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Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #7 07/00

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Metal Gear Solid 2

Konami's PlayStation2 masterpiece unveiled

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More of PS2's elite

- ***Time Splitters***
  From the creators of *GoldenEye*
- ***Drakan for PS2***
  Rynn's brave new adventure
- ***Madden 2001***
  Will it kill *NFL 2K1*?

Reviewed!
Dreamcast's Power Stone 2

And ... E3's best and worst, Jet Grind Radio, Dino Crisis 2, and the latest on Microsoft's X-Box

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Dreamcast ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PlayStation2 ■ PC ■ X-Box ■ Dolphin

I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.
I will not mate outside my species. I will not mate outside my species.
my species. I will not mate outside my species.

Tough as it is, you must resist. Otherwise, you could end up with something like Seaman on your hands. Oh sure, treat him nicely and he's your buddy. Slack off, though, and he becomes just another verbally abusive mutant. Remember that the next time you feel the urge to fiddle with Mother Nature.

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SEAMAN ON LOVE:
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SEAMAN ON HIS ASTROLOGICAL SIGN:
"I need a middle finger to show you."

Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING

ESRB

Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #7

NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

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All E3, all the time. Check out the coverage of the industry's big show — you might be surprised

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Cover Story

PlayStation2's Chosen Ones. Massive coverage of the three games that will define the state of the art for PS2: *Metal Gear Solid 2*, *Time Splitters*, and *Drakan*. Come on, you *know* you want to look 64

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■ EDITORIAL

Everything I need to know I learned at E3

Salutations, my highly evolved readers. It's amazing how much news you'll pick up at E3 when you're disguised as an ape. Last month, we promised you answers from E3, and now we've got 'em. Our eight-page, photo-filled E3 report starting on page 6 will provide you with everything you need to know about the game industry's sixth annual show of shows. This year, 62,000 people crowded a 550,000-sq.-ft. floor to see more than 2,400 new titles. But everyone's eyes came to rest on one title in particular — *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*.

If ever there was a reason to get excited over PlayStation2, it was contained entirely in the eight minutes of *Metal Gear Solid 2* footage projected onto a giant video wall at Konami's (not Sony's) booth. For more on the game that has already changed the industry, turn to page 64.

So what did I learn from E3? In no particular order:

Sega is not going away. In fact, the company should have a good year in the U.S.

Great PS2 software is going to take awhile longer to appear.

PC games are either going to be AAA titles or budget releases.

Duke Nukem's girlfriends don't wear underpants (page 9).

Eidos finally has its ducks in a row.

It's time to start a monthly X-Box column (we did — see page 14).

Dolphin's U.S. release may be delayed even further.

Real broadband entertainment apps are in the works.

The Simpsons are best left to their sitcom.

Japan's developers will support X-Box.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I gotta get out of this monkey suit.

Tom

Tom Russo

Sega Dreamcast.
IT'S THINKING

LIFE'S A DANCE PARTY. THEN YOU DIE.*

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*No Morolians are actually harmed in this game. Their little souls are returned to the planet Morolia where they are recycled and go on to live happy, productive lives.

News

Game industry news and analysis

■ L.A. CONTROVERSIAL

E3 2000: Was it live, or was it all on video?

The Electronic Entertainment Expo, the industry's annual trade show in Los Angeles invoked mixed reactions and was oddly low key (despite a selection of booth babes wearing less than usual). Going in, expectations were, perhaps, unrealistically high: Although there would be nothing new from Nintendo on Dolphin, this show would mark Sony's official introduction of PlayStation2 to the U.S., as well as Microsoft's first E3 with X-Box, and would feature Sega's second-generation Dreamcast lineup, along with further details on SegaNet. It could have been a serious barn burner.

■ CUE TRUMPETS...

The Sony Countdown Begins at E3

PlayStation2 will be available in the U.S. on October 26 for $299

On the Wednesday before E3, Sony led a large number of the international press out of the L.A. sunlight and into a long, cool, and dark auditorium (a stark difference from the glitz of the show floor pictured left). This preshow conference room was fitted with white folding chairs, and surrounded by long, white drapes. At the front was a well-lit soundstage.

From this stage, Sony launched into its "immaculate press reception," revealing PlayStation2's price point and release date, although neither piece of information should surprise **NextGen** readers. With 1.8 million units already sold through to consumers in Japan, Sony expects to move one million units in the U.S. at launch, and have three million units installed by March 2001. The company also promises to have the largest launch lineup on record, with 50 titles on shelves before the end of this year. In fact, Sony VP Phil Harrison said, "there are 270-known PS2 titles in the works."

The company also announced that there would be no PCMCIA port in U.S. machines. Instead, a 3.5-inch hard drive bay will be included, and that bay is also where the "network interface" will attach. Despite the rumors and rumblings, Sony won't be making a modem available, preferring to jump straight to broadband and cable modems with its ethernet network interface card. There was no word on when the hard drive module or network interface card would be released, but presumably it won't be until next year. Nor was there mention of any kind of pricing for the hard drive and card. When confronted with the pricing question, Harrison mentioned the possibility of a "new economic model." We feel he can only be hinting at a strategy similar to Sega's for Dreamcast: Sony would offer the hard drive and card for free as an incentive to new subscribers of Sony's network.

Sony outlined some PlayStation2 network plans, complete with flow charts. But much of what was said was vague. Harrison said the company's broadband partners would be revealed soon, and though the company wasn't naming names, it was certainly clear that Sony felt its custom computer entertainment would be a killer app for broadband.

"PlayStation2 is the future of entertainment, period," concluded Sony Computer Entertainment America CEO Kaz Hirai at the end of his portion of the presentation. In fact, Sony executives refused to use the word *game* at the show. "Computer Entertainment" is the company mantra. Sony describes it as a mixture of games, movies, music, broadband entertainment, and more, including "several categories not yet even invented." It was more than a bit worrisome how much some aspects of the presentation sounded like the old pitches of 3DO and CD-i. Still, given the current advanced technology, perhaps the market is finally ready for a set-top, do-everything box. However, it must be comforting for Sony to know that even if its system fails to usher in a new era of computer entertainment, it still looks as though it will be a pretty good box for playing games. **NextGen**

Yet, while most titles looked good on PS2, almost none displayed the amazing quality Sony promised, either in terms of gameplay or graphics. Indeed, the constant refrain from developers was a low-key grumbling about the difficulties of developing for the system. Microsoft's X-Box presence was limited to most of the same demos shown at GDC and little other news. Nintendo's utter lack of anything but a handful of new Rare games (and →

Pokemon) put it in the running for the Total Waste of Space award. And Sega, well ... actually, Sega was the only booth that nearly delivered what it promised.

The trend was set early by Sony. At the press conference the day before the show opened, the company began with strong, concrete information about the PS2 release date (10/26/00) and price point ($299). It boasted a relatively surprising announcement about the nuts and bolts of the PS2 hard drive/networking add-on. It then made a surprising declaration that more than 50 titles would be available in the U.S. by the end of the year.

Unfortunately, things then veered into grandiose. Phil Harrison, Sony's vice president of research and development and third-party relations, made some nebulous statements peppered with odd jargon about a proposed Sony broadband network, to be launched "eventually."

After the show opened, Sony's booth remained relatively quiet, with few attendees playing any title for more than five minutes before wandering off. In fact, the high point of PS2's presence was the simply amazing *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo running once an hour at the Konami booth. Despite Sony's claim of 50 games by year-end, fewer than half that number were on display anywhere on the show floor, and most of the games that were on display were obviously quite early in their development cycle.

By contrast, a combination of stage shows, fully playable games, quirky titles such as *Samba de Amigo*, and a group of *Space Channel 5*-inspired go-go dancers kept the Sega booth jumping from day one. Though it could be argued that Sega's lineup was in some ways a repeat of last year's

(there were this year's crop of sports games, this year's crop of racing games, and so on), it was also clear that the system was maturing nicely. Most titles showed rather pretty graphics and boasted snappy control, and most folks seemed content to hang around and play.

Indeed, little else underscored the sharp differences between Sony and Sega as much as the parties each company threw. Sega rented a smallish nightclub, but it boasted a networked *NBA 2K1* session with Ice-T, dancing girls, and the band Filter. Sony's party took place on the mammoth Sony Studios lot, featured kiosks with two- and three-year-old PlayStation games, and the musical guest was Macy Gray. Though an excellent singer, Gray is more of a chanteuse than a rocker, and nearly put the crowd to sleep. The net effect was that Sony seemed coolly corporate and unconcerned, while Sega was there mostly to show everyone a good time.

However, this also accentuated the true message of E3 2000: It's clearly a transitional period for the industry. Games are becoming an increasingly mass-market entertainment medium, as evidenced by the higher-than-usual number of celebrities seen wandering the floor, many of whom weren't even involved directly with any titles. Developers are wrestling with new, very powerful systems (such as PS2), or waiting for others (X-Box, Dolphin), while exploiting what they've already learned (Dreamcast, PlayStation). Yet in the end, that left everyone with a lot to watch, and little that was new to actually play.

In other words, while things will undoubtedly perk up by the coming holiday season, most of the excitement was generated by potential. Just wait until next year. NextGen

■ The mood in Sega's booth was nothing short of jubilant, and eye candy such as the *Space Channel* dancers kept packing 'em in

Best of Show Booth: Sega

Put simply, this joint was *jumpin'*. The vast majority of games there were fully playable (some networked), with a surprising variety of both art and gameplay styles, from the *2K1* sports lineup, to the freaky survival horror of *Illbleed*, to the retro-future of *Space Channel 5*. There was literally something for everyone. And if the games didn't hold your attention, regular stage shows featured acts such as trick skaters for *Jet Grind Radio*, and the once-an-hour gyrations of a stunningly gorgeous Ulala and the *Space Channel* dancers, who strutted their stuff on platforms 15 to 20 feet off the show floor. Ooo-la-la indeed!

The 10 Best Games of E3

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami**

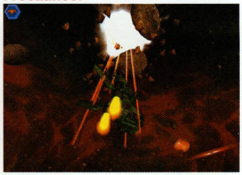
Unquestionably the game of the show, attendees sat down as long as 45 minutes beforehand to get a prime viewing spot of an eight-minute video featuring less than five seconds of CG. The footagealmost entirely consisted of realtime gameplay and in-engine cut scenes.

Black & White

■ Platform: **PC, DREAMCAST**
■ Publisher: **EA** ■ Developer: **Lionhead Studios**

Peter Molyneux's magical god-opus arrives on September 23. It will enable you to "be what you want to be in the game," Molyneux says. And it does. With stunning freedom of choice, players will truly be able to create worlds unto themselves.

FreeLancer



■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **Microsoft** ■ Developer: **Digital Anvil**

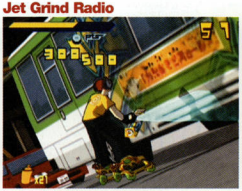
***FreeLancer* continues to be the shining star in Microsoft's impressive software lineup. Boasting a genre-redefining living galaxy and simply staggering spacescapes, this looks as though it will be the space sim to end all space sims.**

Neverwinter Nights

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **BioWare**

The creators of *Baldur's Gate* are set to define the next generation of RPGs. Expect some great multiplayer party adventures, as well as an unprecedented level of customization when this title ships next spring.

Jet Grind Radio



■ Platform: **DREAMCAST**
■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

With its combination of unique art design and fast-paced skating-and-graffiti action, *Jet Grind Radio* was easily the most noteworthy title in Sega's already impressive booth. (See preview on page 29.)

Conker's Bad Fur Day

■ Platform: **NINTENDO 64**
■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Rare**

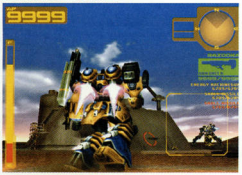
A crowd favorite, this raunchy 3D adventure features Conker, a cartoon squirrel who survives a bloody D-Day-like battle, fights a giant to prove who has the "bigger bone," and gets drunk so he can urinate on flaming enemies. Sure to horrify parents everywhere.

Surprise of Show: Eidos

The House That Lara Built has had a tough time during the last couple of years: It released a long string of perfectly mediocre titles, dealt with the all-too-public failures of certain high-profile developers, and faced conspicuously dwindling sales. And yet, given the titles at its booth this year, the company seems determined to turn things around; the majority of games on display were quite nice looking indeed, including *Fear Effect: Retro Helix*, *Hitman*, *Project Eden*, *I'm Going In*, *Commando 2*, and, of course, *Deus Ex* and *Anachronox*. These were easily among the more solid lineups anywhere on the floor. Well done.

■ **Quality titles such as *Deus Ex* (left), not to mention appearances by the latest "live Lara," made the Eidos booth stand out. E3 just wouldn't be E3 without her**

Armored Core 2



■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Agetec** ■ Developer: **From Software**

Yes, it's true: The best-looking and most solidly playable PS2 title on the floor was this mech combat game, in which each mech boasts 200 customizable parts. Brought to you by tiny From Software and Agetec. Who woulda thunk it?

Sigma

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **Microsoft** ■ Developer: **Relic**

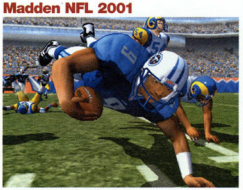
Relic's next realtime strategy game is far more ambitious than *Homeworld* and, the designers feel, more accessible. In a setting similar to *The Island of Dr. Moreau*'s, players can recombinate and splice the DNA of multiple animals. For what? Combat against others.

Episode I: Starfighter

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **LucasArts** ■ Developer: **LucasArts**

We haven't been too impressed by *Episode I* games, but *Starfighter* shows off fantastic terrain, unbelievable draw distance, and gorgeously rendered ships. And let's face it: That makes up about two-thirds of most mission-based shooters. The force is strong in this one.

Madden NFL 2001



■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **EA Sports** ■ Developer: **Tiburon**

EA Sports' flagship title moves into its next generation in a big way. Expect this gridiron giant to compare visually with watching the real thing on Monday night TV. (See the preview on page 35.)

The worst of E3

Simpsons Wrestling

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION**
■ Publisher: **Fox Interactive** ■ Developer: **Big Ape**

This is perhaps the most tenuous tie-in we've ever seen between licensed characters and a game genre. This lowres, low-frame-rate, low-move-count title left us yearning for the days of Acclaim's *Batman Forever*. Admittedly, the game was still very early (15%), but with huge *Simpsons* figures walking around, and being the focus of an entire corner of the Fox booth, it was a garish-enough stain on the show floor to invoke our scorn.

Panty Raider: From Here to Immaturity

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **Simon & Schuster** ■ Developer: **Hypnotix**

In a variation of, of all things, *hunting games*, you lure away supermodels and snap pictures of them in lingerie. This sounds good, until you hit the solid wall of idiot humor used to deflect the "offensive" premise. The result? It's offensively *stupid*. Apparently Simon & Schuster gets off on negative press, hoping to attract the curious. You have been warned.

Mort the Chicken

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION**
■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **AndNow**

We're all for games with a unique premise, but geez, people, do *something* to make them work! Although it's in 3D, this action-platformer jolted us back to 1993, when literally every creature on Earth got its chance to run, jump, and shoot. Mort is one of the least charismatic characters since Awesome Possum, and for entire levels, the backgrounds consist of nothing but cubes. Really. *Cubes.*

Deep Raider

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **InfoBank Technology Group**
■ Developer: **InfoBank Technology Group**

This undersea nonadventure features a low-poly diver strapped to a dolphin — with both suffering from a case of lack-of-animation rigor mortis. This Taiwanese title reminded us that the ocean is basically big, empty, and boring. Best described by its hilariously mistranslated promotional flyer as a "mazy seaweed forest."

Licensed Cart Racing Games

There were too many to warrant individual attention, and none did anything worthy or new to compare favorably to *Mario Kart* or *Crash Team Racing*. The offending include *Star Wars Super Bombad Racing* (DC, PS2, PC); *Austin Powers Mojo Rally* (Dreamcast); *South Park Rally* (Dreamcast); *Walt Disney World Quest: Magical Racing Tour* (Dreamcast); and *Disney's Mickey's Speedway USA* (N64).

Worst peripheral: JoyMouse

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Manufacturer: **InfoBank Technology Group**

Another InfoBank product, this cheaply made joypad with a mouse ball on the bottom boasted a press release that promised players they would suffer "No more embarassment!! [sic]" from having to switch from one input device to another — clearly a problem of epic proportions in today's gaming society. Thank goodness we'll "Never have to juggle with both again!"

Thank God everything's not powered by Voodoo5.

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SO POWERFUL. IT'S KIND OF RIDICULOUS.

Microsoft's console goes under the microscope

Console thinking has been largely unchanged since the Atari 2600. An outrageous claim? Not really. Up until Dreamcast, every console shipped with the same technique for getting games into the system. They've been sealed boxes, cut off from the outside world.

Not anymore.

Sega broke the isolation barrier with a built-in modem; Microsoft upped the ante with plans for a built-in hard drive; and Sony has an add-in device that takes care of both. (Nintendo continues to do its ostrich impression.) But a hard drive is ancient technology as far as storage goes, so why did no one think of this before?

Well, Nintendo did — but the 64DD was doomed to failure because Nintendo never could explain what it would actually do. Does Microsoft suffer the same problem? Not according to Seamus Blackley, Microsoft Games' director of advanced technology, who is convinced the hard drive is an essential adjunct to gameplay and a central part of the hardware.

■ Because nothing says raw hardware power like a room full of... butterflies... and pretty music... and lily pads...

When asked what a hard drive could possibly add to the technology, Blackley explains, "You could be streaming the next room in a level off the DVD onto the hard drive, all in the background, making the whole process of managing texture memory much faster." True, and that may make the 64 megs of unified X-Box memory all the more potent; if a game can hold level and texture information in some kind of fast-access limbo, the textures per area can be higher resolution — an obvious benefit.

If a game can hold level and texture information in some kind of fast-access limbo, the textures per area can be higher resolution — an obvious benefit.

Microsoft is also refreshingly honest about the base functions of a hard drive. Despite the fact that the system is scheduled to ship with an 8MB memory card, the company is unfazed by the concept of storing game-save information on the unit. "Players are comfortable with the idea of managing memory screens," Blackley explains. "That just won't be a problem."

When asked if we would see some type of Windows-style interface, Blackley simply responds, "No."

Price and speed don't even appear to be issues for Microsoft. The proposed 8GB hard drive is simply a bullet point at this time (its specifications and manufacturer haven't been revealed). But Blackley seems relaxed: "The read-write speeds don't vary that much; you can expect the X-Box to use whatever's current. The model for selling hard drives is the capacity and the price range."

Ed Fries, vice president of Microsoft Games Publishing, is equally ebullient about his company's decision to ship the system worldwide with a standardized hard drive. "The problem is that the PS2 has already shipped in Japan without a hard drive," Fries says, "and that's a nightmare for developers. If you can't count on all the machines being the same, you have to write to the lowest common denominator. Just look at the problems Nintendo had with the 64DD."

No one knows how Sony plans to distribute its PS2 hard drive and modem in the U.S., but no matter how this is accomplished, it will put the Japanese market at a major disadvantage — perhaps problematic considering that Japan will be the source of most PS2 killer apps. How will the Japanese development community respond to the extra strain and apparent disparity between territories?

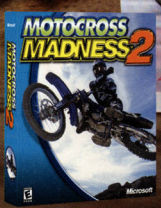
Competitors may argue that Microsoft will lose money by including such an expensive component. But a built-in hard drive is a sound strategy. Because the hard drive will be a crucial support piece for online connectivity, it's important to note that the prospect of future online strategies is virtually unlimited.

— *Frank O'Connor*
Editor-in-Chief, *Daily Radar Consoles*

Actual game footage

Racing is in your blood

Along with small pieces of rock and bone.



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07/00

Dolphin Watch

Lost in Space World

No news is not always good news

"All good things come to those who wait," seems to be Nintendo's unspoken philosophy for Dolphin. And that's exactly what we've all been doing — some more patiently than others. As we confirmed in the last issue, both the Dolphin system and Game Boy Advance were totally absent from E3. No hardware behind closed doors, no technical demos. Nothing. According to Nintendo, the long, frustrating wait for more information on these systems will come to an end on August 25 at the annual Space World show in Japan, which several development sources told us could be pushed back to November if the software isn't ready.

"I will tell you that [Dolphin] is considerably more developer friendly than [PlayStation2 and X-Box]."

— Peter Main, executive vice president, Nintendo of America

Developers, start your engines

Development sources also tell us the ArtX-designed graphics chip is nearly complete at ArtX's Palo Alto, CA-based office. With the graphics architecture finalized, development kits will be in the hands of NCL, NST, all second-parties, and perhaps even a handful of select third parties by the time you read this. From what we've heard, the hardware actually lives up to Nintendo's initial specs, and that means any companies prototyping Dolphin software based on specs will be able to port their code over relatively easily. When asked if Dolphin's development environment was as friendly as PS2 and X-Box, NOA's Peter Main replied, "I will tell you that it is considerably more developer friendly than the products you just mentioned." Good, because developers don't exactly have much time to build games that will impress us before Space World.

Nintendo — not just for kids anymore

Rare's genuinely foul *Conker's Bad Fur Day* is a prime example of Nintendo's new, bolder attitude. Many had already written off the Dolphin system as a console that will appeal primarily to the younger audience, yet along with *Conker's*, Nintendo's recent partnership with new second-party developer Silicon Knights is another example of Nintendo's aim to broaden Dolphin's appeal. Silicon Knights developed the original *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, and will release *Eternal Darkness*, a *Resident Evil*-like epic adventure for N64 this October. The company is also working on a Dolphin project that is most probably a game called *Too Human*, a futuristic RPG formerly scheduled for PlayStation release. "*Too Human* will not appear on PlayStation, and it will not appear on a future PlayStation," says Silicon Knights' president Denis Dyack, who adds, "If it's going to appear on a Nintendo platform in the future, we will announce it."

Silicon Knights is integral in Nintendo's push for games aimed at the bigger-picture, older market, but the company is not alone. Others include Rare (believed to be developing the *Perfect Dark* sequel for Dolphin); Retro Studios (rumored to be working on five Dolphin titles, including a first-person shooter and an RPG); Factor 5 (*Thornado*, essentially *Turrican* meets *The Matrix*); NST (*Metroid* anyone? Please? Please?); and more. Throw in Namco, Konami, Capcom, and Acclaim, and you have a few more publishers with Dolphin projects for "mature" gamers.

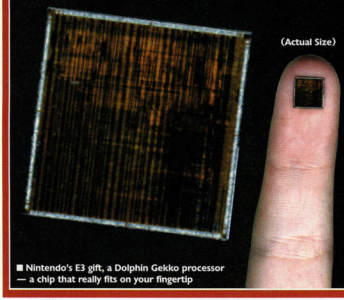
And finally...

We know nothing about the controller except for unsubstantiated rumors that suggest it may feature a microphone for voice-over-Internet gaming. We also don't know the full extent of Nintendo's plans for writeability, or if, in fact, the feature is actually being considered. "We have some technical assets [for Dolphin] that we're not going to talk about that we feel very confident with, in light of what has now been shown as aspiring targets for the X-Box," says Peter Main of NOA, adding, "We think we're in great shape."

— Matt Casamassina
Editor-in-Chief, IGN64.com

The Gekko slithers into E3

Nintendo of America President Minoru Arakawa came out of hiding to make a brief, but informative, speech about the company's present and future outlook at a pre-E3 press conference. While the majority of Mr. Arakawa's words were focused on Nintendo 64 software, the Dolphin console was touched upon, if only for a moment. According to Arakawa, IBM's highly touted Gekko processor is now complete and in production. Nintendo demonstrated this fact by passing out working copies of the chip, which is based on PowerPC architecture, to select members of the press. Size, evidently, is no indication of power, because the Gekko processor is no bigger than the fingernail on your index finger.



■ Nintendo's E3 gift, a Dolphin Gekko processor — a chip that really fits on your fingertip

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Conspicuously Missing

Duke Nukem Forever

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **GT Interactive**
■ Developer: **3D Realms**

Hardly a misnomer by now (it's actually taking forever), this FPS failed to appear anywhere on the show floor for the second year in a row. Could switching from the *Quake II* engine to the *Unreal* engine two years ago have set the project back this far? Is this fallout from GT's collapse? No clue.

989 Sports' PlayStation2 Titles

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **SCEA**
■ Developer: **989 Sports**

Where were the PS2 sports games? EA's booth, that's where. Considering *Gameday* has been the superior product to *Madden* on PlayStation for several years, we were a bit surprised 989 held back. Was 989 having as much trouble as everyone else with the hardware, or did Sony just not want to upset the show-long stroke-fest with EA by showing off better games? Your guess is as good as ours.

