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GAMEFAN

NEXT GENERATION GAME MAGAZINE

VOLUME 4
ISSUE 6

THE CREATORS OF SONIC MAKE THEIR SATURN DEBUT WITH:

NiGHTS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

PLAYSTATION:

TEKKEN 2
OVERKILL
SKELETON-WARRIORS
STEEL-HARBINGER

SATURN:

WIPEOUT
LEGEND OF-OASIS

NINTENDO 64:

SUPER MARIO 64
PILOTWINGS 64

GAMEFAN'S SUMMER RACING GUIDE - PART 1

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JNN SPECIAL REPORT: AN INTERVIEW WITH AKIRA NISHITANI CREATOR OF SF2!

SONY'S UNBELIEVABLE:

CRASH BANDICOOT

GAMING'S NEWEST SUPERSTAR TAKES THE PLAYSTATION TO NEW HEIGHTS

CRYSTAL DYNAMIC'S GENRE RE-DEFINING ACTION PLATFORM SHOCKER!

PANDEMONIUM

You can't just run away from your problems any more. From now on, you'll have to think on your feet.

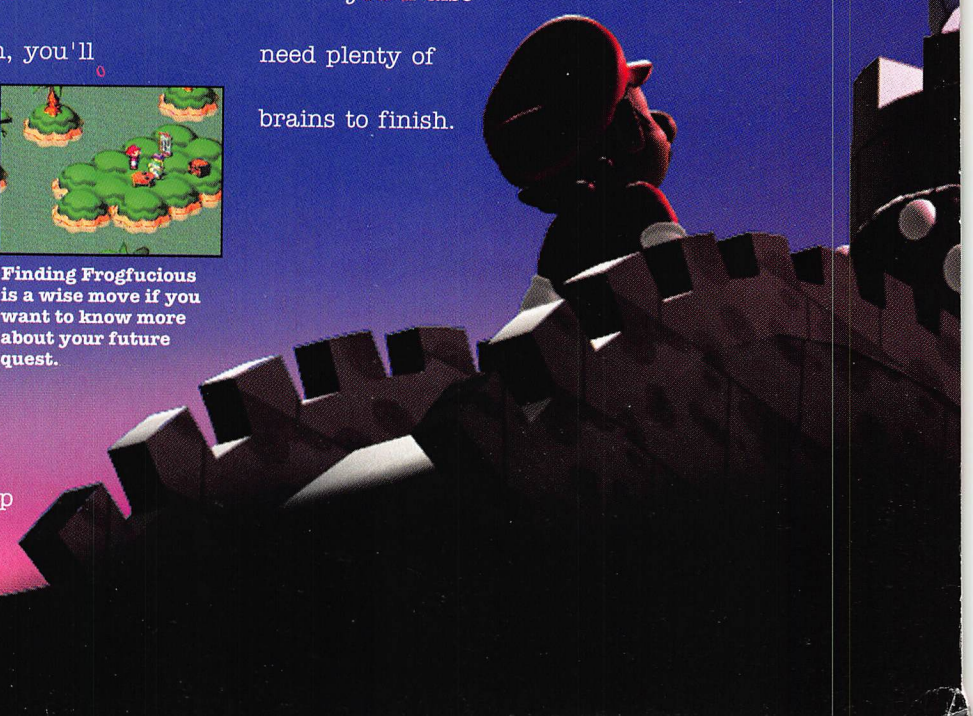
Jumping, ducking and dodging have always been a critical part of any button-bashing Mario adventure. But with the new Super Mario RPG you'll also be pushing every brain cell you've got. • That's right. You and the world's most heroic plumber will have to battle through all the twists, turns and thumb-numbing action of a classic Mario adventure. Plus, meet the mental challenge as the story unfolds in this fully-rendered role-playing game! • It's the best of both worlds. One minute you're neck and neck at the Yoshi Races. The next you're gambling the night away at the Grate Guy's Casino. And, in between, you'll have to test your brains on mind-mushing riddles and new action-puzzles. Of course you'll find plenty of new friends who can help out. But they'll need your help in return. Without you, Mallow will never find his true family. Geno will never become a real boy. And Booster will never find a bride. • You'll also bump into all kinds of new baddies, plus classic goons from every Mario game in history. Only now, they're rendered in ACM with a 3-D, three-quarter overhead view. • So get ready for all kinds of new Nintendo action and brain-bending Square Soft adventure. Remember, running and jumping is a great start. But this time around you'll also need plenty of brains to finish.

You'd never want to be on the bad side of your new pal Mallow. His thunderbolt Special Attack brings a blast of lightning down on any enemies in sight.

You want a new kind of Mario action? Try the Yoshi races. But here's a tip. If you don't hit the buttons to the beat, you'll get beat.

Whether you call it more action or more RPG, the fact is you'll have to use every trick in both books to beat these bad guys.

Finding Frogfucious is a wise move if you want to know more about your future quest.



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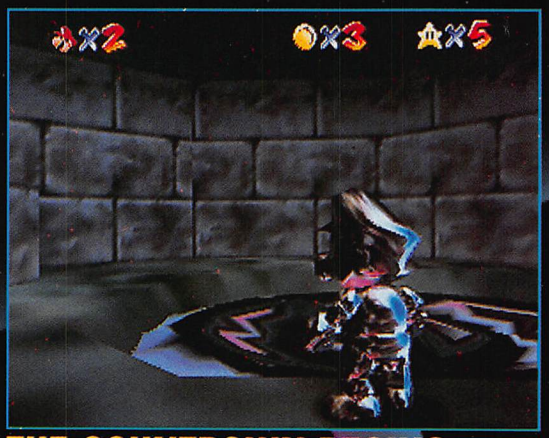

THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS...

FINALLY, SOME NEW N64 SHOTS! IS MARIO READY FOR THE PARTY?

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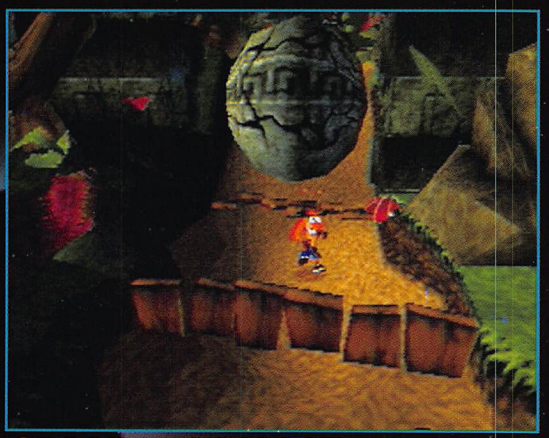

CRASH BANDICOOT

UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE AND NAUGHTY DOG GIVE SONY THE ULTIMATE WEAPON FOR PLATFORM DOMINATION

PAGE 20

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STEEL HARBINGER
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COVER STORY

CRASH BANDICOOT DIDN'T JUST BREAK THE MOLD... WE THINK HE BURIED IT SOMEWHERE.

GAMEFAN original art by:

TERRY WOLFINGER

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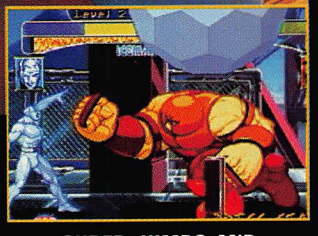

SUPER JUMPS AND MID-AIR ATTACKS!

KIDS TO ADULTS K-A AGES 6+

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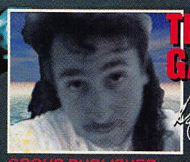

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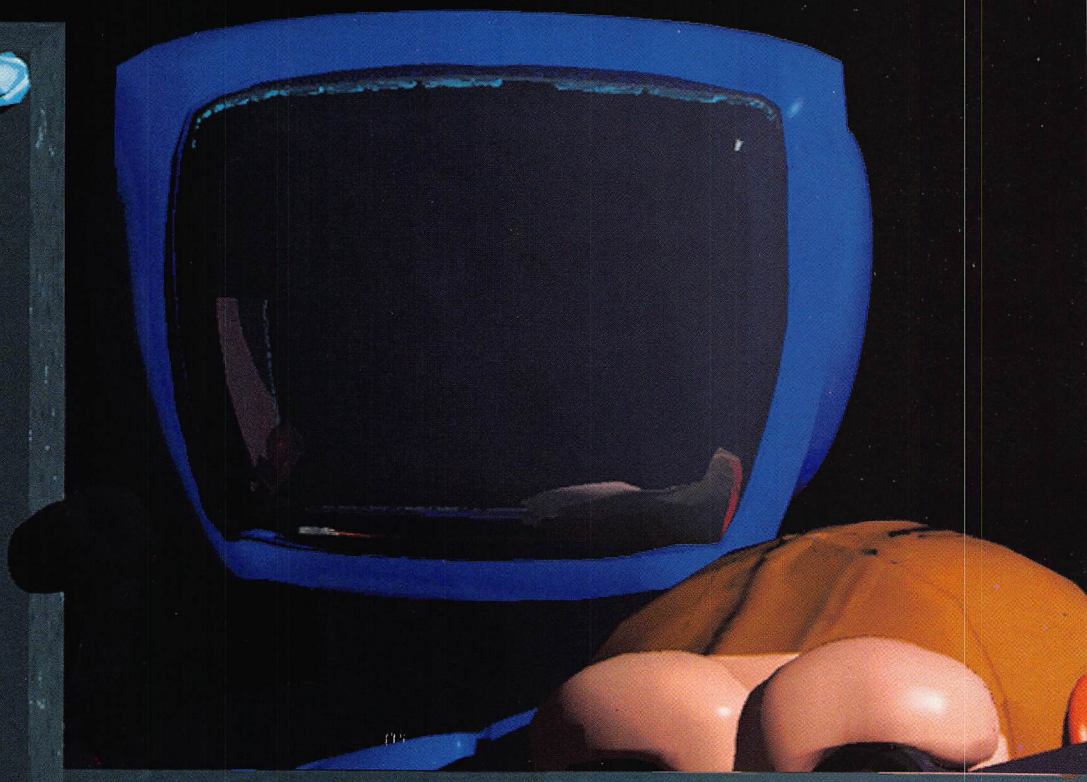
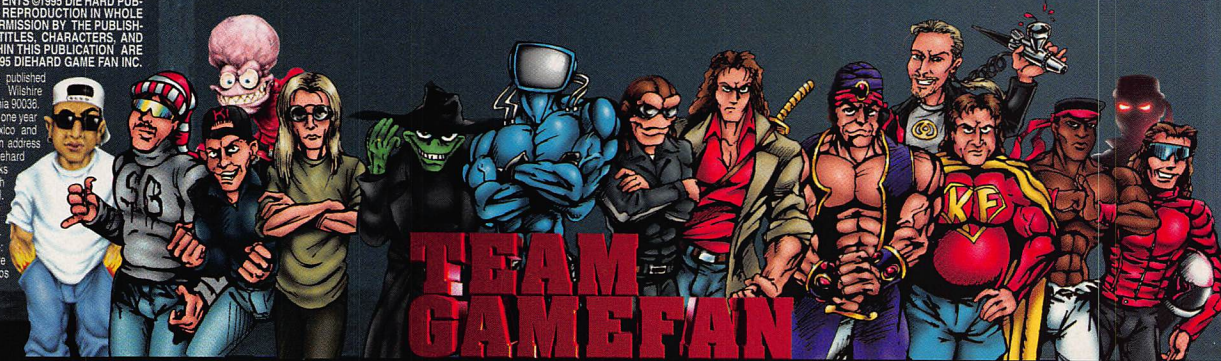


As the second E3 show approaches and we begin to get a glimpse of what to expect this year, one thing is clear: We, as publishers, have our work cut out for us. Developers are progressing at a rapid pace and firing out games less than a year post-launch that totally eclipse what we're playing now. Now add to the mix the high powered M2 (quad speed, 8-megs of RAM-burnin' powerhouse), which has solid backing from Matsushita and a much lower price than previously forecasted (well, add it late this year, early next), and the arrival of Nintendo's make-it-or-break-it Nintendo64 and who knows what lies ahead. These days, no one really knows where all this hardware, coupled with the vivid imaginations of designers, musicians, and programmers will take us.

