00
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	6	Apr-01
TimeSplitters	9.5	Dec-00
Theme Park Roller Coaster	7.5	Jan-01
Tokyo Xtreme Racer: Zero	8	Jun-01
Top Gear Dare Devil	2	Dec-00
Twisted Metal: Black	9.5	Jul-01
Unison	7.75	May-01
Unreal Tournament	9	Dec-00
Warriors of Might and Magic	7.75	Apr-01
Wild Wild Racing	7.5	Nov-00
Winback: Covert Ops	7.5	Apr-01
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	7	Mar-01
X-Squad	7.5	Nov-00
Zone of the Enders	9.25	May-01

PLAYSTATION

007 Racing	7	Jan-01
102 Dalmations: Puppies to the Rescue	6.5	Feb-01
Alien Resurrection	6	Nov-00
Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare	8	Aug-01
Army Men: Air Attack 2	1	Dec-00
Army Men World War: Land, Sea, Air	1	Dec-00
ATV: Quad Bike Challenge	6	Nov-00
Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker	0.5	Dec-00
Blade	4	Jan-01
Blaster Master: Blasting Again	5	Dec-00
Breath of Fire IV	8.5	Dec-00
Bugs Bunny & Taz: Time Busters	8.5	Feb-01
Buzz Lightyear of Star Command	5.5	Dec-00
Championship Surfer	7	Jan-01
Championship Motocross 2001 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	6.5	Feb-01
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	7.75	Jan-01
Cool Boarders 2001	5	Dec-00
Crash Bash	6.5	Dec-00
Dance Dance Revolution	8.75	Apr-01
Darkstone	7.25	Apr-01
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	7.75	Nov-00
Dave Hirra Freestyle BMX: Maximum Remix	7.25	Jul-01
Disney's Aladdin In Nasira's Revenge	6	May-01
Disney's Atlantis: The Lost Empire	7.25	Aug-01
Disney's The Emperor's New Groove	8.25	Dec-00
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7	Jan-01
Dragon Valor	7.5	Nov-00
Driver 2	8.75	Jan-01
Ducati World	5.5	Feb-01
ECW Anarchy Rulz	4	Nov-00
ECW: Hardcore Revolution	8.25	Mar-00
Eternal Eyes	7.75	Dec-00
Evil Dead: Hail to the King	4.5	Feb-01
Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix	8.5	Mar-01
FIFA 2001	7.5	Dec-00
Final Fantasy IX	9.75	Dec-00
Final Fantasy Chronicles	9	Jul-01
Freestyle Motocross: McGrath Vs. Pastrana	3	Jan-01
Golden Tee Golf	5	Jan-01
Grinch, The	5	Feb-01
Harvest Moon: Back to Nature	6.75	Dec-00
HBO Boxing	3	Feb-01
Incredible Crisis	7.5	Nov-00
Jarrett & Labonte Stock Car Racing	7.75	Jan-01
Knockout Kings 2001	7.5	Dec-00
Looney Tunes Racing	6.25	Dec-00
Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete	7.5	Jan-01
March Madness 2001	8.25	Feb-01
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	8.5	Jun-01
Medal of Honor: Underground	9	Nov-00
Mega Man Legends 2	8	Nov-00
Mega Man X5	7	Feb-01
Metal Slug X	6	Aug-01
Mike Tyson Boxing	5	Dec-00
MLB 2002	6	Jul-01
Moto GP World Tour	7	Jan-01
MTV Sports Skateboarding featuring Andy Macdonald	3	Nov-00
MTV Sports: Pure Ride	6.5	Nov-00
Mummy, The	0.75	Feb-01
Muppet Racemania	5	Nov-00
NASCAR Heat	6.5	Feb-01
NBA Live 2001	8	Dec-00
NBA ShootOut 2001	5.5	Nov-00
NCAA Final Tour	5.5	Jan-01
NFL Blitz 2001	5.5	Nov-00
NHL 2001	7.75	Nov-00
NHL Face Off 2001	6.5	Nov-00
Persona 2: Eternal Punishment	8	Feb-01
Point Blank 3	7.25	May-01
Polaris Snocross	5.5	Nov-00
Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball	5	Jan–01
Raycrisis: Series Termination	7.25	Nov-00
Razor Freestyle Scooter	8	Jan-01
RC De Go	7.5	Jan-01
Resident Evil Survivor	4	Nov-00
Road to El Dorado, The	1	Feb-01
Saiyuki: Journey West	8.5	Aug-01
Simpsons Wrestling, The	2	Jun-01
Sno Cross Championship Racing	6	Nov-00
Spec Ops: Ranger Elite	6	Jul-01
Spyro: Year of the Dragon	8.75	Nov-00
Star Wars: Demolition	7	Jan-01
Strikers 1945	6.75	May-01
Supercross	5.75	Apr-01
Time Crisis: Project Titan	7	Jun-01
World is Not Enough, The	7	Dec-00
Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf	8	Feb-01
Tomb Raider Chronicles	7	Jan-01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	10	Nov-00
Torneko: The Last Hope	2.75	Dec-00
Top Shop	7.5	Jul-01
Toy Story Racer	5	Apr-01
Triple Play Baseball	7	Apr-01
Ultimate Fighting Championship	7	Jan-01
WCW Backstage Assault	3	Dec-00
Woody Woodpecker Racing	3	Jan-01
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	3	Dec-00
World's Scariest Police Chases	6.75	Aug-01
WWF SmackDown 2: Know Your Role	9	Dec-00
You Don't Know Jack: Mock 2	5	Mar-01

NINTENDO 64

Aidyn Chronicles: The First Mage	0.5	May-01
Banjo-Tooie	9	Jan-01
Cruis'n Exotica	6	Feb-01
Conker's Bad Fur Day	9	Apr-01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7.5	Feb-01
Dr. Mario 64	8.5	May-01
Hercules: The Legendary Journeys	4.75	Feb-01
Hey You, Pikachu	4	Jan-01
Indiana Jones: The Infernal Machine	6.75	Jan-01
Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask, The	9.75	Nov-00
Mario Party 3	4	May-01
Mega Man 64	7.25	Dec-00
Mickey's Speedway USA	6	Jan-01
Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness	7.5	Dec-00
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	4	Nov-00
Paper Mario	7.5	Feb-01
Pokémon Puzzle League	8.5	Dec-00
Pokémon Stadium 2	6	May-01
Star Wars: Episode I Battle for Naboo	8.5	Jan-01
Spider-Man	8	Jan-01
WCW Backstage Assault	3.5	Dec-00
World is Not Enough, The	9	Nov-00
WWF No Mercy	9.5	Dec-00

DREAMCAST

18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker	8.5	Jun-01
4X4 Evolution	8.75	Dec-00
BANG! Gunship Elite	8	Jan-01
Championship Surfer	5	Mar-01
Chicken Run	5	Jan-01
Confidential Mission	5.5	Jun-01
Crazy Taxi 2	8.75	Jul-01
D2	4.75	Oct-00
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	8	Feb-01
Daytona USA	7	Apr-01
Demolition Racer: No Exit	8	Nov-00
Dino Crisis	6.5	Jan-01
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	7	Oct-00
ECW Anarchy Rulz	3	Mar-01
Evil Dead: Hail to the King	4.5	Mar-01
F355 Challenge: Passione Rossa	7.5	Dec-00
Floigan Bros.	8.25	Aug-01
Frogger 2: Swampy's Revenge	7	Dec-00
Grandia II	8	Jan-01
Gunbird 2	5.5	Oct-00
Illbleed	5	Jun-01
Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000	3.75	Nov-00
Jet Grind Radio	8.25	Dec-00
Kao the Kangaroo	7	Apr-01
Kiss Psycho Circus: The Nightmare Child	4.5	Feb-01
Looney Tunes Space Race	7	Jan-01
Mars Matrix	8	May-01
Metropolis Street Racer	9	Dec-00
Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness	8	Jan-01
NBA 2K1	9.5	Jan-01
Next Tetris: On-Line Addition, The	7	Dec-00
NFL 2K1	9.5	Nov-00
NFL Blitz 2001	5.25	Nov-00
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	2.5	Nov-00
Outtrigger	6.25	Jun-01
PBA Tour Bowling 2001	6.25	Jun-01
Phantasy Star Online	9	Mar-01
Pod: Speedzone	3.5	Jan-01
Project Justice	7	Feb-01
Quake III Arena	9.25	Jan-01
Railroad Tycoon II	5	Nov-00
Record of Lodoss War	8.5	May-01
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	7.5	Jan-01
Red Dog	7.75	Dec-00
Resident Evil 2	8	Jan-01
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	8	Jan-01
Samba De Amigo	5.5	Dec-00
Sega Marine Fishing	8	Nov-00
Sega Smash Pack	9	May-01
Shenmue	6	Dec-00
Silent Scope	7.5	Jan-01
Skies of Arcadia	8.5	Jan-01
Soldier of Fortune	7.75	Aug-01
Sonic Adventure 2	7.5	Aug-01
Sonic Shuffle	7	Jan-01
Spawn: In the Demon's Hand	6.5	Nov-00
Speed Devils Online	7.5	Jan-01
Spider-Man	8	Jun-01
Sports Jam	7.75	Aug-01
Starlancer	7	Dec-00
Star Wars: Demolition	7	Jan-01
Star Wars: Jedi Power Battles	8	Jan-01
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike	8.25	Nov-00
Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition	8	Jan-01
Surf Rocket Racers	5.5	Feb-01
Test Drive Le Mans	4.75	Jan-01
Test Drive V-Rally	1	Jan-01
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2	8.5	Nov-00
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	7	Feb-01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	9.75	Jan-01
Typing of the Dead	9	Feb-01
Unreal Tournament	8.5	Apr-01
Vanishing Point	7.5	Mar-01
Worms World Party	8	May-01
Xtreme Sports	7	Jan-01

PC

Age of Empires II: The Conqueror's Expansion	9	Nov-00
America	6.5	Apr-01
American McGee's Alice	9	Feb-01
Baldur's Gate II	9.5	Nov-00
Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal	9.75	Aug-01
Black & White	9	Jun-01
Blade of Darkness	8.25	May-01
Blair Witch Volume One: Rustin Parr	6.75	Dec-00
Call to Power II	6	Jan-01
Clive Barker's: Undying	8	May-01
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	6.5	Apr-01
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2	9.5	Dec-00
Crimson Skies	8.25	Nov-00
Echelon	9	Jul-01
Emperor: Battle for Dune	8	Aug-01
Escape From Monkey Island	8.25	Jan-01
EverQuest: The Scars of Velious	9.5	Jan-01
Evil Islands	5.25	May-01
Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood of Steel	8.75	May-01
Fate of the Dragon	6	Jun-01
Freedom: First Resistance	5.75	Mar-01
Gangsters 2	4	Aug-01
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	9.25	Feb-01
Gunman Chronicles	8.25	Feb-01
Half-Life: Blue Shift	6.75	Aug-01
Half-Life: Counter-Strike	9.75	Jan-01
Hitman: Codename 47	6.75	Feb-01
Homeworld: Cataclysm	8	Nov-00
Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter	9	Apr-01
Insane	7.25	Mar-01
Jagged Alliance 2: Unfinished Business	5.75	Apr-01
Kingdom Under Fire	6.25	Mar-01
Mechcommander 2	8.75	Aug-01
MechWarrior 4: Vengeance	8.75	Jan-01
Midtown Madness 2	7.75	Dec-00
Moon Project, The	7.75	May-01
Myst III: Exile	7.5	Jul-01
NASCAR Racing 4	8	Apr-01
No One Lives Forever	7.75	Dec-00
Project IGI: I'm Going In	3.5	Mar-01
Quake III: Team Arena	3.5	Mar-01
Rainbow Six: Covert Ops Essentials	8.75	Dec-00
Rune	7.75	Dec-00
Sacrifice	8.5	Jan-01
Sanity: Aiken's Artifact	5.25	Nov-00
Sea Dogs	8.5	Mar-01
Serious Sam	8.5	Jun-01
Sheep	7.5	Feb-01
Shogun: Total War Warlord Edition	9	Aug-01
Simcoaster	7.75	Apr-01
Sims: House Party, The	7.5	May-01
Sims: Livin' Large, The	7	Nov-00
Squad Leader	6.25	Jan-01
Star Trek: Away Team	4.5	Jun-01
Star Trek New Worlds	5	Nov-00
Star Trek: Starfleet Command Vol.2	8.5	Mar-01
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	8.25	Dec-00
Starpeace	7	Apr-01
Starship Troopers	7.75	Jan-01
Startopia	9.25	Aug-01
Steel Soldiers	6.25	Aug-01
Timeline	5.75	Feb-01
Tomb Raider Chronicles	4	Feb-01
Tribes 2	8	Jun-01
Tropico	9.25	Jul-01
Wizards & Warriors	5	Dec-00
World War II Online: Blitzkrieg	8.25	Aug-01
You Don't Know Jack: 5th Dementia	8	Jan-01
Zeus: Master of Olympus	8.5	Jan-01

GAME BOY ADVANCE

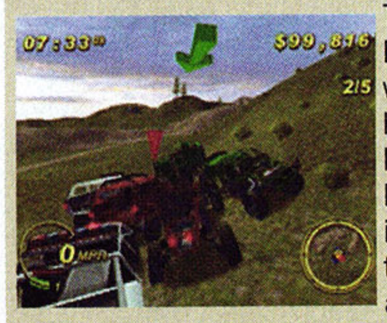
Army Men Advance	5.5	Aug-01
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	8.75	Jul-01
Chu Chu Rocket	8	Jul-01
Earthworm Jim	7	Jul-01
F-Zero: Maximum Velocity	9	Jul-01
Fire Pro Wrestling	8.5	Jul-01
GT Advance Championship Racing	6	Jul-01
Iridion 3D	6	Jul-01
Krazy Racers	7	Jul-01
Namco Museum	7	Aug-01
Pinobee: Wings of Adventure	8	Jul-01
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure	7.5	Jul-01
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	4.25	Jul-01
Super Dodge Ball Advance	9	Jul-01
Super Mario Advance	8.5	Jul-01
Super Street Fighter II: Turbo Revival	9	Aug-01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	9.25	Jul-01

GAME BOY

Aladdin	7	Feb-01
Action Man: Search for Base X	2.5	Apr-01
Batman: Chaos in Gotham	6	Mar-01
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	2	Dec-00
Chicken Run	4	Jan-01
Commander Keen	7	Aug-01
Croc 2	6.5	Apr-01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7.5	Jan-01
Donkey Kong Country	8.75	Jan-01
Dragon's Lair	6	Dec-00
Dragon Warrior I & II	7	Dec-00
Frogger 2	7.5	Dec-00
Galaga Destination: Earth	2	Feb-01
Hoyle Card Games	9	Mar-01
Inspector Gadget	6.5	Jan-01
Kirby Tilt 'N' Tumble	8.75	May-01
Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages, The	9.5	Jul-01
Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons, The	9.25	Jul-01
Lion King: Simba's Mighty Adventure, The	7	Mar-01
Little Mermaid II: Pinball Frenzy	7.5	Dec-00
Looney Tunes Racing	4.25	Mar-01
M&M's Minis Madness	6	Dec-00
Magi Nation	8.5	May-01
Mario Tennis	8.75	Feb-01
Marvin Strikes Back!	6	Apr-01
Mega Man Xtreme	7	Mar-01
Metal Walker	7.75	Dec-00
Mickey's Speedway USA	6	May-01
Monster Rancher Explorer	7.5	Nov-00
MTV Skateboarding Featuring Andy Macdonald	6.75	Dec-00
MTV Sports Ultimate BMX	7	Apr-01
Perfect Dark	4	Nov-00
Pokémon Puzzle Challenge	8.5	Feb-01
Pokémon Silver & Gold	9	Dec-00
Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball	6.5	Jan-01
Q*Bert	6.5	Feb-01
Road Champs BXS Stunt Biking	7.75	Apr-01
Road Rash	6	Feb-01
Shrek: Fairy Tale Freakdown	0.5	Jun-01
Simpsons: Night of the Living Treehouse of Horror, The	7.5	Jun-01
Snoopy Tennis	7	Jul-01
Spider-Man	4	Nov-00
Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six	8	Aug-01
Star Wars: Episode I Obi-Wan's Adventures	8	Mar-01
Tech Deck Skateboarding	3	Jun-01
Toki Tori	7.5	Apr-01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	6	Jan-01
Toy Story Racer	4	May-01
Trouballs	8	May-01
X-Men: Wolverine's Rage	7	Aug-01

SMUGGLER'S RUN

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **REVIEWED** NOV-00

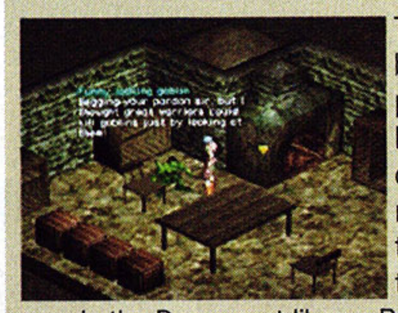


The real keys to the game are learning to evade opponents who often have faster and hardier vehicles than you, and how best to move across the landscape. As entertaining as it is to make a straight beeline for the next piece of contraband and rocket over every bump at over a hundred miles an hour, it's often better to choose your routes carefully and hug the terrain rather than bounce across it. In closing, Smuggler's Run is a great game. While it lacks the variety that might keep a lone player going to that fateful hour when birds start singing, the multiplayer experience is exciting and you never really get sick of moving through the terrain. – **ERIK**

EVERYONE E ESRB **8.5**

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR

■ **FORMAT** DREAMCAST ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG
■ **PUBLISHER** CRAVE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **REVIEWED** MAY-01



There are no random dungeons, but sidequests and places not pertinent to the adventure at hand abound. Even were you to concentrate only on required missions, Lodoss would still take weeks to complete. It's that big. The ultimate hidden gem in the Dreamcast library, Record of Lodoss War is a fantastic game that's been unjustly underordered by every video game retailer across the country. If you're even remotely interested in it, I suggest you go buy it right away. I guarantee it will be selling for around a couple hundred in a few years. – **JAY**

MATURE M ESRB **8.5**

NEW RELEASES ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CALL YOUR LOCAL RETAILER FOR MORE DETAILS

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor	System
8/15/01	Bob the Builder	THQ	GBC
8/15/01	Barbie Pet Rescue	Vivendi Universal Interactive	GBC
8/15/01	Duke Nukem: Endangered Species	Gathering of Developers	PC
8/15/01	Gamefest: Forgotten Realms	Interplay	PC
8/20/01	Fortress	Majesco	GBA
8/20/01	Dragon's Lair	Digital Leisure	PC
8/20/01	Real War	Macmillan Computer Publishing	PC
8/20/01	Conflict Zone: Peacemakers	Red Storm Entertainment	PC
8/20/01	Rune Gold	Talonsoft	PC
8/21/01	Sega Bass Fishing 2	Sega	DC
8/21/01	Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	Namco	GBA
8/21/01	Stuart Little	Activision	GBC
8/21/01	Hands of Time	Titus	GBC
8/21/01	Top Gun: Firestorm	Titus	GBC
8/21/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	PC
8/21/01	Independence War 2: Edge of Chaos	Infogrames	PC
8/21/01	Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
8/21/01	Empire Earth	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
8/21/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	PS-X
8/21/01	Shooter Starfighter Sanvein	Tommo	PS-X
8/21/01	Extreme G3	Acclaim	PS2

SPY HUNTER

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 25

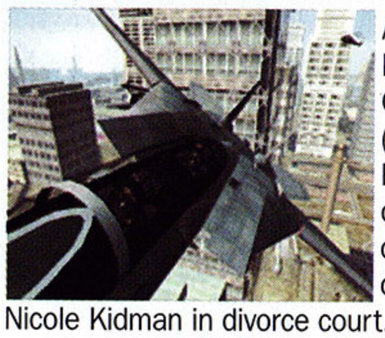
It's inevitable that the video game classics make their way to newer systems. Too many people have fond memories of these games from their youths. So in the case of Spy Hunter, we always knew it was going to happen, it was just a question of whether it was going to get its just desserts. All the classic elements are here: you must avoid gangster-styled cars, rendezvous with the weapons truck, and navigate safely through civilian traffic, but now it's all done in a beautifully rendered 3D world with all the jumps and hazards you would expect. Spy Hunter is still a ways from being complete, but from our time with this early version, we must admit we're pleasantly surprised.