Team Fortress 2

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **Sierra**
■ Developer: **Valve**

The anticipated sequel to the *Quake*-mod-turned-*Half-Life*-multiplayer-staple was nowhere to be seen. Unfortunately, Valve is leaning towards a 2001 release. We're sure hoping the game will be worth the wait, because, damn, they're really making us wait for this one. Of course, they made us wait for the last one, too....

Floigan Bros.

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Sega**
■ Developer: **Visual Concepts**

This *Banjo-Kazooie*-like mix of two characters with complementary skills (in this case, a slow, strong guy and his weaker, speedier brother) has, according to Sega, suffered some "developmental setbacks." As with Duke, the Floigans were AWOL for the second year running.

The E3 Scouting Report

Still early in development, these titles showed promise

Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Infogrames**
■ Developer: **Oddworld Inhabitants**

Although the developers at Oddworld have expressed increasing frustration with the difficulties of PS2 development, this title keeps looking better every time we see it.

Legion: Legend of Excalibur

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Midway**
■ Developer: **7 Studios**

Based on Arthurian legends, this atypical console strategy title wowed us with its cool concept and awesome artistic style. The rather short video took us into the middle of a chaotic and adrenaline pumping battle between medieval armies — including an incredible one-on-one fight between King Arthur and the Black Knight.

Run Like Hell

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Interplay**
■ Developer: **Digital Mayhem**

This is one *scary* game – survival horror that's truly horrifying (see page 22). Even at this early stage, we are confident that this title is going to be among the more genuinely frightening games of next year.

Republic

■ Platform: **PC, PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Eidos**
■ Developer: **Elixir Studios**

This *The Sims*-style game was still a very advanced technology demo when we saw it, even though little, if any, gameplay had been implemented yet. Vying for political power in a city of one million unique citizens is a tempting proposition, and the game still has a year before it is scheduled to come out.

Gunslinger

■ Platform: **PLAYSTATION2**
■ Publisher: **Activision**
■ Developer: **Surreal Software**

Shown very, very early in development, this third-person spaghetti western was quickly dismissed by some attendees. In the game, players become a hero or outlaw by fighting other gunslingers in quick-draw fashion. Though there was little in the way of graphic detail or gameplay, the concept impressed us.

Battle Realms

■ Platform: **PC**
■ Publisher: **Crave**
■ Developer: **Liquid Entertainment**

Nestled deep in the secret alcoves of the Crave booth was an early playable version of this highly advanced realtime strategy game. Although the game is a year out, the level of detail in the world is already eerily realistic, and we can't wait to see more.

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

E3 has come and gone. The booths are down, and the men dressed as game characters have all gone home with the women dressed hardly at all. And although E3 is usually the place for big news and major announcements, this year it was more a booze-soaked revelry, as companies tried to shake off the malaise caused by quarterly losses and get ready for a bright, bold future. We'll see in coming months if it worked. But for now, here are the results from the show:

The new kids on the block were noncommittal. Microsoft gave a sound demo for its X-Box, but made none of the major acquisition announcements the industry expected. It did, however, announce "developer support" from Electronic Arts, Konami, Acclaim, and Eidos. Late in the show, though, Microsoft had to make clear that "developer support" didn't actually mean those companies were developing games, just that they were very supportive of Microsoft and the idea of the X-Box. Sony countered this revelation with an announcement that Square held its hand during fifth-period math class, and that Namco gave it a hug when it was feeling fat one day.

Speaking of fat, Sony was reportedly very nervous about its massive booth up to the minute the show floor opened. With developers receiving dev kits only four to five months before the show, Sony was worried that many of the games in its area would look weak. One source told us that third-party support at Sony consisted of calling the publishers that were to display at Sony's booth the day before the show, exclaiming, "If there's even one problem, we're yanking you from the floor!" Perhaps that's why Sony's booth was more like a museum than a game company.

But if it was a museum, its curators were stuck there. At least, they weren't allowed to go anywhere near Bleem's booth. According to a source close to Bleem, the company was granted a court restraining order prohibiting employees of Sony from entering Bleem's booth. This was likely in response to last year's actions

■ TOM RUSSO'S

In the Studio

Development news as it develops

BOSS FOR X-BOX

➔ Microsoft hasn't wasted any time getting neighborly with the locals; it has already put Seattle-based developer Boss Games hard at work on a racing title for X-Box. As a longtime N64 developer, Boss created *World Driver Championship*, among other N64 racing titles. The developer had been working on *Stunt Racer 64* for Midway, but the futuristic racing title was recently canceled.

MORE PS2 ROLE PLAY

➔ Not every new PS2 RPG in development was shown at E3. A new top-down RPG from Stormfront Studios called *Eternal Blade* is in early development. The game will be published by Mattel Interactive in 2001.

GROUND CONTROL TO PS2

➔ Sierra's 3D realtime strategy title *Ground Control* may have just hit the shelves, but developer Massive Entertainment and Sierra have made plans to take it to Sony's new system. Massive will assist an unnamed developer with the port. Sierra isn't stopping there, either. The company is bringing *SWAT 3* to Dreamcast, and the predominantly PC publisher promises 50 percent of its titles in the next two years will be on consoles.

BUNGLING BUNGIE

➔ The smarty-pants developer behind *Halo* and *Oni* planned to announce a third new title at E3, but then changed its mind and opted not to. Still, **Next Generation** learned that the game would be a fantasy-based siege warfare title that featured both realtime and turn-based gameplay. The cool part? It will be built on the *Halo* engine.

IRRATIONALLY PLAYSTATION2

➔ Survival horror goes to hell, literally, with *The Lost*, the latest from the same team at Irrational Games that brought us *System Shock 2*. This time it doesn't look as though you'll be dealing with zombies, because you'll have to brave the nine circles of hell instead of the standard haunted mansion. No word yet on whether we'll see staple genre items "Herb," "Lighter," or witty banter in which you may be described as "The Master of Unlocking."

KING OF POP IS KING OF THE RING

➔ Midway has announced that its upcoming *Ready 2 Rumble 2* will feature a roster of boxers that will include the Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal and the one and only Michael Jackson. Although it's unclear if either of the two can box, we're sure plenty of gamers out there would love the chance to administer a beating to both of these guys.

BLEEMCAST ARRIVES

➔ In their continuing quest to make Sony's lawyers both filthy rich and prematurely gray, the folks at Bleem have introduced a PlayStation emulator for — you guessed it — Dreamcast. Bleem for Dreamcast will display images in full 640 x 480 resolution, complete with software-based anti-aliasing. Bleem will also offer "bleempod," an adapter that will allow players to use standard PlayStation controllers and memory cards. Bleem for Dreamcast is expected to launch early this July.

by Sony, in which several Sony lawyers and reps from the IDSA (which runs E3) appeared at Bleem's booth and shut it down temporarily. This year, Bleem was showing off Bleem for Dreamcast, its emulator that allows Dreamcast to play PlayStation games and use its graphic acceleration to improve the 3D. We can't imagine why the folks at Bleem might think Sony would be upset about that.

And speaking of Dreamcast, you'll be able to get one $50 cheaper, thanks to Sega.com. Sega announced during the show that it would offer a special $50 rebate to those purchasing the Dreamcast between June 4 and August 31 who register for a free one-month trial of the Sega.com ISP. So, gamers who buy the Dreamcast and sign up for two years of the Sega ISP will get $200 off a $150 system, thus receiving $50 to buy a free game. Sega announced this on the same day that Sony announced a $300 price point for the PlayStation2. It's getting interesting...

Infogrames made two big announcements at the show. First, it's killing the GT Interactive brand. After acquiring the foundering New York company and merging its operations, the company intends to bring out all games under the Infogrames brand. Second, the company's earnings are way up. For the third quarter, it yielded revenue of more than $118 million. Infogrames' big fromage, Bruno Bonnell, says that the company hopes to join EA in the $1 billion annual-revenue club by this time next year.

And the winner at the show in the "What the Hell Were They Thinking" category is clearly Gathering of Developers. In an industry focusing more and more on the mass market and mainstream acceptance, GOD put itself two clicks up river in the middle of a parking lot filled with trailers, midgets, and models dressed as catholic school girls. When we asked GOD's CEO, Mike Wilson, what exactly he was thinking, he said, "You're an errand boy, sent by grocery clerks, to collect a bill..." This is the end, my friend.

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb, Executive Producer, DailyRadar.com

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Alphas

Next Generation chases developers to the outer limits to bring you the first in-depth previews of tomorrow's games

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■ PLAYSTATION2

RUN LIKE HELL

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Digital Mayhem** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2001** ■ Origin: **US**

"Game over, man. *Game* over!"

Many developers confuse true horror with the gooey mess of an exploding zombie, while others feel they can invoke fear simply by programming a few beings to jump blindly out of the darkness at unsuspecting players. No, true fear is a much more complex beast. As anybody who has seen both *Alien* and *Alien3* can tell you, the subtle differences between the real and the superficial go a long way towards keeping you up at night with the lights on. The *Run Like Hell* team has put a lot of thought and effort into designing their game around the psychology of real fear. You know, the dark stuff: paranoia, confinement, and the unknown. With these principles firmly in mind, they're aiming to scare you like never before.

On the surface, *Run Like Hell* stands out from its survival-horror brethren simply due to its sci-fi setting. The game takes place on the Forseti space station, a fairly remote, yet profitable, rock mining colony in deep space. Yesterday, it was business as usual, but today something has gone horribly wrong. As former war hero Nick Conner — now exiled — you return from a routine scouting mission to find that your base has become an abandoned derelict. Things immediately get worse when a strange alien crushes your ship (bad), bites off your partner's head and spits it at you (very bad, but at least you duck), then comes after you (very, very bad). This is just the start of what is going to be one hell of a day, as Nick tries to figure out what happened aboard Forseti, attempts to find his fiancée who is on board (if she is still alive), and ultimately tries to escape.

The third-person, action-adventure gameplay falls somewhere between that of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Resident Evil*, but is done in the visual style of films such as *Alien* and *John Carpenter's The Thing*. The power of PS2 enabled the team to create realtime characters and realtime environments, so expect a lot of cinematic trickery aimed at making you feel closed in and hopeless while you

Alphas

wander the station. The general idea is that, as in *The Thing*, people trapped in enclosed environments start to panic. When the game makes you feel as if you were shut in with nowhere to run, then the team will feel they've done their job.

Unfortunately, the situation only gets worse because you're also hopelessly outmatched. The aliens are faster than you, are immune to most of your weapons, and literally want your blood to splatter the walls of the station as part of the growing biomass they breed in.

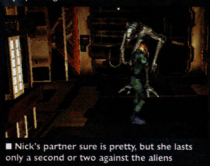
"I want there to be a sense of danger, because these aliens are vastly superior to you," says producer Travis Williams. "I don't know how long people can be scared of slow-walking zombies. It's like," he begins gesticulating wildly, "'walk, walk for your life!' And anytime you can walk away from an enemy, I fail to be scared."

So the moral is this: Move cautiously, run frequently, and above all don't jump out with guns blazing. You don't always have to flee, because a lot of the puzzles in the game revolve around using your wits as well as your MacGyver-like abilities to construct makeshift weapons from debris on the ship. You have to be careful, however, because despite early evidence to the contrary, a greater intelligence is at work, and the aliens will eventually adapt and overcome any technology you use against them. The words *run like hell* were used in more than one of the gameplay situations described to **Next Generation**.

Despite the obvious emphasis on just plain survival, there is actually a very complex storyline interwoven with the action. As you creep through the station, you'll meet and cooperate with a rogues' gallery of "good guy" alien NPCs who survived the onslaught. The cast includes a brutish sidekick who'll help you through some tough spots (although he accidentally shoots you the first time you run into him), and a nurse who's of a race that Nick helped to conquer and who can heal him — maybe. And, of course, there's Nick's fiancée, who is certain to play some part. Nick isn't

■ Nick and the other game models are made up of a whopping 10,000 or more polygons. Nick's teeth and tongue are even modeled for accurate lip-synching

■ Nick's partner sure is pretty, but she lasts only a second or two against the aliens



RUNNING LIKE HELL

The fastest man in the world, Maurice Greene, currently holds world records in three different sprints: 100 meters (9.79 seconds), 60 meters indoor (6.39 seconds), and 50 meters indoor (5.56 seconds). Strangely enough, the editors of **Next Generation** have also seen him hold his own at both *NFL 2K* and *Soul Calibur*, making him a true renaissance man for the new millennium

■ The Brute (below) is the first alien you meet, and it rips off your partner's head with its teeth. The Cutter (upper right) can use its claws to open sealed doors and then eviscerate you in a single swipe

your stereotypical action hero, either; he fits into the formula a bit differently than the average Schwarzenegger- or Willis-style character.

"Nick is not necessarily all that tough; he's just brooding," says Williams. "He's pissed off throughout the whole game because he doesn't know where his fiancee is, he wants to get off this damn ship, and everything wants to slow him down."

Given Nick's personality, it's no surprise that Lance Henriksen (*Millennium*) has already been cast in the leading role. With his dry vocal style, Henriksen fits the part to a tee, and the early samples we heard were a far cry from the standard *Resident Evil* fare. Williams confided to us that sound production in general was a very high priority for *Run Like Hell*, and everything — especially the voice acting — would get AAA treatment. In fact, the person in charge of casting the voice actors has also worked on acquiring talent for full-length Disney features.

Williams assured us that it would take more than 20 hours to run the gauntlet and beat the game, and along the way there are plenty of plot twists and high-intensity action scenes (someone must have radioed for help while the aliens initially attacked, right?). What we've seen so far is already pretty disturbing, even though it's obviously lacking a lot of the polish it will get in the next year of production. And, after a quick glimpse at some of the game's darkest secrets, we can say with conviction there's still a lot more to come.

As an example of PlayStation2's second generation, *Run Like Hell* stands out as one that is utilizing the advanced technology to build a better, more well thought out mousetrap. Let's hope that it can realize its own dark ambitions and give us all something to scream about.

— Blake Fischer

■ As Nick wanders the halls of Forseti station, the alien biomass will slowly grow and assimilate entire halls. The worst part is that it's made of mulched station crew

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Animated Violence

Mild Language

■ DREAMCAST

JET GRIND RADIO

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega** ■ Release Date: **Q4 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Make your mark on the world with a can of spray paint

It was bound to happen sooner or later: With the plethora of snowboarding and skateboarding games on the market (with surfing and biking coming soon), someone was sure to bring out an inline skating game. Still, the team behind *Jet Grind Radio* (known as *Jet Set Radio* in Japan) isn't ready to concede their game to the extreme sports category long populated by Mountain Dew-sponsored wanna-bes. With gameplay that's anything but stale, and a graphical flair well beyond the norm, *Jet Grind Radio* is looking to shed the shackles of niche sports gaming and become one of Sega's killer apps in 2000.

Don't be fooled by the cartoony graphics; *Jet Grind Radio* is as deep a game as they come. As a member (male or female) of a group of inline skaters in Tokyo, you must do your part to mark and expand your territory by spraying graffiti all over the city. Unfortunately, both the cops and rival gangs will attack you and try to prevent you from tagging each territory. If you're especially skilled, you'll end up beating the rival gangs out of their own domains, and gaining the help of key gang members. But the police will always be a thorn in your side (you are, after all, vandalizing the streets of Tokyo). Later levels shown to Next Generation even featured paratroopers dropping onto the streets to get in on the chase.

While the storyline is simple and a stretch at best (you're fighting against some supreme evil, blah, blah, blah), it's the skating action that will keep gamers coming back for more. Getting around the city is as easy as it gets, and with

■ *Jet Grind Radio*'s unique visual style puts it in a class of its own, yet it also has some innovative skating-'n'-painting gameplay to ensure that it isn't just a flash in the pan

Alphas

wheels on your heels, you're free to go where you want, when you want. At your disposal are 10 stunt moves true to inline skating, enabling you to flip, spin, and grind anywhere in sight — but you can still wipe out and eat pavement.
"The 3D world is complex," claims producer Kawagoe Takauki. "You can skate underground in the subway or the sewer, but you can also go inside buildings, climb on rooftops, and jump from one roof to another."

The game design called for a level of street detail on par with *Crazy Taxi*'s, and the team has done a lot of work reproducing the Tokyo districts of Shibuya, Kabukicho, and Tsukishima. Each area is teeming with life, too, and you will have to do your best to avoid traffic and careless pedestrians while you flee from the authorities. Because the U.S. release of the game follows Japan's release by a few months, it will include an additional map — a city design likely based on a U.S. location. Takauki isn't quite sure what the new city will look like — it's scheduled to be done after the Japanese version ships in June. He does confess that it probably won't be based on cities such as New York or San Francisco, because "they don't offer enough spots for inline skating."
The actual painting of graffiti is almost

■ While the game comes with more than 100 graffiti designs, you can create your own and trade them with friends via VMU or the Internet

■ The police are none too happy with your spray-painting spree, so be careful

■ The stunt system is intuitive and fun: Pulling off a railslide is as easy as jumping up and landing on the rail, then holding on for dear life

THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN

Trivia fact for gaming buffs: The guys behind Sega's *Panzer Dragoon* series (known as Team Andromeda) broke off from Sega and worked on Polyphony Digital's *Omega Boost* for PlayStation. Still, not all of the team has left Sega's fold. The producer, art producer, and designer of *Jet Grind Radio* all worked on the best *Panzer Dragoon* game in the series, *Panzer Dragoon Saga*. So if you were hoping for another *Panzer Dragoon* game, we'd have to guess that there's nobody left to work on it, at least until *Jet Grind Radio* ships.

a minigame unto itself. The gameplay is very similar to that of a rhythm action game, for which, strangely enough, *Jet Grind Radio* was mistaken when early screens were released. Whenever you get to a place you need to tag, you must repeat a series of moves displayed onscreen with the analog stick. More complex graffiti patterns require you to string several of these moves together. The game has more than 100 patterns, and will include a create-your-own-pattern mode. Custom patterns can then be shared with friends via VMU or the Internet.

■ Expect to decorate three different Tokyo districts, as well as one as-yet-to-be-revealed city with a more American feel, with your "public art"

While the gameplay is innovative, the team is also counting on their exciting, new visual style to draw players into the game. A relatively new technique known as cel shading (a form of rendering that draws a black line around the characters and separates them from the background) is being used to bring a hip cartoon style to the game. The resulting effect is truly next-generation.

"We studied the Power VR2 closely, and we have been able to make things that are impossible on PlayStation2," states art producer Ueda Ryu. "For example, the textures are very colorful and detailed. The PS2 would not be able to handle them because of its weaker memory."

While some features still aren't finalized — such as the music, which is being worked on jointly by Sega of Japan, Europe, and America — *Jet Grind Radio* is already shaping up to be one of the most impressive and original games of 2000. With games such as this and the upcoming *Phantasy Star Online*, Sega may be giving Sony a much tougher battle this Christmas than expected. And for the record, *Jet Grind Radio* doesn't have any aliasing problems. — *Blake Fischer*

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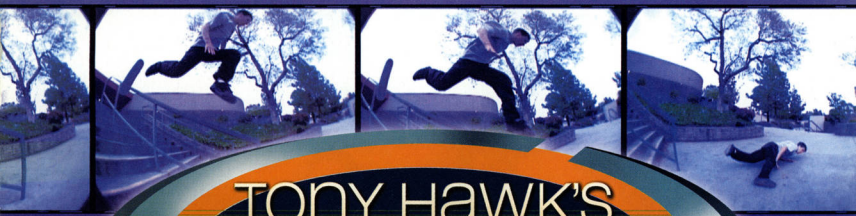

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■ PLAYSTATION2, PC, N64, PLAYSTATION

MADDEN NFL 2001

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Tiburon** ■ Origin: **US**
■ Release Date: **Launch for PS2; Aug. for PC, PlayStation, N64**

Who's afraid of *NFL 2K1*? Not EA

Is there any doubt that EA's venerable *Madden* series is the most influential video sports franchise of all time? The series was instrumental in making the Genesis a competitive platform, and has been a staple of hardcore sports gamers' diet ever since (with the notable exception of no-show *Madden NFL '96* for PlayStation). This August, *Madden NFL 2001* will arrive for PC, PlayStation, and N64, closely followed by the PlayStation2 version, which will be ready for the system's North American launch. Like Warren Sapp thundering down a clear lane to Brett Favre, *Madden NFL 2001* is ready to making a huge impact.

The first thing we noticed upon seeing *Madden NFL 2001* in action on PS2 was the graphics. Quite simply, consoles have never had anything like this before. Sure, we've seen games in which each player is scaled to roughly the correct height, but *Madden* takes player models to a new level. Quarterbacks are thicker in the middle due to their flak jackets; linemen are hulking, broad-shouldered behemoths whose bellies often hang over their belts; and a powerful running back such as Atlanta's Jamal Anderson can practically be identified by his bulging leg muscles. Each player also has unique accessories

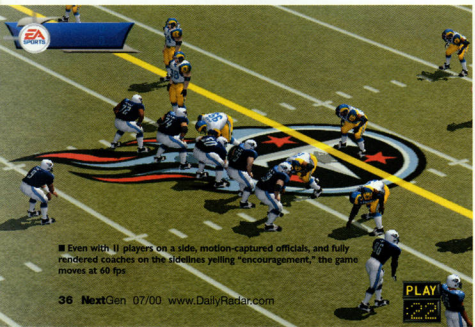
■ John Madden himself verifies each player's abilities, so when Issac Bruce slips a tackle and breaks free, it's because he actually can

■ **Are you ready for some football? Any lingering doubt about PlayStation2's capabilities will be erased when you see *Madden NFL 2001*. This baby is deep, and beautiful**

(armbands, face mask, etc.), and is textured with amazing precision — zooming in reveals hair on the player's forearms. Also, many of the players will have their real-life faces.

As impressive as all this may be, it pales in comparison to the way the game moves. Even at this early stage in the game's development, the demo we played chugged along at a solid 60 fps in 640 x 480 resolution. Each athlete fluidly switches from one animation to another with no hint of jerkiness. Moreover, thanks to very well developed inverse kinematics, collisions are smoother and more realistic than ever before. Gone are the days when you see a pass get closer and closer to a receiver, only to watch it suddenly jump into his hands from roughly a foot away. Instead, the ball maintains a smooth glide right until it hits the player's fingers, and you'll see him haul it in (or not, if you're playing against a team with a decent secondary).

Inverse kinematics also play a large part in the way the game handles tackles and other forms of player contact. The game now considers an athlete's height and mass during a



■ **Even with 11 players on a side, motion-captured officials, and fully rendered coaches on the sidelines yelling "encouragement," the game moves at 60 fps**

ATHLETIC SUPPORTERS

While the PS2 version of *Madden NFL 2001* is certainly exciting, the other versions are being tuned to be equally impressive on their respective systems. The PC version will utilize the Internet, enabling gamers to play an entire season online, or enter EA-sponsored tournaments. The PlayStation version will sport a create-a-team mode, and both PlayStation and N64 will offer a two-minute drill, in which up to 10 players can compete in a scoring contest. PC, N64, and PlayStation versions will include a play editor. Finally, every version but the PC will reward certain accomplishments with "Madden cards," which will unlock codes, players, or All-Madden teams from the past. Gamers will be able to trade the cards, and even wager them in competition.

■ **Visual detail is everywhere, from reflections of the stadium on players' helmets to the hair on each player's arm**

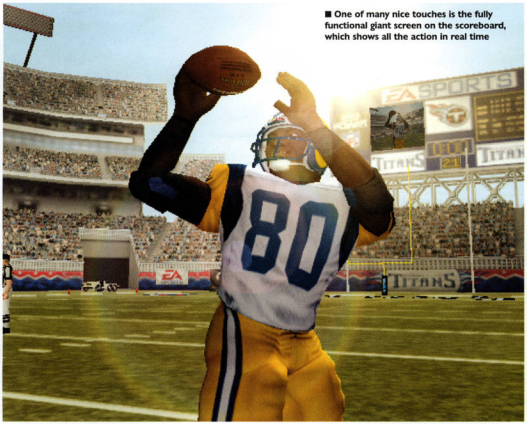
contact situation. With a small, finesse runner (say, Robert Smith), you want to try to juke him around a 180 lb secondary. However, if he happens to be Eddie George, he may just run right over the hapless fellow. We even saw Steve McNair hurdle a defender diving for his ankles. Regardless of the result of the contact, the animations are seamless and realistic, adding markedly to the visceral impact of the action.