It's always been our job to chronicle these events—it just used to be a whole lot easier. We pretty much knew what the limitations of 16-bit were, and you could see a hit coming from a mile away. Nowadays however, it seems that greatness is more often achieved, and by a vaster array of teams, both large and small. Of course, this is all great. We'll just have to find more editors to track it all down.



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HIGHWAY BATTLE
JUNE 1996
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K-A
AGES 6+
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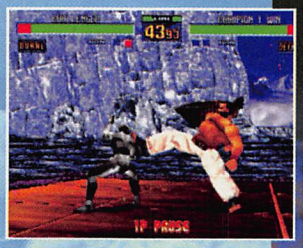
TOP TEN MOST WANTED

READERS' TOP TEN

1. *Virtua Fighter 2* - Saturn
2. *Chrono Trigger* - SNES
3. *Diddy's Kong Quest* - SNES
4. *Street Fighter Alpha* - PS
5. *Doom* - PS
6. *Final Fantasy III* - SNES
7. *Killer Instinct 2* - Arcade
8. *Killer Instinct - SNES*
9. *Sega Rally* - Saturn
10. *Resident Evil* - PS



READERS' MOST WANTED

1. *Killer Instinct II* - U64
2. *Mario*^{64} - U64
3. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
4. *Mario RPG* - SNES
5. *Tekken 2* - PS
6. *Toshinden 2* - PS
7. *Zelda*^{64} - U64
8. *Ultimate MK3* - Saturn
9. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - Arcade
10. *Panzer Zwei* - Saturn

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest

ED BOON

PROGRAMMER/PRODUCER *MK1- MK4*

1. Millipede - Arcade
2. Defender - Arcade
3. Robotron - Arcade
4. Missile Command - Arcade
5. Ultimate MK3 - Arcade
6. Tempest - Arcade
7. River Raid - Arcade
8. Killer Instinct - Arcade
9. SSF2 Turbo - Arcade
10. Cyber Ball - Arcade

GF EDITORS' TOP TEN

1. *Dark Savior* - Saturn
2. *Wipeout* - Saturn
3. *Jumping Flash 2* - PS
4. *Legend of Oasis* - Saturn
5. *Motor Toon GP 2 - PS*

6. *Choro-Q* - PS
7. *Guardian Heroes* - Saturn
8. *Tekken 2* - PS
9. *Earthworm Jim 2 - Saturn*
10. *Skeleton Warriors* - Saturn

1. *Resident Evil* - PS
2. *Tekken 2* - PS
3. *Dark Savior* - Saturn
4. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
5. *Policenauts* - PS

6. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - Arcade
7. *Snatcher - Sega CD*
8. *Street Fighter Alpha* - PS
9. *Lufia 2* - SNES
10. *Night Warriors* - Saturn

1. *Killer Instinct 2* - Arcade
2. *Super Mario RPG* - SFC
3. *Resident Evil* - PS
4. *Tekken 2* - PS
5. *Motor Toon GP 2* - PS

6. *Jumping Flash 2* - PS
7. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - Arcade
8. *Night Warriors* - Saturn
9. *Kirby's Super Deluxe* - SNES
10. *Wipeout* - Saturn

1. *Resident Evil* - PS
2. *Legend of Oasis* - Saturn
3. *Dark Savior* - Saturn
4. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
5. *Dragon Force* - Saturn

6. *Tekken 2 - PS*
7. *Genso Suikoden* - PS
8. *King of Fighters '95* - Saturn
9. *Policenauts* - PS
10. *Romancing Sa•Ga 3* - SF

1. *Tekken 2* - PS
2. *Killer Instinct 2* - Arcade
3. *Super Mario RPG* - SFC
4. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - Arcade
5. *Sega Rally* - Saturn

6. *Soul Edge* - Arcade
7. *Street Fighter Alpha* - PS
8. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
9. *Doom* - PS
10. *Ridge Racer Revolution* - PS

1. *Tekken 2* - PS
2. *Resident Evil* - PS
3. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
4. *Policenauts* - PS
5. *Genso Suikoden* - PS

6. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - Arcade
7. *Street Fighter Alpha* - PS
8. *Super Mario RPG* - SFC
9. *Lufia 2* - SNES
10. *Ridge Racer Revolution* - PS

WIN THE GAME SYSTEM OF YOUR CHOICE! ENTER TODAY!

All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

First Prize:
Your choice of a 32X, VIRTUAL BOY, or NOMAD.

Second Prize:
Your choice of one of the Picks of the Month in Viewpoint.

Third Prize:
A FREE year of GameFan! The best magazine in the universe!

Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

Congratulations

to last month's winners:

First Prize:
James Asta, Fort Meyers, FL

Second Prize:
Paul Kissee, Ozark, MO

Third Prize:
Christian Hintz, West Milford, NJ

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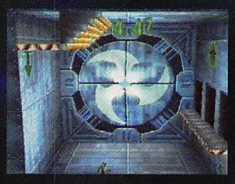
E3 LINE-UPS ARE ALREADY POURING IN... LET'S TAKE A LOOK, SHALL WE?

ACTIVISION

BLAST CHAMBER—Saturn and PlayStation—November '96



A unique action game set in a rotatable 3D cube, Blast Chamber allows up to 4 players to challenge each other in a pressure-packed race against time. Players must stay one step ahead of their opponents as they maneuver their character through an intricate maze of obstacles, obtain control of a crystal and place it into the appropriate transmitter before a deadly time bomb strapped to their character is triggered.

BMG INTERACTIVE

FIRO AND KLAWD—Saturn and PlayStation—October '96

The game contains fully-animated characters, richly-detailed graphics, and incorporates full motion video, plus 15 levels (containing multiple sub-games) to offer non-stop, action-packed gameplay. It also provides a special "active auto detect" feature that automatically adjusts gameplay difficulty according to a players' skill and ability.

GRAND THEFT AUTO
PlayStation—Fall '96

Grand Theft Auto transports players into the heart-stopping action of crime, high-speed chases and rule-breaking. On the roadways of several major cities, players can travel in a variety of stolen getaway vehicles.

CAPCOM

MARVEL SUPER HEROES
Saturn and PlayStation
4th quarter '96

This incredible one-on-one fighting game features Infinity Combos, counters, and a 3-stage Super Meter. It introduces "Infinity Gems" as an all-new system to the fighting game that adds a new level of excitement by allowing players to increase their strength, speed, or vitality during a match.

BREATH OF FIRE 3—Saturn and PlayStation—3rd quarter '96

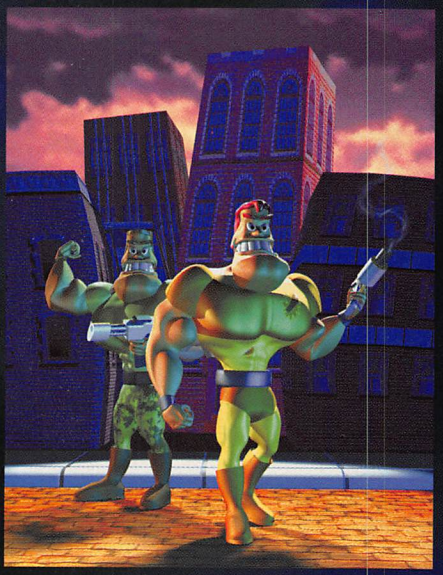
Breath of Fire 3 features large, beautifully-detailed 2D characters who interact in a fully 3D polygon world. The player is able to select from different viewpoints, which may reveal secret passageways, hidden enemies, or unseen treasures.

MEGAMAN 8 and MEGAMAN X4
Saturn and PlayStation
4th quarter '96

He's back! The Blue Bomber's demise has evidently been greatly exaggerated, as both the classic MegaMan and his futuristic counterpart, MegaMan X, bolt onto both the Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn in two separate titles. New graphics, lighting effects, improved music, and intense action are only the tip of the iceberg on these new titles.

MAJOR DAMAGE—Saturn and PlayStation—3rd quarter '96

Part platform adventure, part shooter frenzy, Major Damage provides explosive amusement for one or two player simultaneous action. The game is comprised of five different worlds, with a total of 16 levels. Along with platform levels emphasizing destruction, there are also auto-scrolling levels where the player has a chance to leap behind the wheel of the Damagemobile or the Carnage Cruiser, and take to the streets for some 4-wheelin' action.



WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE—Saturn and PlayStation—3rd quarter '96

This 2 player game offers an exciting new perspective never before seen in video games. Based on the popular RPG environment created by White Wolf, this game will combine many elements of horror and fantasy to create a rich gothic environment.

cont'd. on p. 10

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Acclaim®

cont'd. from p. 8

INTERPLAY

AFTERMATH—Saturn and PlayStation

12 different highly-detailed, rendered levels where the danger and difficulty increase, resulting in 30 hours of play. Astounding fully-rendered graphics combined with animated texture maps, light source shading and a true 3D environment. Plenty of hidden surprises and danger throughout the levels.

LUCASARTS

SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE
Nintendo64

Developed by LucasArts in partnership with Nintendo of America, Shadows of the Empire is a new Star Wars story set in the time between The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. Players assume the role of Dash Rendar, a roguish hero who must thwart the ruthless leader of a powerful crime syndicate whose emergence threatens to upset the balance of power in the universe.

REBEL ASSAULT II
PlayStation

A best-seller on PC CD-ROM, Rebel Assault II is an action-adventure game set in the Star Wars universe. The game features realistic 3D graphics and live-action video—the first new Star Wars footage since Return of the Jedi.

DARK FORCES—PlayStation

The award-winning Dark Forces is a first-person action/adventure game executed in richly-detailed 3D graphics. The compelling Star Wars story is fraught with danger and intrigue, and challenges players to destroy the Empire's latest weapon: the Dark Trooper.

MYTH ADVENTURES
Saturn and PlayStation

Greek mythology is turned into a virtual toga party starring Hercules and his buddies, in the light-hearted, 2 player arcade-style game Myth Adventures. With the fate of ancient civilization hanging in the balance, players battle countless gods, mythical creatures and other assorted bad guys throughout the game's vast field of play.

BALLBLAZER—PlayStation

The blindingly fast sports gaming classic BallBlazer returns with an all-new, updated multiplayer version for the PlayStation. BallBlazer has been redesigned to take full advantage of the latest technology and is set in a spectacular real-time 3D environment.