8/21/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
8/21/01	Test Drive Off Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	PS2
8/21/01	Gallop Racer 2	Tecmo	PS2
8/21/01	Armored Core 2: Another Age	Agetec	PS2
8/27/01	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Nintendo	GBA
8/27/01	Shattered Galaxy	Tri- Synergy	PC
8/28/01	NCAA Football 2K2	Sega	DC
8/28/01	Last Blade	Tommo	DC
8/28/01	Portal Runner	3DO	GBC
8/28/01	Tiny Toons: Plucky's Big Adventure	Crave Entertainment	PS-X
8/28/01	Portal Runner	3DO	PS2
8/28/01	Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	PS2
8/28/01	NFL QB Club 2002	Acclaim	PS2
8/28/01	Paris Dakar Rally	Acclaim	PS2
8/28/01	Shadow Man 2: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	PS2
8/28/01	Stretch Panic	Crave Entertainment	PS2
8/29/01	Tang Tang	Take 2 Interactive	GBA
8/29/01	Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	Capcom	PS2
8/31/01	Jekyll & Hyde	Dreamcatcher	PC
8/31/01	Fisher Price Rescue Heroes	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS-X
8/31/01	M & M's Shell Shocked	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS-X
9/3/01	V.I.P.	Ubi Soft	DC
9/3/01	High Heat Major League Baseball 2002	3DO	GBA
9/3/01	Powerpuff Girls	Bam! Entertainment	GBA
9/3/01	LEGO Island II	Lego Media	GBA
9/3/01	LEGO Racers II	Lego Media	GBA
9/3/01	LEGO Bionicle	Lego Media	GBA
9/3/01	Robopon	Atlus	GBC
9/3/01	Dragon Warrior Monster 2: Tara's Adventure	Enix	GBC
9/3/01	Dragon Warrior Monster 2: Cobi's Journey	Enix	GBC
9/3/01	Barbie Kelly Club	Vivendi Universal Interactive	GBC
9/3/01	Gladiator	Vivendi Universal Interactive	GBC
9/3/01	007: The World Is Not Enough	Electronic Arts	PC
9/3/01	SimsVille	Electronic Arts	PC
9/3/01	Coaster Works	Infogrames Interactive	PC
9/3/01	EverQuest Game Card	Verant Interactive/989 Studios	PC
9/3/01	NASCAR Racers	Infogrames	PS-X
9/3/01	Atari Anniversary Edition	Infogrames	PS-X
9/3/01	NBA Shootout 2002	Sony	PS-X
9/3/01	Barbie Explorer	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS-X
9/3/01	LEGO Racers II	Lego Media	PS2
9/3/01	Disney's Jungle Book	Ubi Soft	PS2
9/3/01	Dinosaur	Ubi Soft	PS2
9/4/01	ESPN Final Round Golf 2002	Konami	GBA
9/4/01	Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos Interactive	PC
9/4/01	Monopoly Tycoon	Hasbro Interactive	PC
9/4/01	Nicktoons Racing	Infogrames	PS-X
9/4/01	Tales of Destiny II	Namco	PS-X
9/5/01	Mega Man Xtreme 2	Capcom	GBC
9/5/01	Wendy: Every Witch Way	TDK Mediactive	GBC
9/6/01	Sesame Street Sports	NewKidCo	GBC
9/6/01	Sesame Street Sports	NewKidCo	PS-X
9/6/01	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Interplay	PS2
9/10/01	Advance Wars	Nintendo	GBA
9/10/01	Hot Wheels Extreme Racing	THQ	PS-X
9/11/01	Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	Activision	DC
9/11/01	Ooga Booga	Sega	DC
9/11/01	Phantasy Star Online: Version 2	Sega	DC
9/11/01	ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	GBA
9/11/01	Jurassic Park III: Park Builder	Konami	GBA
9/11/01	NFL Blitz 2002	Midway	GBA
9/11/01	007: The World is Not Enough	Electronic Arts	GBC
9/11/01	Dragon's Lair 3D	Ubi Soft	PC

9/11/01	Throne of Darkness	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
9/11/01	Power Rangers Time Force	THQ	PS-X
9/11/01	Panzer Front	Tommo	PS-X
9/11/01	ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	PS2
9/12/01	Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis	Activision	PC
9/13/01	Mask, The	Dreamcatcher	GBC
9/13/01	Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	PS2
9/17/01	Snood	Destination Software	GBA
9/17/01	F14 Tomcat	Majesco	GBA
9/17/01	Caesars Palace	Majesco	GBA
9/17/01	Disney's Atlantis	THQ	GBA
9/17/01	3D Pool All Stars	Titus	GBC
9/17/01	Robocop	Titus	GBC
9/17/01	RIM	Fishtank Interactive	PC
9/17/01	Empire of the Ants	Strategy First	PC
9/17/01	Castrol Honda VTR	Interplay	PS-X
9/17/01	Soldier of Fortune	Majesco	PS2
9/17/01	Duke Nukem	Take 2 Interactive	PS2
9/18/01	Propeller Arena	Sega	DC
9/18/01	NFL 2K2	Sega	DC
9/18/01	Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace	Activision	GBA
9/18/01	X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse	Activision	GBA
9/18/01	Lufia: The Legend Returns	Crave Entertainment	GBC
9/18/01	Project Eden	Eidos Interactive	PC
9/18/01	Trade Empires	Eidos Interactive	PC
9/18/01	NHL 2002	Electronic Arts	PC
9/18/01	Gamefest: Chess Classic	Interplay	PC
9/18/01	Red Faction	THQ	PC
9/18/01	Silent Hunter II	Ubi Soft	PC
9/18/01	Destroyer Command	Ubi Soft	PC
9/18/01	Spider-Man 2: Enter Electo	Activision	PS-X
9/18/01	X-Men Mutant Academy 2	Activision	PS-X
9/18/01	Sheep Raider	Infogrames	PS-X
9/18/01	Project Eden	Eidos Interactive	PS2
9/18/01	NHL 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
9/18/01	Silent Scope 2: Dark Silhouette	Konami	PS2
9/18/01	Arctic Thunder	Midway	PS2
9/18/01	Time Crisis 2 w/Guncon	Namco	PS2
9/18/01	BASS Strike	THQ	PS2
9/19/01	Power Rangers Time Force	THQ	GBA
9/19/01	MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	GBA
9/24/01	Armada	Camaj Interactive	PC
9/24/01	Bait	Camaj Interactive	PC
9/24/01	Freeform	Camaj Interactive	PC
9/24/01	Casper	TDK Mediactive	PS2
9/25/01	Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare	Infogrames	DC
9/25/01	Final Fight One	Capcom	GBA
9/25/01	Rocket Power Dream Scheme	THQ	GBA
9/25/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	GBC
9/25/01	Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor	Learning Co, The	PC
9/25/01	Pool of Radiance Collector's Edition	Learning Co, The	PC
9/25/01	Lock On: Modern Air Combat	Ubi Soft	PC
9/25/01	Battle Realms	Ubi Soft	PC
9/25/01	NASCAR Thunder 2002	Electronic Arts	PS-X
9/25/01	Backyard Soccer	Infogrames	PS-X
9/25/01	Syphon Filter 3	Sony	PS-X
9/25/01	Sponge Bob Square Pants Super Sponge	THQ	PS-X
9/25/01	Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2	Eidos Interactive	PS2
9/25/01	Thunderstrike Operation Phoenix	Eidos Interactive	PS2
9/25/01	F1 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
9/25/01	Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare	Infogrames	PS2
9/25/01	Silent Hill 2	Konami	PS2
9/25/01	Spy Hunter	Midway	PS2
9/25/01	NHL Hitz	Midway	PS2
9/25/01	ICO	Sony	PS2
9/26/01	Scooby Doo and the Cyber Chase	THQ	GBA
9/26/01	Rugrats	THQ	GBA
9/26/01	Tetris Worlds	THQ	GBA
9/26/01	Stunt GP	Titus	PS2
9/28/01	Doom	Activision	GBA
10/1/01	Lady Sia	TDK Mediactive	GBA
10/1/01	Star Trek: Bridge Commander	Activision	PC
10/1/01	Car Tycoon	Fishtank Interactive	PC

TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** TITUS SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 22



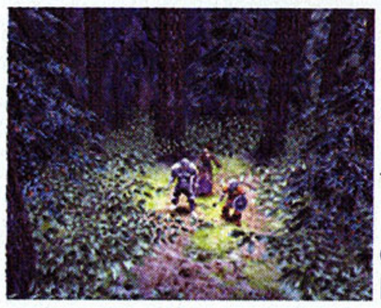
Across four superbly detailed locations – Southeast Asia, the Gulf States, Northern Russia (damn Ruskies!), and Miramar Base – players will take some of the Navy's best planes on combat missions more dramatic than Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman in divorce court. With a look similar to Namco's Ace Combat and Konami's Airforce lines, Top Gun delivers detailed cityscapes, an incredibly long draw distance, and vehicles comprised of thousands of polygons. Theatrical replays and a handful of views give the game the cinematic punch it needs. Top Gun will be hard to resist, especially if Titus follows through with plans to release a bundle with the DVD Special 15th Anniversary Edition of the film included.

10/1/01	S.W.I.N.E.	Fishtank Interactive	PC
10/1/01	Fun Racer	Fishtank Interactive	PC
10/1/01	Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	PC
10/1/01	Jeanette Lee's Virtual Pool	Interplay	PS-X
10/1/01	Arc the Lad: Collection	Working Designs	PS-X
10/1/01	Gundam: Zeonic Front	Bandai	PS2
10/1/01	Hidden Invasion	Crave Entertainment	PS2
10/1/01	Kinetica	Sony	PS2
10/2/01	Conflict Zone	Ubi Soft	DC
10/2/01	Scooby Doo and the Cyber Chase	THQ	PS-X
10/2/01	Okage: Shadow King	Sony	PS2

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor	System
10/2/01	Grand Theft Auto 3	Take 2 Interactive	PS2
10/8/01	Aquanox	Fishtank Interactive	PC
10/9/01	Breath of Fire	Capcom	GBA
10/9/01	Mega Man Battle Network	Capcom	GBA
10/9/01	Harvest Moon 3	Crave Entertainment	GBC
10/9/01	Need for Speed: Motor City Online	Electronic Arts	PC
10/9/01	Command & Conquer: Renegade	Westwood Studios/EA	PC
10/9/01	Batman: Vengeance	Ubi Soft	PS2
10/11/01	Flight Simulator 2002	Microsoft	PC
10/15/01	Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo Revival	Capcom	GBA
10/15/01	Midnight Club Street Racing	Destination Software	GBA
10/15/01	Smuggler's Run	Destination Software	GBA
10/15/01	Dark Arena	Majesco	GBA
10/15/01	Jumpstart Dino Adventure	Vivendi Universal Interactive	GBC
10/15/01	Etherlords	Fishtank Interactive	PC
10/15/01	Stronghold	Gathering of Developers	PC
10/15/01	Freelancer	Microsoft	PC
10/15/01	EverQuest: Trilogy Collectors Edition	Verant Interactive/989 Studios	PC
10/15/01	Jumpstart Wildlife Safari	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS-X
10/15/01	Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco	PS2
10/16/01	Bomberman Online	Sega	DC

DUNGEON SIEGE

■ **FORMAT** PC ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION/RPG
■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 1

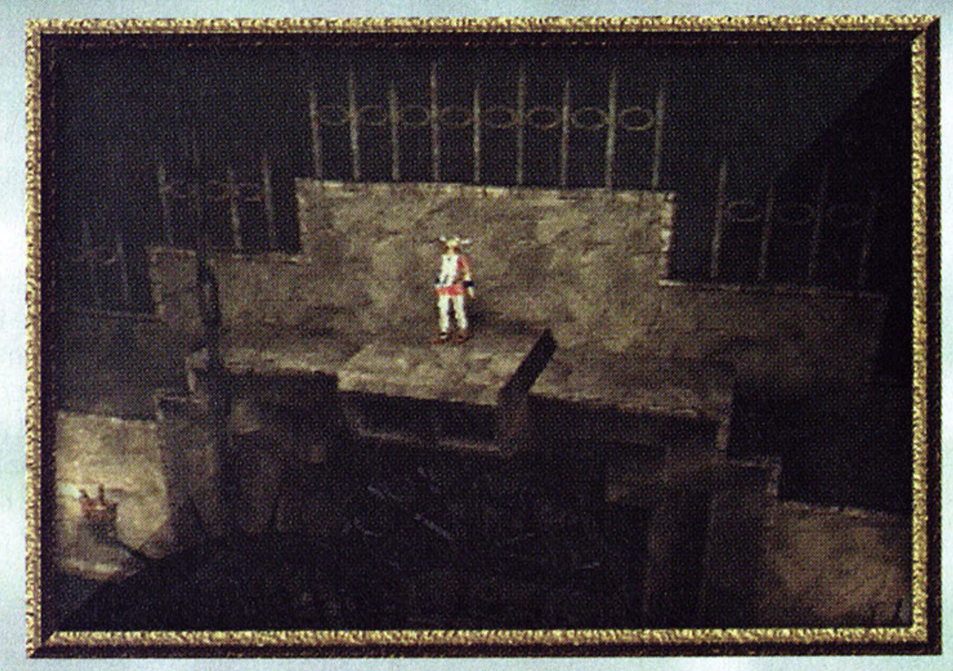


Dungeon Siege will feature an immersive, continuous fully 3D environment. What this will allow is a gaming experience without the irritation of loading times. Different locations will include castles, secret underground lairs, dungeons, and expansive outdoor environments. Fully animated 3D characters, special effects, and awe-inspiring vertical landscapes all await you upon release of this stylized release. Players can customize their party to include any ratio of character types they deem necessary to their playing style. There are no restrictions pertaining to character class, allowing players to build a party consisting entirely of archers if they choose. Upon closer inspection of the shots Game Informer received while on a recent trip, we've found this type of game has a lot of potential – both for greatness and disappointment.

10/16/01	Evil Twin	Ubi Soft	DC
10/16/01	Prehistorik Man	Titus	GBA
10/16/01	Mary Kate & Ashley Crush Course	Acclaim	GBC
10/16/01	Sabrina the Teenage Wish 2	Vivendi Universal Interactive	GBC
10/16/01	Civilization III	Firaxis Games	PC
10/16/01	Pajama Sam 3	Infogrames	PS-X
10/16/01	Herdy Gerdy	Eidos Interactive	PS2
10/16/01	NASCAR Thunder 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
10/16/01	Mummy Returns	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS2
10/17/01	Devil May Cry	Capcom	PS2
10/19/01	Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Crave Entertainment	PS2
10/22/01	WWF SmackDown!: Just Bring It	THQ	PS2
10/22/01	Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	PS2
10/23/01	NBA 2K2	Sega	DC
10/23/01	Disciples II: Dark Prophecy	Infogrames Interactive	PC
10/23/01	Supercar Street Challenge	Activision	PS2
10/23/01	Ace Combat 4	Namco	PS2
10/23/01	NFL 2K2	Sega	PS2
10/23/01	Disney's Tarzan	Ubi Soft	PS2
10/29/01	Disney/Pixar Monsters, Inc.	THQ	GBA
10/29/01	Disney/Pixar Monsters, Inc.	THQ	GBC
10/29/01	Duke Nukem Forever	Infogrames Interactive	PC
10/29/01	Mafia	Talonsoft	PC
10/29/01	Hidden & Dangerous II	Talonsoft	PC
10/29/01	Myth III: The Wolf Age	Talonsoft	PC
10/29/01	Max Payne	Take 2 Interactive	PS2
10/29/01	Smuggler's Run 2	Take 2 Interactive	PS2
10/29/01	Half-Life	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS2
10/30/01	Shenmue 2	Sega	DC
10/30/01	World Tennis 2K2	Sega	DC
10/30/01	Batman: Vengeance	Ubi Soft	GBA
10/30/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	GC
10/30/01	NHL Hitz	Midway	GC
10/30/01	Super Monkey Ball	Sega	GC
10/30/01	Force of One	Interplay	PC
10/30/01	FIFA: Road to FIFA World Cup	Electronic Arts	PS-X
10/30/01	American Deer Hunting	Interplay	PS-X
10/30/01	Deep Sea Fishing	Interplay	PS-X
10/30/01	18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	PS2
10/30/01	FIFA Soccer 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
10/30/01	Simpson's Road Rage, The	Electronic Arts	PS2
10/30/01	ESPN NFL PrimeTime	Konami	PS2
10/30/01	NFL GameDay 2002	Sony	PS2
10/30/01	Drakan II	Sony	PS2
10/30/01	Conflict Zone	Ubi Soft	PS2
10/30/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	Xbox
10/30/01	NASCAR Thunder 2002	Electronic Arts	Xbox
11/1/01	Beam Breakers	Fishtank Interactive	PC
11/1/01	Arx Fatalis	Fishtank Interactive	PC
11/1/01	Planet of the Apes	Fox Interactive	PC
11/1/01	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	Fox Interactive	PC
11/1/01	Star Wars: Galactic Battleground	LucasArts	PC
11/1/01	Ghost Recon	Red Storm Entertainment	PC
11/1/01	Wizardry VIII	Sir Tech	PC
11/1/01	Rogue Spear: Black Thorn	Ubi Soft	PC
11/1/01	Evil Twin	Ubi Soft	PC
11/1/01	Hooters: Road Trip	Ubi Soft	PC
11/1/01	IL 2: Sturmovik	Ubi Soft	PC
11/1/01	Rayman M	Ubi Soft	PC

PLAY TO PERFECTION

SACRIFICE



After the dream sequence, climb up the stairs to your right and pull the lever. Exit out the door below you that opens.

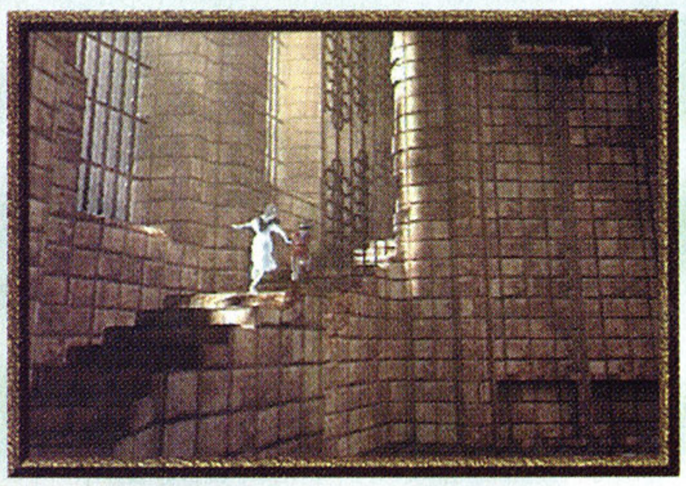
Climb up the two steps and up the chain. Turn your back to the ledge and press jump again to hop there. Go through the open window.

Take the ladder to Ico's right and head up the massive staircase, pass the chain until you see a cutscene of Princess Yorda in a cell. Exit out the window above you.

Climb down and then back into the large chamber through the window two spaces down.

Walk over and pull the lever to lower the princess down. Head back the way you came until you reach the bottom of the staircase. Use the ladder across the room to reach the ledge above the sealed door (see picture). Leap out and land on top of her cage. After the cutscene, quickly grab the stick, then run over and pull the princess from the blackness by pressing the R1 button. Disperse the creature by whacking him with Ico's stick. Take the princess' hand and lead her to the sealed door. She will open it for you (which also is a checkpoint in your adventure). Climb up the steps on the other side, using the R1 button to pull her up to you.

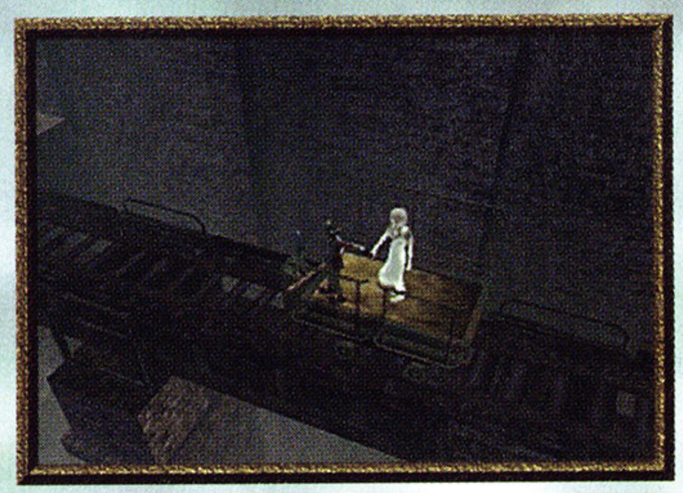
BRIDGE



Once you get to this area, lead her to the couch and...get your mind out of the gutter...save your game, you dirty-minded freak. Cross the bridge...don't fall...and head out the sealed door.

Kill the creatures that attack. Move the block to raise the staircase. Ignore the door, as it leads to a dead end, and head up.

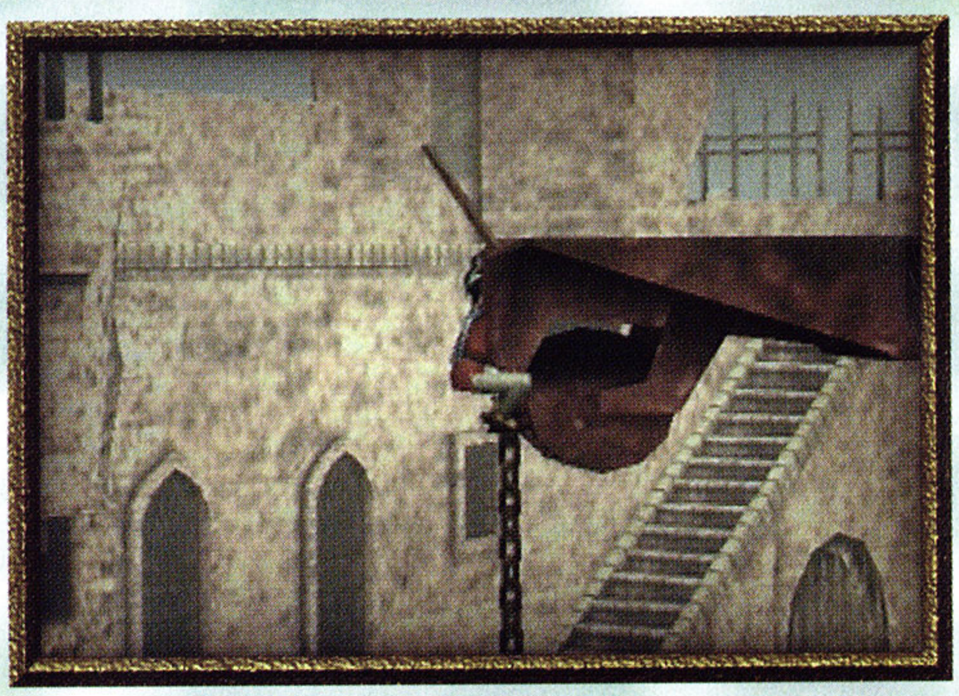
CART & CRANE



Follow the wooden staircase. In the next room you come to a locked door. Leave the princess on the balcony (we know it's tough, but you can do it) by jumping over the railing. You will find a lever on the other side of the locked door. Grab her and lead her down to the chain hanging from the ceiling. Climb up and push the block off. Kill the mist monsters that attack and then go back to where you pushed the block off. If you stand near the ledge and press the R1 button to call her, you will reach down to pull her up. Hold the call button and she will come. Exit out the door.