***Madden NFL 2001* has also** refined its gameplay, this time with an all-new user interface. The game should also avoid the "running game" curse that *NFL 2K* faced upon its debut last year. Product Marketing Manager Munir Haddad reminds us, "We dealt with that two years ago." All the familiar *Madden* play modes will return as well, including Franchise mode, which will enable you to command your team's every trade, draft, and play for a span of 30 seasons. Create-a-player modes are basically standard in games now, but *Madden*'s complex stat system takes customization to new heights.

Executive Producer Steve Chiang explains, "While we would all like to create a player with the awareness of an eight-year vet, the reality is the player has probably lost a step, so choices will have to be made." Similarly, players are more likely to be injured as the season and their careers progress. So deep are the player stats that, when questioned about the importance of a player's college of origin, a seemingly superfluous statistic, Chiang responds not so cryptically, "It never hurts to have an offensive lineman from Nebraska, or a quarterback from BYU!" If you want to stack the deck in your own favor, you can also "bend" the laws of physics (a 7'2", 300 lb tight end who runs the 40 in 4.2 seconds? Hey, why not?).

What *Madden NFL 2001* attempts to do better than any previous game is bring the football simulation to the next level. Call an offensive audible, and watch the defensive line shift in compensation. Haddad is most proud of features such as this: "It's depth that's always been there [in the All], but now you can actually see it." Actually, he's understating. We saw it, felt it, and frankly, can't wait for it.

— Eric Bratcher



■ **One of many nice touches is the fully functional giant screen on the scoreboard, which shows all the action in real time**

■ **Even the players' eyes move, watching the action with an intensity that would have made Mike Singletary proud**

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■ PLAYSTATION2

ESPN X GAMES SNOWBOARDING

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Release Date: **November 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Will Konami's snowboarding title be more extreme than SSX?

It's an inarguable fact that great sports games (or lack thereof) can make or break a system. Luckily for Sony, Konami has realized the potential of ESPN's over-the-top X Games franchise. The company's first PS2 title, *ESPN XGames Snowboarding*, is scheduled to hit American slopes this November, meticulously recreating the attitude and intensity of the competition that inspires it.

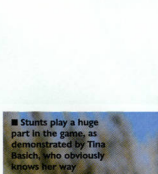
ESPN X Games Snowboarding is all about authenticity. The development team spent an entire week mapping Mt. Snow in Vermont to recreate the existing X Games courses. Of course, the designers are creating a few of their own, including a brand new, 36-square-mile mountain, specifically designed for free roaming action. While this may seem excessive, Producer Yasuo Dakai explains it's all part of the plan.

"Many of the past snowboarding games have been more like racing games," Dakai says, "we are making *X Games* more of a snowboarding simulation. That's one of the reasons we are creating a mountain, rather than just a variety of different race courses."

It works. In an early demo, we dropped onto Dakai's new mountain, and were stunned by the wide-open terrain. As we cruised through snowfields scattered with trees, huge vistas opened before us, imparting the same feeling of exploration that any seasoned boarder might enjoy when first encountering a new mountain.

The game will recreate four major X Games snowboarding events: Border Cross, Big Air, Slopestyle, and the standard Half-Pipe competition. While Border Cross resembles a simple, pure race, the other events require players to pull off airborne stunts. Big Air is a freestyle jumping competition, allowing players to launch from a huge ramp and pull stunts in mid-air. Slopestyle is a race for the best time with the added

■ ESPN's actual X Games broadcast team helped design the camera angles used during replay mode



■ Stunts play a huge part in the game, as demonstrated by Tina Basich, who obviously knows her way around a picnic table

element of rails, picnic tables, and other obstacles strategically placed for trick performance. The custom mountain also sports a Free Ride mode if you just want to cruise and catch big air.

You can create your own extreme rider, but Konami has also licensed several of the X Games' fiercest competitors, so you can risk a professional's life and limb instead of your own. While the roster isn't final, it's likely that five female and 11 male boarders will bring their own specific skills, riding style, moves, and even facial expressions to the action, all in unprecedented visual detail.

According to Dakai, "You'll see snow kick up as riders fly by. You'll see their clothes blow in the wind. You'll even see snow accumulate on your clothing after you fall down a few times." Dakai also promises the finished version will boast a frame rate of "Absolutely 60. Even if it's two player split screen, we will maintain a 60 fps frame rate."

ESPN's broadcast team is also making every effort to ensure that all elements of the presentation will be authentic, if not familiar. Replay mode will utilize the same camera angles ESPN uses when broadcasting the actual event, and ESPN is even helping design the game's graphical overlays and instant replay wipes. Music will be on par with the existing X Games soundtracks, which feature music from several groups, including The Descendants, Crystal Method, and Korn.

While there will very likely be at least one other snowboarding game available on PlayStation2 when *ESPN X Games Snowboarding* arrives this November (EA's *SSX*), players seeking total X Games immersion would do well to take a long, hard, look at *ESPN X Games Snowboarding*. — *Eric Bratcher*

THE STORY OF X

Since its debut in June of 1995, ESPN's X Games has become the premiere showcase for "alternative" sports, such as skateboarding, bicycle stunt riding, and street luge. Nielsen analysis indicates that a staggering 37% of American male teens tuned in for the 1999 Summer X Games, during which Tony Hawk successfully landed skateboarding's first 900. The Winter X Games debuted at California's Big Bear Lake in 1997, with focus on cold weather sports such as Snow Mountain Bike Racing, Big Air Snowboarding, and the now-discontinued Super-modified Shovel Racing.

■ **More than any snowboarding title we've seen before, *X Games* really conveys the sense that you're carving turns on a vast mountainside, as opposed to confining you to a narrow band of allowed territory. Every small crest seems to lead to a huge bowl of pristine, untouched powder**

■ **(Above, right) 2000 Big Air Gold Medalist Peter Line shows his stuff**

■ This is what happens when you combine a stunning graphics engine with very creative people. This entire scene, swirling purple wormhole and all, takes place inside a schoolhouse that looks perfectly normal from the outside

Alice is now a teenager, and she must fight against the Queen of Hearts, whose evil has mutated the already bizarre Wonderland

■ PC

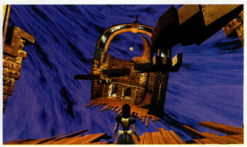
AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
■ Developer: **Rogue Entertainment**
■ Release Date: **Fall 2000**
■ Origin: **U.S. (Dallas)**

Will McGee's first post-id effort outshine John Romero's *Daikatana*? Go ask Alice

American McGee has finally returned. After leaving id Software, the famed level designer of *Doom II*, *Quake*, and *Quake II* dropped out of sight, but his name soon resurfaced, in connection with a conceptual drawing of a droll, sloe-eyed young lass holding a bloody knife and wearing a party dress. She is the main character in his new project: A third-person, action-adventure based on the *Alice in Wonderland* stories. Plainly stated, this girl resembles the traditional Alice about as much as a great white shark resembles Mrs. Paul's fish sticks.

American McGee's Alice is undeniably the brainchild of McGee, who, as Creative Director for the



■ Ants become much more threatening when they happen to be taller than you, but they're nothing compared to the Centipede, who is basically a tyrannosaur in a centipede's body

■ This room seems plain when you enter it, but then the ceiling rises, the floor splits, and the pieces start to levitate. Just another day in Wonderland

project, leads the EA production team and oversees developer Rogue Entertainment. The game takes place a little later than the classic Lewis Carroll children's books upon which it is based. Alice is now a teenager, and she must fight against the Queen of Hearts, whose evil has mutated the already bizarre Wonderland into a twisted, nightmarish, gothic landscape filled with dangerous puzzles and vicious enemies. Many locations and characters are inspired by the books, but have been contorted to look like they belong in a Tim Burton film. For example, McGee's Cheshire Cat sports a grin, but is a mangy, haggard looking creature with visible bones and tribal tattoos — and the Mad Hatter now appears as equal parts man and steam-driven cyborg.

Alice already boasts some amazing environments, thanks to American's imagination and a heavily modified *Quake III* engine. The finished game will contain 15 vast levels, encompassing five separate worlds — the Caterpillar's garden, the vast, mansion-like Fortress of Doors, the area below a volcano, the Mad Hatter's Escher-esque castle, and of course, the Queen's garden, grounds, and castle.

The game's artistic quality is boosted by engine enhancements that enable some fantastic effects work. Animated textures make a wall of stone look as if it's made of flames, and ceiling beams appear to have ghostly faces dancing over them. Imagine our surprise, when, upon walking through a doorway we discovered the room actually contained a wormhole — which then tore the room in two. The only way to cross the rift without plunging into the swirling plasma was to jump onto fragments of what used to be the floor, which (naturally) were being flung about by the tornado-like vortex.

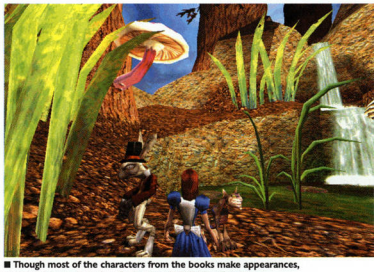
Other challenges are more subtle, like a maze where the floor tilts as Alice walks, lowering you into traps, or lifting you above to the only exit. Overall, puzzles in *Alice* promise to be more imaginative and elaborate than the typical platform/jumping situations in most games.

Impressive as they are, puzzles comprise only about 30% of *Alice*'s gameplay. The remaining 70% will showcase enemies ranging from the familiar Card Guards to new enemies like the Boogum, a ghostly remnant of one of the Queen's victims. Alice uses playing cards as throwing stars and swings the meanest flamingo-headed croquet mallet this side of an acid trip. Best of all are the Demon Dice, which summon a demon that will attack anything.

It's tough to imagine a game doing justice to the *Alice in Wonderland* universe, but McGee and Rogue are playing the license to the hilt, stuffing the game full of outrageous characters and imaginative ideas that couldn't work anywhere else but here. Currently scheduled only for PC, this is definitely a warped looking glass, but it's one that we'll jump headlong into this fall.

— Eric Bratcher

■ As third-person titles are typically built for consoles, a PS2 or DC port would make sense



■ Though most of the characters from the books make appearances, each has been adapted to fit the game's "off-kilter" style

ONE PILL MAKES YOU LARGER, AND ONE PILL MAKES YOU A MATHEMATICIAN?

While Alice Liddell was indeed a real person, it's a little-known fact that Lewis Carroll, author of her fictional adventures, was not. Rather, it was the pen name used by Rev. Charles Dodgson (1832-1898), a noted clergyman and Oxford mathematics teacher whose prolific "legitimate" writings included treatises on symbolic logic, countless papers on geometry, and a biography of Euclid. Most interesting of all is the fact that Dodgson wrote the Alice books (neither of which, by the way, was actually entitled *Alice in Wonderland*) without the assistance of any hallucinogenic substances. God only knows what he would have come up with if he'd lived during the '60s.

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■ Play on grass, clay, or hard courts. Each court type plays differently from the other, so you'll have to master them all if you want to win the game

■ DREAMCAST

VIRTUA TENNIS

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega of Japan** ■ Release Date: **July** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Tennis anyone? You'll have a hard time saying no

■ The players are as lifelike as any we've seen in a sports game – even compared with those of some of the latest PS2 offerings. Still, they lack fine details such as facial expressions when shown extremely close-up

■ Up to four players can play at once in a game of doubles. If you play a game of doubles by yourself, the CPU is actually a more-than-competent partner

The gold standard in videogame tennis has long been *Super Tennis* for Super NES — in the nearly ten years since its release, no other tennis game has come close to duplicating the awesome feel and control of the game. Until now.

A port of the arcade game of the same name, *Virtua Tennis* is already on track to be the best tennis game ever. When the beta arrived in the **NextGen** office, work came to a grinding halt, which necessitated calling in the editor-at-large to write the preview for fear that if the other editors tried, they wouldn't do anything else for the issue.

The control of the game is awesome: Using only three buttons and the D-pad, you can basically deliver any shot in the tennis lexicon. The game draws slightly from *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*'s control scheme, in that simple inputs frequently result in amazing moves onscreen. But as with *Tony Hawk*, you never feel as though you are anything but in total control of the action.

Graphically, the game is also a stunner. Player models are detailed and high-resolution; the animation is incredibly smooth; and the game is packed with little touches — footprints and ball marks on the clay courts, for instance — that make the experience totally immersive.

With a roster of 16 top international stars and three play modes, *Virtua Tennis* is exactly the kind of game Sega needs to release right now to counter the hype surrounding PlayStation2; it's fast, fun, and exclusive to Dreamcast. — *Chris Charla*

■ It's apparent that one of the hallmarks of this game is going to be ferocious battles against dozens of enemies – hey, we're OK with that

SO WHY DOES IT LOOK SO MUCH LIKE *D&D*?

The origins of *Record of Lodoss War* can be traced to the imagination of a Japanese high school student named Ryo Mizuno around 1980-81. Role-playing games like *D&D* were relatively unknown in Japan at the time, and rulebooks were hard to come by. So Mizuno and some friends made up their own *D&D* "inspired" system, and recorded their subsequent adventures as stories. By 1986, they had formed "Group SNE" and had the rule system and a few stories printed in one of publisher Kadokawa Shoten's magazines. They were a hit, and a series of manga and OAVs followed, along with commercial publication of the RPG. The lesson: Being a geek can pay.

■ **DREAMCAST**

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: THE ADVENT OF CARDICE

■ Publisher: **ESP** ■ Developer: **Kadokawa Shoten** ■ Release Date: **June 29, 2000 (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Yes, it looks remarkably like *Diablo*, but the *Lodoss* series itself has always looked like *D&D*, so...

It's disappointing that the classic anime *Record of Lodoss War* has surfaced so infrequently in video games — its sprawling fantasy world and epic battles make it a natural. Yet, except for two RPGs on PC Engine (Turbografx in the U.S.) in Japan in the early '90s, along with a contemporaneous port of the first for Super Famicom (a.k.a. Super NES), there's been nothing.

So it's surprising that it resurfaces now on Dreamcast, in the form of an isometric, action-RPG that resembles an anime-influenced *Diablo*. And yet, unlike *Diablo* (or *Diablo II*) *Lodoss* is fully 3D, enabling you to rotate around and zoom in at will. Your central character will meet various NPCs, and through conversation trees, can convince them to join you. Although you won't control NPCs, they will help, given their abilities and situation.

Characters gain magic and abilities through reading scrolls, while combat confers experience points to boost levels and stats. A "paper-doll" style inventory and equipment screen enables you to manage possessions, and the strength and magic powers of weapons and armor can be modified by applying different combinations of over 200 magical runes.

However, what truly sets *Lodoss* apart is its deep anime world and huge enemies. With a wealth of lighting and other special effects, the game has a decidedly unique look and feel, and the control is exceptionally responsive.

No word yet on a U.S. release, and there are no apparent plans for online multiplayer modes. But even as a one-player game, we'll keep an eye on this one. — *Christophe Kagotani/Jeff Lundrigan*

■ **Although it may look like *Diablo*, the gameplay is much more like a traditional console action-RPG. Can't imagine pointing and clicking on something as large as this dragon, for example**

■ **Expect numerous and sundry lighting and spell effects, just because they keep things interesting**

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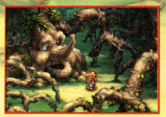

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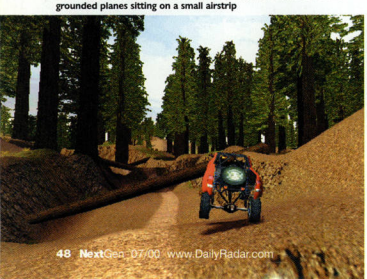
■ PLAYSTATION2

SMUGGLER'S RUN

■ Publisher: **Rockstar Games** ■ Developer: **Angel Studios** ■ Release Date: **Late 2000** ■ Origin: **US**

■ You can interact with hundreds of objects, from downed trees to grounded planes sitting on a small airstrip



Driver goes off-road

Becoming a hardened criminal with mad driving skills isn't easy, at least that's what recent games such as *Driver* have taught us. With nothing in your life but exhilarating car chases, huge payoffs, and hot women (we admit we're speculating a bit about that last part), it sure must be rough. Now, with *Smuggler's Run*, Angel Studios is taking the wild lifestyle out of the big city and into the open countryside, where the stakes are higher, the runs are tougher, and your criminal driving skills will be put to the ultimate test.

As a gang member in this mission-based driving game, you are tasked with picking up contraband (guns, biological materials, gems, etc.), then delivering it to your buyer. Unfortunately, seven other gangs are out to violently force you off the road and steal your stuff. And if that weren't enough, the border patrol, police, and CIA are also hot to intercept your goods. The pace of the gameplay is hectic; you drive fast and dodge pretty much everybody. Fellow gang members will assist you occasionally, but the pressure will always remain on you to get the goods, make the deliveries, and obtain the cash.

Knowing the environment is the secret to surviving each mission, because each area poses many dangers that can be as lethal as your enemies. Each of the

■ In the final game, this desert town will be teeming with pedestrians and camels to hit as you tear on through

four game worlds — Arctic tundra, North African desert, South American jungle, and North American forest — is harsh and unyielding, forcing you to use off-roading skills to successfully complete each mission. Your biggest advantage is that you aren't constrained to any specific path. Take a peek at the map, set off in the correct direction, and you'll eventually find your spot — screw the roads if necessary. Still, use caution, because each level is more than 100 square miles, and getting lost is a possibility.

Along the way you'll discover small towns, herds of wild animals, and even pedestrians who will valiantly try to get out of your way (and unlike those in *Driver*, they may not always be successful). The game also features some of the best PlayStation2 technology we've seen to date. If you can find a high enough vista point, the game engine will draw a realtime landscape that stretches for miles and miles in any direction.

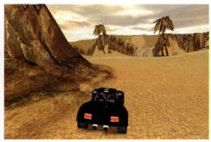
There are more than 40 different cars total, each with its own unique handling characteristics, for you to destr... er, drive. And once you take a look at the fully modeled four-wheel independent suspension on the vehicles, you'll agree that *Smuggler's Run* boasts one of the most intricate physics models you've seen. Each different surface (snow, dirt, railroad tracks, etc.) has a different level of traction and roughness, and if you land a jump incorrectly, your vehicle will break apart. You'll even lose tires if you drive too recklessly. Of course, playability still takes precedence over realism. The dual analog control is tight, and the game is somewhat forgiving when it comes to rolling the car and other extreme situations.

There are 40 cars, each with its own unique handling characteristics, for you to destr... er, drive

With multiplayer modes in the works and the single-player game falling into place, *Smuggler's Run* looks as if it could be an exciting and playable addition to PlayStation2's library. It'll be like reliving driver's ed, only this time it's exciting, violent, and illegal. — *Blake Fischer*

SMUGGLER'S RUM

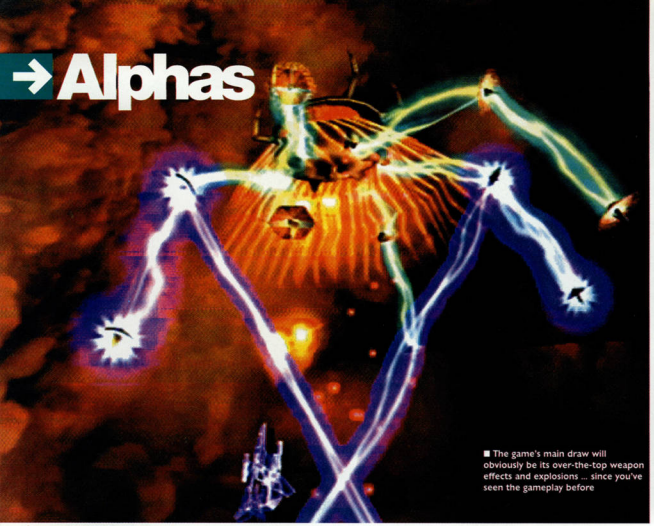
Thought you lived an exciting life? Well, we bet you haven't checked out the Rum Festival held in Whitehaven, England. This year, the festivities begin with a fully rigged ship in port, the opening of the Rum Centre (where you can learn about the deep history of the liquor), and, of course, the dramatic re-enactment of an 18th-century smuggler's raid. Family activities and heavy drinking? Sounds like a great combination to us.



■ **Due to the complex physics model, the off-road driving experience in *Smuggler's Run* is unparalleled**

■ **See that mountain in the background? You can actually drive to it and ascend the treacherous road to its peak. The reward: You can then take some pretty impressive jumps (just don't expect your car to survive)**

■ **Every vehicle in the game has a fully modeled four-wheel suspension system that works just as it would in real life. Each driver also comes with two aspirins to deal with all your off-road bumping around**



■ The game's main draw will obviously be its over-the-top weapon effects and explosions ... since you've seen the gameplay before

■ PLAYSTATION2

SILPHEED: THE LOST PLANET

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Game Arts** ■ Release Date: **Summer 2000** ■ Origin: **Japan**

An old-school shooter that blows up real good

Sega released the original *Silpheed* in 1993 for Sega CD. Unique for its time, the forward scrolling shooter featured 3D ships flying over a prerendered FMV background.

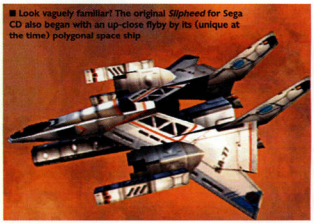
■ Pick your weapons carefully, because each of the six level bosses is vulnerable to a certain kind of weapon

However, it was no coincidence that its release closely followed that of *Star Fox* for Super NES. It was almost a direct response from Sega, a statement that its system could handle polygons, too.

For the game's upcoming PS2 incarnation, Game Arts (which also developed the original) has junked the FMV in favor of genuine 3D backgrounds. However, the gameplay will remain essentially the same — *Silpheed: The Lost Planet* is still a forward scrolling shooter. The game will reportedly feature six differently themed stages (which appear to be the usual suspects — a space level, a lava level, a postapocalyptic city level, etc.), each ending in a boss. As with the original, there are two "hard points" on your ship to which you attach weapons. You choose weapons from a list at the beginning of each stage, and "buy" them with points earned from the previous stage. There is a bit of strategy and planning involved, because some bosses are more vulnerable (in some cases, *only* vulnerable) to certain weapons.

Although the gameplay may not be groundbreaking, apparently a great deal of work is going into bringing the visual effects into the 21st century. Expect a plethora of particle and plasma effects, lightning, fire, and some remarkably kinetic explosions. If nothing else, *Silpheed: The Lost Planet* will be a feast for the eyes.

— *Christophe Kagotani/Jeff Lundrigan*



■ Look vaguely familiar? The original *Silpheed* for Sega CD also began with an up-close flyby by its (unique at the time) polygonal space ship

THE *THEXDER* CONNECTION

The original *Silpheed* was first released in the U.S. in 1988 by Sierra on PC, oddly enough. It was the follow-up to Sierra's earlier Game Arts import, *Thexder*, a rather simplistic, if challenging, shooter that featured a *Transformers*-style mech that could turn into a jet. Though Sierra was mostly known for adventure games at the time, *Thexder* proved a modest hit, so the company imported Game Arts' next title, *Silpheed*. It wasn't until almost five years later that Sega would scoop it up, add FMV, and release it for the then-brand-new Sega CD.

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COMING FALL 2000

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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GAME BOY COLOR

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■ Although there are puzzles, don't expect the game to be too cerebral — there should be a fair amount of kinetic action as well

■ If nothing else, *Orphen* promises to look very pretty indeed, with a terrific variety of settings and locales

■ PLAYSTATION2

ORPHEN

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Kadokawa Shoten**
■ Release Date: **Summer 2000 (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

So how do you make a good game about a lazy sorcerer?

As with *Record of Lodoss War: The Advent of Cardice* (see p. 46), *Orphen* (and yes, that's the way it's spelled) is another PlayStation2 game based on a Kadokawa Shoten anime. However, in this case the anime is being used as the background for a fully 3D, third-person-perspective action-adventure game.

You'll have the option of choosing among three characters. The first is Orphen — that's actually his name, and yes, he is an orphan. The anime series (see sidebar) also features a character named Majik who — guess what? — studies magic, so you can sense a theme here. He's a sorcerer trained in the "black arts," even though he's the good guy. Besides Orphen, you can choose between two other as-yet-undetermined characters. However, the game will follow a different story depending on whom you choose, with a fourth scenario becoming available once you complete the other three.

The game footage we've seen so far suggests a strong platform-challenge

WHAT'S UP WITH *ORPHEN* ANYWAY?