MGM INTERACTIVE

Cyberthug
PlayStation—October '96

This 3D action game stars a tough, tongue-in-cheek hero who battles an evil computer hacker in the netherworld of the Internet. Sparked by 3D real-time rendered graphics and flying action transitions, Cyberthug is aimed at hard-core gamers.

H.O.S.T
PlayStation—October '96

An arcade-style shooter with fast action gameplay. As a mutating, warrior robot, the player acquires the weaponry and special powers of vanquished enemies before battling its next adversary. A top-down shooter with 3D rendered backgrounds and characters and plenty of visual effects.

PLAYMATES

VIRTUAL SUPERCROSS
Saturn and PlayStation
November '96

A true 3D racing experience, set on both stadium Supercross and outdoor motocross tracks. Players can control throttle speed, Skid, jump and perform tricks in the air while battling seven other racers for the championship.

PSYGNOSIS

CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD
PlayStation—May '96

Gorgeous graphics and movie-style cinematic techniques contribute to this truly exciting journey within the rich and ancient time of King Arthur's Britain. Utilizing movie techniques which create greater ambiance and realism, the detailed graphics in this interactive adventure encompass 100 environments as you take your sword against human and non-human foes.

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2
PlayStation—Fall '96

Joining the spectacular crashes and open-arena wrecking action that made Destruction Derby such a hit will be longer, more intense race tracks, an improved racing model, banking section on the open arena "bowl," a more advanced 3D engine and more.

DISCWORLD 2
PlayStation—Winter '96

Once again, Monty Python star Eric Idle gives voice to our bumbling hero, who teams up with another Discworld favorite, Death, for another side-splitting, puzzle-packed graphic adventure.

ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU
PlayStation—Winter '96

Experience real-time calculated 3D characters and high-res 3D pre-rendered FMV backgrounds in this action adventure game. Its cinematic sequences, including real actors performing inside 3D scenes, add to the realism.

FORMULA ONE
PlayStation—Summer '96

Welcome to F1—the only official Formula One racing game for the PlayStation. Experience the glamour and excitement of a full season as you take on the formidable challenge issued by the biggest names in Formula One competition. Combining both arcade race modes and more serious simulation-style features, F1 is already the most talked about racing game of the summer.

cont'd. on p. 18

DEATH.

It's what they live for.

Against a dark and shifting 3-D landscape, the warriors of the twisted underworld known as BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2™ await your return. How do they know you'll be back? Let's just say it's a *gut* feeling. As in the first 360° go-round, the moves are lethal, the stages visceral and the characters, wicked. And this time, the original avengers are joined by a new crew of fighters. Like Tracy, the sexy cop gone bad; Verm, merciless madman; and Chaos, a friendly fella who happens to swing a sickle. All of 'em real keen to get to know you better. On every level.

So welcome back. And plan to stay awhile. Because here in Battle Arena Toshinden 2, these forsaken foes aren't just out to take you down. They're down to take you *out*.

http://www.playmatestoys.com

PlayStation

TEEN
AGES 13+

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Send in your codes... good, bad, or ugly. We'll look 'em over and choose one grand prize winner each month. Codes cannot come from a previously published US magazine. Winners will be drawn each month and displayed here in Hocus Pocus, the only place where cheaters prosper. (Current subscribers who win a sub. will receive a one-year extension.)

* Any video game featured in our "Viewpoint" section

CONGRATULATIONS!

To this month's winners:

First Prize:
Christopher B. Morin, W. SPLFD, MA

Second Prize:
Alexi Mock, Springfield, MA

Third Prize:
Emilio Ortiz, Columbus, OH

SEND YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS TO:
Hocus Pocus
5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Jumping Flash! (Sony PlayStation)

Stage Select!

During this TITLE SCREEN, enter; UP, UP, DOWN, DOWN, X, X, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, X, TRI, X, TRI

Start the game and your free to roam!

Getting to the last boss should be no problem now!

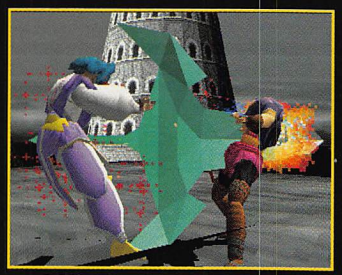
Justin Smith, Longview, TX

Toshinden 2 (Sony PlayStation-Import)

Access Bosses

When the words come flying into the screen, on CONTROLLER 1 enter;

L1, L2, TRI, R1, R2, SQU to access Master and Uranus. For Vermillion and Sho, on CONTROLLER 2 enter;

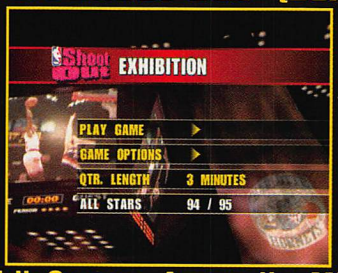


SQU, R2, R1, TRI, L2, L1. Go to the CHARACTER SELECT screen, and hold SELECT to slow down the icon.

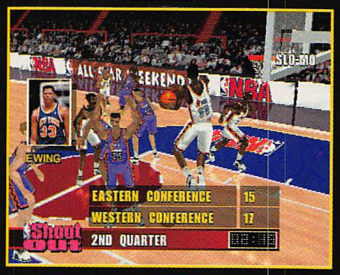
Emilio Ortiz, Columbus, OH

NBA Shoot Out (Sony PlayStation)

All-Star Teams



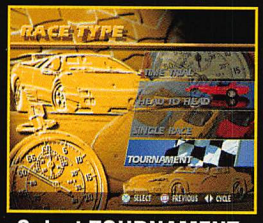
First start an EXHIBITION game. Then before starting, press; R1, L1, R1, L1, R2, L2, R2, L2. A new menu option should appear. Simply turn "ON" the selection to play as the All-Star teams and in Arizona!



Erik Gayoso, Annapolis, MD

Need For Speed (Sony PlayStation)

Rally Mode, Warrior Car, X-tra track



Select TOURNAMENT, then select PASSWORD. Then enter; "TSYBNS"

Press L1 & R1 together when selecting the track. Desert Springs should now be Oasis Springs.

LOST VEGAS should appear between the Vertigo Falls and City courses when selecting the tracks.

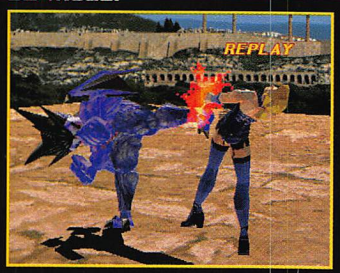
Press L1 & R1 to select the cars. The WARRIOR car should appear when you scroll through.

Robert Brown, Omaha, NE

Tekken 2 (Sony PlayStation-Import)

50 Mode!

First beat the game and get all 25 characters including Roger/Alex and Devil/Angel. Then, during the character select, hold the SELECT button and choose any character. If you hold SELECT immediately after winning, the character will be twice as big.



Alexi Mock, Springfield, MA

Tekken 2 (Sony PlayStation-Import) — Wire Frame Mode!

To access the WIRE FRAME MODE, first get all 25 characters.

Then, when selecting a character, press and hold L1 & L2 while choosing.

Bingo! *Punch-Out* mode!

Frank Martinez Jr., Granada Hills, CA

THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE ARE THIS MONTH'S SUPER HOCUS POCUS WINNERS! CONGRATULATIONS! AND KEEP SENDING IN THOSE TRICKS!!

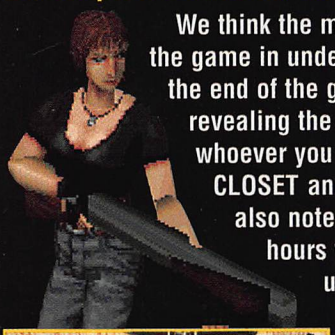
1ST PLACE
CHRISTOPHER B. MORIN
W. SPLFD, MD

2ND PLACE
ALEXI MOCK
SPRINGFIELD, MA

3RD PLACE
EMILIO ORTIZ
COLUMBUS, OH

Resident Evil / Bio Hazard (Sony PlayStation-Domestic / Import) — Game Shark Cheats!

Christopher B. Morin, W. SPLFD, MA.



We think the method to get the SPECIAL KEY is to beat the game in under 7 hours, but it may involve factors at the end of the game which we cannot talk about without revealing the ending. This SPECIAL KEY will allow whoever you are playing as to go to the WARDROBE CLOSET and change his/her clothing/outfit. It was also noted that if you beat the game in under 3 hours you can get a ROCKET LAUNCHER with unlimited ammo! Good luck!

Here's a picture of the SPECIAL KEY. The Game Shark codes will allow you to access many more things, but we haven't found any use for many of the items. Just like the 3 listed below...

OIL

DUM DUM BULLETS

PICK AXE

These Game Shark codes listed can take all of the fun out of the game, so try to beat it without using them first!

KNIFE	0001
BERETTA	FF02
SHOTGUN	FF03
COLT PYTHON	FF04
FLAME THROWER	FF06
BAZOOKA	FF07
ROCKET LAUNCHER	FF0A
CLIP	FF0B
SHELLS	FF0C
DUMDUM ROUNDS	FF0D
MAGNUM ROUNDS	FF0E
FUEL	FF0F

The first 2 numbers of the set of 4 are the numbers of items and the second 2 numbers are the actual item.

Example: 800C8784 FF02 = Beretta with 100 shots.

Item Prefixes (slots 1-8): 800C8784 FF0C, 800C8788 FF0C, 800C878A FF0C, 800C878C FF0C, 800C878E FF0C, 800C8790 FF0C, 800C8792 FF0C, 800C8786 FF0C

You can change the amount from 01 to 255 (FF) but this may crash the PlayStation with some items. Since there are more times than spaces, turn your Action Replay off and put new things in the chest. If you turn it on again, it will give you what you started with. Also make sure to enter the prefix code as well.

EXPLOSIVE ROUNDS	FF10	BROKEN SHOTGUN	011C	MO-DISK	0128	HELMET KEY	0136	SERUM	FF42
ACID ROUNDS	FF11	CRANK	011D	WIND CREST	0129	LAB KEY	0137	RED HERB	FF43
FLAME ROUNDS	FF12	CRANK 2	011E	FLARE	012A	SPECIAL KEY	0138	GREEN HERB	FF44
EMPTY BOTTLE	0113	EMBLEM	011F	SLIDES	012B	DORMITORY KEY	0139	BLUE HERB	FF45
WATER	0114	GOLD EMBLEM	0120	MOON CREST	012C	DORMITORY KEY 2	013A	MIXED HERBS	FF46
UMB NO. 2	0115	BLUE JEWEL	0121	STAR CREST	012D	C-ROOM KEY	013B	MIXED HERBS 2	FF47
UMB NO. 4	0116	RED JEWEL	0122	SUN CREST	012E	LAB KEY	013C	MIXED HERBS 3	FF48
UMB NO. 7	0117	MUSIC NOTES	0123	INK RIBBON	FF2F	DESK KEY	013D	MIXED HERBS 4	FF49
UMB NO. 17	0118	WOLF MEDAL	0124	LIGHTER	0130	RED BOOK	013E	MIXED HERBS 5	FF4A
YELLOW 6	0119	EAGLE MEDAL	0125	LOCK PICK	0131	DOOM BOOK 2	013F	MIXED HERBS 6	FF4B
NP 003	011A	CHEMICAL	0126	SWORD KEY	0133	DOOM BOOK 1	0140	COM RADIO	014D
V-JOLT	011B	BATTERY	0127	ARMOR KEY	0134	FIRST AID SPRAY	FF41		

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2

HOCUS POCUS SPECIAL

Nick Rox here. Sorry that our *Alpha 2* coverage in this issue is limited to this paltry selection of codes. We're waiting till we've played the game for over a month to bring you strategies and combos. Hopefully we will have them for next issue. I also hope to reveal all of the character endings. See ya next month!