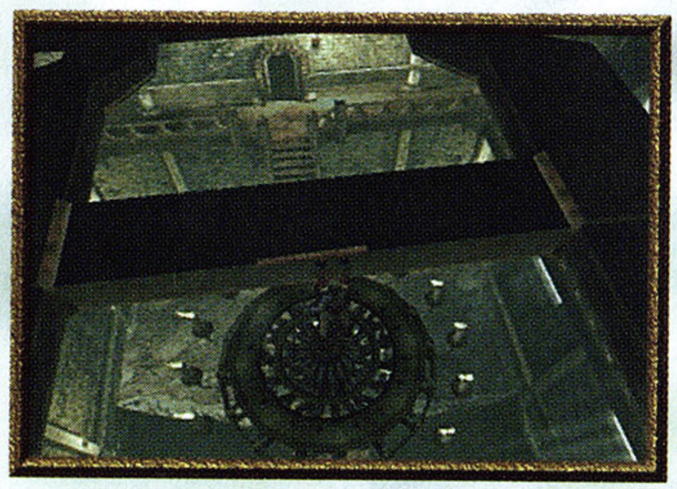
At the top of the stairs you will be attacked again. Dispatch the enemies (and save on the couch), then take the stairs down to a ladder that leads to a track. Once down the ladder, follow the tracks northeast until you reach the cart. Get her onboard, then pull the lever to drive to the other end of the castle.

Pull her up, save on the couch if you like, then proceed down the path. You will have to use a running jump to make it to the other side of the collapsed walkway. Once on the other side, press and hold the call button to make her leap to you. At the dropoff, leave the princess and shimmy across the pipe. Pull the lever to raise the large box. Go back to where she is and



jump out onto the box. Call her from there and she will jump to you. Leave her on the suspended box. Head back to the lever and pull it again to lower her. To the right of the lever is a series of ledges you can climb up to get on the roof of the structure. Walk out to the end of the crane and climb down the chain to get back to the princess. From the box, jump to the nearby ledge and call her. Save on the couch, then head in the door right next to it with the princess.

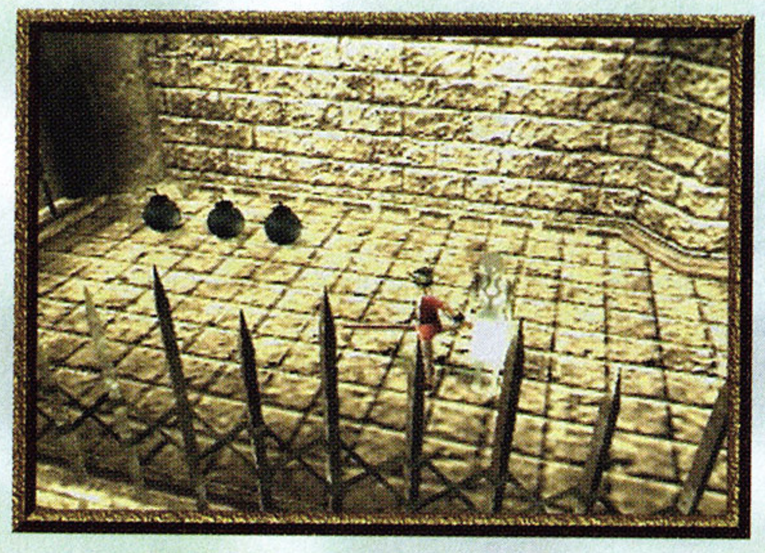
CHANDELIER



Leave her as soon as you enter the room and take the outside path to where you see a chain going down. Instead of going down, take the windowsills up and into the rafters. Drop down onto the hanging chandelier to make it crash into the already damaged bridge. Grab the princess and head back outside to the previous save couch.

Take the stairs down and around this structure, making note of the large bombs at the bottom of the stairs. Enter the door, drop off the princess, then hurry back outside, grab a bomb, and return to her. Set the bomb by the already damaged pylon, then go to the candles still burning on the fallen chandelier. Light your stick using the action button, then quickly light the bomb. Grab the princess, head back up the spiral staircase, down your newly derailed bridge, and she will open up the sealed door leading to the next area.

COURTYARD



Head down the stairs in front of you. Mist monsters will spawn on either side of your goal – the sealed door on the opposite side of the room. Follow the path around, fighting when you have to, and exit out that door.

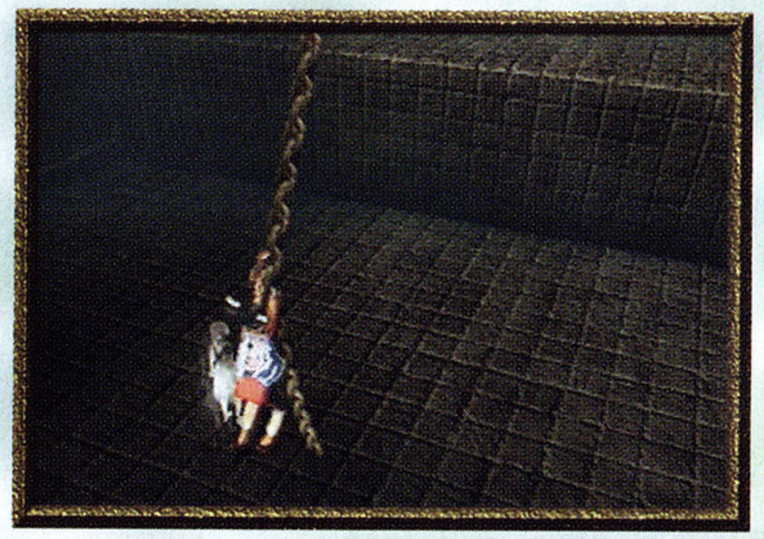
As you run to the gate, the queen will appear. After your audience with her, push in all eight of the unlit torch stands to light them. Save on the couch, then head back to the previous room.

In here, there are bombs to the left of the original entrance. Grab one, and place it by the wooden planks blocking the exit to the right of the original entrance. Light the bomb, and then exit through the newly-opened passageway.

GRAVEYARD

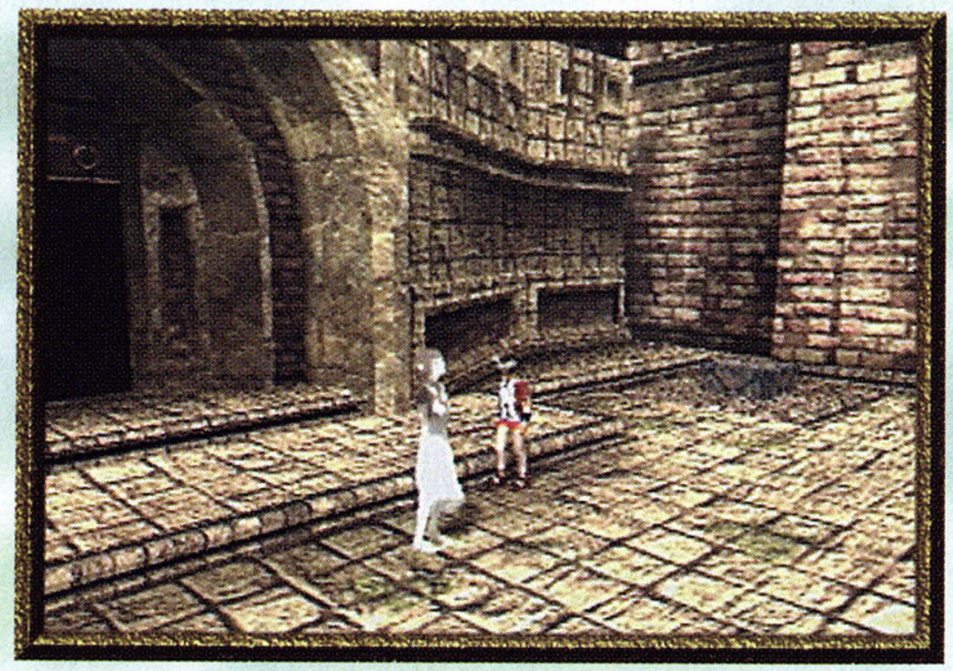
At the bottom of the stairs is a couch to save if you wish, but we advise that you wait until after you have killed the mist monsters that will spawn as soon you head down the second set of steps. After the fight is over, save, then head down to the closed door. Notice the two switches on either side, place the nearby block on one, and set the princess on the other. Enter the door.

Quickly take the ladder to Ico's left, and then leap out to the chain. Once you reach the platform above, exit back into the room with the princess.



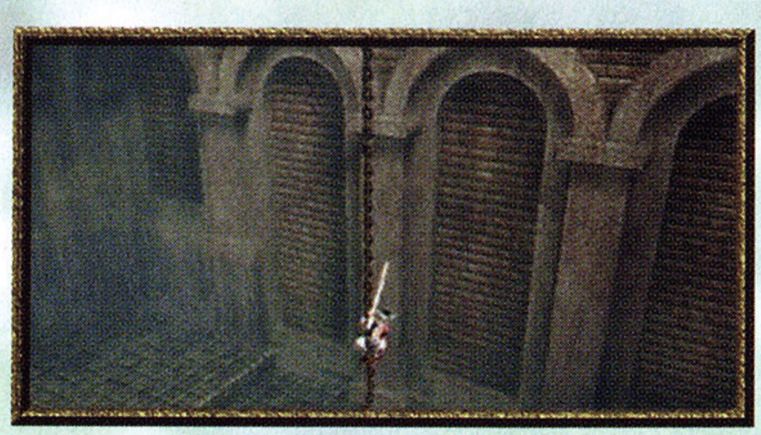
Push the block down, and then kill the monsters that spawn. Place the new block on the switch that was previously occupied by the princess and then both of you enter the now permanently open door.

Leave the princess once you enter here. Head up the ladder on Ico's left and back outside again. Follow the path to Ico's right and you will re-enter the hall with the princess. Follow this path to the opposite side of the room, and use the ledge to reach the ladder. At the top of the ladder, press jump to leap out and grab the hanging chain. Now that the platform is raised, press and hold the circle button while hanging from the chain. To get up on the ledge, push back and forth on the left analog stick to swing, and then press the triangle button to release. Pull the princess up and then exit out the sealed door.

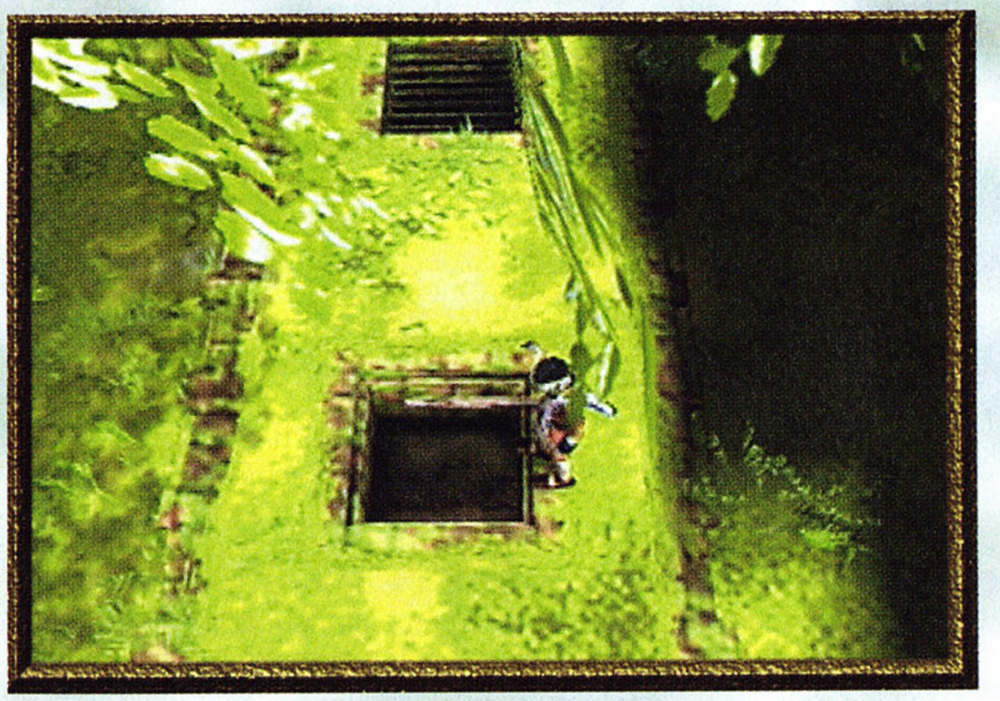


WINDMILL

You can climb up the windmill by jumping from ledge to ledge. When you reach a platform where the camera turns back and looks at the spinning blades, run and jump out to grab one. Timing is pretty crucial, as you must then shimmy towards the outside of the blade so that when it gets to the top you are on the end of the blade. Once it reaches its apex, jump off and you will find yourself on the top of the windmill. Follow the path around until you get to the switch (it's past the sealed door). Pull it, then go to the edge and call the princess. She will jump to you. Head out the sealed door (you can also save at the couch in the corner if you like).



PLAZA



As you enter this room, mist monsters will attack. Kill them, then head up the chain. Fall into the one hole in the grass that is not covered by a grate. Stand on the right side switch to open the door by the princess. Call her to you, then have her stand on the left-hand switch. Exit out that door and head up the pipe. Leap back over to the grass, then stand over the uncovered hole again, but this time call the princess and pull her out. Head up the nearby stairs and out the sealed door.

PLATFORM

Take the elevator up. Leave the princess and ignore the switch for now. At the hole in the fence, drop off the side. Use the X button to drop to a lower ledge and the ▲ button to climb up. Follow the path of ledges around and back up. Now you should be above the princess near a block. Push the block off and jump down. Fight the monsters, then use the block to flip the switch and lower the chain from the crane. Then push it back to get both you and the princess back up to the upper platform. Save at the couch. Use the ledges on the wall by the couch to make it to the far side of the chasm (you'll notice that part of the column is missing on the second level – you can pass there). Walk the plank and slide down the chain. You'll notice a doorway in the wall. Swing on the chain and then jump for it. Kill the monsters that spawn, then push the two blocks out of the windows. Follow them into the Plaza.

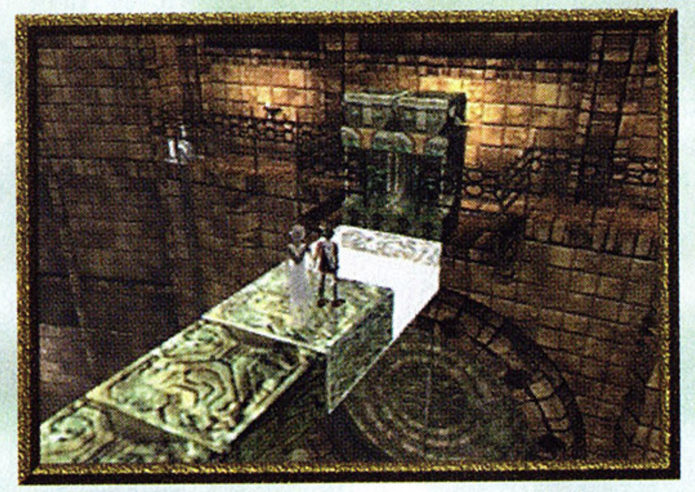
Grab one of the blocks and bring it to the far side of the wall with the staircase. Use it to climb up to the ledge, then follow the path around to a chain that leads up and then back into the room with the princess.

Take the ladder up, jump to the chain, then leap to the far platform with the lever. Call the princess so she moves to the metal platform, then pull the lever. The platform will take the princess across. Quickly take the chain down and kill the monsters. Lead her out through the sealed door.

Follow the path and go through the next two sealed doorways. You should find yourself above the gate. Follow the path to the East Arena.

EAST ARENA

Save on the couch, then head out the only open door in the room.



Go down the ladder, and then climb the circular platform and pull the princess up. It will move and create a staircase. Leave the princess here. Run up and pull the lever at the top of the stairs to reveal empty torch sockets. Light them with your stick to open the portal. Head out.

Quickly climb the ladder just to the left of the portal and head back into the room with the princess.

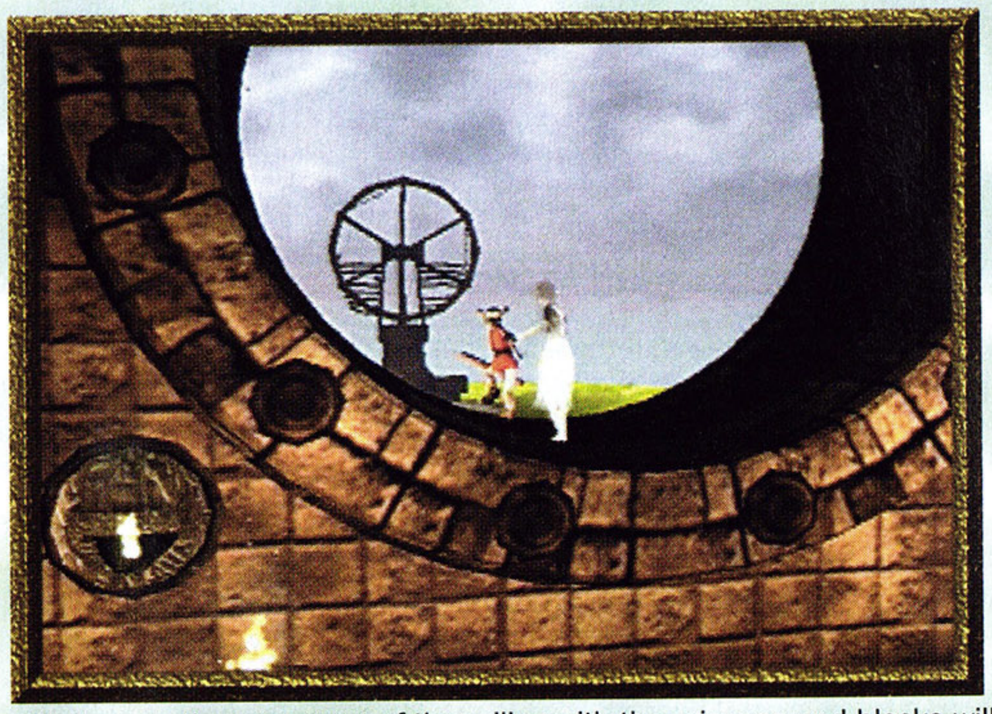
Pull the lever up here, then light your stick on the torch next to it. Jump down and light the two new sockets next to the middle portal that just opened. Grab the princess and head back to the first room.

Grab the sword, and a cage will come up. Hop up on the platform with a gear to the left of the portal and cut the rope with your sword. Then do the same on the other side and the gate will fall. Now head to the far left of the portal to the spot up the stairs. Jump and attack to cut this rope and open the door. Exit that way.

Use the camera to map out the best way to make it across the series of ledges that will take you to the top. Don't worry about leaving the princess behind, you won't be separated for long. Head around the corner once you reach the top and go through the door.

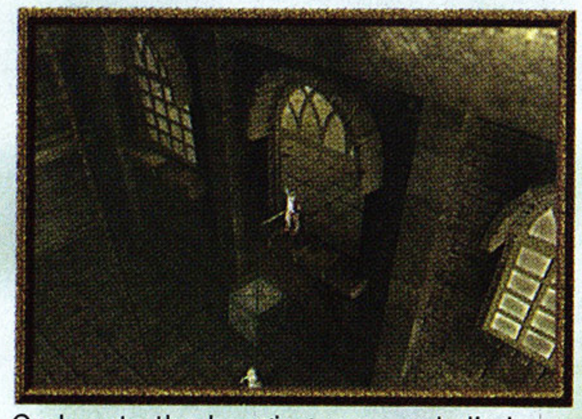
Head up along the path using your sword to cut the bridges free. Then head out the door at the top.

Pull the lever in this room to stop the water. Run back down to grab the princess, then cross the bridge you just formed.



Walk up to the open part of the railing with the princess and blocks will form a bridge for you to reach the switch on the other side. Pull it. Take the elevator down and then light the newly opened sockets with your stick. After the cutscene go back and grab your sword, then head to the door outside that you just saw open.