The television anime series this game is based on, *Sorcerous Stabber Orphen*, is a sword-and-sorcery-style show that began airing in Japan in 1998. The original storyline had Orphen looking for a woman named Azalea, an orphan he grew up with and whom he considers to be his older sister, only to find she's been possessed by a dragon. However, the interesting thing about Orphen, compared with your usual heroes, is that he's a bit of a slacker – he can't keep up with his rent, and although he tutors a local boy in magic to pay the bills, his lessons seem to consist of kicking back and half-heartedly blowing stuff up with careless gestures. "Don't you know?" he says at one point. "Sorcerers are pretty lazy."

■ **In addition to battling monsters, you can expect to spend a significant amount of time dealing with deadly tricks and traps**

component to the action, with Orphen making his way *Castlevania*-style up the inside of what looks to be a clock tower, jumping from moving gear to moving gear. Still, it appears that the RPG-adventure elements are every bit as strong, with gorgeous in-game cut scenes and a fair amount of interaction with various NPCs.

Orphen, and perhaps the other playable characters as well, can fight with both weapons and magic, and as is becoming typical for this kind of game, magic is used for long-range "shooting," while the sword is used for close-range combat. While it seems the game will follow the usual pattern of "work your way through the level, and face down the boss," the bosses themselves are pretty aggressive and will likely shape-shift during battle. In any case, the single boss battle we saw featured a rather creepy-looking winged dragon, which Orphen battled by using a targeting crosshair to fire magic as it flew by.

The available screen shots also show evidence of what could be in the running for the PS2's most overused special effect: motion blur

■ **With three characters to choose from and three storylines (plus a fourth you can unlock), *Orphen* will hopefully have more than enough replay value to go with its strong visuals**

As with almost all the PlayStation2 games we've seen in this latest wave, *Orphen* makes good use of lighting and particle effects, as well as telling background details. The outdoor environments teem with little touches —grass, blowing leaves — and the available screen shots also show evidence of what could be in the running for PS2's most overused special effect: motion blur. (Remember all the lens flare in the original PlayStation's early days?)

Although at press time little was known about this oddly titled game, both the screens and game footage we've seen so far look quite promising. *Orphen* will find its way to the U.S. courtesy of Activision shortly after the PS2 launches here. The anime has a small domestic follwoing, and positive word of mouth could give it some buzz.

— *Christophe Kagotani/Jeff Lundrigan*

■ ***Orphen*'s style of gameplay is hybrid, mixing both platform challenges and adventure game puzzles**

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■ If you're looking for mech combat on an epic scale, look no further — this has got the goods

■ PLAYSTATION2

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

■ Publisher: **TBD**
■ Developer: **Game Arts**
■ Release Date: **Summer 2000 (Japan)**
■ Origin: **Japan**

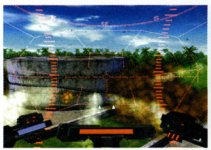
Will the PS2 unleash the full fury of this mech universe?

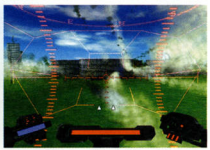
With its *Gun Griffon* series, Game Arts has had a reach that has always outdistanced its grasp. Two previous efforts for Saturn were technically excellent, yet as good as the gameplay was, the graphics were disappointing; they left the feeling that the designers had been forced to leave out as many game elements as they had managed to squeeze in. However, with PlayStation2, the company may finally be getting the kind of horsepower it needs to present full 3D mech combat in the way it always wanted to.

Blaze is set in the familiar *Gun Griffon* world, a vaguely postapocalyptic Earth divided up into political blocs in which resources are scarce and tensions are high. The player (as you might guess) fights for the Japan-centered Oceanic bloc, facing down North America, Europe, and Russia. Note that each "nation" has a unique design strategy; for instance, the Germans have heavily armed and armored behemoths and the French, fast and maneuverable units. Japan, of course, relies on high-tech, often *Transformers*-style mechs. The game will have six different mission areas of varied terrain, divided into numerous missions. These missions range from search and destroy, to escort, to full frontal assault.

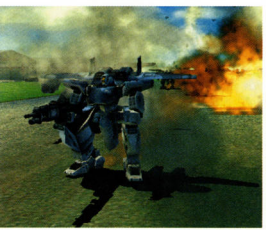
Thanks in part to this variety, if nothing else, expect *Blaze* to look incredible. Dozens of combat robots clamber across the screen at once, going through lush environments filled with explosions, smoke, and even weather conditions such as rain. It's been quite a while since any console has seen a worthy mech combat game, and by all early indications, *Gun Griffon Blaze* may provide just that.

— *Christophe Kagotani/Jeff Lundrigan*





■ **The view from inside the cockpit shows the Mass Energy Detector at the bottom of the screen. It takes less space than a radar, but will it work in combat?**



■ **"But wait! Can't we just sit and talk? Reason this out? Aw heck ... Blast those suckers back to the *Stone Age*!"**

WHAT, NO RADAR?

In an effort to make the interface as "simple" as possible, Game Arts has taken a somewhat radical step, disposing of the traditional radar screen in favor of a Mass Energy Detector, or MED. The MED is a warning bar at the bottom of the cockpit display that grows larger as a potential threat draws near. However, while this arguably makes the screen less cluttered, it remains to be seen whether the MED will prove to be more useful than (or even as useful as) a radar screen in actual combat. Still, at the very least it is a different approach, and given Game Arts' fine mech-combat design in the past, we'll extend the benefit of the doubt until we can test it for ourselves.

■ Even aliens need a place to dance and have a good time, apparently

PERFECTION DOESN'T COME EASY

The title *Startopia* is, of course, a play on *Utopia*, a word created in the 16th century by Sir Thomas More to be the title of a book he was writing. Today, "topia" is often tacked on to any word to describe a perfect form of whatever the word represents. (Witness *Fruitopia*, *Petopia*, etc.) However, way back when More was crafting his satirical opus, he had more sinister, ironic implications in mind. *Utopia* is not only derived from the Greek *Eutopia*, meaning "good place," but also from the word *Outopia*, which means "no place." More was intentionally ambiguous, so as to imply that there may be no such thing as a perfect place. But hey, no pressure. We're sure you'll do just fine.

■ PC

STARTOPIA

■ Publisher: **Eidos Interactive** ■ Developer: **Mucky Foot** ■ Release Date: **Winter 2000** ■ Origin: **UK**

Surely there's room for at least one more strategy game in the outer reaches of space

■ The Bio Deck is a haven of alien flora and fauna

Most of *Startopia*'s development staff learned their trade at Bullfrog Studios, cutting their teeth on the creation of popular simulations including *Theme Park*, *Populous II*, and *Dungeon Keeper 2*. It's no surprise, then, that the idea for this new game came to Mucky Foot director and joint project lead, Guy Simmons, in the guise of a new *Theme* title, while he was still working for Bullfrog. Mucky Foot isn't building just another *Theme* game, though; with *Startopia*, it's attempting to improve on the standards set by the popular EA series.

As the Station Master, you're charged with rebuilding a devastated empire one space station at a time through courage, diplomacy, and, of course, careful use of available resources. Ultimately, your

■ The feeling of being in space is enhanced by the variety of otherworldly inhabitants found throughout the space station

As a Station Master, you're charged with rebuilding a devastated empire one space station at a time

success depends on your ability to leverage the materials at hand to create a stable society, while continuing to expand it at the same time. Each station you manage will house both residents and visitors, and the staple *Theme*-style balance between hard work and pleasure must be struck if the citizens are to remain happy and continue doing your bidding. Your mettle as leader will be tested in nine different stations throughout the game, each of which contains three game levels.

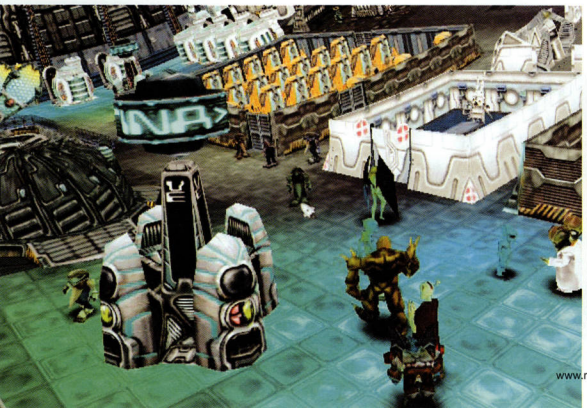
The resident aliens are a motley crew of Mucky Foot's more eclectic design ideas. "We're planning to make *Startopia*'s alien races familiar to many players, with tongue-in-cheek representations of many famous sci-fi characters from movies such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*," explains director and joint project lead Gary Carr. Some of the more original life-forms include the troublesome Gemslugs, which are useless except as a producer of energy (currency); Zedem Monks, which offer spiritual guidance, but have a tendency to form subversive cults; and the hardworking Salthogs, which must be kept happy because if just one gets annoyed, then its fellow workers will quickly follow. Of course, no space colony would be complete without a little interspecies romance — that's where the winged sirens come in.

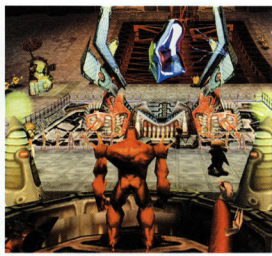
"Mucky Foot wants to create its own identity, and *Startopia* is innovative in a number of ways," says Carr. "For example, it has a much stronger storyline and more strategy elements than many of the *Theme* titles." The AI is another area where this game differs from the *Theme* series. Characters are aware of each other and even the Station Master (you!). As the game progresses, creatures will also be able to signal their feelings when they have concerns or something to show you, and the game will also allow multiplayer contests among up to four other Station Masters over a LAN. "That's where there's another difference," Carr explains. "The *Theme* series never allowed multiple players to play against each other on the same map."

The new 3D engine for *Startopia* is a welcome change from the 2D, sprite-based norm for *Theme* titles. Effects you can expect to see include dynamically updated reflection mapping, progressive meshing, specular bump and shininess mapping, atmospheric lighting and shadowing, and self-shadowing objects.

With its quirky humor and original subject matter, it looks as if *Startopia* could supplant the very games that the team cut their teeth on as sim fans' desktop favorite. Come this fall, we'll finally find out if the human race really is capable of running the galaxy, or if we should just stick to Earth for now.

–John Coghlan





■ The impressive 3D engine brings a whole new look to the popular sim genre

Milestones

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

■ While there's definitely strategy involved, the game mostly focuses on wading through entire football teams' worth of enemies

■ PLAYSTATION2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

Koei has just announced that it will bring this samurai-era strategy/beat-'em-up to the U.S. in time for the holiday season. The gameplay basically lies somewhere between the military planning of *Kessen* and the one-man-against-the-horde carnage of *Sword of the Berzerk: Guts' Rage*.

■ Of course, just because your game is based in feudal Japan is no reason not to fill the game with fancy lighting effects

■ Players will occasionally be given the chance to fight from horseback, which will allow quicker movement around the battlefield

■ PLAYSTATION

DINO CRISIS 2

■ Dylan is the game's second character. He's stronger than Regina, but not as swift

Capcom's dino horror franchise returns to PlayStation in October, this time bringing reinforcements in the form of new controllable character Dylan, whose brute strength complements Regina's agility. The action has moved outdoors into the depths of the jungle, and will include underwater segments as well. Players will often be attacked by multiple dinos simultaneously (as opposed to the first game's mostly one-on-one duels), but they can now wield a weapon in each hand or draw a bead on enemies from substantially above or below harm's way.

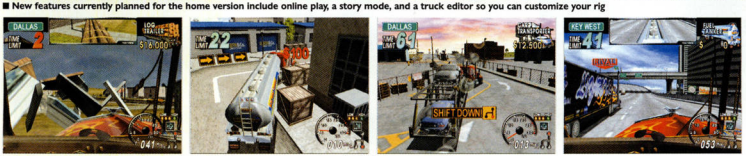
■ **The critters in *Dino Crisis 2* usually move and attack in groups, unlike the first game's mostly solitary carnivores**

■ DREAMCAST

18 WHEELER: AMERICAN PRO TRUCKER

Hot on the wheels of *Crazy Taxi* comes Sega's *18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker*, an arcade conversion that puts the player behind the wheel of a big rig with a long way to go and a short time to get there. Players will choose from five available big rigs, select their cargo, and then race to deliver it safely across the country. If players happen to crash through a house or smash a competitor's rig into the body shop, so be it. Dreamcast enhancements will include new stages, a parking practice mode, and Screen Division Battle mode. A release date has yet to be announced.

■ **New features currently planned for the home version include online play, a story mode, and a truck editor so you can customize your rig**



■ **Real truck drivers can't be bothered with braking for menial things such as stoplights, fences, or buildings**

Milestones

■ Because *Outtrigger* was originally an arcade game, the arenas are designed to make gameplay extremely fast and very intense

■ DREAMCAST

OUTTRIGGER

Sega brings its arcade FPS to Dreamcast, complete with four-player split-screen multiplay and full Sega.net support, including selectable team colors and Internet rankings. Game environments (some exclusive to the Dreamcast) will include castle ruins, an abandoned train station, and an astronomical observatory. Though a firm release date has yet to be announced, Sega is also planning to release a Dreamcast-compatible mouse for gamers who prefer a PC-style control scheme.

■ While a lone player can choose a first or third-person point of view, two- and four-player split-screen modes will default to first-person views in order to conserve frame rate

■ PC

RED ALERT 2

Westwood's definitive RTS series, *C&C*, marches on with this title, which takes place on an Earth where Russia is reborn as a huge military powerhouse and has set about tearing the rest of the world (especially the U.S.) a new one. Boasting several new units (such as the mind-controlling Uni) and refinements designed to simultaneously speed up gameplay and reduce the effectiveness of cheap tactics, the game should arrive on store shelves late this year, courtesy of publisher Electronic Arts.

■ Though most of the action takes place in the good old U.S. of A., it looks as though Paris will take some collateral damage, too

■ While some RTS titles feature only ground units, *Red Alert 2*'s troops will attack from land, sea, and air

■ DREAMCAST

SONIC SQUARE

■ **Players' locations on the main game board will determine if anyone teams up for the next minigame**

Aimed squarely at the party game set, Sega's newest *Sonic* title will feature the blue one and company facing off in an assortment of minigames. The title will feature split-screen play for up to four competitors, and will also support online play.

■ DREAMCAST

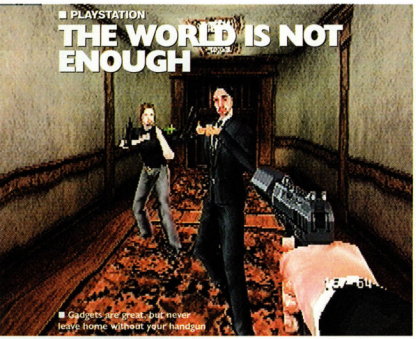
FERRARI 355 CHALLENGE

■ **The unique aspect about *Ferrari 355 Challenge* is that it simulates each individual system of the car, rather than treating the car as a single unit**

Not to be confused with Acclaim's similarly titled PS2 racer, Sega's *Ferrari 355 Challenge* is a direct port of Yu Suzuki's amazing Ferrari driving simulation. Enhancements will include a two player split-screen mode and Internet functions. It's unclear what company will publish the American version, because Acclaim holds the rights for all Ferrari games.

■ PLAYSTATION

THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH



■ **Gadgets are great, but never leave home without your handgun**

James Bond's latest adventure will arrive from Black Ops and publisher Electronic Arts on PlayStation this fall, granting gamers first-person access to Bond's gadgets, weapons, and women. The game's story will closely parallel the plot of the film, and Bond's selection of devices will include the grappling-hook watch featured in the film.

■ PLAYSTATION2

ONI

■ ***Oni* focuses heavily on using hand-to-hand techniques to dispatch your enemies, though you'll also have access to firearms**

Despite the fact that Bungie's anime-inspired third-person adventure has yet to appear on PC, the title is well into development for PlayStation2. The player takes the role of a futuristic peacekeeper who uncovers a conspiracy while investigating tech-centric crimes.

Animated Violence
Comic Mischief
Suggestive Themes

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Many developers will try their hands at PlayStation2 development. Some will fail to make it to gold master, some will fail to impress, and a select few will provide gamers with the new gaming experiences they'll remember all their lives. The teams with grand vision, and more importantly, the unwavering tenacity and perseverance to execute that vision, will be the ones that catapult PlayStation2 to its expected heights. Ultimately, the hard work is rewarded when their titles become...

PlayStation2's Chosen Ones

Three games that will define the state of the art on Sony's new system

Next Generation went behind the scenes to meet exclusively with the creators of three titles sure to rock PlayStation2. (And we made it back with some exclusive screenshots to boot.)

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty 66
Simply put, this is likely to be the best action game ever

Drakan: PS2 72
The lovely Rynn and her dragon Arokh embark on an entirely new epic adventure

Time Splitters 75
The designers of *GoldenEye* have a new game for the next generation of console sharpshooters

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Release Date: **Spring 2001 (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Is it the best game ever? We're placing our bets now

■ Besides the rogues gallery who survived the first game, there are now new highly skilled combatants to face

This year's E3 had some predictable moments. For example, every hour on the hour, hundreds of fans and developers alike gathered around the giant screen in Konami's booth to stare in awe at the eight-minute trailer for *Metal Gear Solid 2*. This amazing, tantalizing footage left little doubt that director Hideo Kojima and his team have finally delivered on the long-held promises of PlayStation2. From the intense commando raid on the ship carrying Metal Gear Ray (the newest in the Metal Gear line of combat robots), to the dramatic return of Revolver Ocelot, nothing was held back (well, except a playable version). In fact, we predict this game will be nothing less than the fledgling system's first visual, aural, and gameplay tour de force.

The secret, insists Kojima, is that he and his team have been

concentrating on entirely different priorities than the rest of the PlayStation2 development community. Kojima explains, "In *Metal Gear Solid 2*, everything may be low polygon, but other games don't try to model the air, the temperature, those details. That's why we look more real. That's the key to *Metal Gear Solid 2*." Low polygon or not (and we'd like to point out that the characters don't look low poly at all), the characters have a lifelike appearance that has yet to be matched in other PS2 games. The facial expressions on

This game will be nothing less than the PlayStation2's first visual, aural, and gameplay tour de force

Solid Snake and the other characters are painstakingly animated and reflect their moods. Add to this some amazing wind and weather effects (rain actually splatters off characters' shoulders, and even the camera's "lens" at times), and it's easy to see why many consider this to be the most realistic title at the show.

This sense of realism carries over into the gameplay as well, and Kojima has added more to the game than is immediately visible. "We've added many new moves to Solid Snake, and we've also made the AI better, so enemies will be able to come at him in many different ways," he explains. "The enemy will be able to spot your shadow. It's

■ The enemy soldiers attack you with bulletproof shields at one point. It's not that big a problem, because you can just shoot out their kneecaps

■ *Metal Gear Solid* was one of the first games to emphasize stealth instead of head-on assault. Look for *Metal Gear Solid 2* to further refine this concept. Now, for example, you will have to be wary of where your shadow falls, because if a guard sees it before you take him out, he may sound the alarm

not just a visual enhancement, it also helps the gameplay." Enemies will also now work together in groups, and, in some cases, attack from more than one direction at once in a coordinated maneuver. According to Kojima, a full third of the Emotion Engine's computational power is being used for AI, which makes the combat in the game much more complex and, hypothetically at this stage, more fun.

The little details in the footage shown are what's going to make this game great, and Kojima is eager to point out that nothing should be taken for granted just because you're playing a video-game. "You can shoot the lights and use night-vision goggles, so you can see them and they can't see you," he explains. "You can shoot the pipes, and the steam will cause the enemies to be burned. Stuff like that."

"Other games don't try to model the air, the temperature, those details. That's why we look more real. That's the key to *Metal Gear Solid 2*"

— Hideo Kojima

At one point, a gunfight in the stocked galley demonstrated the sheer volatility of the environment, as bottles exploded under the hail of bullets and boxes of food fell open and spilled the contents onto the floor. At another point, guards confront Solid Snake with bulletproof shields, and he takes them out by blowing away their kneecaps!

The new first-person camera mode makes this kind of accuracy a snap, and throughout our demo, we watched Solid Snake take out targets efficiently from that perspective (even though the majority of the game is still played from the same third-person camera as before). Sometimes, however, bullets weren't warranted, and

■ *Metal Gear Solid 2* is far more cinematic than even the first game. Expect to see some dazzling special effects such as motion blur and bullet-time

Solid Snake used his fists or his new tranquilizer gun to immobilize enemy guards. Paradoxically, though the game is perhaps the most realistic we've ever seen, it still sticks to its roots, and floats "Z"s above sleeping guards who are snoring, and highlighting others who are curious with a giant floating question mark. Of course, this means that the trademark exclamation point still appears over the head of any guard who discovers you.

■ The new first-person camera allows you to target enemies with ease

Because the game is still a year away in Japan, very little is known about the story. We do know that, after *Metal Gear Solid,* Revolver Ocelot took the disk with the Metal Gear Rex data and sold it. Now, every nuclear-powered country in the world has an army of Metal Gear Rexes, so Metal Gear Ray was built to stop them. Unfortunately, as these things always happen, the ship transporting Ray is overrun by terrorists (perhaps the titular "Sons of Liberty," but no real explanation was offered), and Solid Snake must save the day. The big difference this time, however, is that instead of being coerced into taking the mission as in the last game, Solid Snake is there on his own and not part of any organization.

One thing is certain, though: Although the story starts off on the ship, parts of the story will take place in Manhattan. The video also offered some tantalizing clues about who would star in the game. Based on what we saw, we can confirm Revolver Ocelot, Otacon, and even Liquid Snake. Unfortunately, Kojima was secretive about any storyline specifics, but we were able to catch a glimpse of a new female mercenary fighting with Snake.

The biggest question on everybody's mind at the show, however, was, "How did Kojima pull this off? How could this game shine so brightly when so many others on the floor are nowhere near this level?" The answer is simpler than you might think: Kojima has admitted the game budget is the size of that of "A Japanese *Godzilla* movie." (Current Japanese *Godzilla* films cost $10 to $12 million.) Another factor behind the polished quality is the fact that Kojima has a veteran team that's able to rise to any challenge, as evidenced by this quote he gave in an interview

"The team is a very masochistic group. They don't give up, they always come up with a way, and they enjoy the pain"
— Hideo Kojima

with *ign.com*: "Yes, it is difficult to develop on PlayStation2. But, when we run into a problem, say maybe we cannot do this on PlayStation2, our team always comes up with a different way to do it. In that sense, our team is a masochistic group. They don't give up, they always come up with a way, and they enjoy the pain."

Of course, all that anyone has seen so far is just a video, but the impact has already been made. Developers who have been butting their heads against the PlayStation2 hardware have something to aspire to, and many were seen studying the visual techniques in the game and trying to ascertain how they were done. Gamers viewing the video were also inspired — this is the kind of title we dream about. Serving to remind us why we play videogames in the first place. Even this glimpse of *Metal Gear Solid 2* has already irrevocably changed the gaming world, and Kojima's track record of going from video to game (as happened with the first *MGS*) is impeccable. It's going to be a long year to wait, but one that will certainly be worth it.

— *Blake Fischer*

■ Solid Snake has many new moves at his disposal, including the ability to hop the rail and hang over the edge while the guard passes by

Drakan: PS2

■ Publisher: **SCEA** ■ Developer: **Surreal Software** ■ Release Date: **Winter** ■ Origin: **US**

The dragon-riding Rynn returns in an epic adventure possible only on PlayStation2

Two years ago, start-up developer Surreal Software visited the **NextGen** offices and blew us away. We saw an early but polished level of *Drakan: Order of the Flame* for PC, and were impressed by the scale of the world. But the real thrill came when Rynn seamlessly took command of the fire-breathing dragon Arokh in realtime and launched into flight.

Fast-forward to present day, and Surreal President Alan Patmore will excitedly tell you about the three-title deal the company has just signed with SCEA. No longer an unknown start-up, Surreal is also at work on *Gunslinger* for Activision, and has plans to license its engine as part of Sony's middleware program. The company's success can be traced directly back to the sword-wielding woman and her dragon, who are once again the reason for our visit: to get the first real look at an all-new *Drakan* adventure in full production for PlayStation2.

Like the PC title before it, *Drakan* for PS2 is a third-person, realtime action-RPG that is part land-based dungeon exploration and hand-to-hand combat, and part aerial combat from the back of the dragon. And while it features the two characters of the PC game, the adventure is an entirely new one.

"We have to assume that a lot of people on the console have not played the PC version," says Patmore, who again heads up the design. "When we ended the PC version, we left it a cliff-hanger. So we're summing up the history of the world of *Drakan*, including Rynn and Arokh's past adventures. This is a new adventure some time in their future, with closure for fans of the original game."