STAGE SELECT & HIDDEN STAGES!

Insert your coin, press Start, and hold it. Highlight the character whose stage you'd like to go to, and hold your cursor there for a few seconds. Now choose your character. Voila! If you highlight Sagat or Bison with this method, you'll be sent to their secret backgrounds: Venezuela and Australia.

SELECTABLE WIN POSES!

When you win a round, hold Start and any button. Your win pose will change accordingly. You can even select rare or hidden win poses with this code, like Dan's Yuri parody or Rose's "Daijobu?" gown pose.

MID-BOSSES

Win at least five rounds with a Super/Custom Combo and don't continue. Your character will fight a mid-boss.

AUTOBLOCK COLORS

If you're unfortunate enough to live near an arcade that has autoblocking on, try this: Simply choose autoblocking and press Punch or Kick. Two autoblock-only colors will appear!

SUPER AKUMA

Never continue, get to the second-to-last character with over 1,600,000 points and win at least ten rounds with a super/custom combo to reach Super Akuma! This high-powered CPU Akuma can throw two air fireballs and is extremely dangerous. You only get one chance to beat him... but you may be disappointed if you do. Make sure that if you're playing on the 1P side, you're the regular Punch color, and on the 2P side play as the regular Kick color.

SUPER TURBO CHUN-LI

Simply highlight Chun-Li, hold down Start for five seconds and press any button to play as old Chun-Li! The only difference (besides her appearance) with new Chun-Li is her Kikkoken... it's a charge motion.

MOVES YOU MAY NOT KNOW

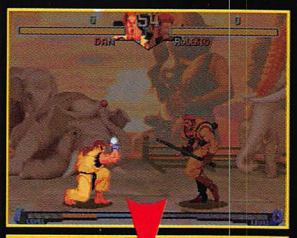
Here's a few moves you might not know yet. Oh, by the way... Akuma's Bison Killer is now performed the same way as the home versions: **Jab, Jab, Towards, Short, Fierce.**

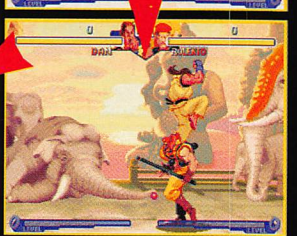
Ken's Fake Roll: Fireball motion with Start. The purpose of this move is still a mystery.

Dan's Roll Taunt: Fireball motion with Start. This will go through most moves.

Ryu's Fake Fireball: Fireball motion with Start. Ryu will fake a fireball.

Dan's Super Taunt: Two fireball motions with Start. Has to be seen to be believed! Dan does several taunts and ends up in a parody of Yuri from *Art of Fighting*.





MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYERS

KONAMI XXL SPORTS SERIES™

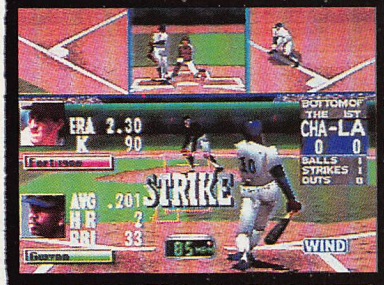
IT'S A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME IN THE BOTTOM OF THE 9TH.

FLUID 3-D POLYGON ACTION

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

700 MLBPA PLAYERS

MEMORY BACKUP



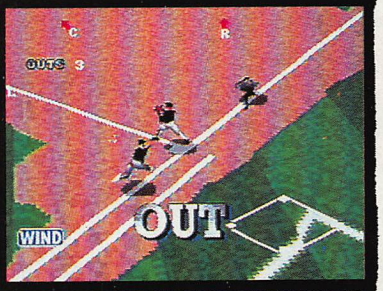
SIGNATURE MOVES

TRADES

FULL SEASON AND PLAYOFF MODES

VOCAL UMPS

ERRORS



3-D INTUITIVE BATTING SYSTEM

TRAINING MODE

WIND CONDITIONS

"PLAY-BY-PLAY" ANNOUNCER

PLAYER STATS

PlayStation™

KIDS TO ADULTS AGES 6+

Coming soon on Sega Saturn™

www.konami.com

"BOTTOM OF THE 9TH"

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OK, this is getting scary. *Wipeout* was made for the PlayStation, right? What's it doing on the Saturn? Better yet, how is it *working* on the Saturn? In fact, except for the light sourcing effects missing, this version might actually be better! The play control's tighter, it seems faster at times, and there's a new tune! In my opinion, the Saturn version is just more fun to play, and is definitely the best racer on the system so far.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 6 **95**

I am amazed. I don't know how they did it, but *Wipeout* for the Saturn is just as impressive on the Saturn as it was on the PlayStation. In fact, I thought I was playing the PlayStation version. The 3D engine in this Saturn version is a miracle and the textures are some of the best I've seen on this system. What's even better is the play control seems to be improved over the PS version and the game even runs faster!

G 10 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 8 **94**

Somehow, Psygnosis has managed to port over not only the same great play mechanics from the PS *WO*, but make them even better. The control takes center stage in *Wipeout* for the Saturn. Graphically, the absence of light source shading is missed and the game looks just a little grainier, but otherwise this is 100% *Wipeout*, one of the best racing-shooters ever devised. The techno soundtrack's a masterpiece, and the feeling of flight unparalleled. You'll play it forever.

G 8 C 10 P 9 M 10 O 9 **95**

WIPEOUT
SATURN
SEGA • CD
RACING/COMBAT

Let's face it here... *Rage* was, at best, a mediocre game to begin with. I mean, this game predates *Killer Instinct ONE*... Why would we want perfect versions of it now? If for some reason you do, then hey, "It's time to *RAGE*" (ha!), but if not, join me, and let's move on with our lives. Can't wait to play a perfect version of this on the M2 sometime in 1998!

G 6 C 5 P 4 M 6 O 3 **59**

Oh boy, yet another perfect arcade translation of *Primal Rage*... Joy! Seriously though, unless you're a big fan of the arcade game (I'm not), this game is boring as boring can be. For what it's worth, the Saturn version is about as close to the arcade game as you can get. The characters are all full size, the music is exact and backgrounds are arcade perfect. The gameplay and control are actually decent, but let's face it, the "wow" factor of this game has run its course.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 6 **73**

Primal Rage needs a major overhaul to compete in the ever-evolving world of fighting games. The overly complex control scheme coupled with slow, large characters just doesn't cut it in the game play dept. these days. Graphically of course, *PR* remains a great game and the Saturn version is hard to distinguish from the coin-op. That is, until you see the hurtin' FMV. The music is pretty weak too, but it always was.

G 9 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 8 **65**

PRIMAL RAGE
SATURN
TWI • CD
FIGHTING

I laughed the first time I saw *Choro-Q* but after playing for just minutes realized this is a serious racer! A lot of time obviously went into making this game more than just a conversation piece. I actually like the handling characteristics of these pocket rockets more then the *Rally* cars. *CQ* is just a total gas to play. The music is also really good, sounding more than a little like the original *Toshinden* soundtrack. Tamsoft has now developed hits in two genres, this one being the stronger of the two.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 9 **88**

I've always wondered what it would be like to zip around in a mini-Cooper, and *Choro-Q* was a great way to find out. Aside from the impressive 3D and tight, responsive control, what I like the most about *CQ* is that it's different. *CQ* doesn't feel like a clone but rather has its own set of rules. You jump through waterfalls, cross water, race in stadiums and off road! You can even earn money on the circuit and build your own car!

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 **85**

Combine the road racing in *Ridge Racer* with the off-road racing in *Sega Rally*, toss in a fantastic soundtrack straight from the composers of *Toshinden* and a cast of hyper-cool little SD race cars and *voila*! *Choro-Q*! Tamsoft has made the jump from fighting to racing in blazing form. Everything about this game is great. Control, difficulty, depth (it's got twice the meat of *Rally* or *RR*) music, and the control are all superb. One of the best next-gen drivers thus far.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 8 O 8 **90**

CHORO-Q
PLAYSTATION
TAKARA • CD
RACING

Dragon Force is really complex and takes a while to learn, but can be a lot of fun once you get into it. It's more like a board game than a traditional RPG, but the battles are amazing, and there's lots of strategy on the overhead map. Not quite what I was expecting, but good nonetheless.

G 7 C 6 P 6 M 6 O 9 **84**

I've played a ton of strategy/RPGs, but I've never seen the two genres combined like this before. *Dragon Force* takes a lot of getting used to, but once you get into it, you'll find it exercises a different corner of your brain than most conventional strategy games. The graphics and sound are nothing too special, but the battle scenes are really impressive. A great change of pace.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M 6 O 8 **91**

Hey, it's *Lords of the Rising Sun 2*! But good! It's been a long time since I've played a strategy title with such depth in both plot and tactics. The battles were enjoyable (although I wish you had more control, but I know that's not what this game is all about), but the true challenge is in the long-term planning of your conquest. Sounds boring, but believe me, it's not.

G 9 C 6 P 8 M 7 O 9 **92**

DRAGON FORCE
SATURN
SEGA JPN. • CD
STRATEGY/RPG

Gradius was a real fun game... about six years ago. Actually, it's still pretty fun, but if you're gonna reprogram it, why not redraw the graphics, add in new music, etc. I guess it's kind of cool to have a 100% perfect version (for nostalgic value), but I don't see myself pulling it out to play often when there are so many better, newer shooters.

G 4 C 7 P 7 M 4 O 1 **69**

Admittedly, *Gradius* helped pioneer the shooting genre and for its time was a great game. Viewed from that angle, well, it's the exact same game, so if you crave going back, well, be my guest. Personally, I now find this game beyond boring and have no interest to suffer through it. I go back to my NES favorites like *Zelda*, *Faxanadu*, and the *Castlevania* series all the time. So you see, I do have respect for the classics. Just not this one.

G 4 C 8 P 7 M 5 O 5 **50**

What can I say...I love *Gradius*, always have, always will. Now I'm not going to go into great detail about how good both these games are (*Gradius* and *Gradius II*) because either you like them or you don't. What I can say is that they are, in every way, arcade-perfect translations. It would've been really nice if Konami had included the SNES *Gradius* as well (*Gradius III*) but I guess you can't have everything. *Gradius* fans, rejoice!