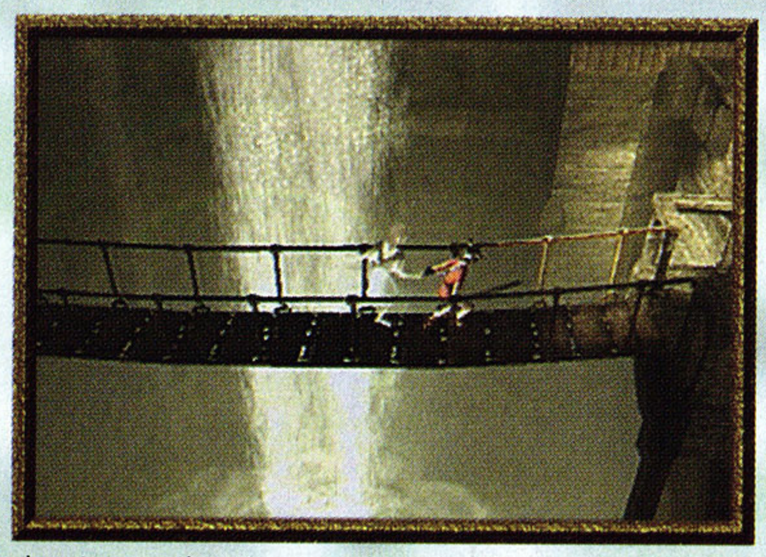
UPPER COURTYARD



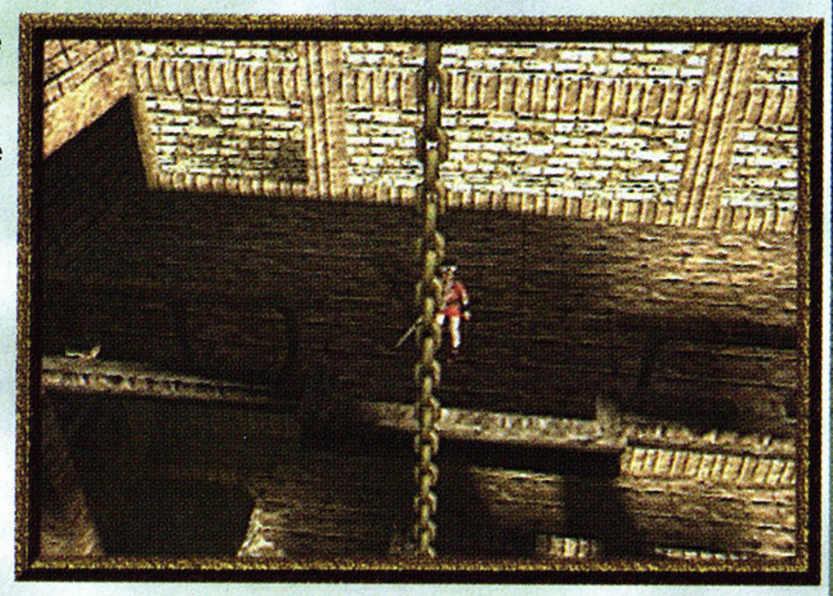
Flip the switch in this room, then head back down the ladder. Enter the door below and head across the newly formed bridge. To the left is a block and a rope up above. Move the block below the rope and cut it. Head through the nearby door to return to the Chandelier. Fight the monsters then go around and down so that you come out in the Lower Courtyard.

Grab onto the hanging rope and climb up, but don't go in the first open window. Head on up to the second window and jump in. Push the block you find in the room off the ledge, then hop down and push it down to where the princess is. Call her and you will be able to pull her up. Take the stairs to the sealed door and exit.

THE WATERFALL



Ahhh, the waterfall. Isn't it nice? Cross the bridge and leave the princess by the gated door. Jump down into the water then climb up the stairs to cross the lower wooden bridge. Take the elevator up and flip the switch in the corner to open the grate. Grab the princess and take her down the elevator, up the steps, and across the wooden bridge to save on the couch. Jump into the water again and take the chain to the top. On the opposite end of that platform is a ladder – take it. Go outside and jump to the chain. Jump from the chain to the far side. Take the ladder down, push the block off, then grab the princess and bring her up to the platform you jumped to from the chain. At the far end of this platform is a ladder leading to a switched door. Enter it.

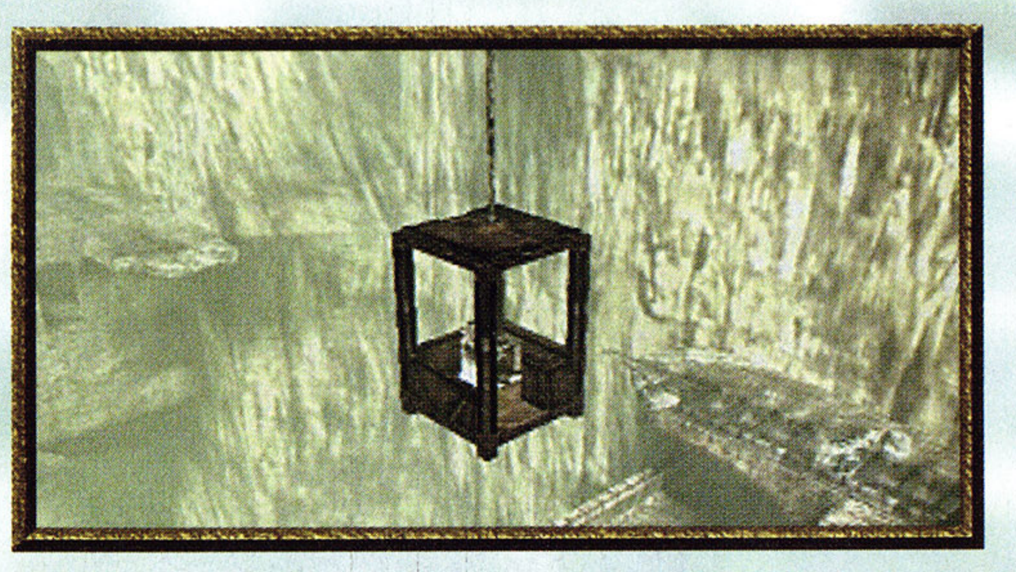


SLUICE

Cross the bridge, then head up the ladder inside the building. Use the poles along the ceiling to make your way outside the building. Drop down, then flip the switch to the left of the stairs to open the door to the princess. Before you grab her, push the block in the water, and jump to the other side. You will see a ladder to the right of the water source – climb it, then turn the spindle to stop the water. Grab the princess and exit by way of the now dried up waterbed.

Bring the princess down to the water, then push the block next to her. She will get on the block. Pull it to the other side, and she will dismount. Exit through the sealed door.

GONDOLA



After you pick your jaw off the floor after seeing this amazing looking room, run down the water path and then up the ladder near the end. Follow the platform and try not to have a heart attack when you hit that jump. Continue along the path and you will go to the next area.

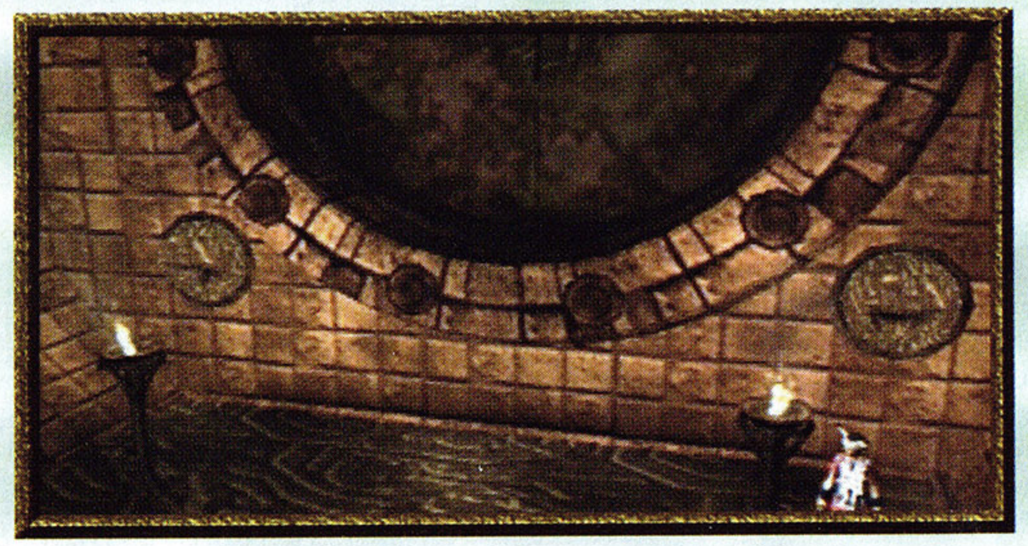
Take the gondola down and save on the couch. At the bottom of the stairs you will find a pipe leading up by the little stairs – use it. Push the tower all the way over, then climb up and jump to the balcony. Pull the switch to drop the bridge, then hurry down to kill the monsters. Cross the bridge and then exit. Follow the path around and you will come back to the same spot, just on top of the buildings. At the end of the path you will find a lift. Rotate the lever until you reach the top.

WATER TOWER

Leave the princess by the couch after you save, and then head down and over using the pipe. Climb up the wall, then walk onto the wooden planks. Hop onto the broken ladder close by, then jump on the platform. Climb up the wooden structure then out towards the chain. Hang from the highest point, jump out towards the raised bridge. You will knock it down. Don't grab the princess yet. Instead, head to the building up the path. Once inside, exchange your sword for a stick and grab a bomb. Head across the bridge, then set the bomb down directly across from the wooden water tower on the stone column. Light the stick on the torch in the corner, ignite the bomb, pick it up, and start to walk toward the water tower. Press the circle button to hurl it over the fence protecting it. The explosion will create a new bridge. Cross it. Climb up the chain, then push the block off of the cross-shaped wooden platform. Jump down to it and push it over to the wall on the right side. Climb up and flip the switch to move a chain out. Head up to the chain and use it to get to the large spindle. Push it around to move a block out to complete a path you can lead the princess across. Grab her and watch for monsters that will spawn as you lead her to the sealed door.

In the next room, just head across to the sealed door and open it. Now you are in a familiar place, but on the other side. Head out along the path until you reach the building.

WEST IDOL TOWERS



Cut the cord up the stairs on the left to open the door. Inside you will find a couch to save. Exchange your sword for a stick, then take the ladder up to the switch above and pull it. Light your stick here and then ignite the now open sockets. Go and stand with the princess on the raised column below, just like you did in the East Arena to raise the stairs. Head up to the switch, pull it, and light the sockets that appear. Head back down to protect the princess from the monsters that spawn. After they are dead, leave the princess here, and head outside through the portal at the top of the stairs. Turn the radar towards the portals, then climb the ladder. Jump to the chain, then go up. Follow the path and create the bridge by cutting the ropes to the bridge like before. Enter the room at the end of the path and pull the switch to stop the water. Head back to the princess and go back out to the first room.

Cut the rope at the top of the stairs on the right side. Go in that door and up the slope where the water once was. Go around the corner and then cross the bridge you created before. Walk to the edge near the hole in the fence, and magical blocks will appear that you can use to cross to the switch that opens the last set of sockets. Take the elevator down, light them, and then head out.

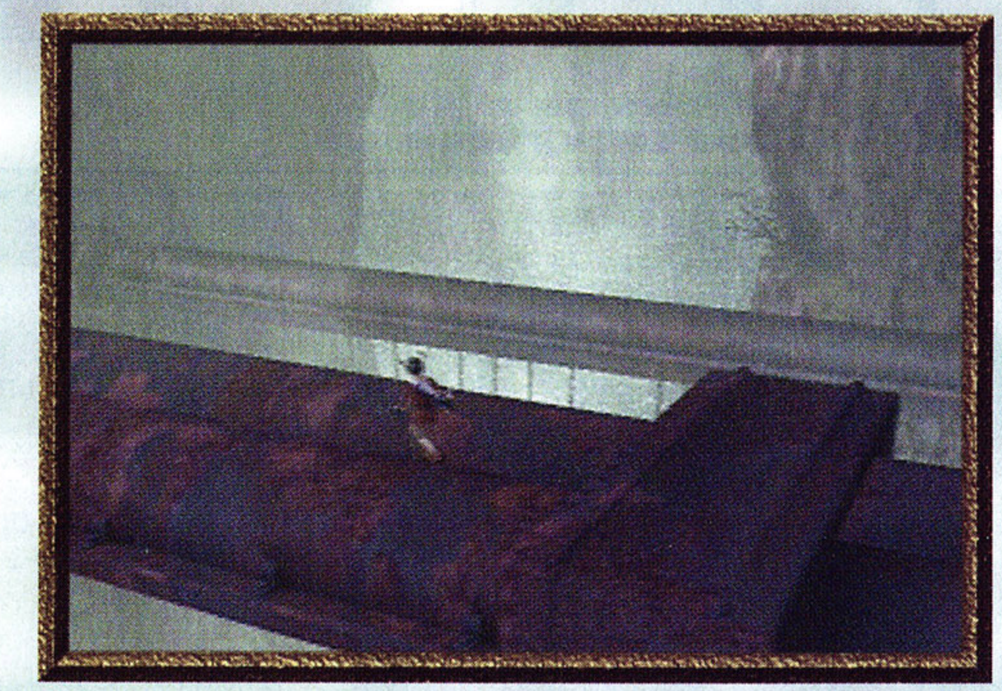
Follow the path around, but take the ladder up and pull the switch to lower the bridge before you head back to the Upper Courtyard. Cross the bridge then head into the Chandelier room. Take the bridge down then cross the Courtyard so you are back at the gates where you first met the queen.

Approach the door and a huge sequence will unfold. After you find yourself on one side of the bridge and the princess on the other, quickly jump over and she will catch you. Another sequence will go down, then you find yourself on some floating cages.

UNDERGROUND

Jump from cage to cage until you get to solid ground. Then you will come to a stream. Run up past the gate at the top of it. At the top of this bank is a switch and box. Pull the switch, then push the box into the water. Push the box underneath the switch next to the gate in the water. Stand on the box and pull it. Drag the box under the chain and then jump up to it. At the top of the chain is a trolley that, when pushed forward, will engage the gears. Go down to the wheel that is spinning and grab one of the pegs. Drop down at the top, then shimmy across the pipe that runs along the wall. Carefully walk across the larger pipe, then shimmy to the other side of this structure. Head up the pipe, then jump to the chain. Swing from this chain to the next, then to the platform straight in front of you. Jump onto the pegs on the water wheel, then drop once you get to the top. Go around the path and jump onto the spinning cog. Hop to the next, then walk across the revolving cylinder. Follow that path out.

THE PIPE

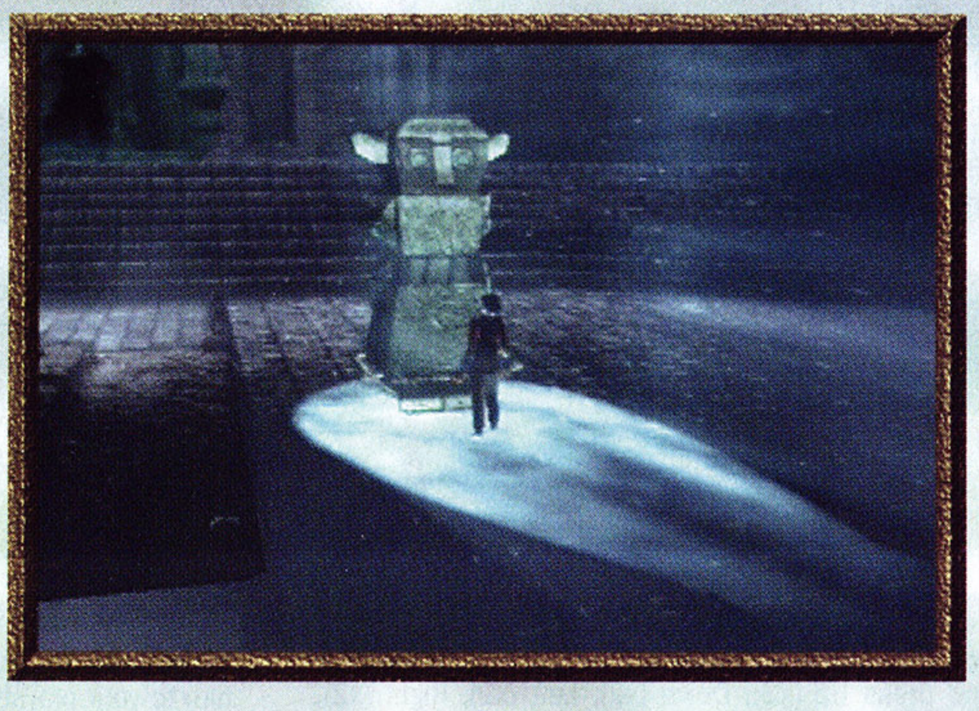


The first part is fairly straightforward, just use the ledges, make a couple of jumps, and you will get to the pipe. Walk across to exit to the new area.

Follow the pipe into the large circular chamber, then slide down the chain. Swing and jump onto the inner ledge. There is only one complete bridge that will take you to the outer ring – use it. Follow the path to the left, then move the chain that hangs from the bridge. Jump out to it, slide down, and swing back to the outer ledge. Don't take the ladder located here, but the one on the opposite side. At the bottom of the ladder, jump to grab onto the broken bridge. Take the ladder down into the water. Hop up onto the landing and exit out the door opposite the sealed door.

At the end of the path you will find THE sword. Go back to the previous room and use it to open the sealed door. Pull the switch and you will have come full circle. Find the princess, then fight the hordes until the room raises and you can climb the staircase behind the princess. Enter this room and look around. Prepare to fight the queen.

QUEEN



Run up to the queen with your sword and attack her shield. Each time you do, the sword will fly off and you will have to retrieve it. Use the two columns to block her attack while you use the camera to find out where the sword went. Go grab it and repeat. After the shield is gone, go in for the final blow. Make sure you watch the credits and explore the beach – you won't regret it.

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

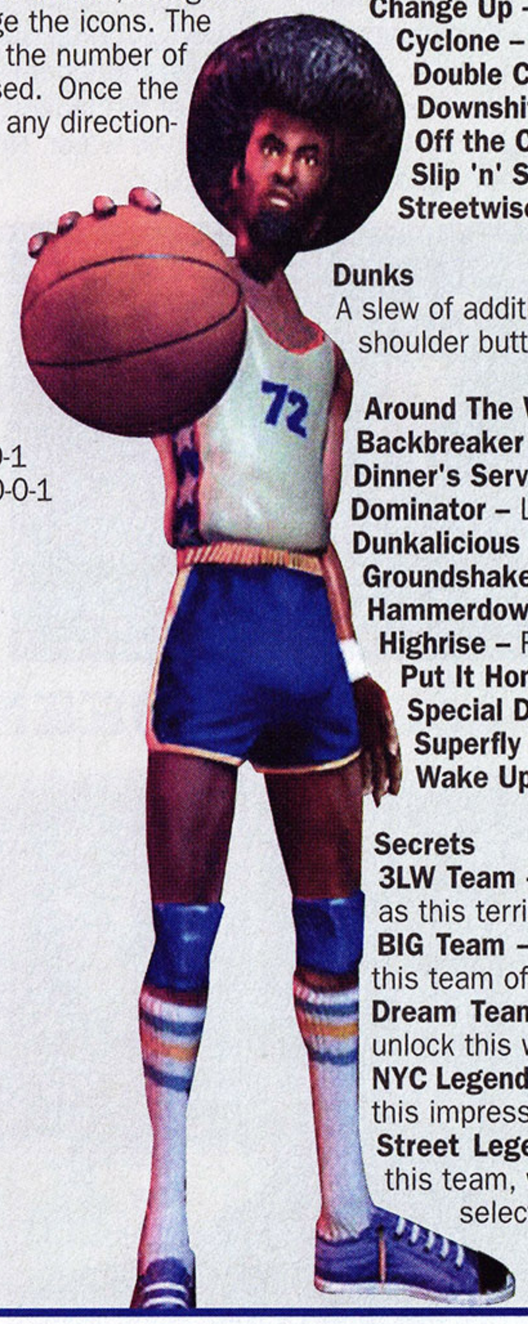
NBA Street

Cheats
Enter all of these codes at the Versus screen, using the □, △, ○, and ✕ buttons to change the icons. The numbers listed in the codes signify the number of times each button must be pressed. Once the button sequence is entered, press any directional button to activate the cheat.

Infinite Juice – 2-0-3-0
No Juice – 1-4-4-3
Mega Dunking – 3-0-1-0
No Dunks – 3-0-1-2
More Gamebreakers – 1-4-3-2
Less Gamebreakers – 1-3-4-2
No Gamebreakers – 1-4-4-2
Springtime Joe "The Show" – 1-1-0-1
Summertime Joe "The Show" – 1-0-0-1
Athletic Joe "The Show" – 1-2-0-1
ABA Ball – 0-1-1-0
Beach Ball – 0-1-1-2
EA Big Ball – 0-1-4-0
Medicine Ball – 0-1-1-3
NuFX Ball – 0-1-3-0
Soccer Ball – 0-2-1-0
Volley Ball – 0-1-1-4
WNBA Ball – 0-1-2-0
Authentic Uniforms – 0-0-1-1
Casual Uniforms – 1-1-0-0
Explosive Rims – 1-2-4-0
Captain Quicks – 3-0-2-1
Harder Distance Shots – 2-2-3-0
Player Names – 0-1-2-3
No Auto Replays – 1-2-1-1
No HUD Display – 1-4-1-2
No Cheats – 1-1-1-1
No Player Indicators – 4-0-0-4
No Shot Indicator – 4-3-2-4
Tiny Players – 4-0-4-0
Big Heads – 4-1-2-1
Tiny Heads – 4-2-0-2
ABA Socks – 4-4-4-4
Easy Distance Shots – 2-1-3-0
Harder Distance Shots – 2-2-3-0
Unlimited Power – 3-1-1-0
Mad Hands – 3-2-1-0
Super Swats – 3-3-1-0
Sticky Fingers – 3-4-1-0
Captain Quicks – 3-0-2-1
Less Blocks – 3-1-2-3
Less Steals – 3-1-4-0
No Alley-Oops – 3-4-1-2
No 2-Pointers – 3-3-0-3

Moves
To perform these daring moves, you'll need Turbo. A slew of additional moves are available when just one shoulder button is combined with □.

Backtrack – L2 + R2 + □
Breaking You Off – R1 + R2 + L2 + □
Change Up – L1 + R2 + □
Cyclone – L1 + L2 + R1 + □
Double Cross – L1 + L2 + R1 + □
Downshift – L2 + R1 + □
Off the Chain – L1 + R1 + □
Slip 'n' Slide – L2 + R1 + R2 + □
Streetwise – L1 + L2 + □



Dunks
A slew of additional dunks are available when just one shoulder button is combined with ○.

Around The World – R1 + R2 + L1 + ○
Backbreaker – L2 + R2 + ○
Dinner's Served – L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + ○
Dominator – L1 + L2 + ○
Dunkalicious – L2 + L1 + R2 + ○
Groundshaker – R1 + R2 + ○
Hammerdown – R1 + L1 + ○
Highrise – R2 + L1 + ○
Put It Home – L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + ○
Special Delivery – L2 + L1 + R1 + ○
Superfly – L2 + R1 + R2 + ○
Wake Up Call – L2 + R1 + ○

Secrets
3LW Team – Rack up 20 wins in any mode to play as this terrible pop group.
BIG Team – Win 10 games in any mode to unlock this team of SSX boarders.
Dream Team – Complete Hold the Court mode to unlock this wacky alien/yeti team.
NYC Legends – Record 30 victories in any mode and this impressive team will become available.
Street Legends – Simply win the City Circuit and this team, which is lead by Michael Jordan, will be selectable.