The title has been designed from the ground up to specifically take advantage of the power of PS2. As the story goes, Rynn and Arokh must restore order to their decaying land, and free an immortal Spirit Dragon. To do this, the pair must battle the forces of evil led by a race of wizards. The game spans eight massive levels, and boasts a variety of terrain, including strange

■ Surreal is using the PS2 to really advance *Drakan*'s environments. This elaborately designed castle is the perfect example

swamp and desert worlds.

"*Drakan* for PS2 is going to make *Drakan* look like a child's game in terms of level of depth," says Patmore. "It's going to be so much more complex in terms of its gameplay, its story, and its characterizations."

Already the in-game models show improvement, and Patmore says Rynn still has a few more passes to go before she's finished. Also important to the team is the use of facial expressions and articulate lip-synching, including all 59 of the game's NPCs, many of which will offer sub-quests.

"One of the bigger things we are introducing is an economy," he describes. "Instead of just finding weapons lying around, you kill enemies for gold, and then go to the blacksmith and have your weapon repaired or buy new weapons."

■ When finished, the game will run in 32-bit mode, at 60fps, fully anti-aliased

And there are weapons galore. The game will boast over 100 melee weapons, 20 projectile weapons, and a 12-category spell system. This time around, Rynn can specialize in three different character classes: warrior, archer, and magic-user. There's also a new depth to Rynn's combat system: Patmore feels the combat in the first game worked more on circle-strafing than actual dueling, and the team plans to implement a more dynamic weaponplay, including

■ Most of the textures in these screens are placeholders – carryovers from the first game. When the final, procedurally generated textures are added, we expect the game to really shine

Bushido Blade–style parrying and combos. "We really wanted to differentiate the weapons," Patmore says. "If you're a big longsword fan, there's a whole series of longswords you can get, and you'll develop a longsword fighting style. If you're an axe fan, you can go down the axe path."

Rynn also now switches between a sheathed-weapon exploration mode and a combat-ready mode. And, as Patmore assures, the move to the Dualshock2 controller wasn't as difficult as he anticipated.

"We wanted Rynn to be able to do *Tenchu*-style stealth attacks," he notes. "With an analog stick we can do that. If you put a little pressure on it, she'll sneak; add more, and you'll move to a walk, then jog, then run."

But don't think the focus will be entirely on Rynn. As Patmore explains, there will be plenty more dragons in this adventure. Not unlike LucasArts' *X-Wing* series, Surreal intends to bring massive aerial dogfights to this game, with squadrons of good dragons and evil dragons mixing it up in the sky.

"Arokh is actually much more fun to control with the dual analog," he says. "You get more of a sense of flight with the joystick than with a keyboard and mouse, you can bank more, and you really feel the pitching and rolling."

Given that the team had to rewrite most of the game code, Patmore is certain there is no way the title can be brought to the PC in its current state. There's a grocery list of new technologies going into *Drakan* PS2, including procedurally generated landscape textures so that environments feature non-repeating textures, dynamic skies, weather and water effects, and a realtime day/night cycle. The draw distance has also been dramatically improved, and as Patmore describes: "We have a castle you can fly up to from far away, and it's so cool. That's what PlayStation2 allows us to do. We can now do what we have actually envisioned."

— *Tom Russo*

■ *Drakan* will offer players more than 47 subquests

■ As in the first *Drakan*, you'll rain fire down on enemy encampments from the back of your dragon, Arokh

Time Splitters

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Free Radical Design**
■ Release Date: **PS2 launch** ■ Origin: **UK**

Meet people from across time, then kill them

If you were to guess what the first project was from Free Radical Design — a company formed of ex-*GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark* team members — you'd probably think it was another hardcore, first-person action-adventure. Well, you'd be half right. While *Time Splitters* is a first-person shooter, it diverges from the team's previous design and instead follows the precedent set by *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* (oh, and *Turok: Rage Wars*, but who cares about that?) into the multiplayer arena.

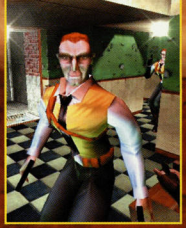
The first thing we noticed was the immediate difference in the feel of the game. "We're not being too serious here," explains director David Doak. "Our inspiration was originally B-movies, and we wanted to get away from that hardcore kind of thing." Gameplay takes place in nine different time periods spread out between 1935 and 2035, each with its own movie theme. Don't expect a time-traveling epic adventure, though, because not only is the game much more focused on fast action, but you actually play separate characters in their own unique adventures for each level. Besides the leading man (you), each level also has its own sub-cast of supporting enemies and weapons that are time specific. So in the 1930s you can play the part of a brave adventurer raiding a mummy's tomb with a torch and a pistol, while in the '70s you play a mutton-chopped cop out to take back the streets. Other scenarios include a teen scream flick haunted house and a sci-fi cyborg adventure.

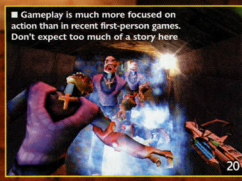
Free Radical Design has been busy putting in as many multiplayer modes as they can

While we expect the single-player game to be fun, it's the multiplayer action that's expected to draw the crowds. The most important design principle, according to Doak, was that the team wouldn't have to apologize for the framerates. No longer hindered by the technical

limitations of Nintendo 64, the team has had the freedom to create a multiplayer game where the technology doesn't hinder the action, and that means 60 FPS with no slowdown, no matter what. The best part is, even at this early stage in the design they appear to be pulling it off. We were shown four players going at it on a split-screen with loads of effects, and the game didn't even stutter slightly. By the release date you'll even be able to add some extra bots to the mix without a problem.

And deathmatch isn't the only option. Free Radical Design has been hard at work putting in as many multiplayer modes as they can. The game will include a variant on the ever-popular capture the flag, and also a king of the hill–style game in which you must find and guard a certain area of the map for as long as possible. Even more exciting is the inclusion of a *Team Fortress*–inspired mode called "Escort Assassin," which has one team taking the role of the target and his guards, and the other playing as the would-be assassins. Each mode is playable in every available time period, but with the single-player map partitioned differently depending on what kind of game you're playing. In addition, there will also be nine multiplayer-only maps for you to choose from.





■ Gameplay is much more focused on action than in recent first-person games. Don't expect too much of a story here

Eighteen maps might seem like a lot, but the level editor that comes with the game will allow you to make hundreds more. While it will be much simpler than PC map editors (for obvious reasons), *Time Splitters'* map editor features enough snap together, pre-built pieces to ensure plenty of variety. You can even build maps that span multiple stories for some vertical sniper-friendly deathmatch action. Of course, the ability to set player starts, weapon locations (and types, enabling you to match 1935 revolvers against 2035 laser rifles), and even colored lighting is available. The best thing about these custom maps is that they take up barely any space on a

"Our inspiration was originally B-movies, and we wanted to get away from that hardcore kind of thing."

— David Doak

■ With the built-in level editor you can create your own maps for either multiplayer or bot deathmatch action

■ The 60 FPS framerate doesn't stutter a bit – even when the screen is filled with enemies

■ Each time period you fight in will have its own unique enemies, which range from zombies to gangsters to cyborgs

memory card, so you can trade them with friends easily. While developers seem to be pushing first-person shooters heavily on consoles, there are still some birthing pains for the genre, most notably the lack of a keyboard and mouse. Still we can't emphasize enough that Doak and his team at Rare were responsible for making the genre playable on the N64 in the first place, and the early version of *Time Splitters* played by **Next Generation** was fast, fun, and showed lots of promise. Will the console FPS take off into the multiplayer arena like it did on PC? With both *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III* coming to consoles this year, it just might. If it does, *Time Splitters* will be one of the first on the shelf to show how it should be done — furiously paced, with plenty of personality.

— Blake Fischer

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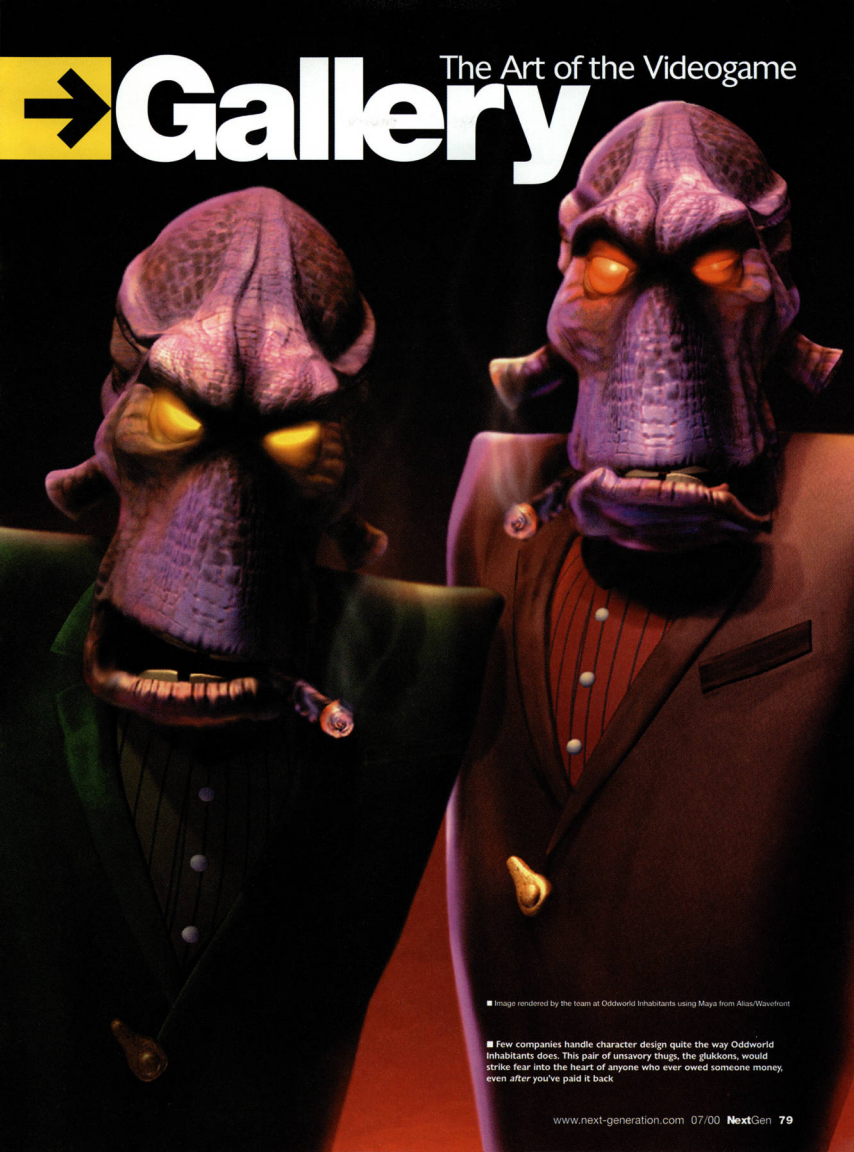
Gallery

The Art of the Videogame



■ Image rendered by the team at Oddworld Inhabitants using Maya from Alias/Wavefront

■ Few companies handle character design quite the way Oddworld Inhabitants does. This pair of unsavory thugs, the glukkons, would strike fear into the heart of anyone who ever owed someone money, even *after* you've paid it back

Gallery

■ The sheer detail and beauty that are the hallmarks of Square's 3D art continue to astound with every new title. Looking over this selection of works for the soon to be released *Final Fantasy IX* convinces us that they are, as far as we're concerned, among the most amazing images ever rendered

© Square/xxxxxxxxxxxx 1999

■ *Final Fantasy IX* character design by Yoshitaka Amano, rendered by the Square team using Maya from Alias|Wavefront and RenderMan from Pixar

Gallery

■ Even Square's "lesser" games show a strong sense of character and grace. Serge (above, lower right, lower left) and his partner Kid (below middle) from the upcoming *Chrono Cross* are prime examples of how to make even stylized, anime-influenced characters seem real

■ Chrono Cross character design by Nobuteru Yuuki, rendered by the Square team using Maya from Alias|Wavefront and RenderMan from Pixar

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Finals

Some months are better than others, but this month there are still plenty of tasty games out there to be savored

PlayStation 2

Fantavision 87
Sky Surfer 87

■ When the camera pans out, characters are often dwarfed by their surroundings

■ **Dreamcast**

Power Stone 2

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

Everybody must get stoned

Sticklers will argue that there are few, if any, truly 3D fighting games on the market. Strip away the polygons, and most fighters are just variations of our old friend *Street Fighter*. One of the first Dreamcast games to fire a shot across the bow of the status quo was *Power Stone*. Instead of fighting in a 2D plane, you were free to roam around intricate, multitiered levels, smashing the scenery as you went. Its sequel, *Power Stone 2*, takes the original's strengths — awesome level design, polished visuals, and new-fangled fighting system — and reworks each on a grander scale. The result is a hybrid that owes as much to *Bomberman* and *Final Fight* as it does to *Tekken*, and you have to applaud Capcom for finally breaking from tradition. The fact that *Power Stone 2* is actually a complete blast (and a great party game) is the icing on the cake.

The controls are simple: attack, jump, and "use." Most of the time, you don't have access to any special moves. Instead, players are encouraged to smash crates and open treasure chests that are

Dreamcast

Power Stone 2	84
4 Wheel Thunder	88
Maken X	88
Evolution 2	88
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	91
Nightmare Creatures II	91
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PlayStation

Jedi Power Battles	92
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PC

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StarLancer	95

The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at Next Generation will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
★★★★☆ **Excellent**
★★★☆☆ **Good**
★★☆☆☆ **Fair**
★☆☆☆☆ **Bad**

Denotes a review of a Japanese product

THE POWER OF STONES

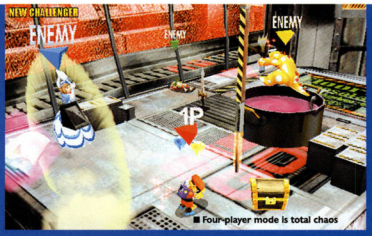
In the real world, collecting gems doesn't give you superpowers. But that doesn't mean gems don't have real-world powers. For example, the first successful optical laser was constructed in 1960 with a ruby crystal at its core. Without the ruby, the laser might never have been invented, and then what would Han Solo have used to fight off Storm Troopers … a cream pie?

■ The floor, the floor, the floor is on fire!

scattered around the levels to uncover useful power-up items (150 in total). These include guns, spears, and stranger stuff such as skateboards and megaphones. Most are weapons, but others slow down opponents or restore health. There are also plenty of interactive objects embedded in the levels themselves: boulder-shooting catapults, gun turrets, and even controllable tanks and planes. The constant rush for power-ups and conspicuous lack of a block button create chaotic, offense-heavy battles.

Then there are the Power Stones. As in the original, if you manage to capture three stones, you're temporarily granted a fancier costume, stronger regular attacks, and two super attacks. Detractors of the original will be happy to know that powered-up characters are far more vulnerable now, and can be knocked out of their attacks just like normal characters.

Although only four new characters have been added to the sequel, what the roster lacks in quantity it makes up for in eccentricity. The game's new characters include a geeky Pinocchio look-alike, a cowboy, a belle in a hoop skirt who comes across as "Mary Poppins from hell," and a chef who chases his opponents around with a frying pan and attacks with soup. Bizarre.



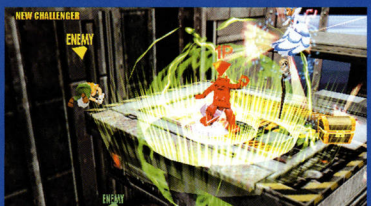
■ Four-player mode is total chaos

It's clear that the bulk of development time went into level design. Each of the game's eight levels is multitiered, incredibly detailed, and full of surprises. Take the airship level, for example. You begin on the deck of an enormous ship sailing through the clouds, then halfway through the fight, the airship breaks into pieces and everyone is flung into the air. As you drop, you're forced to fight in mid-air while trying to grab a pair of falling parasols — fail to grab one, and you smash into the ground, taking significant damage. This constantly shifting pace can be unsettling at times, but it keeps each match distinct. Unfortunately, the trade-off for such big levels is a lack of variety — a paltry eight arenas make for pretty repetitive matches.

On the other hand, the larger arenas are perfect settings for the game's four-player mode. With four players running around, shooting, and throwing things, the winner of a match is often the player who can filter out the explosions and flying debris, and simply locate his character to make sure he isn't getting pummeled. Four-player mode is unquestionably the most fun way to play.

Sadly, the single-player Adventure mode is much less compelling. In this mode, you pick up items and coins as you play. These can be used in the game's Item Shop to purchase or combine items to form more powerful objects, which can then be found during normal gameplay. For example, hand the shopkeeper a trident and a pole, and she'll return with an extending lance. The added items are certainly a novelty, but there's not a whole lot of fun in playing the same game again and again just to unlock power-ups. Capcom should have taken a cue from Namco and included a more full-fledged single-player game, such as the Quest mode from *Soul Calibur*.

— Matt Sammons



■ Pete unleashes his super-electric-robot attack

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: An innovative and beautiful fighting game, *Power Stone 2* will keep you entertained for hours. Just make sure to bring along a few friends.

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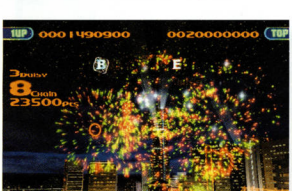


■ Oh yeah, it's pretty, and unlike more than a few tech demos masquerading as games, it's pretty fun too

■ PlayStation2

Fantavision

■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **Sony**

So good it sparkles

While many have rightly criticized PlayStation2's current software lineup as lacking gameplay innovation, this argument doesn't hold water against *Fantavision*. Billed as a "fireworks simulation," the title is actually a unique blend of classic arcade action, quirky atmosphere, and puzzle gaming strategy.

The basic premise is simple, yet engaging: Fireworks are launched into the air, and it's your job to set them off. This is done by using an on-screen cursor to play connect the dots, and when you've linked enough shells together, you detonate them. The trouble is, shells have a limited lifespan, and each can only be linked with shells of the same color, a wild card, or a bonus item. If you fail to detonate a shell before it fizzles, you lose energy, and when your energy reaches zero, the game is over.

Graphically, *Fantavision* is simply gorgeous; the screen constantly erupts in blossoms of bright, overloaded color, and even the backgrounds pack a visual punch as you move from Earth to outer space and beyond. The sounds typically associated with a fireworks show have been replaced with campy, yet oddly appropriate, "intermission-style" organ muzak, which provides a necessary foil to the gameplay.

It's only in terms of its staying power that *Fantavision* falls short. The game is really fun — it's basically *Missile Command* with color coding — but with only eight levels, it can easily be mastered and beaten in an afternoon. It's still completely enjoyable, but experienced gamers will find themselves viewing the ending credits much, much sooner than they would've liked.

— *Eric Bratcher*

■ You can regain your energy during Star Mine, a bonus round that bombards you with a heavy stream of mostly like-colored shells

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A visually arresting cousin of *Missile Command* masquerading as a puzzle game. What's not to love? If only it was longer.

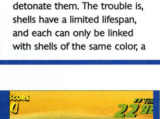
■ PlayStation2

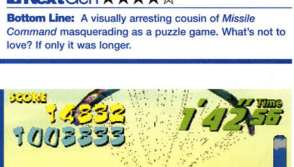
Sky Surfer

■ Publisher: **Idea Factory** ■ Developer: **Idea Factory**

Sometimes a good idea simply isn't good enough

■ This is what most of the game looks like — one single character, floating in empty air. Kinda dull, isn't it?





■ Other vague challenges include popping baloons over a practice fan, and hitting the drop zone ... yawn...

It must be said that the guys at Idea Factory tried very hard to make sky surfing into an interesting videogame. They tried and failed. The sport, which involves strapping a modified snowboard to your feet and leaping from an airplane, is probably very thrilling. It certainly has that Mountain Dew-esque "extreme" quality.

Unfortunately, all their efforts were in vain. Like bungee jumping, this is a sport that probably *can't* make the switch from real life to video simulation.

Graphically, *Sky Surfer* is only interesting at ground level. Unless you're playing the balloon-popping mode, where your character is suspended above a giant rooftop fan, there's not much to look at as you plummet towards Earth. Once the parachute opens, the landscape fades in, and for brief moments, it is very pretty. Otherwise it's just you, the clouds, and the roaring wind. Piloting the parachute as you attempt to hit your landing target is much more fun than performing stunts, and requires that you hit visible thermals — a game mechanic clearly borrowed from the original *Pilotwings*.

The character models are actually pretty impressive — looking not unlike *Tekken* fighters in terms of quality. Hair and clothing react in a convincing fashion, and the animation as they spin and twist is fairly realistic. However, this also reveals one of the game's fundamental flaws: There just isn't that much to do. Almost all of the maneuvers involve spinning around or flipping. Since there's no terrain, stunts are limited. Game modes are pitifully sparse too.

In the end, *Sky Surfer* feels more like a sub-game from *Pilotwings* than a full-fledged piece of software. It remains to be seen if there will be a U.S. release, but at excruciating import prices, this game is a complete waste of money and time, since you'll be done with it in just a couple of hours.

— *Frank O'Connor*

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A game so dull and listless that it almost defines the concept of duff launch software.

4 Wheel Thunder

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Kalisto Entertainment**

■ **It's not the worst racing game ever made, but on a system with so many better ones, it's not even in the running**

Originally, *4 Wheel Thunder* was never meant to be a kind of land-based cousin to *Hydro Thunder*, but when Midway bought it from Kalisto, it was retro-fitted to be part of the series. It shows. As a result, the game's balance has been shifted into a too-heavy reliance on turbo boosts, and what few shortcuts have been pasted in here and there seem to have been added with little regard for whether they're useful.

The game isn't totally awful. Although the individual tracks are a bit bland to look at, the models sport nice, clean lines and the textures are well detailed. And, overall, from track to track there's a great deal of variety, from deserts to rocky mountains.

However, the control is a bit sluggish, and the physics model is "bouncy," making it feel at times as if you're driving a rubber ball instead of a 4x4. You might also notice that cars have no problem pushing you out of the way, but when you slam into them it has little effect. Plus, many of the tracks, especially the indoor arenas, are more frustrating than challenging, and the level of difficulty ramps up far too steeply to be enjoyable. What's worse, in Championship mode, there's no way to stop and start over — you're forced to complete it, even when you know you're going to lose and have to race again anyway.

— *Jeff Lundrigan*

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: It's pretty, but ultimately *4 Wheel Thunder* simply has far too many flaws for its slim gameplay value.

Maken X

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**
■ Publisher: **Atlus** ■ Developer: **Sega**

■ **Choosing the right character will enable you to locate, battle, and brain jack this six-bladed badass**

Dreamcast owners seeking a great first-person title are going to be disappointed in *Maken X*. For the most part, this sword is pretty dull.

The game's main character is Maken, an artificial brain that looks roughly like a mutated carrot with a face, who lives inside bladed weapons. Maken has the ability to "brain jack," i.e. possess, a bizarre assortment of characters. Brain jacking is the key to success in *Maken X*, and the story line changes depending on what characters you choose to pilot.

Unfortunately, the game that's actually built around this creative premise is largely uninspired. With little atmosphere and bland levels, gameplay is a big ho-hum. There are nice touches — an elevator that opens into a darkened room with a pair of glowing red eyes staring out from within, or puzzle rooms in which you coerce armored enemies onto trap doors — but these moments are too rare to keep *Maken X* from skewering itself.

— *Eric Bratcher*

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: There are redeeming elements, but they just don't resolve into anything exciting. We suggest waiting for *Half-Life*

■ **Dreamcast**

Evolution 2

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Sting**

Lots of style and just enough substance

■ **The graphics are a notable improvement over the already sumptuous original**

The original *Evolution* was a charmer of an RPG, almost in spite of itself. Although it hewed too close to typical RPG mechanics to truly distinguish its gameplay, it still featured just enough small advances to keep your interest up. Most importantly, however, it was an incredibly good-looking game, with character designs that were well animated, extremely appealing, and full of, well, character.

Which is why we're happy to report that the main cast from the original has returned for the sequel — Mag, Linear, Gre, Chain, and Pepper are all back, and looking better than ever. In fact, *Evolution 2* is a marked visual improvement over its already impressive predecessor.

The occasional smeary textures of the original have been upgraded to incredible sharpness, and the character models seem to have a higher polygon count as well, although everything still runs at a rock-stead 60fps. The gameplay mechanics, however, are almost exactly the same. The most notable difference is that most of the dungeons are fixed, rather than randomly generated (although the layouts are still somewhat simple).