G 6 C 9 P 7 M 7 O 8 **85**

GRADIUS DELUXE
SATURN
KONAMI • CD
SHOOTER (2)

KOF '95 is my favorite Neo•Geo fighter. The wealth of characters creates a deep, diverse, fighting experience and the art is a testament to hand-drawn games, with some of the best background and character art I've ever seen. The Saturn version is the first game to utilize the cartridge slot and comes with a cool little memory cart. The end result: totally do-able loading time and a pixel-for-pixel perfect translation. SOA needs to bring this game out here. It's a fighter worthy of their label.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 8 **90**

Another exceptional arcade translation for the Saturn. The cartridge was a great idea, and now millions of gamers can finally experience *KOF* without hours of painful loading time. I wish they had added a few more options, or an arranged soundtrack or something, but beggers can't be choosers, right?

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 6 O 5 **92**

This is easily the best CD version of *KOF '95*. Thanks to the dual-ROM technology, *KOF '95* not only looks identical to the Neo•CD version, but it loads much faster as well. In fact, it's the fastest loading Saturn game I've played yet. What's even better is I actually prefer the control of the Saturn *KOF '95* over the Neo•CD version due to the Saturn's better-designed joypad. If you like KOF '95 and you can't afford the Neo•Geo cartridge version, forget the Neo•CD game and go for this one instead. Trust me.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 8 O 8 **88**

KING OF FIGHTERS '95
SATURN
SNK • CD
FIGHTING

GENESIS®
X-PERTS™
SEGA™
LOW BATT.
X
Y
Z
A
B
C
MODE
START
GENESIS® NOMAD™
TEEN
AGES 13+
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At long last, a convenient, Portable Genesis.
(We figured you'll have to go outside sooner or later.)

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Here's an adventure for you: Find this symbol at Sega's web site at http://www.segaoa.com or on Compuserve at GO SEGA and see where it takes you.

SEGA NOMAD

VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality

SKID E. STORM NICK ROX K. LEE ORION MR.GOO TAKUHI WAKA

WIPEOUT
GAME OF THE MONTH!

BLAZING DRAGONS
PLAYSTATION
CRYSTAL DYN. • CD
INT. ADVENTURE

Simply put, *Blazing Dragons* is the best of the genre. User friendly, consuming gameplay is achieved both visually and audibly. For the amount of game here, the animation is more than generous and the art is painstakingly detailed. *BD* would be playable with a dull story. But herein lies the secret. Crystal hires professional actors for all of their games. Cheech Marin is great but only part of a phenomenal cast. Waka had fun playing his favorite moments over the inter-com and we all had a Coke and smile. Makes ya feel good.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 9 — **85**

Usually, I don't like text adventures, but I gotta tell you, *Blazing Dragons* was entertaining enough to garner my praise. Everything is done right in this game. The graphics are well-drawn and highly detailed, the voice acting is impeccable and most of all, the dialogue is hilarious. Time and time again I found myself laughing my arse off. There are corny jokes here and there, but the quest is so well designed and the game is so fun, you don't even care. A miracle.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 9 — **82**

What's with all the *Monty Python*-inspired fantasy-based humor games on the PlayStation? People who liked *Discworld* owe it to themselves to give this one a play, 'cause I had a lot more fun with *Blazing Dragons*. Good puzzles, lots of places to explore, and that catapult scene... Heh heh heh... Wacky good fun.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 9 — **80**

SHELLSHOCK
PLAYSTATION
US GOLD • CD
STR/SIM.

I'm usually the first in line when it says Core on the label but for some reason *ShellShock* just doesn't do it for me. The 3D is good but not their best, and the action is actually pretty entertaining—but it's just so run of the mill. Tank sims are just not my bag. Plus the game is sooo heavily mired in hip-hop it's almost scary. They should have called this one *Heavy-T*. Definitely a niche product. But hey, it's a large niche.

G 6 C 8 P 6 M 7 O 8 — **70**

There are a lot of 3D games on the PlayStation, and the great majority of 'em are a heckuva lot better than this. While *ShellShock* does have its charms, such as that rockin' hip-hop soundtrack and a cool intro. Levels are diverse, but not much fun... Cool explosions, tho.

G 6 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 5 — **70**

I'm normally not a fan of tank sims (they're just too slow for my tastes), but *ShellShock* is an exception. The levels are huge and diverse, there's plenty of things to blow up, and great strategic elements. While none of this separates *ShellShock* from the rest, what other tank sim can claim to be totally run by brothers? That's right, everything from the cinemas, speech, to the music itself was influenced by a bit of soul. It's new, funky, and very well done.

G 6 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 9 — **80**

ULTIMATE MK3
SATURN
WILLIAMS • CD
FIGHTING

What a difference between the Saturn *MK2* and *Ultimate MK3*. Having Williams at the helm has made all the difference. The result is a near-perfect Saturn version of *Ultimate MK3*. I say near only because of the inherent loading during Shang Tsung's morph. It's strictly a RAM thing. I still think *MK* needs to go the hand drawn route (a la *Marvel Super Heroes*) to reach is max potential, but if you like 'em digitized this game is king. Saturn *MK* fans finally have their first cause for celebration.

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 9 O 8 — **80**

Well, what can I say about *UMK3* other than the fact it's totally arcade-perfect. Just the way *MK3* was for the PlayStation, *UMK3* is for the Saturn. The graphics are arcade-perfect, the music is the same, all of the backgrounds are here, the moves, fatalities and babalities are all perfectly intact. Like the PlayStation version, Shang Tsung's morph freezes the game for a second to load a new character, but other than that, this Saturn version is exactly like the arcade game in every way.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 — **85**

Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3 is exactly what Saturn *Kombat* fans need to wipe the taste of the lame *Mortal Kombat 2* conversion out of their mouths. Besides a few small twitches, this is exactly the arcade. Only problem is, I never really liked *MK3* to begin with... But if you're a fan, *bon appetit*!

G 8 C 6 P 6 M 8 O 7 — **81**

F1 CHALLENGE
SATURN
VIRGIN • CD
F1-RACING

I played this game about eight months ago when it came out overseas as *F1-Live Information*, and was pretty impressed. Suprisingly, Sega Sports has obviously passed, and so now Virgin is the lucky recipient of a solid F1-racer for the Saturn. Originally from the folks at Sega Japan with a license from FROC and Fuji TV, *F1-Live* sports some impressive realism and solid gameplay. I only wish the cockpit view had a hand and steering wheel like *Monaco*.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **75**

Talk about fun. *F1 Challenge* combines the effortless gameplay of *Daytona* with the hard-core competitiveness of F1 racing. Graphically, *F1C*'s good but not great, with decent 3D scaling and slightly pixely graphics. The control and playability, however, is spot-on and the F1 circuits are quite close to their real-life counterparts. Although I do wish *F1 Challenge* had more real F1 tracks (there's only 3 out of 17) and more sim elements, it's still better than most racers out there.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **80**

As far as F1 games go, this is okay. As a one-time professional F1 racer myself, I enjoyed the accuracy in engine noises and car design, but let me tell you, when I'd bang into the sidewalls at Hockenheim a couple of times in one race, the race was *over*. *F1 Challenge* is really forgiving about such things. I'd also like to see my steering wheel. Otherwise, smooth 3D, good tunes, and a whole lotta fun.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 — **78**

CONGO
SATURN
3D ADV/STR. • CD
SEGA

I was really expecting *Congo* to bite. The movie was such a smelly I never thought they could make a game of it. But some smart designers figured it out. "Hey, let's ditch the movie and just make a cool 3D action shooter in the jungle!" Very smart. Thanks to a great 3D engine and some unique gameplay, *Congo* really hits the mark. It's a solid challenge, has suprisingly smooth 3D, with ample parallax and is really diverse. For the first time, I hope the name doesn't hurt the game.

G 8 C 8 P 7 M 7 O 8 — **80**

Congo is the most unique first person shooters on the Saturn. I can't call it a *Doom* clone because most of the action takes place in the outdoors. This is a new twist to first-person shooters and I like the way it was used in *Congo*. The enemies are a little pixely, but the graphics are clean and the level design is very imaginative. *Congo* is a bit on the hard side and the sound could've been a little better, but it's still very much worth the price of admission.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 6 O 9 — **84**

Congo is an incredibly fun first-person shooter, and the first I've played in a long time that almost totally ignores *Doom*. Sure, it has preset paths to follow (well, sorta), and things to kill, but that's about it. The levels are very well-designed with tons of deep 3D elements, multiple planes, and lots of cool secrets. The gameplay's also quite a bit different than *Doom*, as you'll find yourself playing much more strategically than you would expect, partially thanks to the high difficulty. A great first-person shooter...

G 6 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 8 — **85**

cont'd. from p. 10

Psygnosis continued.

MONSTER TRUCK RALLY
PlayStation—Fall '96

From Reflections, the same team that brought you the sensational Destruction Derby, comes Monster Truck Rally, an all-action off-road racer that combines dirt-busting rally adventure with raucous monster truck arena stunts. Monster Truck Rally's real-time 3D engine places you in the driving seat for 4-wheel driving thrills and spills.

SENTIENT—PlayStation—Fall '96

Sentient is a race against time set on a space station in a falling-and-potentially fatal-orbit around a distant sun. A comprehensive menu-driven communications system allows you to interact with both the many crew members of the ship and with the ship itself.

WIPEOUT XL—PlayStation—Fall '96

With everyone else trying to catch up, Psygnosis is ready to blow a hole through the future with WipEout XL. Even more eye-popping visual glory and an enhanced race structure give a cutting-edge arcade feel to this king of the racers. WipEout XL features even faster, smoother graphics, more tracks, more crafts and new weapons.

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

BOGEY: DEAD 6—PlayStation-July '96

Pilot your choice of real fighters, including the F-4E Phantom, F-14D Tomcat, F-15E Eagle, F/A-18 Hornet, F-22 Super Star and more! Enjoy exhilarating dogfights with unequaled special effects, 360-degree movement and powerfully immersive sound effects.

CARNAGE HEART
PlayStation—July '96

By 2073, war has evolved. The battle for domination is now a game fought on the moons of Jupiter by warrior mechs armed with deadly firepower. Revolving 3D action with numerous camera angles that you control. Players develop their war mech from scratch, using 4 types of mech-arm bodies, 9 weapon types and numerous moves, with no limit to the combinations.

JET MOTO—PlayStation—4th qtr. '96

An extreme racing sport in vehicles that are a cross between a jet ski, a motocross bike, and a rocket. Jump, slam, and grind the sky on 12 huge, wicked, motocross-styled race courses across muddy swamps, the high-mountain tundra, and work the ramps and jumps to get the edge over 15 riders simultaneously. The jet moto bike even comes equipped with a laser grappling hook for instant 45-degree whip turns and 180-degree flip endos. Huge 3D environments create great open-air race course environments. The racer will not be confined by the track and, in fact, racers are encouraged to find short cuts. 2nd generation programming makes the outdoor environments more real than ever—undulating ocean waves, snow flurries, and animated Jet Moto riders that react to the movements of the bike. 2 player competition modes in both vertical and horizontal split screen views. Also offers a 4 player competitive mode. Link-up 2 PlayStations together and play both games in split-screen mode.

JUMPING FLASH 2

6 different worlds with 3 stages each, plus loads of hidden bonus levels PLUS the player must go through all the stages a second time in order to complete the game. And the second round has an entirely new series of bonus levels.

NFL GAME DAY '97

The number one, best-selling game for the PlayStation will be updated for the 1997 NFL season.

NFL FACE OFF '97

The game will feature updated team rosters and player stats.