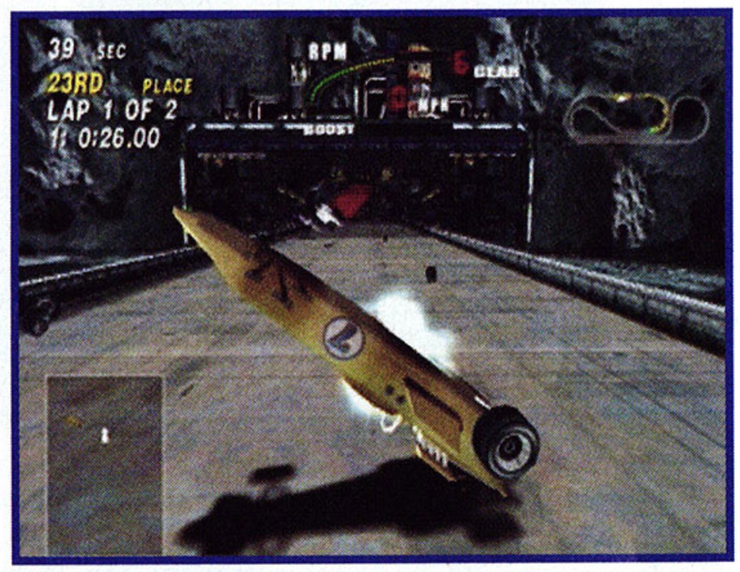
William Morse
Holland, IA

WarJetz

Enter all of these cheats at the Input Code screen.

All Cheats – TWLVCHTS
Bigger Guns – HMMR
Biggest Guns – QD
Double Bux – TWFSTD
Every Movie – GRTD
Extra 10 Bux – WNNNGS
Fast Planes – ZPPY
Ghost Mode – SNKY
Invulnerability – DNGDM
Level Select – JMPTT
Overlords – VRLRDS
Shields On Roll – SCRW
Super Cheats – SPRLZY
Top Gun – DH
Valhalla – WNRLFST

"The VidMan"
Uptown, MN



CART Fury: Championship Racing

Enter all these codes at the Cheats menu within the Options screen. You'll know the codes work when a bell rings out or an enabled message appears.

All Cars – △, ✕, △, □, L2, △
All Movies – L1, ○, R2, ✕, L2, △
All Tracks – R1, △, ✕ (x2), R2, L1
Death Cars – L2, □, L1, R2 (x2), ✕
Death Wall – ✕, □, R2, △, R1, R2
Player Death Car – L1, □, R1, R2, L2, L1

Walter Day
Westchester, IL

MDK 2: Armageddon

Invincibility – During gameplay, pause, then hold L2 + R2 and press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left (x2), Right (x2), □, △, □, △, Select.

Panning Camera – During gameplay, pause, then hold L2 + R2 and press ○, ✕, ○, ✕.

"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen touring Austria with David Hasselhoff)

Bloody Roar 3

Kohryu – Enter Arcade mode and defeat Kohryu to add him to your playable character roster.

Uranus – Enter Arcade mode and defeat Xion without using any continues through the entire game to unlock her as a playable character.

Jason Smith
Nilus Valley, RI

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

CODE OF THE MONTH

TWISTED METAL: BLACK

To enter these codes, the control configuration must be set to the Classic setting.

God Mode – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Up, ✕, Left, ○. If this code is entered correctly, God Mode On will appear at the top of the screen.

Infinite Health & Turbo – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Right, Left, Down, Up. If this code is entered correctly, Invulnerable On will appear at the top of the screen.

Killer Weapons – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press ✕ (x2), Up. If this code is entered correctly, Killer Weapons On will appear at the top of the screen.

Mega Guns – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press ✕ (x2), △. If this code is entered correctly, Mega Guns On will appear at the top of the screen.

Weapon For Health – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press △, ✕, □, ○. If this code is entered correctly, Weapon for Health on will appear at the top of the screen.

Weapon List – During gameplay, simultaneously press Right and Select.

Characters & Levels

Axel – In Midtown Expressway (Freeway), head toward the large cranes at the construction site. Find an angle so that you're aiming at the control booth on the left crane (the one holding the crate). Shoot the control booth with a missile to make the crane spin and drop Axel onto the playing field.

Elevator Multiplayer Level – In Black Vista Highway (Highway Loop), head to the broken bridge and shoot at the gas canister off to the right. Make sure not to touch it, as it will explode with any kind of contact. Slowly but surely, it will roll off of the bridge and create a passage leading to the black box that will unlock the Elevator multiplayer stage.

Freeway Multiplayer Level – In Endurance mode, go to Snowy Roads and rack up ten kills.

ManSlaughter – In Prison Passage, leave the ship once it docks, then head right toward the docks (starboard side). Shoot the crates to create a ramp leading up to the ship. Blast the side of the ship to open a bay door. Once inside, destroy the control panel to unlock the new vehicle and driver.

Minion – Simply complete the game with all of the regular and hidden characters.

Minion's Stadium Multiplayer Level – In Downtown Business District, enter the skyscraper with the Joe's Coffee signs on it. Locate the elevator and ride it up. Drop off of the roof onto the ledge below and destroy the Coffee signs. One of them is hiding the black cube that will unlock Minion's Stadium in multiplayer.

Mini-Suburbs – In Endurance mode, go to Drive In Movie and rack up ten kills.

Power Plant Multiplayer Level – In Black Ridge Rock (Snowy Roads), head to the cliff near the restaurant. Head behind the barrier. Carefully navigate the outskirts of the level to find the black cube that will unlock this awesome multiplayer level.

Prison Passage Multiplayer Level – In Midtown Suburbs, head toward the carnival entrance. Turn left and jump over the dirt hill landing on a building top. Turn toward the ocean and locate the narrow building with a Power Missile on top (red tint). Hop along the buildings, then blast the vent on top of the Power Missile building. Drop inside and grab the black box that will open the Prison level in multiplayer.

Sewer Multiplayer Level – In Abandoned Skyscrapers, head to the tail of the crashed plane and veer to the left. Blast the wooden billboard to form a bridge to another rooftop. Place yourself in the middle of the bridge, and leap into the gap between buildings. You'll die, but if you time your jump correctly, you'll grab the black cube that will unlock the Sewer stage.

Skyscraper Multiplayer Level – This one is easy. Simply turbo off of the circular arena in the general direction of the tanker truck spawning point. Just descend onto the black cube to get this new multiplayer stage.

Warhawk Multiplayer Level – In Zorko Brothers Scrap & Salvage, knock the helium out of the floating boy. The remnants of the balloon will create a jump near the circular magnetic crusher. Use this ramp to launch on top of the crusher. When it ascends to its highest point, leap to the building. Floating in mid air to the left is a black cube. Obtain it and Warhawk's arena will be available for multiplayer play.

WartHog – In Midtown Suburbs, head to the carnival entrance. A few feet after the clown gate, turn left and head toward the large hill. Turbo and jump off of the hill so that you land on top of the brown building. Shoot the structure on top of it to open a hole. Drop inside and shoot the control panel to unlock WartHog.

Yellow Jacket – In Zorko Brothers Scrap & Salvage, use a Homing Missile to shoot down the airliner that is circling the combat arena. Follow the plane as it spirals to the ground. Explore the crash site for a new path leading underground. Navigate the tunnel, then destroy the control panel in front of the column within the circular room. Yellow Jacket will lower into view.

Special Attacks

Axel's Secret Weapon – Highlight the Special Weapon icon, then tap Up (x3).

Charged Land Mine – Press Right, Left, Down.

Freeze Attack – Press Up, Down, Up.

Freeze Attack 2 – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Right, Left, Up.

Invisibility – Press Left (x2), Down (x2).

Jump – Simultaneously press L1 and R1.

Land Mine – Press Right, Left, Down.

Minion's Secret Attack – Highlight the Special Weapon icon, then tap Up (x3).

No Face's Secret Weapon – Highlight the Special Weapon icon, then tap Up (x3), Down (x3), Left (x3), Right (x3).

Reverse Fire – Press Left, Right, Down + R2.

Reverse Special – With Brimstone, Mr. Grimm, Roadkill, Spectre, Shadow, and Darkside, highlight the Special Weapon icon, then quickly press Up, Left, Right, Down, L2 to fire the attack backwards.

Shadow's Secret Weapon – Highlight the Special Weapon icon, then tap Up (x3).

Shield – Press Right (x2), Down (x2).

Nathan Drann
Milwaukee, WI

Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

Professional Mode – Enter Arcade mode, then select any race option. When it prompts you to choose a difficulty level, highlight Hard, then simultaneously press L1 and R1. While holding this combo, press ✕.

Multiple Bonus Cars – This trick requires that you have two PS2 Memory Cards and a ton of cash built up. Before the last race in a Championship Series, if you have at least an 11-point lead over the second place car, save your game onto Memory Card #1. Start the final race, then quit. You'll still win, since your margin was untouchable. Once you get the bonus car, save the game onto Memory Card #2. Now, load your game off of Memory Card #1. Start the final race again, and quit. Continue restarting until you get a different prize car. When this happens, head home, and go to the Trade menu. Load the garage from Memory Card #2. Purchase the first bonus car so that you have both cars in your garage. Save this data to Memory Card #2. Once again, load the data from Memory Card #1 and repeat the process until you unlock the fourth prize car. Purchase all three cars from Memory Card #2, then save the data onto your file on Memory Card #1.

Bonus Cars

License Test

Place Gold in each of the License tests to unlock these speedy machines.

B License – Mazda MX-5 Miata LS
A License – Mazda RX8
IB License – Nissan Z
IA License – Aston Martin Vanquish
S License – Dodge Viper GTS
Rally License – Subaru Impreza

Completion

Continually check your percentage complete progress to see if you've unlocked the cars listed below.

50% Complete – Chevrolet Corvette C5R
75% Complete – Mazda 787B
100% Complete – F094/s
All Races Complete – F688/s
Complete Time – Panoz Esperante GTR 1

Beginner League

All Gold Medals – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution GSR
4WD Challenge – Suzuki Alto Works Suzuki Sports Limited
80's Sports Car Cup – Mazda Savanna RX7 Infini III
Altezza Race – Toyota Celica SS II
Beetle Cup – Volkswagen Beetle Rsi
Clubman Cup – Mazda MX-5 Miata

Evolution Meeting – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IV GSR
FF Challenge – Toyota Vitz RS 1.5
FR Challenge – Nissan Silvia
Gran Turismo World Championship – Toyota Celica GT-Four, Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VI GSR, Mazda MX-5 Miata, Nissan Skyline GTR V-Spec II
Legend of Silver Arrow – Mercedes SLK 230 Kompressor
Lightweight Cup – Mini Cooper
MR Challenge – Toyota MR-S
NA Race of NA Sports – Honda CRX Del Sol
Spider & Roadster Single Race – Mazda MX-5 Miata 1.8 RS
Stars & Stripes Grand Championship – Chevrolet Camaro SS
Sunday Cup – Toyota Sprinter Trueno GT-Apex
Tourist Trophy Audi TT Race – Audi TT 1.8T Quattro
Turbo Race of Turbo Sports Single Race – Daihatsu Mira TR XX Avanzato R
Type R Meeting – Acura RSX Type S
Vitz Race – Toyota Vitz RS 1.5

Amateur League

All Gold Medals – Dodge Viper GTS R Team Oreca
4WD Challenge – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII GSR
80's Sports Car Cup – Nismo Skyline GT R
All Japanese GT Championship – Arta NSX, Denso Supra Race Car, Calsonic Skyline, Loctite Zexel GT R
Altezza Race – Tom's X540 Chaser, Toyota Altezza LM Race Car, Toyota Vitz
American Championship – Subaru Impreza Sedan WRX STi, Chevrolet Camaro, Audi TT 1.8T Quattro, Mazda RX7 Type RS
Boxer Spirit – Subaru Legacy B4 Blitzen
Deutche Tourenwagen Challenge – Volkswagen Lupo Cup Car, Volkswagen New Beetle Cup Car, Opel Astra touring Car, RUF 3400S
Dream Car Championship – Mitsubishi FTO LM Race Car, Mazda RX-7 LM Race Car, Honda S2000 LM Race Car, Subaru Impreza LM Race Car
European Championship – Lotus Elise 190, Nissan GTR V Spec, Gillet Vertigo Race Car, Mini Cooper
Evolution Meeting – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VI
FF Challenge – Celica TRD Sports M
FR Challenge – Toyota Sprinter Trueno GT Apex
Gran Turismo All-Stars – Mine's GT-R-N1 V Spec, Raybrig NSX, Ford GT40, Nismo GT R
Gran Turismo World Championship – Nissan C West Razo Silvia, Nissan Z Concept Car, Toyota GT-One Road Car, Mazda RX8

GT Race of Red Emblem – Nismo 400R
Japanese Cup – Mazda RX 7 Type RZ, Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IV GSR, Mitsubishi FTO GP Version R, Subaru Impreza WRX STi Version VI
Legend of Silver Arrow – Mercedes Benz CLK Touring Car
MR Challenge – Honda NSX Type S Zero
NA Race of NA Sports Single Race – Mazda RX8
Stars & Stripes Grand Championship – Spoon Sports S2000 Race Car

Tourist Trophy Audi TT Race – Audi S4
Turbo Race of Turbo Sports Single Race – Mines Lancer Evolution VI GSR
Type R Meeting – Honda NSX Type-R, Spoon Sports S2000, Mugen S2000, Honda S2000

Professional League

All Gold Medals – F686/m
4WD Challenge – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII
Boxer Spirit – RUF RGT
British GT Car Cup – Aston Martin Vanquish
Clio Trophy – Volkswagen Beetle Cup Racer
Dream Car Championship – Toyota GT-One Race Car, Panoz Esperante GTR, FTO LM Race Car, F090/s
Elise Trophy – Lotus Elise 190
FF Challenge – Spoon Sports Civic Type R
Formula GT Championship Race – F686/m, F687/s, F688/s, F090/s
FR Challenge – Nismo GT-R LM
Gran Turismo All Stars – Nissan R390 GT1 LM, Dodge Viper GTS-R Concept, Toyota GT-One Race Car, Subaru Impreza Sedan WRX STi

Gran Turismo World Championship – Ford GT40, Opel Calibra Touring Car, Nissan R390 GT1 Road Car, Jaguar XJ220 Race Car

GT All Japan GT Championship – Nismo Skyline GT-R S Tune, Castrol Mugen NSX, Toyota MR S Autobacs Apex, Pagani Zonda
GT Race of Red Emblem – Calsonic Skyline
Italian Avant Garde Single Race – Pagani Zonda
Like the Wind – Mazda 787/b
MR Challenge – Tommy Kaira ZZII
NA Race of NA Sports Single Race – Pagani Zonda C12S
Polyphony Digital Cup – Suzuki Escudo Pike's Peak Edition, F094/s, Toyota GT 1, TVR Speed 12
Spider & Roadster Single Race – Shelby Cobra
Turbo Race of Turbo Sports Single Race – RUF CTR 2
TVR Tuscan Challenge – TVR Speed 12, TVR Griffith 500
Vitz Race – Toyota Vitz, Toyota Altezza LM Race Car, Castrol Supra, Toyota Supra RZ

Rally

All Gold Medals – Suzuki Escurdo
Smokey Mountain Rally – Ford Focus
Smokey Mountain Rally II – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VI

Super Special Route 5 – Citreon Xsara
Super Special Route 5 II – Subaru Impreza
Swiss Alps – Peugeot 206
Swiss Alps II – Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII
Tahiti Challenge of Rally – Toyota Celica
Tahiti Challenge of Rally II – Toyota Corolla
Tahiti Maze – Ford Escort
Tahiti Maze II – Subaru Impreza

Endurance

All Gold Medals – F094/h
Grand Valley 300Km – F090/s, Subaru Impreza, Nissan 390 GT1, Spoon Sports S2000
Japan Route 246 – F094/H, Mazda RX7 LM, Nissan C-West Razo Silvia, Toyota GT One
Laguna Seca 200 Miles Endurance – Calsonic Skyline, F686/M, F687/S, Toyota Altezza LM
Mistral 78 Laps – F686/M, Mitsubishi FTO LM, Jaguar XJ220, Pagani Zonda
Roadster Apricot Hill Raceway – F688/S, Mazda MX 5 Miata, Mazda Miata VR Limited A
Rome Circuit Passage to Colosseo – Gillet Vertigo, Lancia Delta HF Integrale, F688/S, Pagani Zonda
Seattle 100 Miles – F687/S, Nismo GT R LM Road Car, Panoz Esperante GTR 1, Tommy Kaira ZZ II
Special Stage Route 11 – Toyota MR-S Autobacs Apex, Arta NSX, F687/s, Nissan C-West Razo Silvia
Super Speedway 150 Miles – Chevrolet Corvette C5R, Tickford Falcon XR8, F090/s, Clio Sport
Trial Mountain 2 Hour Endurance – F094/H, Lister Storm V12 Race Car, Mine's Skyline GT R N1 V-spec, Honda S2000 LM Race Car

The Game Informer Staff
Eden Prairie, MN

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Fire Pro Wrestling

All Wrestlers – Enter Edit mode, then Edit Wrestler. Head straight to Name Entry and input ALL as the nickname (first line). Move down to the first name (second line) and input STYLE. Now, move to the last name (third line) and input CLEAR. Make sure the Exchange is Off, then press Start and exit out to the Main Menu. You'll know the code works when the name you enter reverts back to the default.

"The Silly German"
Suplex County, GA

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

Mindy – During gameplay, pause, then hold the R button and press A, Left (x2), Up, Right, B, A, Start. Exit out of the game and she'll be waiting for you at the Skater Selection screen.

Unlimited Air – During gameplay, pause, then hold the R button and press Left, A, Start, A, Right, Up, Start. Now, hold B for rise into the air and A to descend. Press the L and R Buttons to maneuver Left and Right, and Up and Down to move forward and back.

Carlos Rivera
Humburg, AZ

GT Advance Championship Racing

Enter all of these codes at the Press Start Button screen. A bell will ring out when the code is entered correctly.

All Cars – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press Up/Left + B.
All Tracks – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press Up/Right + B.
Credits – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press Up + B.
All Tune-Ups – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press Down/Right + B.
Extra Mode – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press Down/Right + B.
Extra Mode II – Hold the L and R Buttons, then press Left + B.

Simon McVaughn
Webville, COM

GAME BOY COLOR

Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six

Enter all of these codes at the Title Screen. You'll know you've entered the code correctly when you hear a laugh sound byte.

Infinite Health – Up, Down, Right, A
Level Skip – B, A, Left, Down, Up, Right
Nightmare Mode – A, B, Select, Up, Right, Down
Teddies Game – A, B, A, B, Down

Spider-Man Level – Defeat Lizard, then return to the Downtown area. Head all the way to the left (by the Daily Bugle), and drop through the pipe. Now, pass through the platform by pressing Down and A. What a crazy stage!

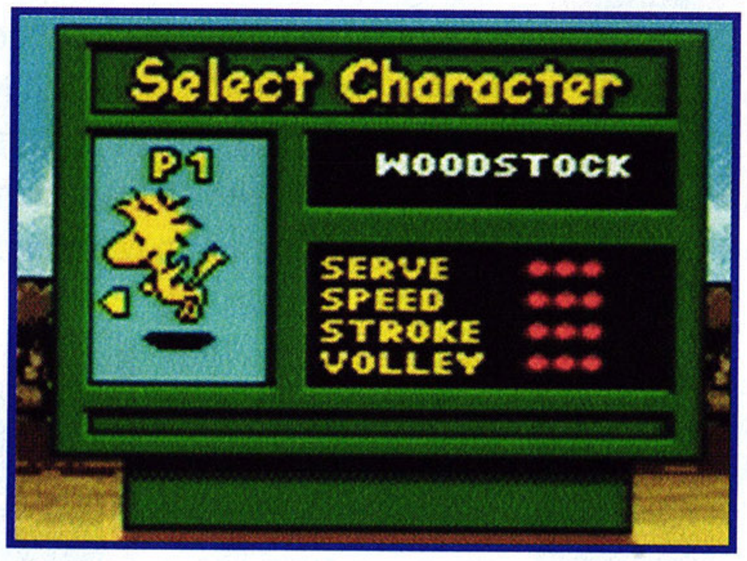
Tim Meadows
New York, NY

Razor Freestyle Scooter

Enter all of these level codes at the Password screen.

Level 2 – Y2QXMZNHNLLQLBLM9L
Level 3 – GJ9ZP35TR0QQLBCV1N
Level 4 – YWGBRDTTT00LLBHXWS
Level 5 – H0SQTNVTW000VBHYNS
Level 6 – 2111YQ7TY010ZBHVFS
Level 7 – M2D98XBT00202BHWBS

"Burning Toast Man"
San Antonio, TX



Snoopy Tennis

Secret Characters – At the Password screen, input "HGQM" to get secret characters like Woodstock and Pig Pen.