Also, there's now a "practice dungeon" available, which *is* randomly generated, so you have the option of going through it in order to raise character skills (and gather items) before heading to the "real" dungeons in other areas of the world.

Still, the greatest improvement in this game is a much more compelling (and coherent) storyline, as Mag and company travel to Museville at the behest of the Adventurers' Guild, only to quickly become embroiled with a gang of local thieves.

The dialog also seems a bit better translated this time around, and the game lasts longer.

— *Jeff Lundrigan*

■ **The characters are better looking too – ain't Linear *too* cute?**

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Just as with the original, nothing about *Evolution 2*'s gameplay is going to set the RPG world on fire, yet once again, its incredible graphics and appealing characters make *Evolution 2* an experience to be savored and enjoyed.

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■ Dreamcast

Marvel vs. Capcom 2

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

Sometimes two dimensions are enough

■ *Marvel vs. Capcom* 2 proves that 2D fighting isn't dead yet

Let's face it, Capcom doesn't usually deviate much in its fighting game formulas. Each installment of every series inevitably adds new moves and new characters, yet it still plays basically the same. Except in this one case. With *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*, Capcom has actually gone and done the unthinkable: They've taken a fairly playable game, re-thought it, re-worked it, and come up with an altogether better experience. Oh yeah, and they also added all the new characters and moves that we expected.

The biggest change is the move from the traditional six-button Capcom fighting style to a more Dreamcast-friendly four-button scheme. While this sounds like a "dumbing down," it actually works much better, and the side benefit is actually a more controllable, combo-friendly experience. Other big changes are the new 3D backgrounds and the fact that each battle is now three-on-three instead of two-on-two. Bottom line: *MvC2* is essentially a different — and better — experience than the first version.

The game also features the largest variety of fighters we've seen in a fighting game, with 56 characters total. Even if you don't have anyone to play against, there's an online head-to-head mode which, sadly, only works in Japan now (although we expect it to be working in the U.S. by the game's launch this fall).

— Blake Fischer

■ Whap! Pow! Zam! Bang!

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Overall, this is the best 2D fighting experience available on a console. If you have a Dreamcast and you can't wait for *SF3: Third Strike*, this is the game to get.

Nightmare Creatures II

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Kalisto Entertainment**

■ ***Nightmare Creatures II* has a thoroughly disturbing atmosphere, but only so-so gameplay**

Horror-filled, but ultimately not horrific, Konami's *Nightmare Creatures II* plays out like a demented *Tomb Raider* as you control the clinically insane anti-hero Herbert Wallace through some of the most unsettling scenery in all of videogamedom. The third-person perspective chopfest takes place in Europe in the 1930s, and contains nine fairly huge worlds. Wallace must explore these dank, creepy locations and destroy the mad sorcerer Adam Crowley.

Endless waves of enemies demand killing, and you'll marvel at the hideous freaks and flesh-chewing zombies. Sadly, *Nightmare Creatures II* puts too great an emphasis on fighting, and little on the fighting engine. Battles play out in mindless button mashing with Wallace chop-chopping away. Two attack buttons allow you to execute combination moves, but the control response seems off.

Dumb puzzle solving requires you to hunt down keys and dynamite, and there's a pervasive artificial *lack* of intelligence that allows for multiple enemies, but only one-on-one combat. It's terrifying watching Wallace hack up a defeated enemy, while a healthy foe sits there twiddling its hideous thumbs — only it's not the sort of terrifying Konami had in mind.

— Greg Orlando

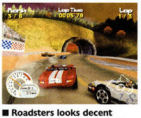
NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Konami's "dream" turns out to be nothing "but clouds in our coffee." (We sincerely apologize to Carly Simon.)

Roadsters

■ Platform: **Dreamcast**

■ Publisher: **Titus** ■ Developer: **Player 1**



■ **Roadsters looks decent enough, but the gameplay is more annoying than exciting**

Pretty, but flawed, Titus' *Roadsters* can take its place in the growing pile of disappointing Dreamcast racing games. Though it holds some pretty neat cars, and some gorgeously detailed backgrounds, the play is the thing and in this case, it just won't play well to the masses.

You can race on eight separate tracks, each with three minor variations on its theme. As players race along these pretty tracks, they'll be accosted by various "Acts of God" such as volcanoes that spew lava and tornadoes that wreak havoc on a car. It's a neat idea and Titus should be commended for this feature, but it does little to moderate the yuckiness of basic gameplay.

Cars, be they from Alfa-Romeo or Toyota, move as one huge block devoid of axles, and handle like go-karts. Tracks hold various shortcuts, but finding them can be an all-too-costly proposition; though it's possible to smash through just about everything in *Roadsters* (including buildings and huge boulders), a simple barricade will often times remain impenetrable.

Worse, you never know whether a barricade will give way or not. If it doesn't, your car will be robbed of all its momentum, and you can kiss any sort of lead goodbye. Stupid AI turns opposing racers into dedicated headhunters whose sole purpose is to perform a videogame mugging of the your car. Toss in a few annoying taunts and pretty soon it all starts looking like one damnable pothole.

— Greg Orlando

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: The Dreamcast edition of Titus' well-worn racer *Roadsters* provides a rather straight and uninterrupted ride to ennui.

Star Wars Episode I: Jedi Power Battles

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **LucasArts** ■ Developer: **LucasArts**

■ **And the cavalcade of subpar *Episode I* games continues unabated with *Jedi Power Battles***

So far, *Episode I*, the movie, hasn't produced any notable games, and *Jedi Power Battles* does nothing to upset the curve.

To begin with, it doesn't look great. It's not ugly, just bland, with simple architecture and big, smeary textures. Also, the characters lack detail and are almost devoid of personality. You can choose from five different Jedi (Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon, Mace Windu, Adi Gallia, and Plo Koon), each with his own set of moves, but there's little else to distinguish one from the other. The story roughly follows the film as you run from left to right, slashing your way through hundreds of enemies. For about a half of a level, it's kind of fun in a brainless sort of way.

Unfortunately, *Power Battles* is more closely patterned after *Shinobi* than *Final Fight*. It's basically a 16-bit side-scrolling action game in 3D, with lots of jumping and platforms. This in itself wouldn't be too bad, but the control isn't precise enough, and the level design is more frustrating than fun, because the simplistic graphics often make distances hard to judge. Worse, the level of difficulty ramps up almost instantly to "nearly impossible." — *Jeff Lundrigan*

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: This game really needed a few more months of playtesting and balancing. As it is, this is best approached as an exercise in anger management.

Vanguard Bandits

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Working Designs** ■ Developer: **Human Development**

■ **Colorful and occasionally clever, *Vanguard Bandits* brings a bit more character to the strategy RPG than usual**

Vanguard Bandits takes place in a medieval world where everyone tramps around in 25-foot-tall mechs called ATACs. The main character is Bastion, your typical hotheaded kid who discovers he's of royal blood and therefore is destined to put an end to all war. The game itself is a strategy RPG, not unlike *Final Fantasy Tactics*. Battles are turn-based, and a winning battle plan involves chesslike maneuvering and well-chosen attacks.

Graphically, the game will neither thrill nor offend, but the story is fun, the characters are entertaining (if stereotypical), and the dialogue is well translated, though strangely peppered with dated pop culture references ("Calgon, take me away!"). Gameplay is solid, with an intuitive, informative interface, customizable mechs, and more than 50 well-planned battles.

Vanguard Bandits may be the perfect starter strategy RPG. It's easy to pick up, and though it isn't innovative, it doesn't suffer any glaring shortcomings. — *Eric Bratcher*

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: *Vanguard Bandits* doesn't redefine the genre, but if you have the time, this strategy RPG is worth it.

Wild Arms 2

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **SCEA** ■ Developer: **Contrail**

■ ***Wild Arms 2* is a decent game, but is nearly indistinguishable from many other entries in the current glut of PlayStation RPGs**

PlayStation has seen an amazing selection of RPGs in recent months, and the trend doesn't seem to be slowing. Unfortunately, *Wild Arms 2* is an example of a decent RPG that may get left in the wake of many finer titles hitting the market at the same time.

The title actually refers to both the weapons used in combat and the warriors who use them. The game has three main characters: a young sorceress, Lilka; a zealous soldier, Ashley; and Brad, a war hero turned war criminal. They're all members of ARMS, a group devoted to combating Odessa, a terrorist organization.

Sound typical? Well, it is. There's really nothing new here, from the characters, to the turn-based battle system, to the graphics. In fact, the only features that stand out are the largely innocuous music that changes thematically to match each location, and the cinematics that introduce each enemy boss. On the other hand, there's not much to complain about in this pretty well packaged game. At the end of the day, though, it provides very little that will stick in your memory as being innovative or above average. — *Eric Bratcher*

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: An adequate title, but one that doesn't have as much to offer as competitors such as *Vagrant Story* or *Alundra 2*.

■ PlayStation

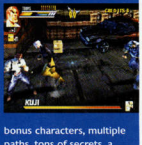
Gekido

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Interplay**

Because some days you just need a good beat 'em up

■ **If you love a good beat 'em up, *Gekido* is the game for you — the best one to hit PlayStation in ages**

In the spirit of the best beat 'em ups comes *Gekido*, a classic, nonsensical side-scrolling adventure that encourages you to kick ass first and ask questions, well, never. With a graphics engine more akin to *Tekken 3*'s than *Double Dragon*'s, plus a combo system to match, there is surprising depth just below the surface of this button masher. As you progress through the game, different combos are displayed on the screen, each one building on the combo before it. These become essential in the later stages of the game, when enemies begin to wise up to basic punch-punch-punch attacks. Soon you graduate from fighting brainless street thugs to facing SWAT members (complete with shotguns and smoke grenades), and even otherworldly monsters that require careful consideration.



To combat the monotony that's part and parcel of the genre, the game's developers have thrown in bonus characters, multiple paths, tons of secrets, a world where even mundane objects seem to be filled with TNT, and an entirely separate four-player fighting game. Although not as well designed as *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style*'s, this brawl mode is a genuinely fun, *Power Stone*-esque romp, giving you a chance to sharpen your combo skills and get used to each of the different characters' idiosyncrasies. Just as in the adventure mode, weapons can be thrown, fired, or swung at friends, and figuring out the best offense against someone with a pistol is just one of the skills that will transfer directly into success in the main game.

— *Daniel Erickson*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It's hardly revolutionary, but *Gekido*'s the best beat 'em up in a long time on PlayStation, and comes with a fun fighting game mode to boot.

■ Squaring off across a bridge is extremely difficult — Sun Tzu recommended an army twice as large as your enemy's

■ PC

Shogun: Total War

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **The Creative Assembly**

If Sun Tzu were alive today, he'd be loving this game

Developers have often returned to the period of Japanese history known as *Sunguko Jedi*, "The Age of the Country at War." *Nobunaga's Ambition* and *Lords of the Rising Sun* did excellent jobs of bringing this dramatic time in history to life, and Creative Assembly has built on those fine titles with *Shogun: Total War*, a combination 2D, turn-based, and 3D realtime strategy game.

The turn-based element, nicely replicating the feel of a board game, is easy to figure out and features challenging AI. As head of a clan, you must reunify Japan under your rule. Using armies, emissaries, ninja, shinobi, and geisha, you'll strive for domination over a period of many years. As time passes, you'll use your wealth to develop more sophisticated structures, which unlock advanced technologies to serve in the cause of war.

The 3D realtime aspect of the game is dedicated to controlling your military units on the battlefield. You can have the computer resolve the combat automatically, though you'll be missing out on half the game. Instead, if you have the guts to engage in open combat, you'll enter the provinces of Japan and fight. Your men fight in military units as large as 120 men each, with up to 16 units on the field at once on either side (that's 3,840 total!). The 3D engine is fantastic, giving life to rolling landscapes that lend themselves well to the strategic mind (fog hides your forces from archers, for instance).

Unfortunately, the realtime section of the game has the most problems from a user interface standpoint. It's difficult to get the hang of, and the tutorial hardly serves to make you comfortable. This can be frustrating if you're a novice player, because instead of fighting with the enemy, you'll be forced to fight with the game.

— Jason Samuel

KILLER GEISHA?

Geisha are the ultimate, top-of-the-line assassins in *Shogun: Total War*. Because of the code of bushido, which forbids samurai from harming women, a geisha is free to enter any castle, and live on the lord's good graces before making an attempt on his life. However, even if she fails, because of the code she still can't killed, and can continue to make attempts. The only way to get rid of one is to send your own geisha against her – which, unfortunately, kills them both through an act of mutual *seppuku*, or ritual suicide. Bummer.

■ Inside the throne room is where the other clans will beg you for mercy ... er, alliances

■ The turn-based strategy element tries to re-create a board game, including wooden sliding sounds when you move a piece

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Once you figure out the realtime interface, this is a thoroughly enjoyable experience that has a lot of replay value. *Shogun* is only the first of a proposed *Total War* series. We're sure looking forward to more.

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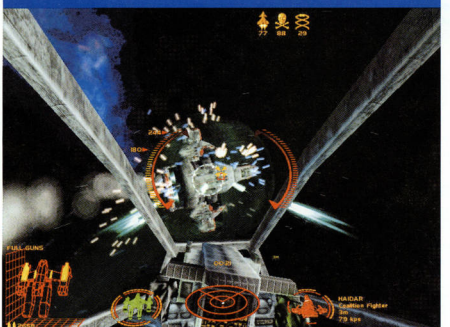
■ PC

StarLancer

■ Publisher: **Microsoft** ■ Developer: **Digital Anvil**

A new space opera from the folks who all but invented it



■ Gatling cannons make short work of a Coalition fighter

The first title to come from Chris Roberts' new Digital Anvil Studios shows that Roberts' new development house is not a lax vanity project. A solid game in the *Wing Commander* tradition, *StarLancer* lays the groundwork for a hopeful future. Erin Roberts, the man behind Origin's *Privateer* series and at the helm of this particular title, proves once again that he knows space combat.

Unlike previous space operas, the bad guys in *StarLancer* are all human. There are no invading aliens; instead it's the U.S.-led Alliance pitted against those sneaky Reds in the Coalition. The borders have been expanded to deep space, but Cold War jingoism still reigns supreme. You begin by signing on as a new recruit in the 45th, your typical ragtag band of volunteer fighter jockeys equipped with third-rate machines.

The game is stop-in-your-tracks gorgeous, which is no mean feat to pull off when the backgrounds mainly consist of a black void. Fortunately, the emptiness of space ensures that all the polygons that would normally be spent on walls, mountains, or scenery can be applied to the ships. Weapons include a small number of guided missiles, but your main choice in the game boils down to choosing either straight-firing beam weapons or the less damaging, but autoaiming, Blind Fire guns. Blind Fire allows you to concentrate more on flying and less on lining up shots, but due to the guns' lack of power, dogfights naturally take longer. In fact, you can tell a lot about a person by the armament he chooses, and the choice lends the game an interesting dynamic.

We will admit that the missions are a bit on the repetitive side — there are far too many runs in which you guard slower convoys from incoming torpedoes — and the game follows a little too closely to the *Wing Commander* mold to be truly innovative. Still, there's more than enough action to keep you on your toes.

— *Chris Kramer*

■ A capital ship jumps in from hyperspace. Trust us, it's a big 'un

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: You'll definitely love *StarLancer* on its own, and as an appetizer for next year's *FreeLancer*; we're already salivating.

Beetle Buggin'

■ Platform: **PC**

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Xpiral**

■ **Considering it's a cheap, easy-to-get-into racing game, *Beetle Buggin'* will give you your money's worth**

The model of most middle-level publishers is simple: Wait for obvious trends in games to appear, acquire inexpensive licenses, tap out competent code, then publish it at affordable prices. Like it or not, this kind of conservative strategy results in profits and in games such as *Beetle Buggin'*.

While it certainly can't compete against such first-rate driving games as *Mobile 1 Rally Championship* or *Gran Turismo 2*, *Beetle Buggin'* is a simple, colorful, easy-to-master driving game. Because the game is clearly meant to reach as wide an audience as possible, the driving is rather simple, with little more to worry about than the gas and steering. There are the standard Quick Race and Challenge modes, but the Championship mode is the most fun, and the best way to unlock all 50 cars and 20 tracks.

The 3D-accelerated graphics are all happy pastels and primary colors. The cars look like their real-world counterparts, but don't look for damage modeling or particle effects — it's all pretty basic. The keyboard controls are, as usual, the last resort in a driving game, but *Beetle Buggin'* handles just fine with a gamepad and even better with a wheel. There's no Internet support, but two players can play split screen, or six can go buggin' on a LAN. The game's not deep, but it's fun, pretty, and more importantly, cheap. — *Jim Preston*

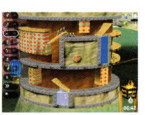
NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Fun and colorful. It's the kind of game your mom would buy.

Lemmings Revolution

■ Platform: **PC**

■ Publisher: **Take 2** ■ Developer: **Psygnosis**



■ **Oh yes! More lemmings! Puzzle games rarely get better**

Psygnosis has finally made a worthy sequel to 1985's classic puzzle game, *Lemmings*. After many misfires, the company has restored the roots of the original, and *Lemmings Revolution* is an absolute pleasure to play.

The game ventures into what's best described as pseudo-3D territory. You rotate each level like a cylinder, helping the lemmings climb, dig, block, and float their way to freedom. New to *Revolution* are anti-gravity pods (which cause the lemmings to walk upside-down), trampolines, and rocketing lemmings, to name a few. There are also new traps, including sliding walls, switches, piranha-filled pools, and other painful-looking contraptions. Finally, lemmings can enter a level from multiple locations, and some lemmings can walk on water.

Controlling the game is a breeze: Assigning skills, rotating the map, and directing the rodents are all handled via the mouse. And each level (more than 100 total) can be solved in multiple ways. — *Kevin Rice*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: As a puzzle game that can be quite complex, *Lemmings Revolution* isn't for everybody. However, fans of the original will love the return to the game's roots, and newcomers will have hours of fun.

Gamer's Guide

But wait, there's more! Act now and we'll include two months of PlayStation2 reviews!

Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, your insanely popular resource to what's worth buying and what's not even worth a glance. Each month, we update the list with every game we've reviewed since the last time, and cull out older stuff. Which older stuff? Well, mostly bad PC games, but a few first-generation console titles, too. We leave in just about every title that ever got ★★★★★ though, since they're almost always a good bet, no matter how old they get. (Although it is worth taking note of which issue it was reviewed in, since time and technology march on, and a game that scored ★★★★ a couple of years ago might only score ★★★ today.)

PlayStation2

title	publisher	rating	#
Dead or Alive 2 (Japan)	Tecmo	★★★★★	06/00
Driving Emotion Type-S (Japan)	Square	★★★★	06/00
DrumMania (Japan)	Konami	★★★	05/00
Eternal Ring (Japan)	From Software	★★★	05/00
Kessen (Japan)	Koei	★★★★	05/00
Ridge Racer V (Japan)	Namco	★★★★	05/00
Stepping Selection (Japan)	Jaleco	★★★	05/00
Street Fighter EX 3 (Japan)	Capcom	★★	05/00
Tekken Tag Tournament (Japan)	Namco	★★★★	06/00

Dreamcast

title	publisher	rating	#
Armada	Metro3D	★★★	02/00
Blue Stinger	Activision	★★★	11/99
Carrier	Jaleco	★★★	04/00
Centipede	Hasbro	★★★	02/00
Chef's Luv Shack	Acclaim	★★	02/00
Chu Chu Rocket	Sega	★★★★	05/00
Crazy Taxi	Sega	★★★★	04/00
Dead or Alive 2	Tecmo	★★★★★	06/00
Dynamite Cop 2	Sega	★★★	09/99
ECW: Hardcore Revolution	Acclaim	★	05.00
Evolution	UBI Soft	★★★	01.00
Expendable (Japan)	Rage	★	09/99
F1 World Grand Prix	Video System	★★★	05.00
Fighting Force 2	Eidos	★★	03/00
Flag to Flag CART Racing	Sega	★★★	10/99
Frame Gride (Japan)	From Software	★★★	09/99
House of the Dead 2	Sega	★★	09/99
Hydro Thunder	Midway	★★★★	10/99
Industrial Spy: Operation Espionage	UFO Interactive	★★★	05/00
King of Fighters (Japan)	SNK	★★★	11/99
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	Eidos	★★★★	05/00
MDK2	Interplay	★★★★	06/00
Monaco GP	Ubi Soft	★★★	11/99
Mortal Kombat: Gold	Midway	★★	10/99
NFL Blitz 2000	Midway	★★★	11/99
Pen Pen TriIceLon	Infogrames	★★	12/99
Plasma Sword	Capcom	★★	03/00
Power Stone	Capcom	★★★★	09/99
Psychic Force 2012	Acclaim	★	01.00
Quarterback Club 2000	Acclaim	★	01.00
Rayman 2	Ubi Soft	★★★★	05/00
Ready 2 Rumble	Midway	★★★★	11/99
Re-Volt	Acclaim	★★★	03.00
Resident Evil: Code Veronica	Capcom	★★★★★	20.00
Ripper Riders	Sega	★★★	01.00
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	★★★★	09/99
Sega GT Homologation Special	Sega	★★★★★	20.00
Sega Rally 2	Sega	★★★	01.00
Sega Sports NBA 2K	Sega	★★★★	01.00
Sega Sports NFL 2K	Sega	★★★	10/99
Sega Sports NHL 2K	Sega	★★★	04.00
Seventh Cross Evolution	NEC	★★	03.00
Slave Zero	Infogrames	★★★	01.00
Speed Devils	UBI Soft	★★★	01.00
Sonic Adventure	Sega	★★★★	10/99
Soul Calibur	Namco	★★★★★	11/99
Soul Fighter	Red Orb	★★★	03.00
Suzuki Alstare Extreme Racing	Ubi Soft	★	12/99
Sword of the Berserk: Guts Rage	Eidos	★★★	06.00
Tech Romancer	Capcom	★★★	06/00
Test Drive 6	Infogrames	★★	03.00
Time Stalkers	Sega	★★★	06.00
TNN Motorsports Hardcore Heat	ASC Games	★★	12/99
Tokyo Xtreme Racing	Crave	★★★	09/99
Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation	Eidos	★★	06.00
Toy Commander	Sega	★★★★	12/99
TrickStyle	Acclaim	★★	11.99
Vigilante 8: Second Offense	Activision	★★	03.00
Virtua Fighter 3tb	Sega	★★★★	12/99
Virtua Striker 2000	Sega	★★	04.00
Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram	Sega	★★★	03.00
Wild Metal	Rockstar Games	★★★	04.00
WWF Attitude	Acclaim	★	02.00
Zombie Revenge	Sega	★★	03.00