MLB PENNANT RACE
PlayStation—May '96

More than 700 real players who perform to their real abilities based on their major league stats from "STATS Inc," complete statistical tracking for an entire season, motion-captured animation—incredibly realistic.

TWISTED METAL 2: WORLD TOUR
PlayStation—4th quarter '96

New and improved cars, 12 in all, including a black hearse, a bulldozer, an Indy-styled race car, and an armed man strapped between two wheels—we call him Axle. New and improved weapons: rolling time bombs, remote controlled detonators, napalm bursts, and multiple missile attacks. New and improved worlds; bigger, brighter, and better than ever. Try the base of an erupting volcano, the icy surface of crumbling glacier, the streets of Paris and more. New combo moves: freeze 'em, blow 'em in the air, then blow 'em away. New interface makes combos execute faster—more combo fun for everyone! Interactive environments: Bridges collapse, buildings fall, and the earth will move—with a little encouragement from a heat-seeking missile, of course.

VIACOM NEW MEDIA

DEATH DRONE
PlayStation—November '96

The speed and strategy of a racing game with the action of a shooting game. High-speed action in real-time 3D. Power-ups allow you to block other runners, fire ammo and capture energy keys to extend your time on each level. Death Drone features a fully open environment: no restricted areas, no predetermined tracks—you control your fate.

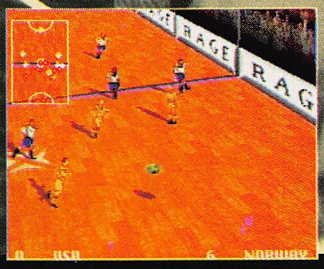
AEON FLUX
PlayStation—November '96

Based on MTV's critically acclaimed spy vs. spy series, Aeon Flux. Real-time 3D characters in a real-time virtual environment give the player total freedom to explore without limitation. Unique moves (walk, run, jump, roll, climb, use a grappling hook, swing from a trapeze, and fight hand-to-hand) against 20-plus characters in over 30 challenging environments. 6 missions based on reconnaissance sabotage and wreaking havoc, 35-plus levels equals 30-plus hours of gameplay.

cont'd. on p. 50

SCORING BIG ON PLAYSTATION!

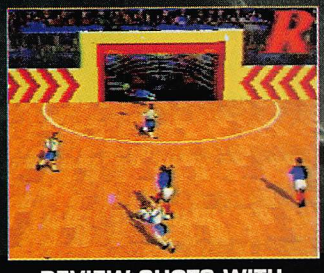
"A very fine FIFA-beating performance." - X GEN



TWO GAMES IN ONE: INDOOR & OUTDOOR SOCCER!

FULL OF INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS!

FREE KICK! WATCH FOR THE BANANA!



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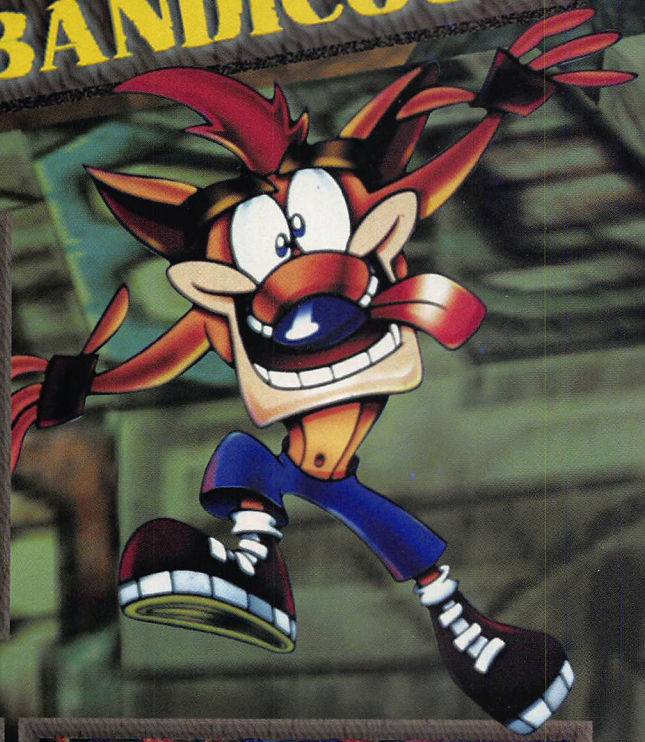
PLAYSTATION NATION

Ask yourself this question, "*do I really know my PlayStation?*" I thought I knew mine. After nearly a year of playing games that were so good, I had doubts it could get much better (unlike 16-bit which blossomed until its final days), I thought the next level would come with the N64, or perhaps the M2.

I have recently discovered just how wrong I was. That's the day I saw *Crash Bandicoot*. This must be an N64 game,

CRASH BANDICOOT



PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER-N-DOG/UNIVERSAL

PUBLISHER - SONY

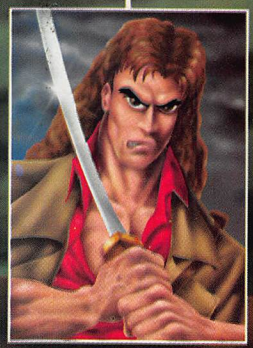
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

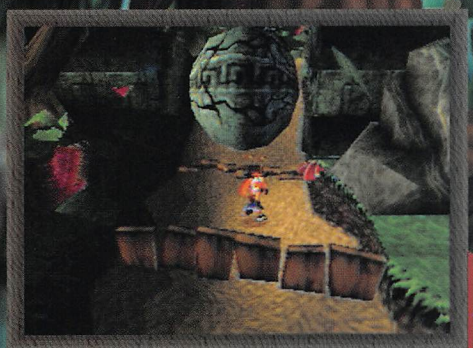
DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - SEP

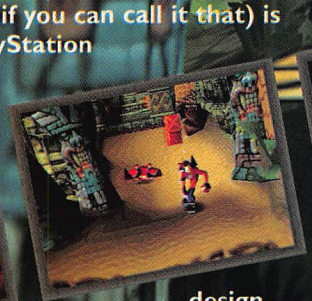
THIS IS THE GAME! NEED I SAY MORE?

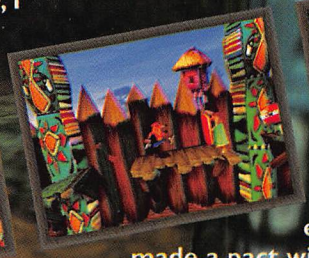


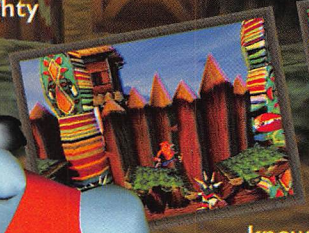
A CRASH COURSE IN PLATFORM POWER!

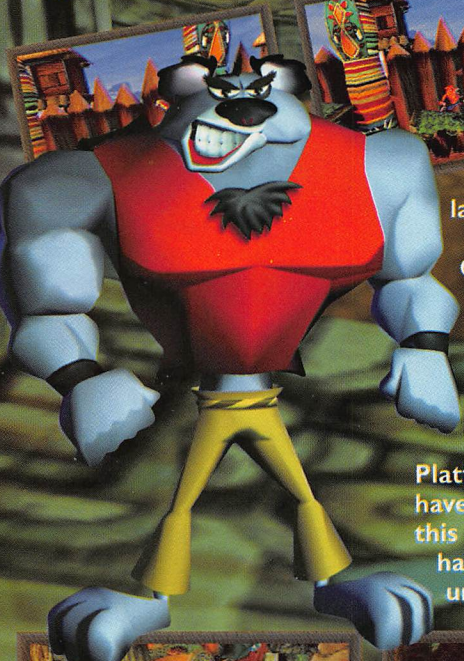


I thought. The 3D is so alive, filled with instinctive gameplay and beautifully-colored, gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped polygons. And there's hardly any visible pixelization. The 2D (if you can call it that) is equally impressive, far surpassing anything I have ever seen. This a PlayStation game? I figure this means one of two things: Either the PS has depths far beyond the likes of what, until today, I thought were 'A' quality games, or the programmers at Naughty Dog and the designers at Universal have made a pact with you-know-who. I know the producer at Universal Interactive so the latter seems unlikely.



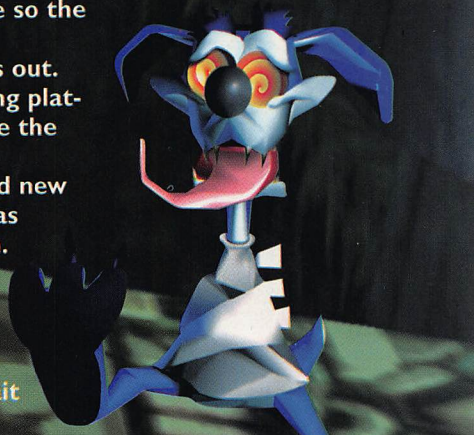






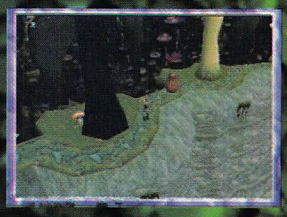
I guess the truth will be known after the year is out. Currently, however, *Crash* remains the best looking platform game I have ever seen. It'll definitely make the folks at Nintendo a little nervous.

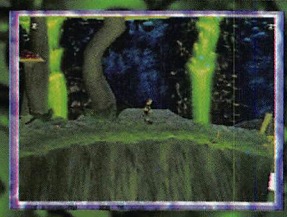
At the very least, platform gaming has reached new heights. At the very most, a legendary series has been born. Either way, PS platform addicts win. Think about what I just said... PlayStation & Platforming. Now there's a surprise! Who would have ever thought the PS would take the reigns in this category? I suppose the Sony camp is mighty happy about *Crash Bandicoot*. I know I am. Just wait until you see it. I'm quite sure you'll agree.



DONKEY RIDES, KILLER PLANTS, AND BANDICOOTS! AIN'T GAMES GREAT?!

OK, THAT'S REAL WATER!





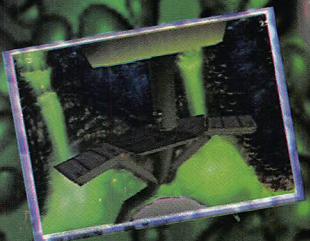
SAN JOSE, CA, APRIL 12, 1996.