"Daddy Fat Sax"
Memphis, TN

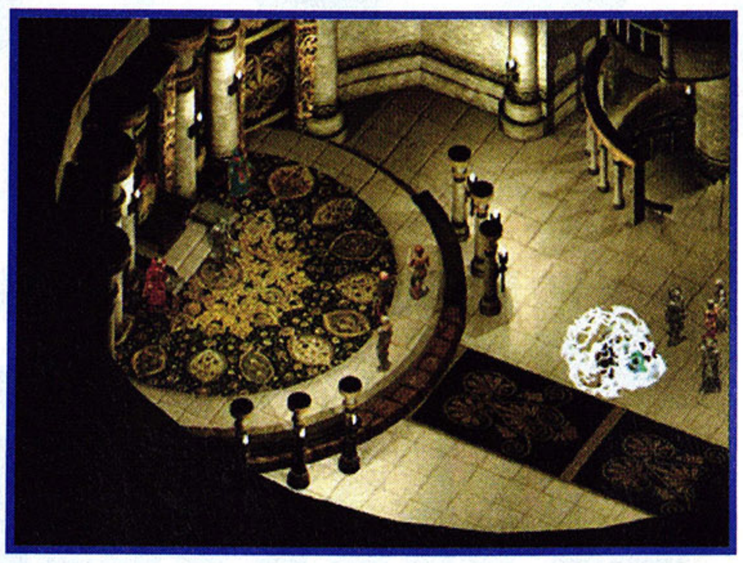
Atlantis: The Lost Empire

Enter all of these level codes at the Continue screen.

Level 2 (Ulysses) – DCNC
Level 3 (Cove Causeway) – XDKV
Level 4 (Fire Trial) – CFCS
Level 5 (Ice Trial) – DHCV
Level 6 (Volcano Bed) – TJJT
Level 7 (Atlantis Internal) – JMFJ
Level 8 (Treachery) – QNFS

Harold Anderson, Jr.
Orlando, FL

PC PERSONAL COMPUTER



Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal

Enter these codes at any point during gameplay.

Heal Character – [Control] + R
Move to Pointer – [Control] + J
Remove Effects – [Control] + T
Kill Monster – [Control] + Y
Change AC – [Control] + 1
Previous Character Model – [Control] + 6
B [Control] + 7
Max Stats (Character Generation Screen) – [Shift] + [Control] + 8

Monster Spawn
Use of the following lines with the CLUAConsole: CreateCreateue("[monsternamehere]") coding to create the desired beastie.

Black Dragon – dragblac
Blue Salamander – icsalcol
Bone Golem – icbone01
Demi Lich – hldemi
Djinni – gendji01
Drow Warrior – uddrow27
Elder Orb Beholder – beheld01
Gauth Beholder – behgau01
Giant Troll – trogi01
Greater Ghoul – ghogr01
Greater Mummy – mumgre01
Iron Golem – goliro01
Lich – lich01
Mature Vamp – vammat01
Mind Flayer – mindfl01
Minotaur – icmin01
Mist Horror – mistho01
Orc Warrior – orc05
Ogre – ogre01
Red Dragon – dragred
Silver Dragon – dragsil
Skeleton Warrior – skelwa01
Splitter Troll – troluo01
Stone Golem – golsto01
Wyvern – wyvern01

"Mr. Monday Night"
Fargo, ND

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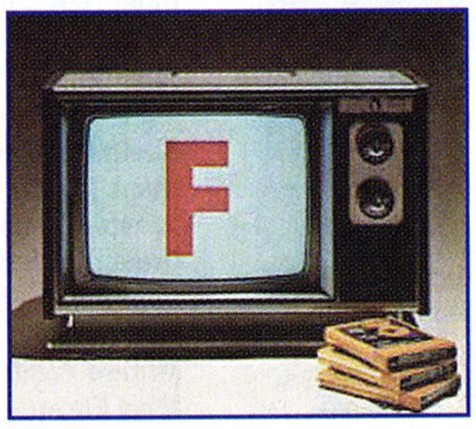
CLASSIC GI

BIRTH OF THE CARTRIDGE

THE FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F

Relatively inexpensive to manufacture, hard to damage, and with a lightning-fast data exchange rate, the cartridge has served the gaming community for 25 years. From the period considered the "classic" video game era to the recently released Game Boy Advance, these plastic and silicon boxes have launched more pixilated lives than any other format in history. Almost all but driven to extinction by CD- and DVD-ROMs, the cartridge is still the medium most identified with home console gaming, and for someone to not understand its simple plug-and-play mechanics seems incomprehensible. Yet, it all had to start somewhere, and in 1976 those who were tuned in to Channel F saw the beginnings of an icon.

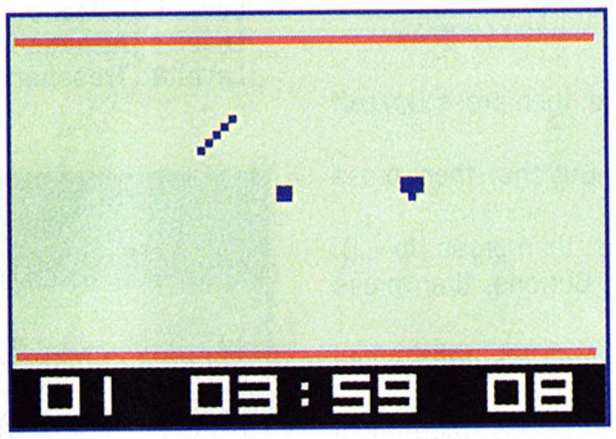
The promotional materials for Fairchild exemplified the unique stylings of the '70s.



By the end of 1975, home versions of Pong were a hot item, and a myriad of companies were jumping on the bandwagon, releasing their own versions of tennis played by two rectangles. An early pioneer in the semiconductor business, Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation also sought to get a piece of this home video game pie, and in August 1976 released the Fairchild Video Entertainment System.

Although it came encased in the standard wood-grain and smoked-plastic look of all electronic components of the time, most everything else about the VES was completely foreign. Rather than having dials attached to the unit, there were devices called "Hand-Controllers" permanently connected to the VES by eight-foot cords. With these controllers, players no longer needed to hunch over the game system. They could sit back at a distance and turn the knob like a dial, move it around like a joystick, or depress it like a fire button.

The biggest difference, however, was that Fairchild's system could play more than the standard Pong variations that came with the console. By purchasing cartridges the company dubbed Videocarts, people could experience entirely different games. To get consumers used to this strange concept, the VES manual instructed owners to insert the bright yellow carts, "...in much the same way as an 8-track audio cartridge is into a cartridge tape player."



Shooting Gallery gives a perfect example of Channel F's simple graphics.

Magnavox's Odyssey 100 already offered a similar feature wherein circuit boards could be swapped out to create new games, but the VES had a microprocessor that could be programmed by its Videocarts, so its games could be more varied. Fairchild figured that since the VES retailed at a competitive $169.95, with new Videocarts fetching $19.95, the unlimited gameplay prospect would appeal to consumers, and all other video game systems would be rendered obsolete. The company was right, and it was this result that quickly put the VES on a downward spiral.

There was already a flood of companies releasing Pong clones. With Fairchild's release of the VES, the idea of a system that could only play one game seemed ludicrous. The public soon stopped buying. Desperate to be rid of excess inventory, these same companies were soon selling their hardwired wares for less than the price of a lone Videocart. This serious pricing competition, coupled with the explosion of the handheld market, took a step out of Fairchild's fledgling stride.

Perhaps the greatest detriment to the VES, though, was that its release awakened a sleeping giant in the form of Atari. The California company had been working on a programmable machine of its own, and when Fairchild beat it to the punch, then-owner Nolan Bushnell realized that a serious influx of

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Jim Paradiso

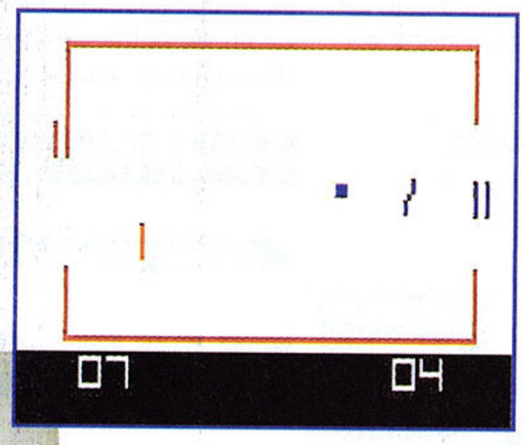
capital was needed to get Atari's console out as soon as possible. In October 1976, Atari was sold to Warner Communications for $28 million. Warner pumped loads of cash into Atari's development and manufacturing divisions, and a year later, in October 1977, the Atari Video Computer System was made available to the public.

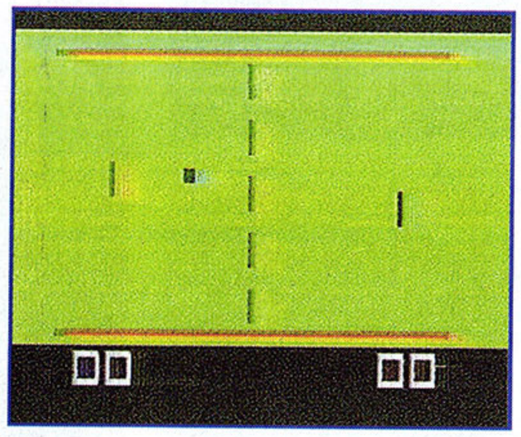
Noting that Atari's VCS was similar in name to its VES, Fairchild changed its console's name to Channel F. However, the flashy new moniker could not save it. Due to the heavy competition, and the fact that games on the Atari VCS (believe it or not) looked and played much better, Fairchild abandoned Channel F just after the 1977 holiday season. Barely a year and a half old, the Channel F died with but 21 Videocarts to its name...almost.

In the original Fairchild Channel F, the sound came from the unit itself, not the television.

In 1982, a company called Zircon International announced that it had purchased all rights to the Channel F, and would again be making the console available on the market. That same year, Zircon kept its promise by releasing all the old Videocarts, as well as an improved Channel F that Fairchild had been developing before abandoning the console. Known as the Channel F II, one of the advantages of the newer model was that audio was issued from the television instead of the unit itself.

These minor refinements to the Channel F did not revitalize the console, nor did the five new Videocarts that Zircon released. If anything, the return of the Channel F just added more debris to an already oversaturated market and, somewhat ironically, helped hasten the 1983 video game crash – which was even worse than the one caused by Channel F's initial arrival. A fitting revenge, perhaps, on its console progeny that never paid it the proper respect.

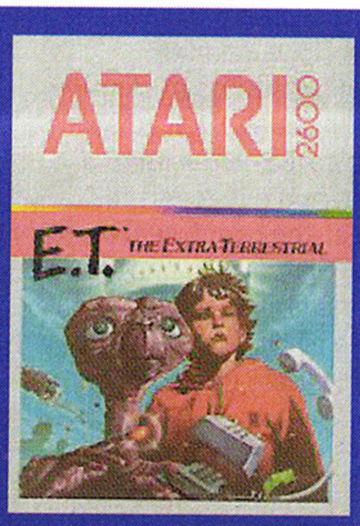


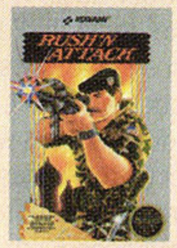


Take a look at Hockey (above) and Tennis (below). Notice a similarity in graphics and gameplay?

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

It was during this month in 1982 that Atari announced the acquisition of the exclusive worldwide rights to market video games based on the movie *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. Figuring that name recognition alone would sell the game, Atari wanted the cartridge out as soon as possible. Cutting the normal six-month programming time in half, E.T. was released in time for the holiday season of the same year. Although it did sell a million copies, bogglingly dull gameplay and rancid word of mouth kept another five million carts in Atari's warehouses. The game became a flop of legendary proportions, and insult was later added to injury when MCA sued Atari for royalties due on the licensing of E.T., as well as two other movies Atari had planned to make games for before this monetary debacle had begun: *The Last Starfighter* and *Dune*.

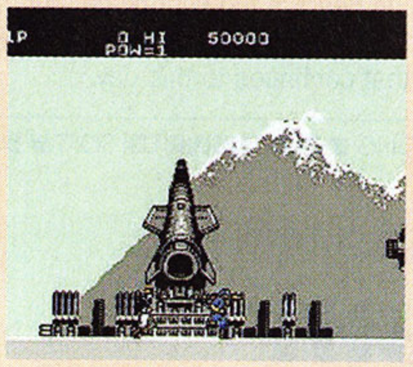




Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

RUSH 'N ATTACK

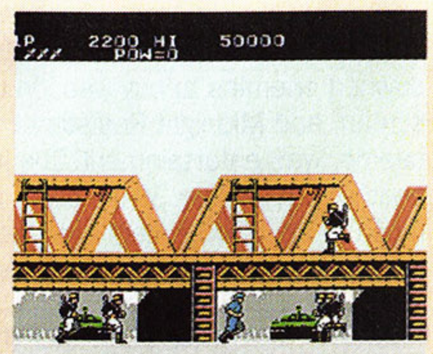
■ **FORMAT** NES ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI



In the midst of the Cold War, when all Americans were looking for any reason to hate communists, only one game ever truly captured the feelings that the United States had toward Russia. Though it may not be remembered for its gameplay or revered as a classic, Rush 'N Attack made you believe in one thing and one thing only – killing commies is fun.

As you picked one of two elite soldiers, you trampled through a melange of Soviet-controlled bases, killing everyone in sight with your trusty buddy backing you up along the way. Also, it should be noted that this game taught more than one person in my family to look for lone gunmen along rooftops, and to never stop running when fighting the reds. Skills like these have served me well. I can't remember how many times I just knew that snipers would be lurking on top of buildings in Syphon Filter, and I always stayed on my toes in GoldenEye thanks to the inundation of knife-wielding democratic justice I received in Rush 'N Attack.

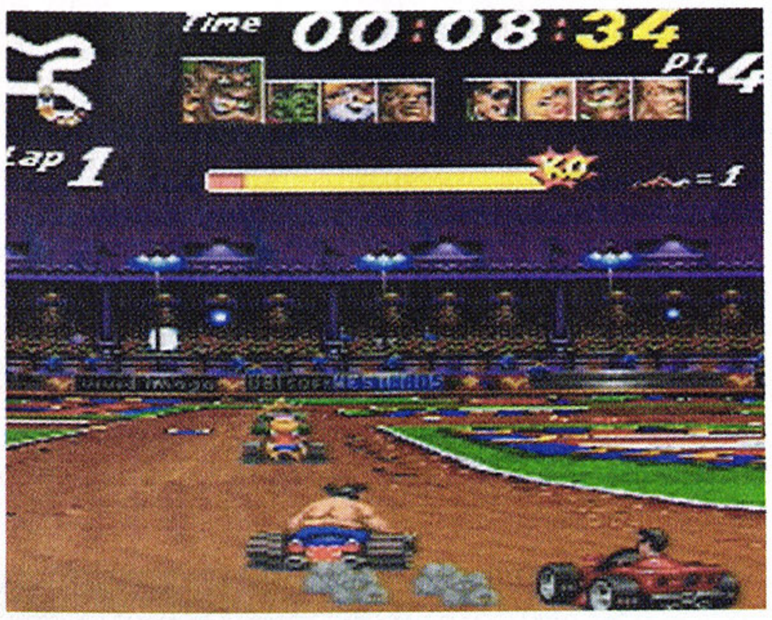
In summary, I feel that Rush 'N Attack was not only revolutionary, but it also taught us some things, especially when dealing with the communist ninjas that live in the forest behind my house. Thank you.

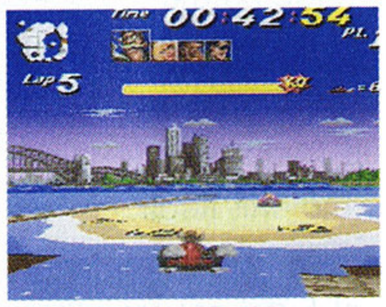


SNES

STREET RACER

RETRO RATING 6





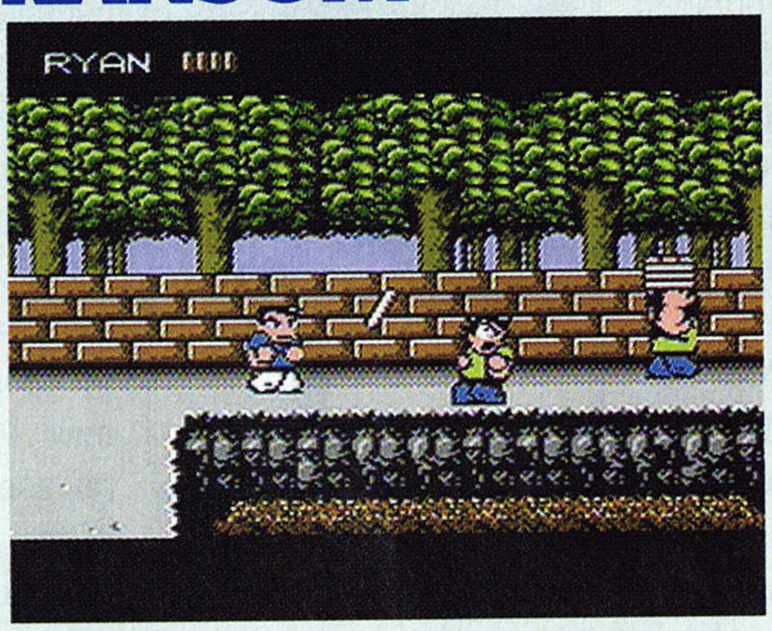
As the first of the Mario Kart clones, Street Racer actually tried to expand on the winning formula of Nintendo's character racer. It didn't work, but at least it tried. The eight colorful characters, ranging from a sumo wrestler to a beach babe to a guy named Helmut (not GI's least favorite independent wrestler, mind you) all had their own unique attributes and attacks. Rather than finding random weapons, characters possess these tactics already. Aside from standard racing, there was also a soccer game and a free-for-all Rumble mode. Sadly, none of these were all that fun. Also ambitious was four-player simultaneous racing, where your view was compressed into a 25% sliver of the screen. Developer Vivid Image had its heart in the right place, but the end product was nothing to be proud of. Mario Kart was done the right way. Street Racer was not, and led the way for the parade of kart pretenders that continues to this day.

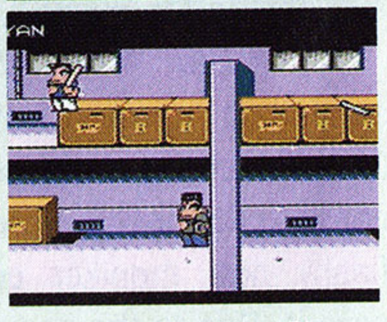
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** VIVID IMAGE
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

NES

RIVER CITY RANSOM

RETRO RATING 8.5





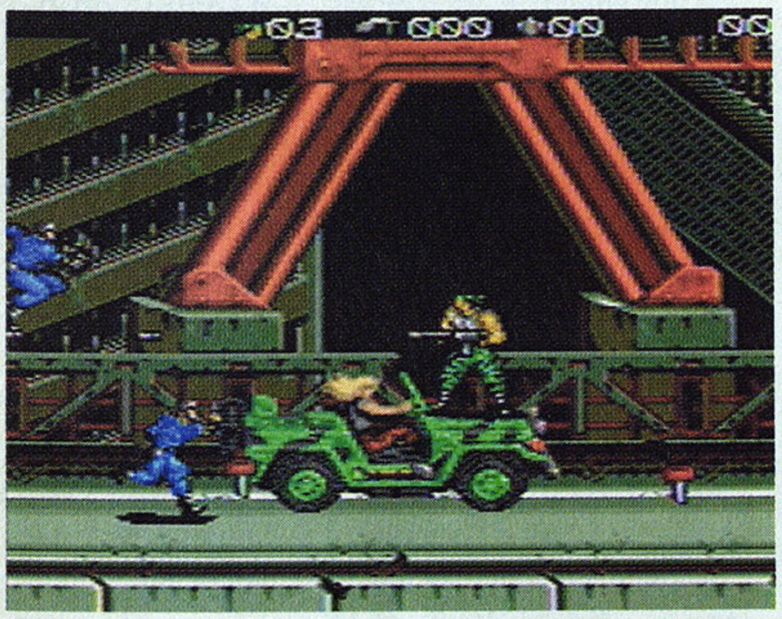
When Game Informer readers paged through the last issue, and noticed that River City Ransom didn't make our Top 100 Games of All Time list, a low, guttural groan could be heard through every corner of this great country. RCR was among the best-loved NES titles out there, and perhaps the system's most popular beat-em-up. Instead of merely punching and kicking your foes (though there is plenty of that), River City Ransom gave the whole ordeal some personality. Enemies would talk junk to you and utter such quips as, "BARF!" when defeated by main characters Ryan or Alex. Between levels, you would shop till you drop at the mall, buying sushi, burgers, or over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. Weapons like brass knuckles, old tires, and baseballs were everywhere, and could either be picked up or thrown at the unruly street urchins. You could do the same to bad guys, too. River City Ransom is a definite Nintendo classic. It's just not one of the 100 best games of all time.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** TECHNOS ■ **DEVELOPER** TECHNOS
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1990

GENESIS

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE

RETRO RATING 6.25



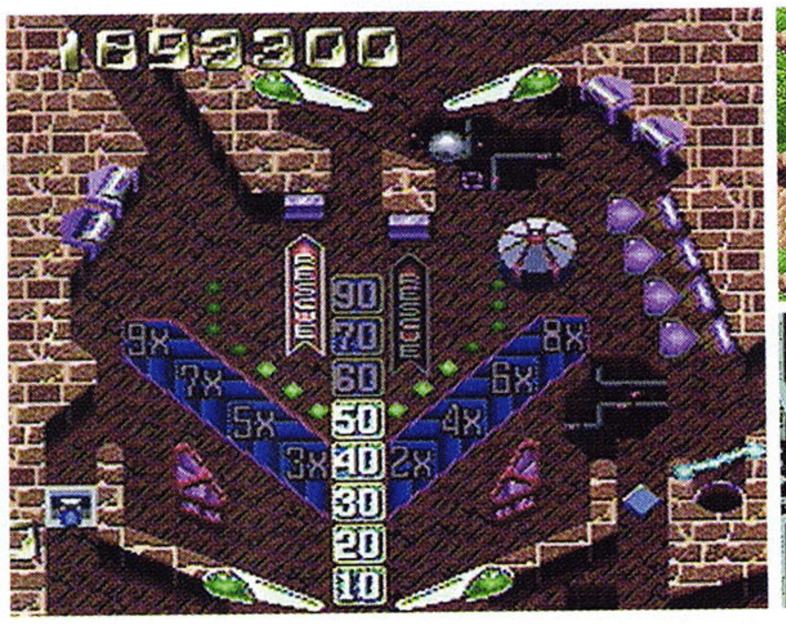
Contra owned all 8-bit shooters. In fact, it held the whole genre captive with its Spread fire. In response, Sega licensed the Data East arcade Contra clone, Midnight Resistance, for its burgeoning Genesis 16-bitter. All the classic guy-with-gun elements were here, like different weapons and sub-weapons including pulse rifles and flamethrowers. In fact, this was done more creatively than in Contra, forcing you to collect items from downed enemies to buy weapon upgrades. Plenty of ammo fodder would run across the screen, and Midnight Resistance's bosses were large and in charge. The one thing missing, it seems, was entertainment. The levels were every bit as difficult as Contra, with one-hit deaths, but with no 30-life code, games didn't last too long. Also, the graphics weren't too much of an improvement over the NES shooter king. Imitation is the highest form of flattery, but Contra shot Midnight Resistance in the face for attempting to duplicate the master.