Nintendo 64

title	publisher	rating	#
1080° Snowboarding	Nintendo	★★★★★	42
A Bug's Life	Activision	★	09.99
All Star Baseball '99	Acclaim	★★★★	43
All Star Baseball 2000	Acclaim	★★★★	55
All Star Tennis '99	Ubi Soft	★★★	10/99
Armorines: Project S.W.A.R.M.	Acclaim	★	02.00
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes	3DO	★★★	12/99
Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo	★★★★	43
Battletanx	3DO	★★★★	51
Battletanx: Global Assault	3DO	★★★★	12/99
Beetle Adventure Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
Body Harvest	Midway	★★★★	48
Buck Bumble	Ubi Soft	★★★	48
Castlevania	Konami	★★★	51
Castlevania: Legacy of Darkness	Capcom	★★★	03/00
Cruisin' World	Midway	★★	48
Deadly Arts	Konami	★	49
Disney's Tarzan	Activision	★★★	05.00
Donkey Kong 64	Nintendo	★★★★	12/99
Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT Interactive	★	09/99
Earthworm Jim 3D	Rockstar Games	★	01.00
ECW: Hardcore Revolution	Acclaim	★	03/00
F-Zero X	Nintendo	★★★★★	46
FIFA Road to the World Cup 64	Electronic Arts	★★★★	38
Fighter's Destiny	Ocean	★★★	41
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Glover	Hasbro Interactive	★★★	48
Goemon's Great Adventure	Konami	★★★	53
Goldeneye 007	Nintendo	★★★★★	34
GT 64	Infogrames	★	47
Hot Wheels Turbo Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★	11/99
Hydro Thunder 64	Midway	★★★★	03/00
In the Zone 2000	Konami	★	02/00
International Superstar Soccer	Konami	★★★★★	32
International Superstar Soccer 98	Konami	★★★	44
Jet Force Gemini	Nintendo	★★★	11/99
Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest	Nintendo	★★★★	56
Lego Racers	Lego Media	★★	01.00
Mario Party 2	Nintendo	★★★	04/00
Mike Piazza's Strike Zone	GT Interactive	★	44
Mission: Impossible	Ocean	★★★	44
Monaco GP Racing Simulation 2	Ubi Soft	★★★	55
Monster Truck Madness 64	Rockstar	★	11/99
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★	44
Mystical Ninja	Konami	★★★	45
NBA in the Zone 64	Konami	★	41
NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC	Midway	★★★	01.00
NHL Breakaway 99	Acclaim	★★	50
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	★★★	50
Nuclear Strike 64	THQ	★★★★	05/00
Perfect Dark	Nintendo	★★★★	06/00
Quake II	Activision	★★★★	10/99
Quake 64	Midway	★★★	41
Quest 64	THQ	★★★	43
Rainbow Six	Red Storm Ent.	★★★	54
Rampage World Tour	Midway	★★	41
Rayman 2	UBI Soft	★★★★	01.00
Ready 2: Rumble Boxing	Midway	★★★	01.00
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	★★★★	12/99
Ridge Racer 64	Nintendo	★★★★	04/00
Roadsters	Titus	★★★★	04/00
Rocket: The Robot on Wheels	Ubi Soft	★★★	12/99
Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA	Midway	★★★	49
S.C.A.R.S.	Ubi Soft	★★★	50
San Francisco Rush	Midway Home	★★★★	36
Shadowgate 64	Kemco	★	10/99
Shadowman	Acclaim	★★	11/99
Snowboard Kids	Atlus Software	★★★	40
South Park Rally	Acclaim	★★	03/00
Space Station: Silicon Valley	Take 2	★★★★★	49
Star Wars Episode I Racer	Nintendo	★★★★★	55
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	21
Supercross	Titus	★	10/99
Tonic Trouble	Ubi Soft	★★★	10/99
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	Activision	★★★★★	05.00
Top Gear Rally	Midway	★★★	37
Top Gear Rally 2	Kemco	★★★★	02.00
Turok: Rage Wars	Acclaim	★★	01.00
Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	★★★★★	47
Vigilante 8	Interplay	★★★	53
Virtual Chess 64	Titus	★★★	47
Wetrix	Nintendo	★★★★★	25
WCW Mayhem	EA	★★★	12/99
WCW/NWO Revenge	THQ	★★★★	48
Wetrix	Ocean	★★★	44
Wirtback: Covert Operations	Koei	★★★	01.00
Wipeout 64	Psygnosis/Midway	★★★★	48
World Driver Championship	Midway	★★★	09/99
Worms: Armageddon	Infogrames	★★★	04/00
Wrestlemania 2000	THQ	★★★	12/99
WWF Attitude	Acclaim	★★	11/99
Xena: Talisman of Fate	Titus	★★★	05.00
Yoshi's Story	Nintendo	★★★★	41
Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo	★★★★★	48

PlayStation

title	publisher	rating	#
3Xtreme	989 Studios	★	55
Abe's Oddysee	GT Interactive	★★★★	35
Ace Combat 2	Namco	★★★★	35
Ace Combat 3	Namco	★★	04/00
Akuji the Heartless	Eidos	★★★	52
Aliens Lalas International Soccer	Take 2	★★★	56
Alundra	Working Designs	★★★★	38
Alundra 2	Activision	★★★★	05/00
Ape Escape	SCEA	★★★★★	56
Apocalypse	Activision	★★	50
Armored Core	SCEA	★★★★	37
Armored Core: Master of Arena	Agetec	★★★	04/00
Armored Core: Project Phantasma	Ascii	★★★	48
Army Men Air Attack	3DO	★★★	01.00
Auto Destruct	Electronic Arts	★★★	39
Azure Dreams	Konami	★★	44
Ballistic	Infogrames	★★★★	01.00
Batman and Robin	Acclaim	★	47
Blast Radius	Psygnosis	★	53
Blasto	SCEA	★★	42
Bloody Roar	SCEA	★★★★	41
Bloody Roar 2	SCEA	★★★	56
Bomberman Fantasy Racing	Atlus	★★★	52
Boombots	Southpeak Interactive	★	01.00
Brave Fencer Musashi	Square EA	★★★★	49
Breath of Fire III	Capcom	★★★★	41
Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling	THQ	★★★	48
Bug Riders	GT Interactive	★★	37
Bushido Blade	Sony	★★★★★	31
Bushido Blade 2	Square EA	★★★★★	49
Bust-A-Groove	989 Studios	★★★★	50
Bust-a-Move	Enix	★★★	41
Bust-a-Move 2	Enix	★★★	55
Cardinal SYN	SCEA	★★	43
Carnage Heart	SCEA	★★★★	28
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	★★★★	36
Castrol Honda Superbike Racing	Electronic Arts	★★	09/99
Centipede	Hasbro/Atari	★★★	09/99
Championship Motocross	THQ	★★★★	10/99
Chocobo's Dungeon 2	Square	★★★	02.00
Chocobo Racing	Square EA	★★	10/99
Circuit Breakers	Mindscape	★★★	41
Civilization II	Activision	★★★★★	52
Clock Tower	Ascii	★★★	37
Codename Tenka	Psygnosis	★★★	28
Colony Wars	Psygnosis	★★★★★	38
Colony Wars: Red Sun	Psygnosis	★★★★	04.00
Contender	SCEA	★	52
Cool Boarders 4	989 Studios	★★★	01.00
Courier Crisis	GT Interactive	★	37
Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back	SCEA	★★★★	37
Crash Bandicoot: Warped	SCEA	★★★★	49
Crash Team Racing	SCEA	★★★★★	01.00
Croc: the Legend of the Gobbos	Fox Interactive	★★★	35
Croc 2	Fox Interactive	★★★★	56
Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	★★★	29
Dark Omen	Electronic Arts	★★★	43
Darklight Conflict	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Dead in the Water	ASC	★★	52
Dead or Alive	Tecmo	★★★★	37
Deathtrap Dungeon	Eidos	★	42
Deception 3: Dark Delusion	Tecmo	★★★	04.00
Demolition Racer	Infogrames	★	11/99
Descent Maximum	Interplay	★★★	29
Devil Dice	THQ	★★★★	47
Diablo	Electronic Arts	★★★★	42
Die Hard Trilogy 2	Fox Interactive	★★	04.00
Dino Crisis	Capcom	★★★★★	10/99
Disney's Hercules	Virgin Interactive	★★	34
Dragon Ball GT Final Bout	Bandai	★	39
Dragonseed	Jaleco	★★	48
Driver	GT Interactive	★★★★	09/99
Dynasty Warriors	989 Studios	★★★	32
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	GT Interactive	★★★★	48
Dukes of Hazzard: Racing for Home	SouthPeak Interactive	★★	04.00
Eagle One: Harrier Attack	Infogrames	★★★★	05.00
Einhander	SCEA	★★★★	40
Elimigtz	Square EA	★★★	55
Fantastic 4	Acclaim	★	35
Fear Effect	Eidos	★★★★	04.00
Fighting Force	Eidos	★★★	37
Fighting Force 2	Eidos	★★★	02.00
Final Fantasy Tactics	SCEA	★★★★	40
Final Fantasy VII	SCEA	★★★★★	34
Final Fantasy VIII	Square EA	★★★★★	49
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Frank Thomas Baseball	Acclaim	★★	32
Frogger	Hasbro Interactive	★	37
Front Mission 3	Square EA	★★★	06.00
G Darius	THQ	★★★	46
G Police: Weapons of Justice	Psygnosis	★	09/99
Galerians	Crave	★★★★	04.00
GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★	27
Gex: Enter the Gecko	Crystal Dynamics	★★★	42
Ghost in the Shell	Ascii	★★★	35
Goal Storm '97	Konami	★★★★	30
Grandstream Saga	THQ	★★	44
Gran Turismo	SCEA	★★★★★	40
Grand Theft Auto London 1969	Rockstar	★★★	56
Grandia	SCEA	★★★★	12/99
Guardian's Crusade	Activision	★★★★	52
Heart of Darkness	Interplay	★★	47
Hot Shots Golf	SCE	★★★★	41
In the Zone 2	Konami	★★★★	26
In the Zone 99	Konami	★★	53
International Track and Field 2000	Konami	★★	03/00
Invasion from Beyond	GT Interactive	★	53
Jackie Chan's Stunt Master	Midway	★★	03/00
Jade Cocoon	Crave	★★	09/99
Jersey Devil	Mega2Toon	★★★	44
Jet Moto 2	SCEA	★★★	37

Jet Moto 3	989 Studios	★★★★	11/99
Jojo's Bizarre Adventure	Capcom	★★	03/00
Judge Dredd	Activision	*	42
Juggernaut	Jaleco	★★★	11/99
Jumping Flash!	SCEA	★★★★★	08
Jumping Flash! 2	SCEA	★★★★	20
Kartia	Atlus	★★★★	45
Killer Loop	Crave	★★	01/00
Knockout Kings	EA Sports	★★	49
Knockout Kings 2000	EA Sports	★★★	01/00
Konami Arcade Classics	Konami	★★★	09/99
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★	10/99
Lode Runner	Natsume	★★★	39
Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete	Working Designs	★★★	55
Machine Hunter	MGM Interactive	*	34
Madden '99	Electronic Arts	★★★	47
Madden 2000	EA Sports	★★★	11/99
March Madness '98	Electronic Arts	★★	42
MechWarrior 2	Activision	★★★★	31
Medal of Honor	Electronic Arts	★★★★	01/00
Medievil	SCEA	★★★	48
Medievil II	SCEA	★★★★	06/00
Mega Man X 4	Capcom	★★★	36
MegaMan Legends	Capcom	★★★	47
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	★★★★★	48
Micro Machines V3	Midway	★★★★	39
Midway Collection 2, The	Midway	★★★★	38
Misadventures of Tron Bonne, The	Capcom	★★★★	03/00
MLB 99	SCEA	★★★★	46
MLB 2000	989 Studios	★★★★	55
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	★★★★★	38
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★	46
Mortal Kombat Mythologies	Midway	*	38
Moto Racer	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	36
Moto Racer 2	Electronic Arts	★★★★	48
N2O	Fox	★★★	45
Nagano Winter Olympics 98	Konami	★★★	39
NASCAR 99	EA Sports	★★★	49
NASCAR 2000	EA Sports	★★	12/99
NASCAR Rumble	Electronic Arts	★★★★	04/00
NBA Jam Extreme	Acclaim	**	28
NBA Live 2000	EA Sports	★★★★	02/00
NCAA Football 99	Electronic Arts	★★★	48
NCAA Gamebreaker '98	SCEA	★★★★★	38
Need For Speed II	Electronic Arts	★★★	43
Newman/Haas Racing	Pygnosis	★★	41
NFL Blitz	Midway	★★★	47
NFL GameDay '98	SCEA	★★★★★	35
NFL GameDay '99	989 Studios	★★★★	47
NFL GameDay 2000	989 Studios	★★★★	11/99
NFL Xtreme	989 Sports	**	46
NFL Xtreme 2	989 Studios	★★★	11/99
NHL 99	EA Sports	**	49
NHL 2000	EA Sports	★★★★★	12/99
NHLFace Off 2000	989 Studios	★★★★	12/99
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	★★★	38
No Fear (Downhill Mountain Bike Racing)	Codemasters	★★★	12/99
No One Can Stop Mr. Domino	Acclaim	★★★	51
O.D.T. – Escape Or Die Trying	Pygnosis	★★	51
Omega Boost	SCEA	★★★★	10/99
One	ASC Games	**	39
Pandapps the Rapper	SCEA	★★★★★	35
Parasite Eve	Square EA	★★★	45
Pitfall 3D	Activision	**	42
Pocket Fighter	Capcom	★★★	45
Point Blank	Namco	★★★	40
Pong	Hasbro	★★★★	02/00
Powerboat Racing	VR Sports	**	42
Psybadek	Psygnosis	*	49
Punky Skunk	Jaleco	*	42
R-Type Delta	Agetec	★★★	09/99
Rally Cross 2	989 Studios	★★★★	50
Rascal	Psygnosis	★★	43
RC Stunt Copter	Titus	★★★	11/99
Reboot	EA	★★★	43
Red Asphalt	Interplay	★★	37
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	★★★★★	39
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	Capcom	★★★★	12/99
Ridge Racer Type 4	Namco	★★★★	55
Rising Zan Samurai Gunman	Agetec	★★	10/99
Risk	Hasbro	★★★	45
Rival Schools: United by Fate	Capcom	★★★	48
Road Rash 3D	Electronic Arts	★★★	46
Road Rash Jailbreak	Electronic Arts	★★★★	05/00
Rock the Rink	Electronic Arts	★★★★	05/00
Rogue Trip	GT Interactive	★★★	48
Rollcage	Psygnosis	★★★★	53
Rollcage Stage II	Psygnosis	★★★★	04/00
Rush Hour	Psygnosis	★★★	32
S.C.A.R.S.	Ubi Soft	★★	48
Saga Frontier	SCEA	★★★	39
SaGa Frontier 2	Squaresoft	★★★★	03/00
Sentinel Returns	Psygnosis	★★	44
Shadow Madness	Crave	★★★	53
Shadow Master	Psygnosis	*	41
Shipwreckers!	Psygnosis	★★★	38
Silent Bomber	Bandai	★★★★	03/00
Silent Hill	Konami	★★★★★	52
Silhouette Mirage	Working Designs	★★★	02/00
Sim Theme Park	Bullfrog	★★★	01/00
Skullmonkeys	EA	★★	40
Sled Storm	Electronic Arts	★★★★	10/99
Spawn: The Eternal	SCEA	*	38
Speed Punks	SCEA	★★	06/00
Speed Racer	Jaleco	★★	42
Spyro	SCEA	★★★★	47
Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage	SCEA	★★★★	12/99
Star Ocean	SCEA	★★★★	09/99
Star Wars: Episode I	LucasArts	*	11/99
Star Wars: Masters of Teras Kasi	LucasArts	★★	38
Steel Reign	SCEA	★★	37
Street Fighter Zero 3	Capcom	★★★★	52
Sukoden II	Konami	★★★★	12/99
SuperCross Circuit	989 Studios	★★★	01/00
Syphon Filter	989 Studios	★★★★	52
Syphon Filter 2	SCEA	★★★★	05/00
Tail Concerto	Atlus	★★★	11/99
Tales of Destiny	Namco	★★★	48
Tarzan	Disney Interactive	**	10/99
Team Losi RC Racer	Fox Interactive	*	47
Tekken 3	Namco	★★★★★	42
Tenchu	Activision	★★★★	48
Tennis Arena	Ubi Soft	**	43
Test Drive 4	Accolade	**	37
Test Drive Off Road 3	Infogrames	★★★	12/99
The Fifth Element	Activision	**	50
Theme Hospital	EA	★★★★	43
Thousand Arms	Atlus	★★★	12/99
Thrasher: Skate and Destroy	Rockstar Games	**	01/00
Thunderforce V	Working Designs/Spaz	**	46
Time Crisis	Namco	★★★★	38
Tiny Tank	MGM Interactive	★★★★	50
TOCA 2: Touring Car Challenge	Codemasters	★★★★	12/99
Tomb Raider II	Eidos	★★★★	37
Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation	Eidos	★★★★	02/00
Tomba	SCEA	★★★★	45
Tombal 2	SCEA	★★★★	03/00
Tomorrow Never Dies	Electronic Arts	**	02/00
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	Activision	★★★★★	11/99
Trap Gunner	Atlus	★★★★	47
Triple Play 2000	EA Sports	★★★★	55
Turbo Prop Racing	SCEA	★★★	45
Twisted Metal 2	SCEA	★★★★	30
Twisted Metal 3	989 Studios	*	50
Ultimate 8-Ball	3DO	★★★★	50
Ultimate Race Pro	Electronic Arts	★★★	01/00
Uprising X	Square EA	★★★★	06/00
Vandal Hearts 2: Heavenly Gate	Konami	★★★★	01/00
Vigilante 8	Activision	★★★	45
Virtual Pool	Interplay	★★★	27
VR Baseball '99	Interplay	★★★	46
WarGames	MGM Interactive	★★★	46
Warpath: Jurassic Park	Electronic Arts	*	02/00
Warzone 2100	Eidos	★★★	56
WCW Nitro	THQ	★★★	38
WCW Vs. The World	THQ	★★★	30
WCW/NWO Thunder	THQ	★★★	52
Wild 9	Interplay	★★★	49
Wing Commander IV	Electronic Arts	★★★	31
Wipeout	Psygnosis	★★★★★	11
Wipeout 3	Psygnosis	★★★★	45
World Cup '98	EA Sports	★★★★	45
Wu-Tang Shaolin Style	Activision	★★★★	02/00
WWF Smackdown	THQ	★★★★	05/00
WWF Warzone	Acclaim	★★★	47
X-Games Pro Boarder	Activision	★★★	49
The X-Files	Fox Interactive	**	01/00
X-Men: Children of the Atom	Acclaim	**	40
X-Men vs. Street Fighter	Capcom	*	45
Xena: Warrior Princess	Electronic Arts	★★★★	11/99
Xenogears	Square Electronic Arts	★★★★★	49
You Don't Know Jack	Sierra	★★★★	12/99

title	publisher	rating	#
Online			
Aero Online	Kesmai	★★★	43
Asheron's Call	Microsoft	★★★★	02/00
Command & Conquer: Tele Sunner	Westwood	*	41
Meridian 59: Revelation	3DO	★★★	37
Netstorm	Activision	★★★★	40
NetWAR	Headland	★★★	41
Sanctum: Oppositions	Digital Addiction	★★★★	09/99
Tribal Tranus	3DO	★★★★	40
Ultima Online: The Second Age	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	51

title	publisher	rating	#
PC			
Abomination	Eidos	**	02/00
Addiction Pinball	MicroProse	★★★★	45
Age of Wonders	GT Interactive	★★★★★	02/00
Alien Earth	Psymatics	★★★	42
Armor Command	Ripcord Games	★★★	43
Army Men	3DO	★★★	44
Army Men II	3DO	★★★	53
Baldur's Gate	Interplay	★★★★★	52
Battlezone	Activision	★★★★	42
Battlezone II: Combat Commander	Activision	★★★	03/00
Barrage	Activision	**	50
Black Dahlia	Take 2 Interactive	**	44
Blaze and Blade	THQ	*	05/00
Blood 2: The Chosen	GT Interactive	**	50
Boarder Zone	Infogrames	★★★	05/00
Braveheart	Eidos	★★★	12/99
Break Neck	SouthPeak Interactive	★★★★	05/00
Burnout Championship Drag Racing	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★	43
Castrol Honda Superbike	Intense Simulation	*	46
Civilization II Test of Time	MicroProse	★★★	11/99
Civilization: Call to Power	Activision	**	55
Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun	Westwood	★★★	11/99
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines	Eidos	★★★★	49
Corsairs	Microids	*	10/99
Crusaders of Might and Magic	3DO	★★★	03/00
Dark Side of the Moon	SouthPeak Interactive	**	51
Darkstone	Gathering of Developers	★★★★	11/99
Deathclock II	Cyberlore Studios	★★★★	43
Deathkarz	GT Interactive	★★★★	49
Deer Avenger 2: Deer in the City	Simon & Schuster	**	01/00
Delta Force	NovaLogic	★★★	51
Delta Force 2	NovaLogic	★★★	02/00
Descent 3	Interplay	★★★★★	56
Descent Freespace	Interplay	★★★★	45
Die by the Sword	Interplay	★★★★★	42
Dominant Species	Red Storm	**	49
Dominions: Storm Over GiR 3	Eidos	**	46
Drakan: Order of the Flame	Psygnosis	★★★★	11/99
Dungeon Keeper 2	Electronic Arts	★★★	10/99
Dune 2000	Westwood	★★★	48
Emergency: Fighters for Life	WizardWorks	**	48
Expendable	Rage Software	★★★	56
Extreme Tactics	Piranha Interactive	★★★	46
F-15	EA	★★★★	43
F-16 Aggressor	Interplay	★★★★	11/99
Fallout 2	Interplay	★★★★	50
Flesh Feast	Segasoft	★★★	45
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	44
Freespace 2	Interplay	★★★★★	01/00
Gabriel Knight 3	Sierra	★★★★	02/00
Gangsters	Eidos Interactive	★★★★	51
Game, Net & Match	Blue Byte	★★★	45
Get Medieval	Monolith	★★★	48
Grand Prix Legends	Sierra Sports	★★★★★	49
Grand Theft Auto	Take 2	★★★★	42
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	★★★★★	50
Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer	3DO	**	11/99
Half-Life	Sierra	★★★★★	50
Heavy Gear II	Activision	★★★★★	10/99
Homeworld	Sierra	★★★★	12/99
Heretic II	Activision	★★★	51
Hexplore	Infogrames	★★★	49
Icarus: Sanctuary of the Gods	JC Research	★★★	48
Imperialism II	Strategic Simulations	★★★★	56
Incoming	Rage Software	★★★★	46
Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine	LucasArts	★★★★	03/00
Industry Giant	Interactive Magic	★★★★	45
Interstate '82	Activision	★★★★	02/00
Invictus	Interplay	**	05/00
Jeff Gordon XS Racing	Sierra Sports	★★★★	51
Jagz Jackrabbit 2	G.O.D.	*	45
Jeff Gordon XS Racing	ASC Games	**	09/99
John Saul's Blackstone Chronicles	Mindscape	★★★	51
Kingpin: Life of Crime	Interplay	★★★★	51
King's Quest: Mask of Eternity	Sierra	★★★★	51
Knights and Merchants	Interactive Magic	★★★★	49
M.A.X. 2	Interplay	★★★★	47
Mi Tank Platoon II	MicroProse	★★★★	43
Machines	Acclaim	★★★	55
MechCommander	MicroProse	★★★	46
MechWarrior 3	MicroProse	★★★★	09/99
Messiah	Interplay	★★★	06/00
Midtown Madness	Microsoft	★★★	56
MIG Alley	Interplay	★★★	04/00
Might and Magic VI	3DO	★★★★	44
Might & Magic VII	3DO	★★★	09/99
Might and Magic VIII	3DO	**	06/00
Monster Truck Madness 2	Microsoft	★★★	44
Montezuma's Return	Wizardworks	**	50
Mortyr 2093-1944	Interplay	**	03/00
Myth II: Soulblighter	Bungie	★★★★	53
Nam	GT Interactive	*	47
Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit	Electronic Arts	★★★★	48
Need for Speed: High Stakes	Electronic Arts	★★★★	09/99
Need for Speed: Porsche Unleashed	Electronic Arts	★★★	06/00
NHL 99	EA Sports	★★★★★	50
Nocturne	Gathering of Developers	**	01/00
Nox	Electronic Arts	★★★★	05/00
Odium	Monolith	★★★	02/00
Official Formula 1 Racing	Eidos	**	10/99
Omikron: The Nomad Soul	Eidos	★★★★	02/00
Outcast	Infogrames	★★★★	12/99
Panzer Commander	SSI	★★★★	46
Panzer General 3D Assault	SSI	★★★★	12/99
The People's General	SSI	★★★★	50
Pharaoh	Sierra	★★★★	02/00
Plane Crazy	SegaSoft	**	48
Planescape: Torment	Interplay	★★★★★	02/00
Prince of Persia 3D	Mindscape	★★★★	12/99
Pro Pinball Fantastic Journey	Empire Interactive	★★★★	03/00
Quake 3	Activision	★★★★★	02/00
Railroad Tycoon II	Gathering of Developers	★★★★	50
Rainbow Six	Red Storm	★★★★	47
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	Red Storm	★★★★	12/99
Rally Championship	Electronic Arts	★★★★	44
Re-Volt	Acclaim	★★★★	10/99
Recoil	Electronic Arts	★★★	55
Red Baron 3D	Sierra	★★★★	50
Redguard	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★	50
Redjack	THQ	★★★	45
Redline Racer	Ubi Soft	★★★	47
Redneck Rampage Rides Again	Interplay	★★★	45
Return to Krondor	Sierra	**	52
Revenant	Eidos	★★★★	02/00
Revenge of the Arcade	Microsoft	*	48
Rich Diamond	Core Concepts	**	56
Ring	Red Orb	★★★	10/99
Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter	WizardWorks	**	44
Sabre Ace: Conflict Over Korea	Virgin Interactive	★★★	38
Sanitarium	ASC	★★★★	44
Settlers II	Blue Byte	★★	53
Shadow Company: Left for Dead	Ubi Soft	★★★★	12/99
Shadow Watch	Red Storm	*	04/00
Shogo: Mobile Armor	Monolith	★★★★	50
Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	52
Sid Meier's Gettysburg	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	37
SimCity 3000	Electronic Arts	★★★★	53
Sims, The	Electronic Arts	★★★★	04/00
Sin	Activision	★★★★	50
Silver	Infogrames	★★★★	01/00
Sim Theme Park	Electronic Arts	★★★★	02/00
Sinistar Unleashed	THQ	★★★	12/99
Soldier of Fortune	Activision	★★★★	06/00
South Park	Acclaim	★★★	51
Space Bunnies Must Die	Ripcord	★★★	50
Spec Ops II	Ripcord	*	02/00
Star Trek: Armada	Activision	★★★★	06/00
Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	Hasbro Interactive	**	09/99
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	Activision	★★★★	03/00
Star Trek: Starfleet Command	Interplay	★★★★	11/99
Star Trek: Pinball	Interplay	*	43
Star Wars Episode I	LucasArts	★★★★	09/99
Star Wars: Force Commander	XXXXX	★★★★	06/00
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	LucasArts	★★★★	51
StarCraft	Cendant	★★★★★	43
Starsiege: Tribes	Sierra	★★★★★	51
Starship Titanic	Simon & Schuster	★★★★	43
System Shock 2	Electronic Arts	★★★★	11/99
Sub Culture	Ubi Soft	★★★★	37
Swarm	Reflex Entertainment	**	44
Tex Murphy: Overseer	Access	**	52
Thief	Eidos	★★★★	52
Thief II: The Metal Age	Eidos	★★★★	06/00
Tiger Woods Golf '99	EA Sports	★★★★	48
Tomb Raider III	Eidos Interactive	★★★★	49
Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	GT Interactive	★★★★	10/99
Trespasser	Dreamworks Interactive	**	50
Ultima IX: Ascension	Origin	★★★★	02/00
Ultimate 8 Ball	THQ	★★★★	56
Ultimate Race Pro	MicroProse	★★★★	43
Unreal	GT Interactive	★★★★★	44
Unreal Tournament	GT Interactive	★★★★	09/99
Uprising	Cyclone Studios	★★★★★	37
Urban Assault	Microsoft Games	★★★★	49
Uprising 2: Lead and Destroy	3DO	★★★★	51
Virtual Pool 2	Interplay	★★★★★	38
VR Baseball 2000	VR Sports	★★★★	49
Wall Street Trader 2000	Interplay	★★★★	04/00
WarGames	MGM Interactive	★★★★	46
Wargasm	Infogrames	**	52
Warhammer 40,000: Chaos Gate	SSI	★★★★	51
Warhammer 40,000: Rites of War	SSI	★★★★	11/99
Warlords III: Darklords Rising	Red Orb	★★★★	47
Warzone 2100	Eidos	★★★★	55
Wheel of Time	GT Interactive	★★★	02/00
Wild Wild West	Southpeak Interactive	**	50
X-COM: Interceptor	MicroProse	★★★	46