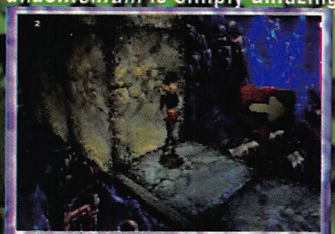
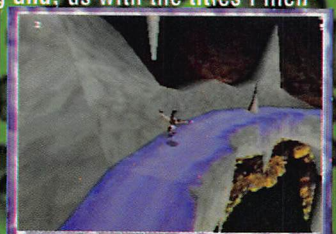
Once in awhile everything comes together just right. Story, art, character design, level design, control, physics, music, gameplay and a fresh idea join and fuse, becoming a legendary piece of software. This happened in fighting with *Street Fighter*, 3D action with *Doom*, platforming with *Mario* and *Sonic*, role playing with *Final Fantasy*, puzzles with *Tetris*, and may just happen here with *Pandemonium*... but in what category? To my knowledge (barring some unknown universe) this has never been done. So what is *this* you ask? Well, if I had to assign it a name I'd call it a virtual platformer. These shots were for the most part snatched off of a video tape and the ones that weren't don't even come close to telling this tale. You simply must see *Pandemonium* move. The first time I saw it move I asked, "So what does the game look like?" "This *is* the game," they said. But how can you control something so active and fluid, moving in so many directions and constantly changing perspectives? That's when they handed me the controller. From that point on I remember little of that afternoon... You don't play *Pandemonium*, you submerge yourself in it. Sure, you're pressing left and right, but it's producing new results as the playfield and cameras are constantly in motion. The real shocker is that it remains 100% instinctive as if you were playing a normal action platform game. *Pandemonium* is simply amazing and, as with the titles I men-

PANDEMONIUM

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

NIKKI



PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYN.

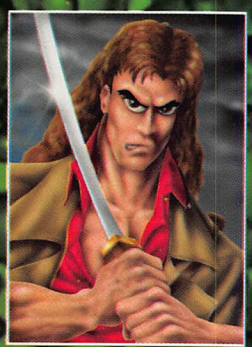
PUBLISHER - CRYSTAL DYN.

FORMAT - CD

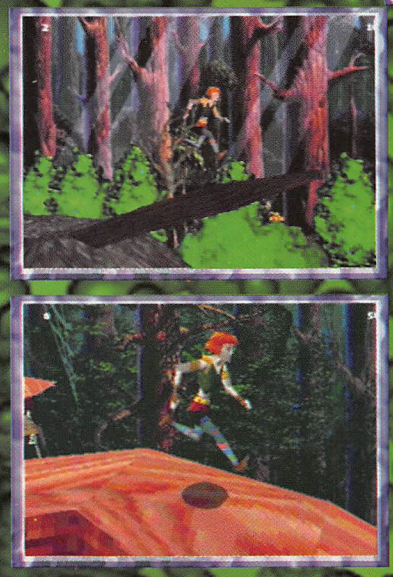
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - TBA

AVAILABLE - NOV



UNBELIEVABLE!

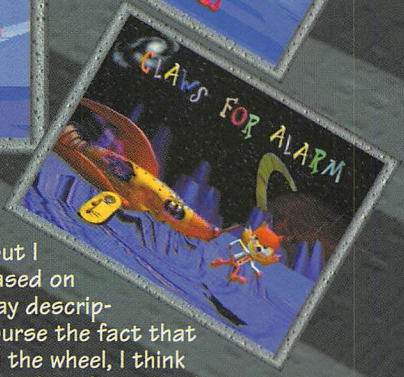


tioned earlier, genre-redefining. Many will glimpse an early version of *Pandemonium* at the upcoming E3 this May, where I'm sure the game will attract much attention. After that, however, it's the long wait. *Pandemonium* isn't due until November. But wait! I have stupendous news! The very same day, I saw a nearly completed *Legacy of Kain* and let me tell you, action role playing has never, ever, even come close to this majesty. Light sourcing, vivid and well acted FMV, 80-120 hrs. of gameplay... Go there the day it hits.

Sorry for getting off the subject at hand but soon you'll understand why. I can say little more about *Pandemonium*. I will guarantee however, as much coverage as we can possibly squeeze out of our friends at CD up until it's released and that no matter who you are or what you like, *Pandemonium* will astonish you. You and a friend that is... it's two player co-op!

-E. Storm

BUBSY 3D



P PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EIDETIC

PUBLISHER - ACCOLADE

FORMAT - CD

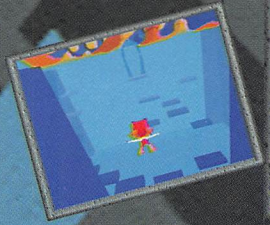
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - SUMMER

Granted, the last two installments of *Bubsy* (*B2* and that Atari mess) have been far from spectacular. But I feel redemption in the air. Based on early conceptual art, gameplay descriptions, these shots, and of course the fact that the original designer's behind the wheel, I think *Bubsy 3D* is going to surprise a lot of people. I've liked the character since the original *Bubsy* which I personally, thoroughly enjoyed. It's a personal goal of mine, as a *Bubsy* fan, to bring you a sparkling GF layout complete with high-res screen captures as soon as humanly possible. These shots were provided via disc and therefore do not properly represent the game's visual appeal. You should have seen those blues before process color got a hold of them. Look for lots more on *Bubsy*, perhaps even a chat with the developer in the July GameFan.

THE PS SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS KITTY PURRRRRR.



PROJECT OVERKILL

PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

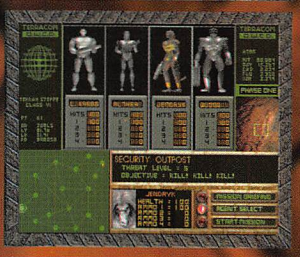
OF PLAYERS - 1

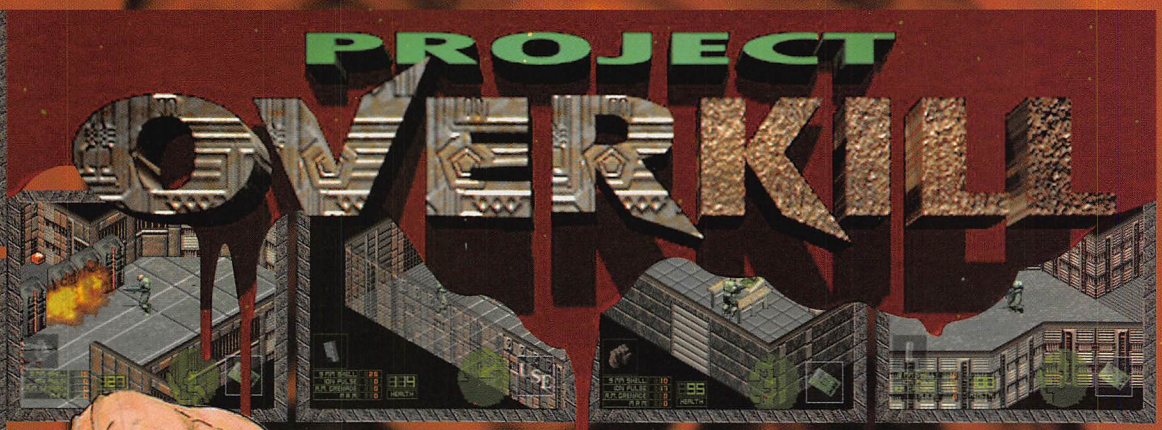
DIFFICULTY - N/A

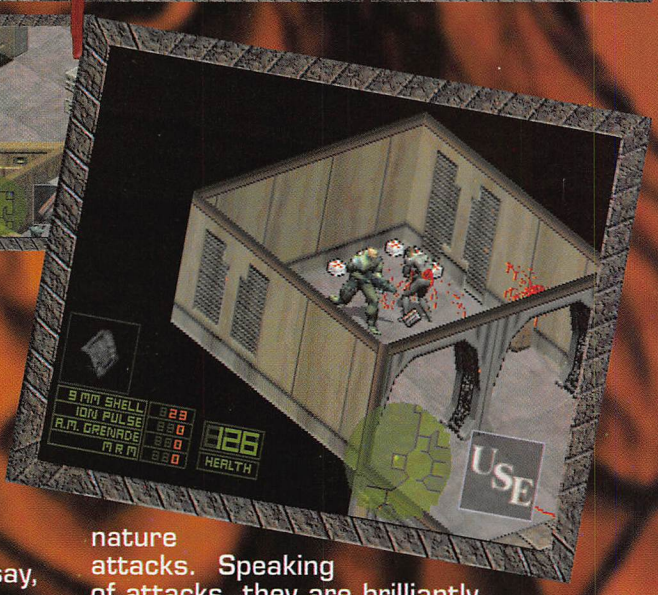
AVAILABLE - SUMMER

E. STORM
I RENDERED THIS ON AN OLD AMIGA

PROJECT OVERKILL

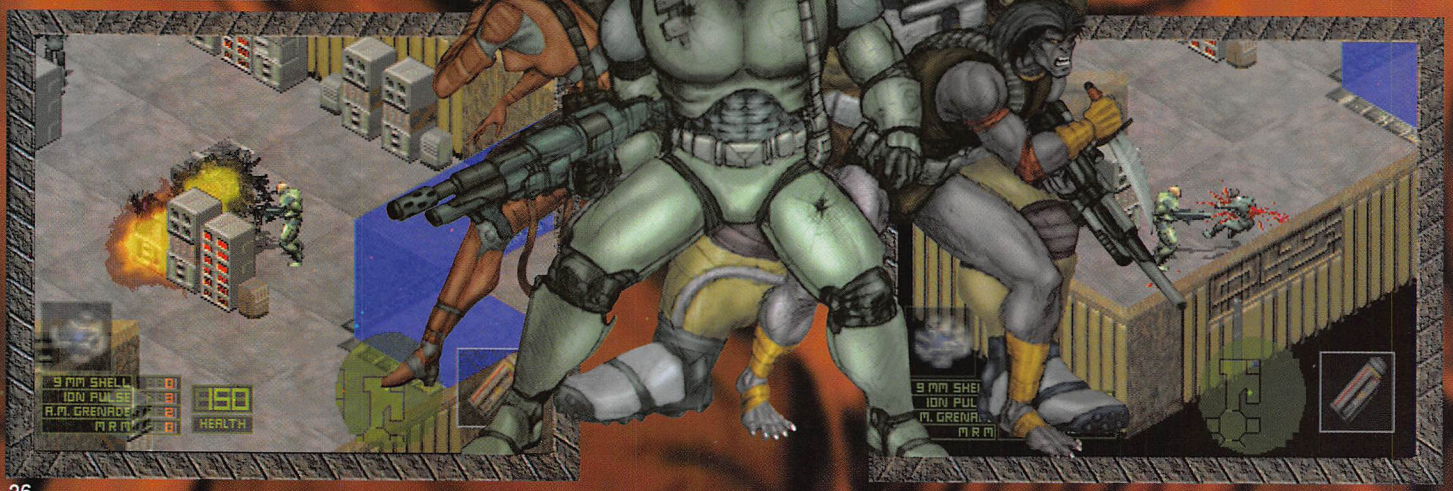






Konami's first action game for the US PlayStation is upon, or, er, should I say, all over us. *Overkill* is gushing with promise. The game is set up much like *Metal Gear*, that infamous NES game of old.

You assume the role of one of four unique sub-human mercenaries in predominantly military situations, reclaiming compounds, eliminating deviants and so on. Let's just say it's alien-infested. When a character dies you can pull back and fetch another. Each has his or her strong and weak points, along with signature attacks. Speaking of attacks, they are brilliantly animated, as is everything in *Overkill*. In fact, *Overkill*'s are among the best animated pre-rendered characters I have ever seen. The actual methods of attack vary. Several weapons can be used once the ammo is found and, when you run dry, hand-to-hand combat takes center stage. Hand-to-hand attacks range from pounding cranium with the butt of your gun to slicing and dicing with knifes. Each produces a 30 fps stream of shooting



blood, often as the victim dives back and withers in agony. The vast assortment of weapons produce similar results with each upgrade intensifying the enemy's death. Some actually cause them to explode, and I mean burst apart. It's all very yummy. At this point only the game's control has me concerned. Pre-rendered characters do not take well to strafing and can only shoot in 8 directions where full 360-degree annihilation is needed. If the team at Konami US can rectify this problem they may re-define the isometric action category. A tall order, yes, but is it do-able? I think so. -E. Storm

BLAZING DRAGONS

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYN.