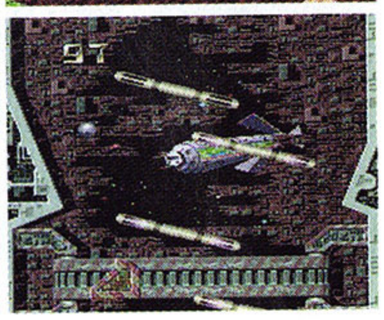
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** DATA EAST
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

TURBOGRAFX-16

TIME CRUISE

RETRO RATING 5.5





Pinball games aren't usually emulated too well on consoles. One of the exceptions was the Crush series on TurboGrafx. Alien Crush and Devil's Crush were great games with realistic physics, creative table design, and a fabulous soundtrack. It seemed like a given that Time Cruise, being another Turbo pinballer, would be a quality title, but this wasn't the case. The reason being, Naxat developed the Crush games, while Face developed Time Cruise. This card was inferior in nearly every way. The physics were awful. You never knew where the ball would go after each hit or bounce. Dying was almost impossible, but unlike the other two TG-16 silver ball titles, staying alive was more torturous. The music sounded like it belonged in King of Casino, rather than a futuristic pinball game. Bonus stages were the only highlight. You had to earn your extra points and free balls by doing creative tasks. Stick with Alien Crush and Devil's Crush for your console pinball thrills. Time Cruise is a waste of time.

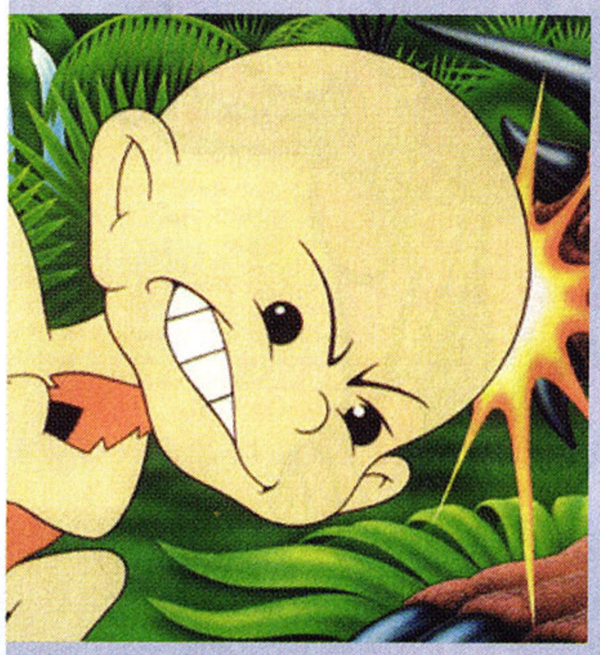
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** FACE ■ **DEVELOPER** FACE
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1992

TURBOGRAFX

TIME CRUISE

90 Million Points – While in Options, hit **Up**, **Right**, **Down**, **Left**, **Up**, **Right**, **Down**, **Left**, **II**, **II**, **II**, **II**, **Select**, **Select**. After all this button pressing, a new menu item will show up, called **90,000,000 Start**. Select it, and you'll have a nice little head start.

Bonus Rounds – While at the Practice menu screen, hit **Up**, **Up**, **Down**, **Down**, **II**, **II**, **Right**, **Select**. You'll now have access to Time Cruise's bonus rounds.



BONK 3: BONK'S BIG ADVENTURE

Debug Mode – On Mode Select, with the icon at Quit, hold **Down/Left** and both the **I** and **II** buttons. Press **Run**, and you'll be magically transported to a cheat menu where you can tweak the important aspects of Bonk.

Invincibility – While in the debug mode, toggle your speed and jump to a desired level, pick which stage to start at, and hit **Select**. You'll now be a caveman god.

KEITH COURAGE IN ALPHA ZONES

Debug Mode – Turn on the system, and hold **Select**, **Run**, **I**, and **II**. Once you see **Start** onscreen, hit **Up** eight times. The debug mode should show up. Hit **II** to change the options.

Alpha Sword – In the debug mode, go to **Effect**, and play the first selection. Now play **Sound 06**. Play **Effect 11**, which should change the audio. Go into level six, where you would normally buy the Alpha Sword. You already have it.

Boss Freeze – To make the game's final boss freeze quicker than a Chihuahua in the Arctic, go to the part on the last level before dropping down to the boss. Start at the edge of the platform and run off it. You'll drop down to find a stiff end guy, who's now a sitting duck for your blade.

NES

RIVER CITY RANSOM

Every Thing Maxed – This code will make even the toughest gangsters putty in your hands.

WelcYSGTOQ2
ar15oAQVXXi
cXsU3mVUn1c

BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT VIDEO GAME ADVENTURE

Level Password

2 555-6929
3 555-9807 (you can't make the last number appear until you run into a red skull)
6 555-5864

SNES

STREET RACER

Alter Attributes – Go to the racer choosing screen and hit **X**, **Y**, **X**, **Y**, **X**, **Y** then hold **X**. Pressing left will decrease attributes, and right will increase them.

Extra Tracks – At the Custom Cup screen, hit **L**, **R**, **L**, **R**, **X**, **Y**. There are now 24 tracks at your disposal.

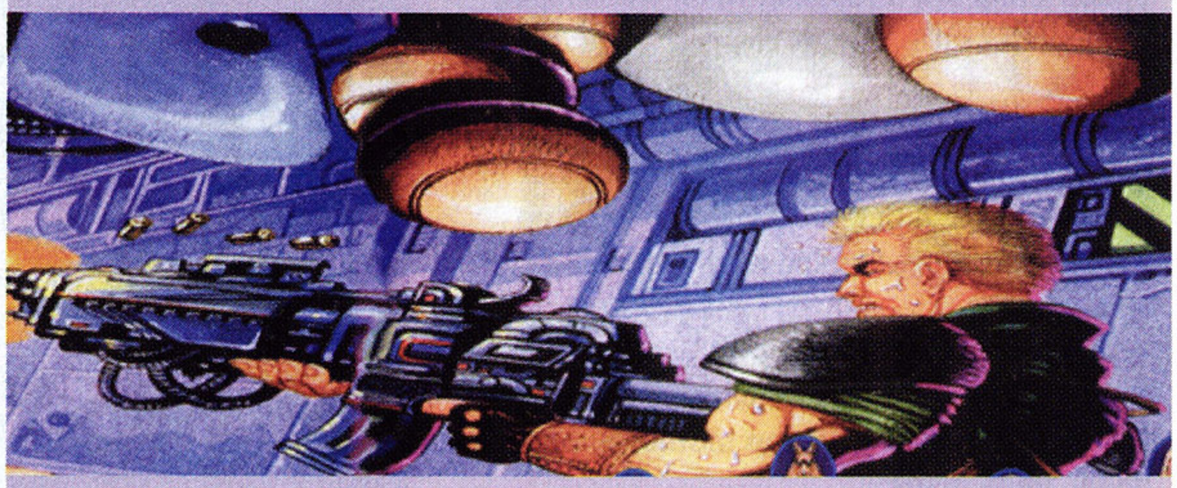
GENESIS

CONTRA: HARD CORPS

Infinite Lives – Before starting your game, do a variation of the classic Konami code: **Up**, **Up**, **Down**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **Left**, **Right**, **A**, **B**, **B**, **A**, **Start**. Instead of just 30 lives, you'll get an infinite amount!

Secret Level – In the room before fighting Noiman in **Stage 3**, climb up the wall. You'll be asked if you want to enter the battle arena. Go for it.

Alternate Endings – Go underground in the Junkyard stage. Climb the wall with guns mounted on it. When you get to the top, you'll see a guy who grants you the chance to take on a trio of bosses one after another. Send them to robot Hell, and you'll see the game's hidden endings.

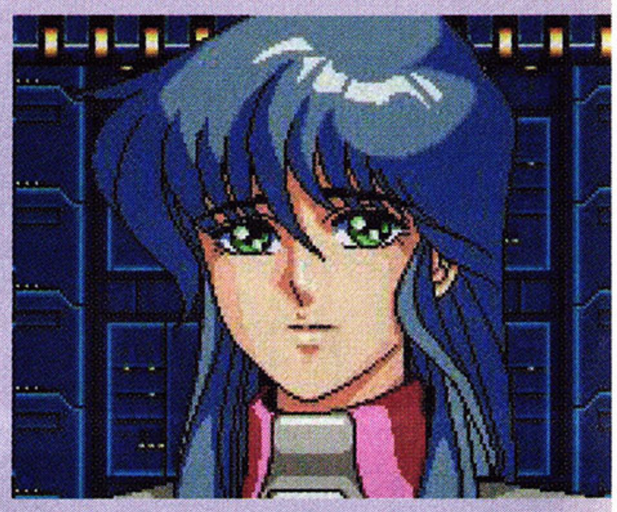


MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE

Level Skip – Highlight **Start Game** at the Title Screen, hold **C** and press **Start**. While in the game, pause and hit **A** to warp to the game's next level.

GAIARES

Invincibility – When you pause the game, hold **A** and **C**, and press **Left**. You'll see the screen freeze. When you unpause, you'll be invulnerable to enemies. This lasts until you beat that particular level, but can be used again after that. Now you can finally trounce this tough shooter.



Level Select – At Gaiares' **Title Screen**, go into the **Configuration** mode by holding any button and hitting **Start**. Put the background music at **18**, then hold **A** on the second controller. Exit the screen, and you'll see a stage select.

SNES

SUPER METROID

The Metroid species was down to one surviving creature. Bounty hunter Samus Aran couldn't bring herself to destroy it, however, and instead opted to take it to a research facility space station. Things go horribly wrong as Ridly comes in and steals the specimen. Hot on his heels, Samus ends up on the planet Zebes, and knee-deep in the adventure of a lifetime.

BOUNTY HUNTER BASICS

➤ **The X-Ray Scope is a very useful item, allowing you to see nearly all hidden paths and items. Make sure to inspect every corner with it to uncover the 230 Missiles, 50 Super Missiles, 50 Power Bombs, 14 Energy Tanks, and 4 Reserve Tanks.**

➤ **If reaching an item is proving overly difficult, come back to it later. Items such as the Space Jump and Grappling Hook will simplify things later on.**

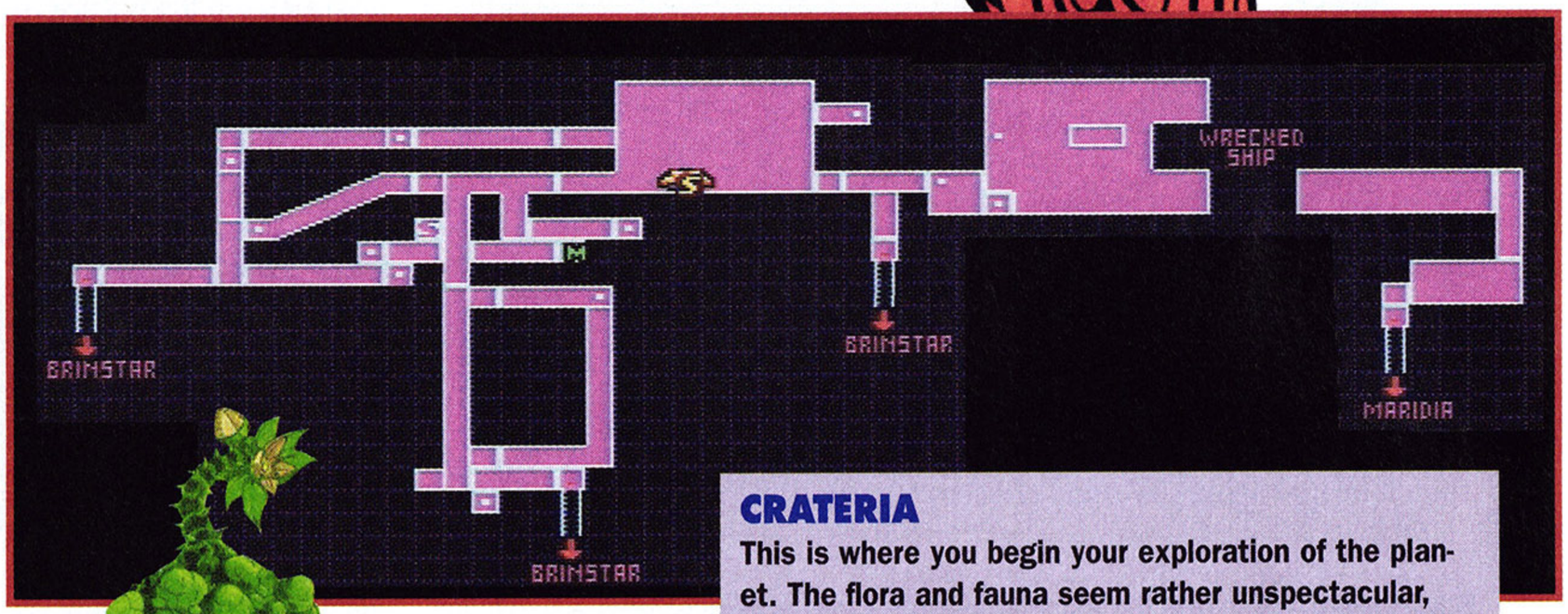
➤ **When your health is low, take a break and destroy the flying creatures that come out of certain pits and pipes. They'll hook you up with replenishing life and missiles.**

➤ **The shorter it takes you to beat the game, the cooler of the three endings you'll receive. It's worth the effort to cap Mother Brain in under three hours.**

➤ **There are a few special weapons hidden in the game. To access them, have your charger and one other weapon selected, highlight the Power Bombs, and charge up.**

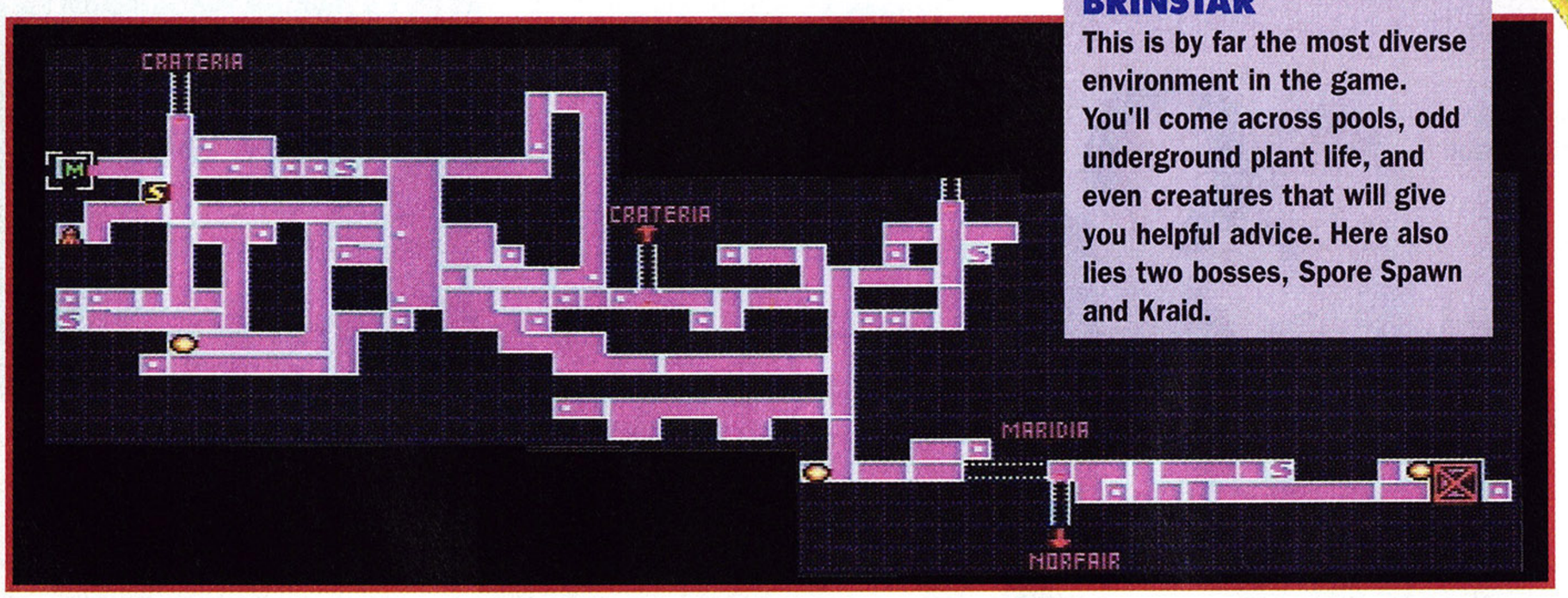
SIGHTSEEING

Here are the maps for each of the seven areas of Zebes. Make sure to fully explore each room to rape and pillage the planet of all its natural resources. A thorough bounty hunter is a happy bounty hunter.



CRATERIA

This is where you begin your exploration of the planet. The flora and fauna seem rather unspectacular, with enemies that are nothing to soil your armor over. Crateria is more of a front, hiding the evil that lurks below the surface.

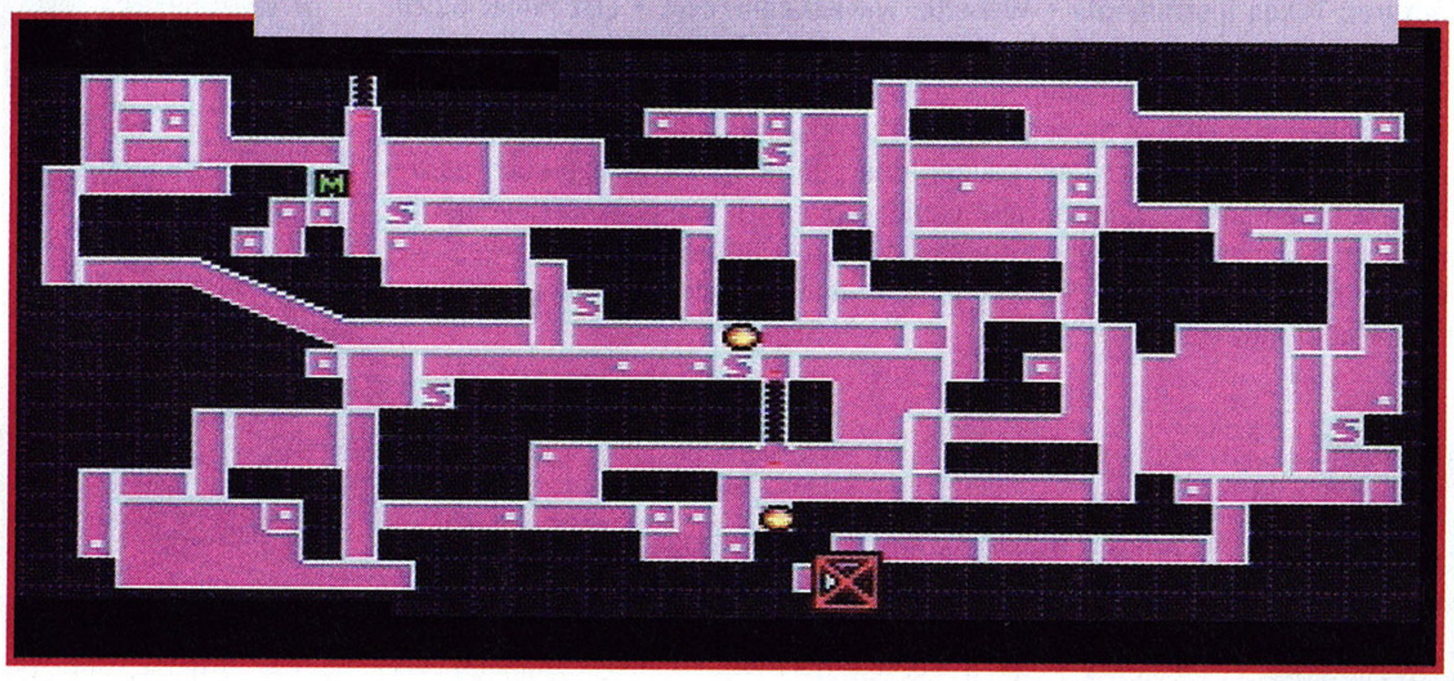


BRINSTAR

This is by far the most diverse environment in the game. You'll come across pools, odd underground plant life, and even creatures that will give you helpful advice. Here also lies two bosses, Spore Spawn and Kraid.