20 locations

Atlanta, GA
Boston, MA
Charlotte, NC
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Houston, TX
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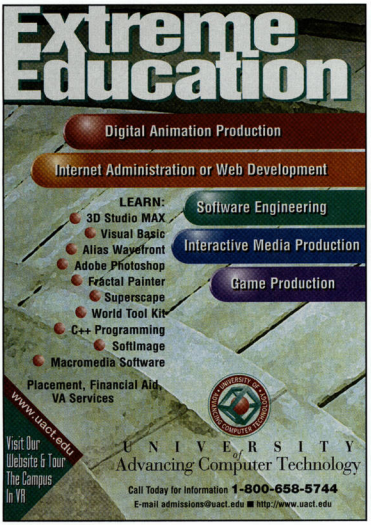
Classic Gaming Expo 2000

Jackie Gaughan's Plaza Hotel & Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada
July 29 & 30

Classic Gaming Expo is an annual celebration of the roots and history of the videogame industry. If your mind's eye can see you as a 10-year-old frantically tearing the reindeer-covered wrapping paper off a package from Santa, revealing an **Atari 2600, Intellivision, ColecoVision,** or Vectrex, then you won't want to miss the show. Classic Gaming Expo is a place where memories such as these run free.

Just a few of the special guests who can be found at Classic Gaming Expo 2000 include Ralph Baer (often referred to as "The Father of Videogames"), Steve Cartwright, Tod Frye, John Harris, Arnie Katz, Bob Polaro, Jay Smith, former Intellivision programmers The Blue Sky Rangers, and dozens more.

Special guests are only a part of what's happening at Classic Gaming Expo 2000. There will be dozens of classic arcade games lining the walls and available for play, scores of vendors offering classic games for sale, game contests and tournaments, keynote speeches and roundtable discussions, and a museum boasting the most comprehensive collection of classic videogame hardware and software ever assembled.



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Letters

While we were away at E3, we mailed it in

In **NG 05/00** you rated the PS2 on hardware power, in which you gave the system four stars. *Four stars*! First of all, I agree that some games seemed a bit rushed (*Ridge Racer*, *Street Fighter*, etc.), with a lack of anti-aliasing (which is a software problem) and rather shallow gameplay. But the graphics, nevertheless, looked great. And looking at the other games on the horizon — *SSX*, *DOA2*, *Armored Core*, to name a few, not to mention what the U.S. launch line-up will look like — these should really define the potential power of Sony's machine.

Furthermore, your review went on to say that the PS2 is not the "World-Destroyer that Sony led us to believe." One question: how did Sony lead you to believe that? To my knowledge, all Sony did was announce the specs for its upcoming next-generation game console, and talk about the ability to "synthesize emotions" and its broadband capability. Not once did I read nor hear anyone from Sony say they were building the End-All-Be-All or "World-Destroyer" that many proclaimed. As a matter of fact, the only places I've heard such labels were from the media, the Internet, or videogame magazines.

The PS2 deserves better than the measly four stars it received. It's clearly beyond anything I've ever seen. The fact is you, and those like you, held PS2 up to standards that were a little, if not a lot, higher than what even Sony had set. But in my eyes, Sony delivered everything it said it would, a true next-generation console. Uh, I'd give it about year and a half, two at the most, before we start calling it "World-Destroyer."

Tracy Laws
migyon@postoffice.pacbell.net

Read the category and text again. We rated PS2 at four stars on demonstrable hardware power (four and a half overall) — not on what it might be able to do, not on what we hoped it could do, but on what, at the time we reviewed it, it proved it could actually achieve. To quote ourselves, "All the power in the world means nothing if developers can't tap into it." The dual-CPU Saturn, for example, had a lot of horsepower on paper, but the architecture was so problematic that no one was ever able to take full advantage of it. At this time, looking over the games that were available at release and reports from developers (both on and off the record), PS2 is a bit problematic to develop for, and our score reflected that.

We'll no doubt rate the system again this fall in our annual holiday system roundup, and if, by then, the software has improved, it's doubtless that the rating will rise. In fact, we hope so and think it probably will. So far, however, nothing we've seen since launch has changed our minds (including the bulk of PS2 titles on display at E3), and we would be giving in to a pro-Sony bias to rate the system any higher based purely on "potential."

And while it may be true that Sony has never specifically claimed PS2 to be a "World-Destroyer," its own quotes aren't exactly known for their modesty, either, and the company has done everything it can to make sure everyone else sings its praises. This included a six-page cover story in the March 6 issue of* Newsweek*, in which Ken Kutaragi actually equated the importance of PS2 with the discovery of the New World: "Over 200 years ago, the founders of your continent cut out the roadways, new towns, new cities, new culture. This is the same."

Perhaps we should have used the phrase, "World Builder."

It ain't hip to forget the Zip

I have a couple of questions regarding Dreamcast that no magazine has been able to answer. First, what ever happened to the Zip drive for Dreamcast? I was really excited about the Sega Network and the $200 rebate, but now Sony has stolen some of Sega's thunder by saying that PS2 will be accompanied by a hard drive and a modem. It's like Sony is just waiting for a big announcement from Sega or Microsoft, then duplicating what was an original thought from a superior gaming company.

My other question is in regards to the quality of pictures in your magazine. Although I love my Dreamcast to death, it is hard to believe that the graphics are better than the PS2's. If you examine the pictures of *Ridge Racer V* in your last issue on page 88, or the pictures of *Gran Turismo 2000* on page 78, you will notice "jaggies" and the quality of the game. Now if you compare those pictures to the pictures of *Sega GT* on page 96 of the same issue, you will notice no "jaggies." Is this a reflection of the games' quality or the quality of the picture?

LeQuan Williamson
Columbus, OH

As far as we know, Sega still plans to release a Zip drive add-on for Dreamcast this fall (probably right around the time it launches the Sega Network). The drive is complete and ready to go; when it's released is a matter of timing what Sega considers to be the optimal price.

As for the pictures, we freely admit that while we've solved the problem of getting high-quality Dreamcast screens, capturing equally high-quality PS2 screens is, at present, eluding us. In some cases, the technology we're currently using makes anti-aliasing problems actually seem worse when the screens are printed, than the way they appear on a monitor, and in other cases it makes them seem not as bad. However, we can honestly report that "jaggies" have been present in practically every PS2 game we've seen so far.

■ The Dreamcast Zip drive is apparently ready for release, but Sega is awaiting the best moment to do so

I know that people write you guys letters pointing out your mistakes, so I figured that I should contribute. On page 86 of **NG 04/00** where you review *Fear Effect*, up in the top left corner it says "PlayStation Finals," right? Well then, why did you put the Microsoft logo there instead of the PlayStation logo?

So what are you going to do to the person who made this mistake? Carve the PlayStation logo on the back of his hand with a steak knife?

Brian Hans
hothans26@hotmail.com

Actually, the PlayStation logo on the back of one hand and the Microsoft logo on the other. And we used a pen knife, by the way. It was handy.

I got your 05/00 issue and saw the "guts" of the PlayStation2, and I was wondering, what are the PC card slot and battery for? I can't figure any reason for a battery. Oh, and

another thing, on page 10, in the bottom left-hand picture of the people playing PlayStation, why do they have it upside down? Are they just stupid?

Michael Votaw
freeker123@yahoo.com

The battery is there for keeping the realtime clock going, among other things, just as with Dreamcast and, for that matter, the original PlayStation and PCs. The PCMCIA slot is a general expansion port that's also found on most laptops and used for many peripherals, such as modems, external drives, specialty controllers, and the like. Sony wants to make PS2 as adaptable as possible, and PCMCIA is a good way to go, because it's a type of port that's familiar to many hardware developers. Given the lackluster history of peripherals in the console market, it's unclear what sort of impact this will have, but the latest rumors are that Sony's own modem/hard drive unit will use that port.

And no, running a PlayStation upside down isn't stupid — in fact, a lot of folks do that to help vent off heat and prevent skipping problems.

After reading the article about the X-Box announcement in the May issue I had two questions. First, what will it offer that the PC does not? Second, the specs are great, but how high will the price be?

Robert Welsh
welshl@sgi.net

There's been no word on X-Box's pricing yet, although conventional wisdom says it will have to be below $300. As for what it offers that a PC doesn't, well, nothing really, other than (apparently) exceptional high-performance graphics and a closed architecture, which will enable developers to concentrate on squeezing every bit of power out of the system.

When I first bought a Dreamcast, I was very satisfied with the machine. I thought that the graphics were superb and that many great games were out for the system. Soon after I bought my Dreamcast, there came word of PlayStation2. I began to think that I had made mistake with Dreamcast as I had with the Sega Saturn. Your article on "Sega's New Deal" restored my faith in Sega as a competitor in the videogame market. I began to realize that the PlayStation2 was going to have to fight hard to maintain a number one position in the videogame market. Sega has a bold new plan; Microsoft has unlimited funding plus amazing graphics capability; and Nintendo has an extremely loyal customer base around the world. Thanks to your article, I am now confident that Dreamcast will remain a viable system for many years to come.

I would also like to complain about your review system. I think you should consider using a half-star system. I believe single stars are not that efficient.

Ivan Kander

It remains to be seen whether Dreamcast will be a viable system for "many years to come." That would seem to hinge almost entirely on how enthusiastic the public gets over the rebate program and Sega Network — if Sega can move 10 or 20 million units that way, the installed base alone will persuade publishers to continue producing titles. It's a bold move on Sega's part, and we certainly wish the company all the best. At the very least, the coming two years are going to be a very interesting time in the industry, as all four major players try out new strategies in an ever-growing and increasingly mass market.

As for our rating system, we long ago decided that whole stars were best, although certainly there have been times when our reviewers have come across titles that begged for another half star. In the end we think people tend to divide games into rough categories of "must have," "really want to have," "worth getting," "not worth my time," and "I must warn others." A ten-point, or hundred-point, rating system just muddies things, devolving into pointless debates about whether Title A is really two percent "better" than Title B. A five-star scale is more than adequate, lets you know at a glance how we feel about a game, and, together with going over the particular merits (or lack thereof) in the body of the review, should easily let you know which mental category we think it fits into.

Too rich for my blood

OK, we all know PS2 is gonna launch for $299, and in your latest issue, (Lifecycle2, vol. #4, page 15), you said that PlayStation games could be selling for as low as $10! That is a great deal, but what are PS2 game prices going to be? I have already seen a few Web sites selling PS2 games for nearly $90 a game! That's outrageous! Any clue what the game prices may be when PS2 does launch?

Jade Muir
muir@peoplepc.com

The $90 you're seeing right now is for import games, and because, given the laws of supply and demand, import sellers can charge just about anything they want, their prices are a bit outrageous. Rest assured, once PS2 launches in the U.S., the games will sell for about what original PlayStation titles did at launch, with an MSRP of $49.

Yeah, paying 90 bucks for crap imports like the virtual photo shoot *Primal Image* seems silly to us, too (although ... *mmm ... polygon babes* ...), but there's nothing to stop an importer from charging anything they want

Looking over the past few issues, it seems that the PlayStation has received the majority of four- and five-star reviews, more than the graphical powerhouse of the Dreamcast. It just goes to show you that innovative and immersive gameplay is much more important than "real purty" pictures. Graphics, schmaphics. Let's hope that developers remember that when creating new games for PS2.

James Szymanski
skimn57@yahoo.com

We should also point out that, in fairness to Dreamcast (and, for that matter, PS2), developers have been maximizing the capabilities of PlayStation for several years now. Also, there are (still) a lot more new PlayStation games than Dreamcast or PS2 titles, so you might expect that a larger number of great games would land on PlayStation, if only by law of averages. In essence, though, you are correct: Better graphics don't necessarily mean better games, in either the short or long term — although, having gotten a taste of those "purty pictures," more than one Next Gen staffer has found it difficult to go back to original PlayStation graphics, even for a great game.

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Note: email is vastly, vastly preferred

Retroview

July 1991

The plumber versus the hedgehog, round one

1991 saw the release of many incredible games, including Sid Meier's *Civilization* and LucasArts' *Monkey Island 2* on PC, both of which remain among the best PC games ever made.

Meanwhile, Nintendo's console stranglehold was threatened for the first time since the release of its 8-bit NES in 1985. Playing David to Nintendo's Goliath was, of course, Sega. Sega had struggled to keep its Genesis system competitive since its launch in 1989, but with some strong sports titles from EA, the company was now gaining a significant share of the console market.

Still, most of Sega's software had been mediocre during the Genesis' first two years, a prime example being the technically impressive but incredibly unentertaining *Moon Walker*, featuring Michael Jackson. In June 1991, however, the tides would officially turn with the release of Yuji Naka's *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Sonic's energetic attitude and frenetic pace further positioned Sega as the system of choice for older gamers — the trendsetters of the consumer market.

■ With *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Sega found a hip new identity, allowing it to chip away at the aging NES's dominance.

Nintendo countered with the September launch of the Super NES, a new system that Nintendo hoped would be enough to blow Sega out of the water. Instead, what resulted was one of the closest and most competitive console wars in the history of the industry.

What we were playing

If you don't know these, you know their descendents

■ **STREET FIGHTER 2**

■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Capcom

■ **STREETS OF RAGE**

■ System: Genesis
■ Publisher: Sega

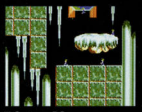
■ **SUPER MARIO WORLD**

■ System: Super Nintendo
■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ **FINAL FANTASY 2**

■ System: Super Nintendo
■ Publisher: Square

■ **LEMMINGS**



■ System: PC
■ Publisher: Psygnosis/DMA Design

Fall 1991 Prime Time Schedules

Wednesday Night

	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS	Royal Family	Teech	Jake & The Fatman	Jake & The Fatman	48 Hours
NBC	Unsolved Mysteries	Unsolved Mysteries	Night Court	Seinfeld	Quantum Leap
ABC	Dinosaurs	Wonder Years	Doogie Howser, M.D.	Sibs	Anything But Love

Thursday Night

	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
CBS	Top Cops	Top Cops	Trials of Rosie O'Neil	Trials of Rosie O'Neil	Knot's Landing
NBC	The Cosby Show	A Different World	Cheers	Wings	L.A. Law
ABC	Pros and Cons	Pros and Cons	Pros and Cons	American Detective	Primetime Live
FOX	The Simpsons	Drexell's Class	Beverly Hills, 90210	Beverly Hills, 90210	Non-network

...and in the real world

■ Basketball legend Magic Johnson reveals that he has contracted the HIV virus. The announcement shocks the world, mostly because Johnson seems to have slept with nearly every woman in America. Johnson retires from the NBA, but not before becoming MVP of the All-Star game.

■ The USSR self-destructs, completing its transformation from a superpower no one could ignore to a collection of small, struggling countries no one can keep straight.

■ Rodney King becomes a martyr for racial injustice when a videotape surfaces that shows the African American King being savagely beaten by four L.A.P.D. officers. As horrifying as the incident is, it will pale in comparison to the riots that break out when the officers are acquitted in 1992.

■ Former child star Adam Rich is arrested for breaking into a pharmacy, allegedly attesting that the phrase "Eight is Enough" does not apply to drug dosages.

■ American forces drive Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in the short-but-sweet Persian Gulf War.

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It turns out E3 actually stands for "Excitement," "Exhaustion," and "Erotica" (mmm ... bomb babes ... wearing a lot less than usual this year, too). Coming next month: the *Dakatana* review — because by then we can go out and buy it ourselves. Public service announcement: Have you lost the love for games? Would you rather just watch TV than play? Then try this: Hit yourself in the head a few times, grab a beer, invite some friends over, and throw any of the following into your PlayStation: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Bushido Blade,* or *Jet Moto.* But only the first one. Or just *Virtual Tennis, Marvel vs. Capcom 2,* or *Soul Calibur* into the Dreamcast. Or *Ridge Racer, Tekken 3,* or *Gran Turismo* into the PS. Or *Rayman 2* into the N64. Revenge. Any of these games will help you find the love again. The message is courtesy of your friends at *NextGen,* where it's all about The Love. *Next Generation* magazine, handcrafted in San Mateo County, California, since 1994. *NextGen:* where the lunatics run the asylum.

BPA

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Bath London Milan Munich New York Paris San Francisco. (*Next Gen* can also be found in the abandoned super conducting super collider in TX.)

BackwardsCompatible

The mystery of the ages revealed (or something similarly important). Page 7. **"I'm funny how? I mean, funny like I'm a clown? I amuse you? I make you laugh?" Page 79.** Proof positive that Lloyd's of London should avoid insuring the Eiffel Tower. Page 60. **OK, so there's no Radar. As long as Hawkeye, Klinger, and Col. Potter are still around, we should be fine. Page 55.** Or, cry like a baby. It's really your choice. Page 23. **You can't run the bar at Mos Eisley, but this is probably as close as you're gonna get. Page 56.** This game looks great, but we think the life-size semi cab controller is waaay too expensive. Page 59. **Your first look at the game voted "Most Likely to Cause People to Make That Homer Simpson Gurgling/Drooling Noise While Repeating the Game's Title Like a Mantra" by Next Gen's editorial staff. Page 66.** Seriously, kid, it's time to start checking the sizes before you buy the clothes. Page 82. **The world may not be enough, but a car like this one just might be. Page 61.** A morale gauge? You're surrounded by dozens of guys, each with a sword and a strong urge to kill you. Why would you need a morale gauge? Page 58. **From laser-belching dragons to graffiti-spraying skaters. Never say these boys can't adapt. Page 31.** To be completely honest, the eye thing is a little bit creepy. It's amazing, but it's still creepy. Page 37. **Hey, remember when people thought picnic tables were actually for picnics? Times were simpler then.... Page 41.** Rumor has it that Midway is already working on the next entry in this series: a top-secret title called *Just Plain Thunder.* Page 88. **One of Sega CD's greatest titles finally gets the sequel treatment — on PlayStation2. Page 50.** Find out what game nearly caused several **Next Gen** editors to miss their deadlines, their flight to E3, and some more deadlines after that. It's not what you think. Page 45. **Dolphins, lizards, and a squirrel who could kick all their asses. Page 16.** Man, put her with that sorcerous, stabbing, orphan boy, and we'd have a pair of wayward teens that could set juvenile hall on fire. Page 42. **More games than anyone can reasonably play. Luckily, many of us are completely unreasonable about our gaming. Page 96.**

NextMonth The Getaway

■ WE TEST DRIVE EUROPE'S HOTTEST PLAYSTATION2 RACER

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Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING | INTERNET GAMING

NOW IT'S ON THE NET
UNLEASHING THE ULTIMATE HORROR:
YOUR FELLOW AMERICANS.

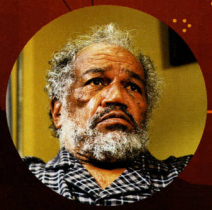
Point of Origin: Eugene, Oregon

Screen Name: Cap'nCarnage

"I stuck a cat in your rocket, you backass Tuscaloosa cracker. He's in there chewing your mice. But you probably eat mice yourself when you run out of possum, you monster truck-loving, buck-toothed hillbilly. And you other two mentally challenged dopes: hang up. I won."

Player-/[0.01] | Time Remaining: 00:00:00 | Total Mice On Board: 779

ChuChu Rocket!



Point of Origin: Golden Palms Rest Community, Tempe Arizona

Screen Name: Peaches

"I'm nude."

Player-/[0.02] | Time Remaining: 00:00:00 | Total Mice On Board: 329

P. 01

P. 02

P. 03

P. 04

Point of Origin: Pittenweem, Vermont

Screen Name: JuliusSqueezer

"Cap'nCarnage? What are you captain of? The Oregon Survivalist Granola Militia? Maybe you should stop macking pine trees and focus on the cat in your blue rocket—oh, holy crap. I'm the blue rocket."

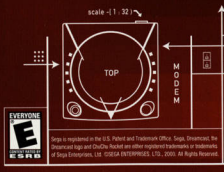
Player-/[0.03] | Time Remaining: 00.03.19 | Total Mice On Board: 91+1 cat

Point of Origin: Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Screen Name: WhiteLightning

"Shut up, Cap'nCarnage, you don't know bull-diddly doo. I don't love monster trucks I am not dumb. I had to go to the crapper is how the cat get in. I am smart. I went to State. For too years. So you can just kiss my chu chu."

Player-/[0.04] | Time Remaining: 00.00.00 | Total Mice On Board: 0+1cat



-/[0.01] | mk-50000

ChuChu Rocket

For the first time ever Team Sonic presents your chance to go online and face wacko opponents from all across this great nation. Lead stampeding rodents into your rocket in a race against time while you sick vicious kitties on rival ships through more than 75 massive levels and five different modes.

EVERYONE E ESRB

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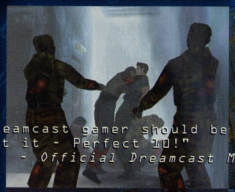
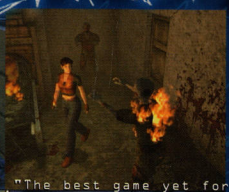
It's everything you FEARED.

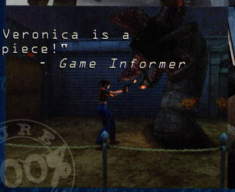


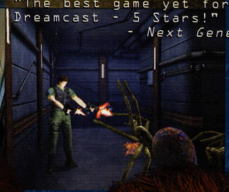
"No Dreamcast gamer should be without it - Perfect 10!"
- Official Dreamcast Magazine



"The best game yet for Dreamcast - 5 Stars!"
- Next Generation

"Code Veronica is a masterpiece!"
- Game Informer





And more.

Now the most chilling game series of all time awaits you on Sega Dreamcast. Resident Evil Code: Veronica delivers a terrifying new chapter in survival horror. Frighteningly realistic. Graphically astonishing. Relentlessly terrifying. It's two disks of 100% pure fear. And it's all so real, you'll start sleeping with the lights on.

RESIDENT EVIL
CODE: Veronica™

Sega Dreamcast

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