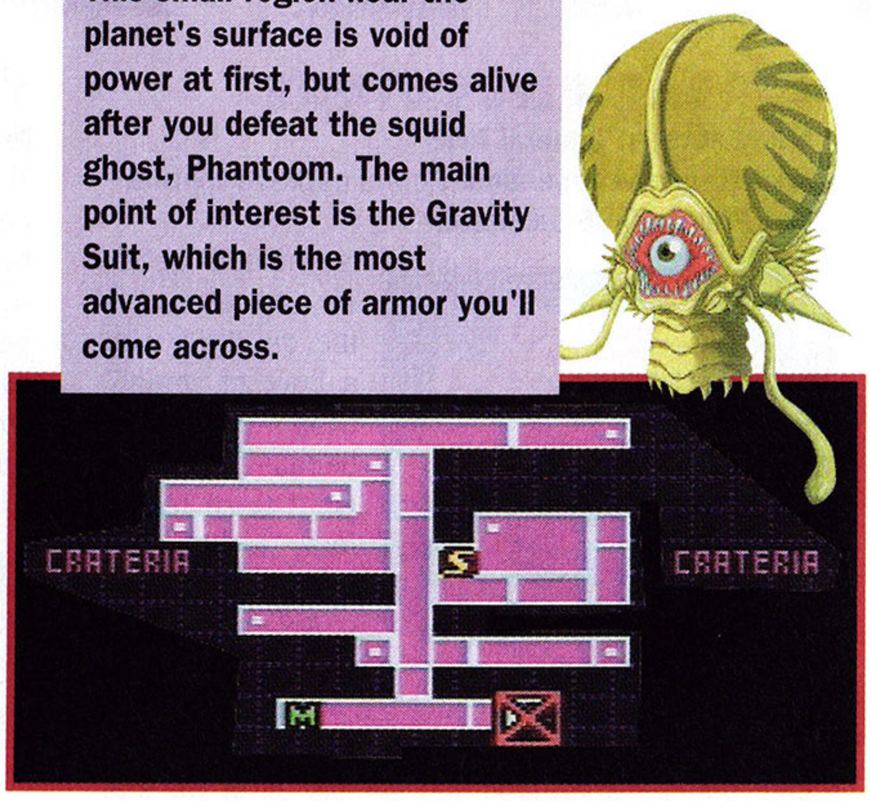
NORFAIR

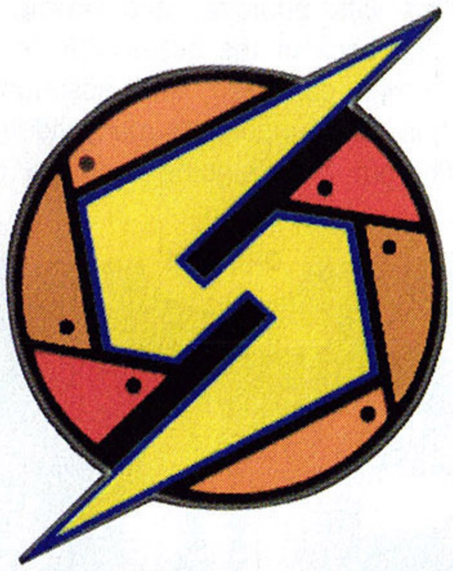
The depths of Zebes brings forth high-temperature zones, filled with fiery magma. You'll need to get the Varia Suit from Kraid to fully explore Norfair, which is Super Metroid's largest level. You will find many vital items, such as the Hi-Jump Boots, Speed Booster, and Grappling Beam.

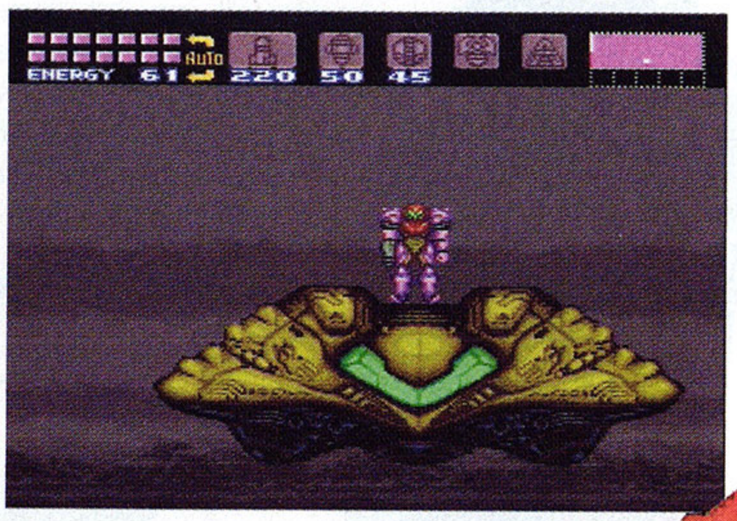


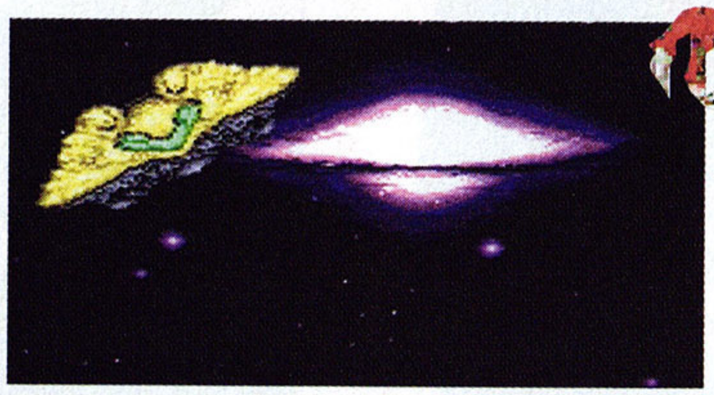
WRECKED SHIP

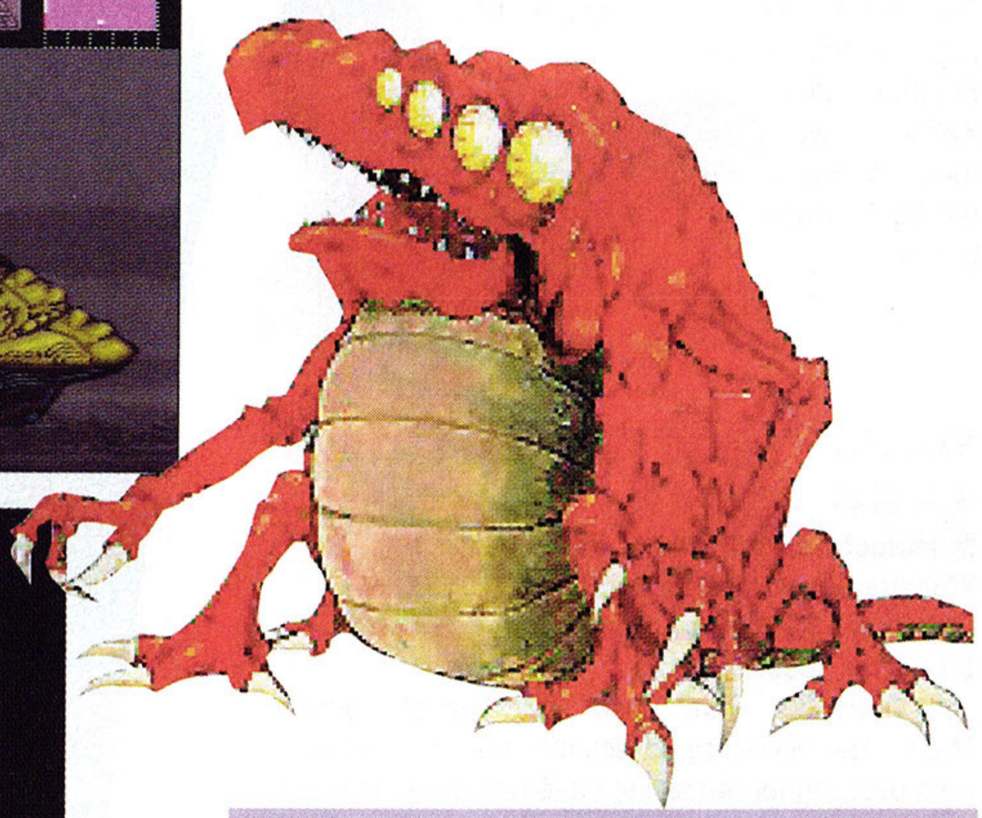
This small region near the planet's surface is void of power at first, but comes alive after you defeat the squid ghost, Phantoom. The main point of interest is the Gravity Suit, which is the most advanced piece of armor you'll come across.





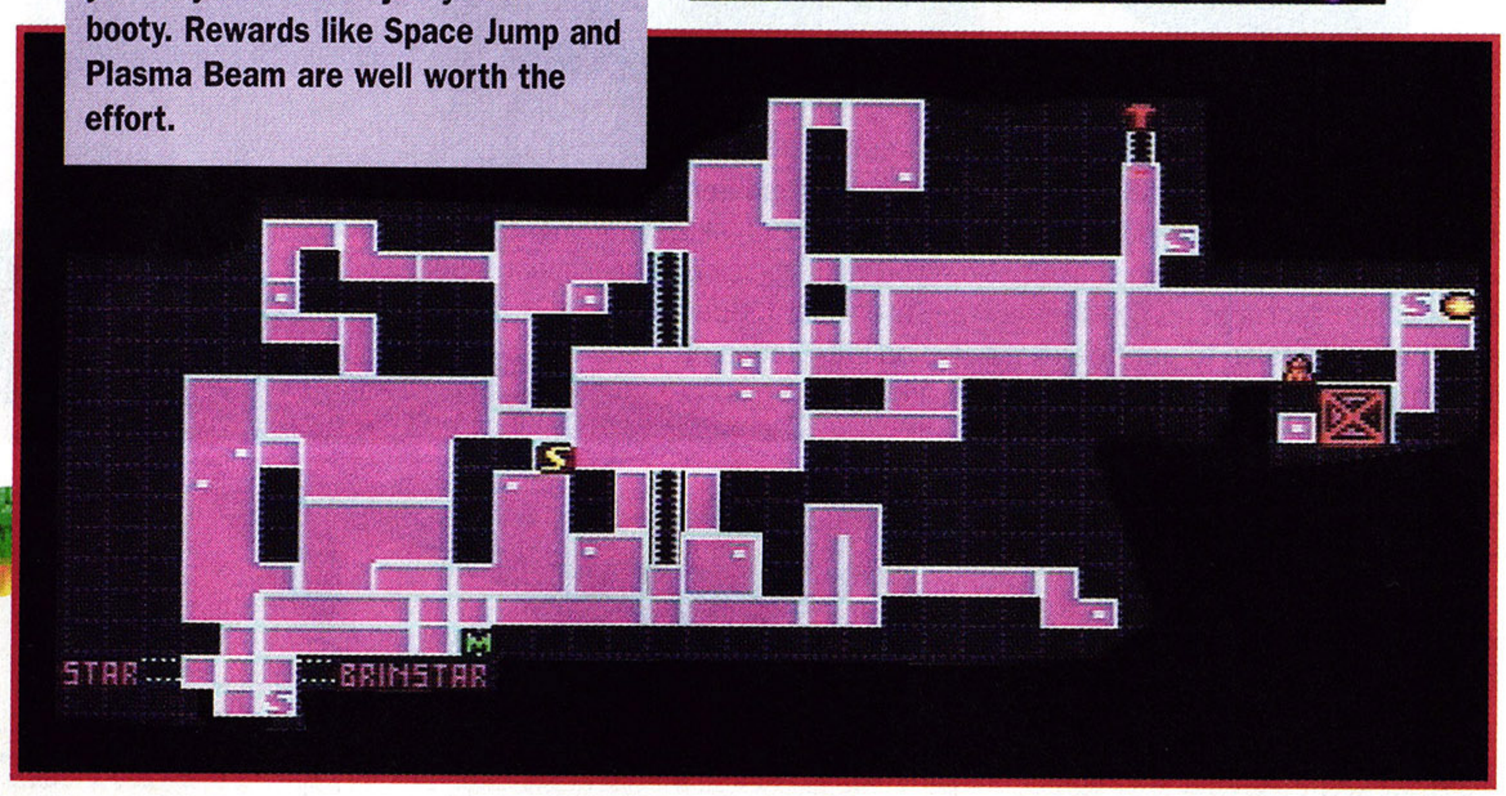






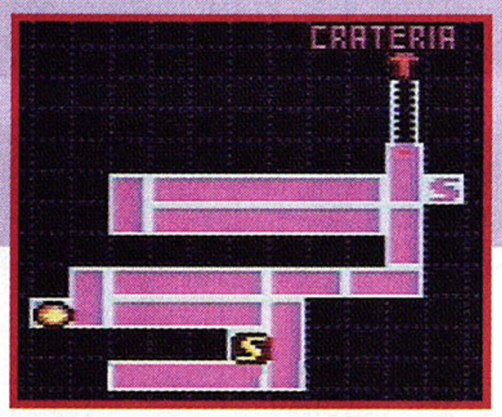
MARIDIA

This water wonderland is full of aquatic adversaries. You'll be hard-pressed to find all the treasures contained here, and most tasks are quite tricky. Use all your wits, and you may nab the majority of the booty. Rewards like Space Jump and Plasma Beam are well worth the effort.



TOURIAN

Your tour of Zebes ends here, in a stage that can only be reached after defeating all the planet's bosses. Hordes of Metroids are here, as well as the sinister Mother Brain. Once you use the final save point, you can't go back, so be sure you're well prepared for this final confrontation. Maybe you'll get by with a little help from your friends.

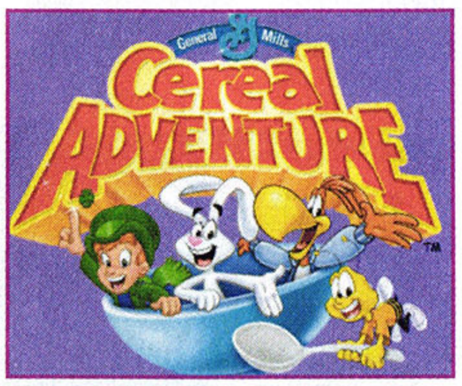


ETC

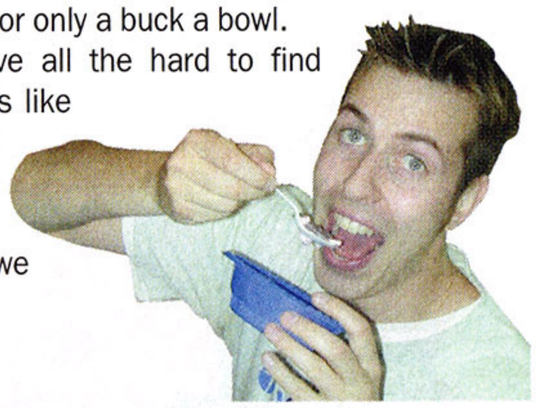
BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIAL

CEREAL ADVENTURE

Manufacturer: General Mills
Website: www.generalmills.com/cerealadventure
List Price: $5.95 admission



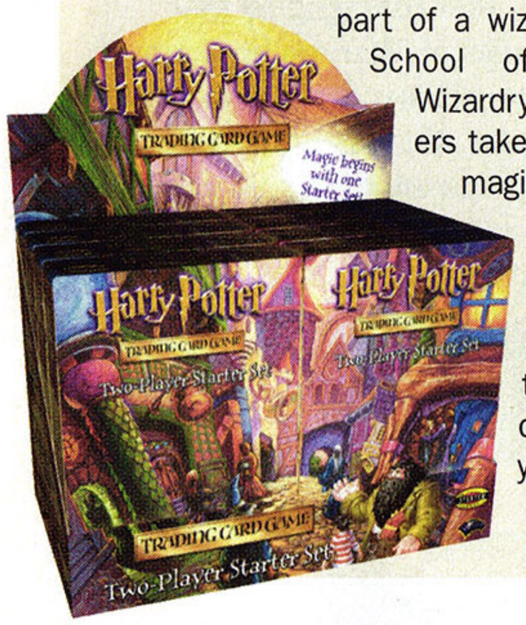
Is there a better way to start off the day than with a bowl of cereal? Stop pondering, because there isn't! On a recent foray to the normally horrific Mall of America, we discovered the recently opened Cereal Adventure park. Here, you can learn all about the origins of the ultimate breakfast treat. Even better, though, is the café outside where you can sample all of General Mills' cereals for only a buck a bowl. They even have all the hard to find regional brands like Boo-Berry and Kaboom. We used to hate the Mall, now we love it!



HARRY POTTER TRADING CARD GAME

Manufacturer: Wizards of the Coast
Website: www.wizards.com
List Price: $9.99 for a starter set, $3.29 for booster packs

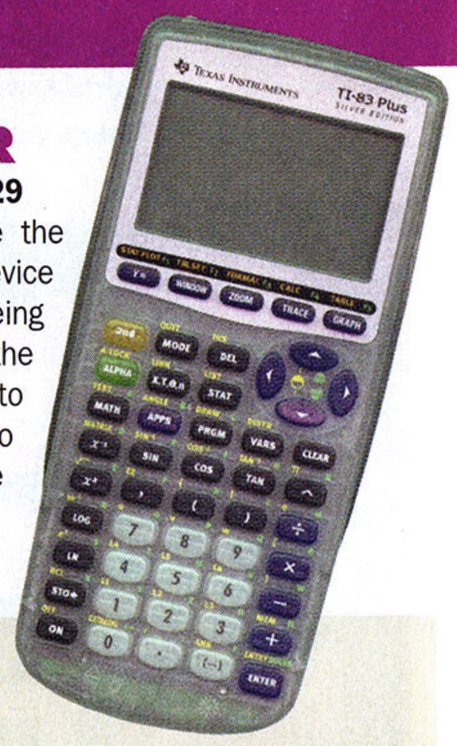
First teachers were upset over people playing Magic: The Gathering in school; then they raised a fuss over students trading Pokémon cards in class; soon they'll have Harry Potter to worry about. Releasing just in time for the first fall class bell, the Harry Potter trading card game lets players take the part of a wizard from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Like Magic, players take turns in a battle of magic. This game should blow up around the time the Harry Potter movie comes out, so start early to get your skills in order...and to drive your teachers nuts.

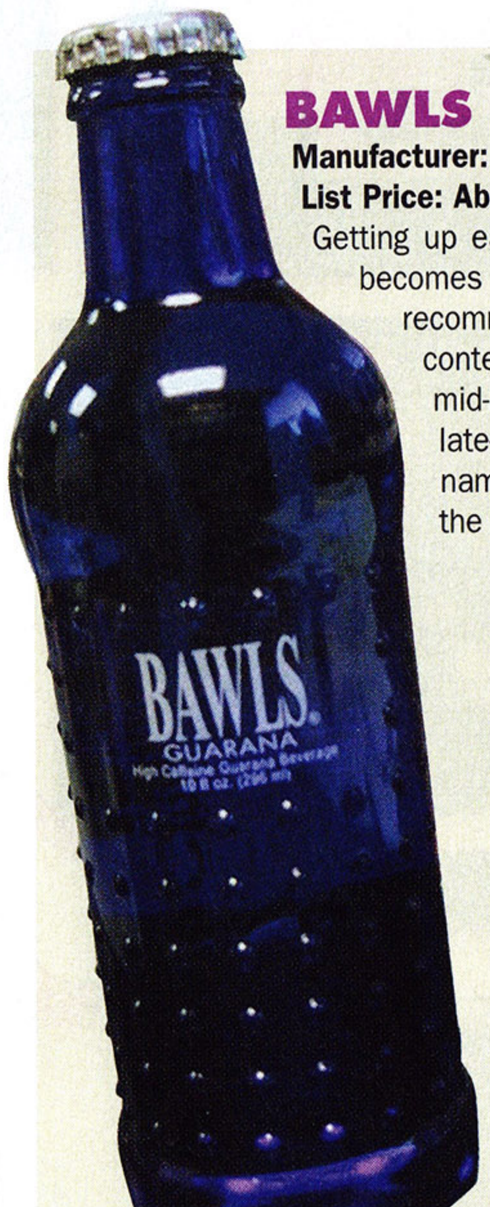


TI-83 PLUS SILVER EDITION CALCULATOR

Manufacturer: Texas Instruments • Website: www.ti.com/calc • List Price: $129

There are two school-time traditions that have been going on in class since the beginnings of the educational institution – cheating and goofing off. There is no device better at assisting with both of these pastimes than the TI-83 Plus. In addition to being a scientific calculator of the highest caliber, one can download things such as the periodic table, a personal organizer, and games aplenty. If you're smart enough to even use a graphing calculator, you'll be smart enough to have all the answers to your next math test programmed in, and you can use the extra time to get to the end of the Block Dude game.





BAWLS

Manufacturer: Hobarama Corp. • Website: www.bawls.com
List Price: About two bucks a bottle

Getting up early for school sucks, and staying awake isn't made any easier when class becomes – as it sometimes does – mind-numbingly dull. To stay awake, may we recommend you get some Bawls? Filled with guarana, and having a caffeine content so high there's a warning on the back of the bottle, this is the perfect mid-morning treat to give you pep. Bawls can also lend assistance to your late-night gaming sessions. To prove this, Bawls sponsors many video game tournaments across the nation. Need to find out if one's going on in your area? Go to the website listed above to find details.

FREESTYLER BOARD

Manufacturer: Thrustmaster • Website: www.thrustmaster.com • List Price: $69.99

The oncoming of class soon brings about the end of skateboarding season and the beginning of snowboarding season. Now you can act sick, skip school, and practice both sports at home with the FreeStyler Board. Guaranteed to add a new dimension to any boarding game on PlayStation or PlayStation 2, this Thrustmaster product adds more realism by making the games played with it hard as hell. Fun at parties, frustrating on your own, try this bad boy out if you think SSX is too easy with the Dual Shock 2. Reiner has a standing offer of $5 to the person who can complete Pro Skater using only the FreeStyler Board. Can you win the prize?

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