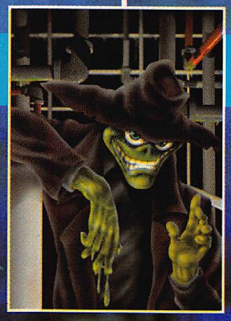
PUBLISHER - CRYSTAL DYN.

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - EASY

AVAILABLE - JUNE



MR. GOO CLICK ON, CLICK OFF, THE CLICKER!!!

You're Flicker, a dragon trying desperately to become a knight by tomorrow's tournament, so you may win the hand of Princess Flame, the King's daughter (obviously). Trouble is, evil human Sir Cheech ... er, George (an honest mistake considering who supplies the voice acting) makes it known that he is entering the tournament. Of course, it being a tournament of Dragons, Chee... er, George, is building a mechanical dragon to enter in the contest, as somehow, if he wins, he gets the King's kingdom. This contraption is powered by a steam engine of Flicker's design, which was stolen from Flicker's invention book by the King's evil Chancellor. Flicker is, of course, the noted inventor famed for designing the "clicker," a brilliant invention whose only flaw is that, technically, it has no practical use—yet...

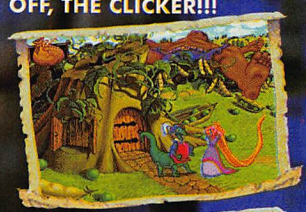
The king, hearing of Sir George's plans to enter the Black Dragon in the tournament, sends his four Knights of the Square (ha!) Table out to get more information about this Black Dragon. Meanwhile, Flicker figures that if he can become a squire, then he's got a better shot at becoming a knight by tomorrow. But, as the knights take off on their mission, the king assigns you a task, as well: Wash all the dishes piled up in the Royal Kitchen. Here's where the actual playing begins.

Spewing forth from the rather precocious brain

Our Hero Flicker | The Princess Flame | The King | The Evil Chancellor | Sir George | The Evil Mervin

matter of one Terry Jones (of Monty Python fame), *Blazing Dragons* is a twisted, hilarious sort of interactive-type movie, er...game, er, uh... yeah, that...what *he* said. The graphics are, well, about what you'd expect in a game of this type. You know, scenes with a bit of animation here, a bit there. The music is competent—nothing outstanding, but solid. What really sets this game apart is the giggle-till-you're-rolling-on-the-floor storyline, and the *voices*! In addition to Cheech Marin, Harry Shearer is credited with voice acting in Blazing Dragons. Now, I'm not sure who did what voice, but for the most part, they're all amazing: a burly muscle-head with an "Ahnold"-esque voice (you've got to out-dance him to get his comics away from him), an ant caught by the leg in a bear trap who sounds incredibly like Vinnie Barbarino (free him and he'll come along with his buddies to help you later), and even Sir George's gate guard who sounds very much like Don Knotts.

Flicker's invention book comes in quite handy in putting together the various items to create an automatic dishwasher, free the trapped knights, and ultimately, become a knight, destroy the Black Dragon, save everyone, *and* win the hand of the Princess. And the rest of her, as well, I would assume. The various items include a bottle of hair tonic, an oar, crackers, the head of a Sir George effigy, a lump of coal, hedge clippers, tartan ribbon, and popcorn, among other



things. Many other things.

What's strange, though, is that the game doesn't let you do anything wrong. Often I found myself blundering around the kingdom, stuck, trying every item in different combinations and locations, and not getting anywhere. But time never ran out, I never had to start over to obtain items I'd missed, and I was never killed off. I finished the game my first time through, although that did involve about 20 hours, scattered over about three days (Save features are great, aren't they? Oh, how we've come to take them for granted. Hmmm, I'm wandering, aren't I?).

Blazing Dragons is a good time. Laugh, laugh, and then, oh, I don't know, laugh some more. Terry Jones, I thank you.

JUS' KEEPIN' DA PEACE

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CORE

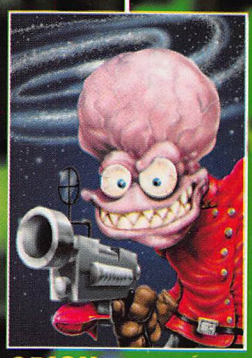
PUBLISHER - US GOLD

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY



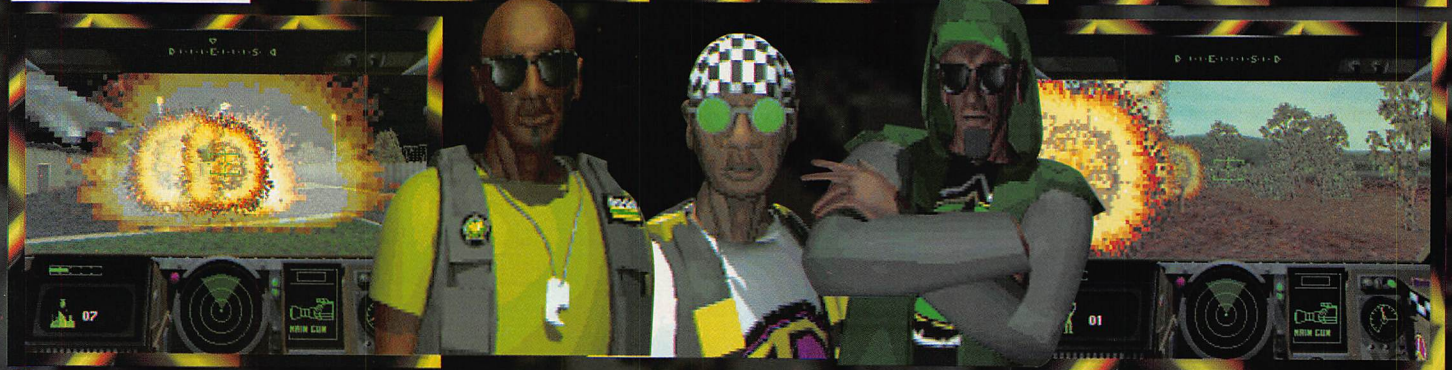
ORION

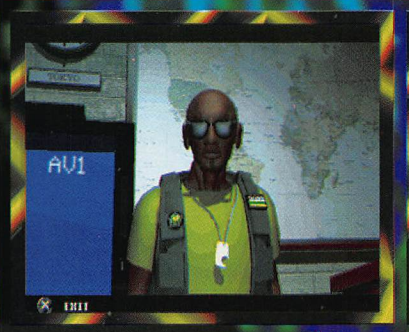
CHAT WIT DA HOMIES OR BUY ALL THE GOOD STUFF FOR YOUR HOOPTIE

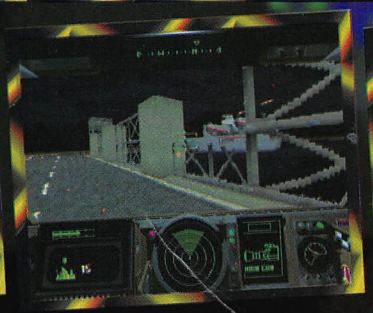
SHELLSHOCK

What happened to justice? In a world full of terrorism and oppression ruled by corrupt leaders, there seems to be none. Entire middle-eastern cites are being held hostage by warring gangs, American reporters are being taken hostage in Africa, drug cartels run rampant in Colombia, and who's doing anything about it? The local police? Paid off or overpowered. The Army? Held back, waiting for the "proper procedures" to take effect. And while nothing is being done, the suffering continues. This is where the Wardenz come in.

They were once part of a Special Forces unit, commanded to protect a civilian convoy from harm. Something, however, went terribly wrong... US intelligence declared the unit expendable and support was denied when they found themselves under attack. That was in 1994. Three years later, the five survivors from the unit banded together to form a heavily-armed commando team. Based in New York, these ex-army officers travel to trouble spots all around the world, and dispense their own brand of justice. There are no rules or regulations to follow, nothing binding them from doing what they think is right. They just have tanks, lots of ammo, and you as their newest team member.







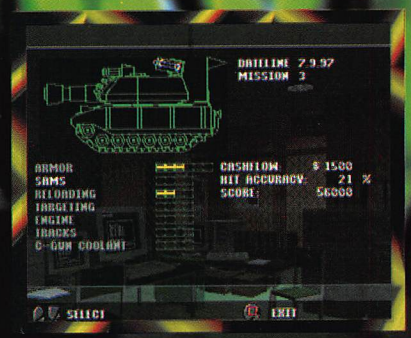
Armed with an M-13 Battletank, you'll be ordered to clean out trouble spots all over the world. From destroying drug manufacturing plants in Colombia to wiping out an entire army base in Africa, nothing's too big for you and your little tank to handle. It won't be a cakewalk though, as every level is packed with enemy tanks and helicopters.

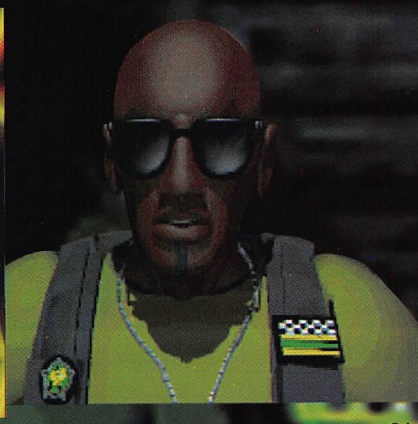
If you're into tank sims, you'll find yourself right at home with *ShellShock*'s gameplay. Naturally, a tank can't just drive up to another tank and fire away, You'll have to find obstacles to hide behind before you start your attack. This is where *ShellShock*'s true strength lies, in its strategic gameplay. The levels are simply monstrous in size, and full of trees, buildings, and other objects that can be used for protection. The enemy's forces are huge, and if you want to reach your target, a straight line though them usually isn't an option. You'll have to carefully map each stage, then use skill and cunning (or just the built-in radar detector) to get past them.

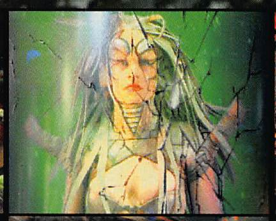
The graphics in *ShellShock* are the only thing that I feel could have been better. While at times there's plenty of detail and color, most of the stages are very bland and pixelly. There really isn't an excuse for this, when you figure the game is only playing on half of the screen (the other part is covered with the instrument panel). The cinemas, on the other hand, are amazing. The quality in computer animation is getting scary, almost every new game's cinema destroys the last, and *ShellShock* (with its realistic looking people) is no exception.

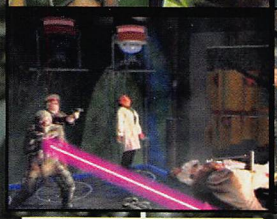
Yes, the storyline is sorta' corny, and the whole tank thing's been done a million times, but *ShellShock's* got one unique point—a bit of soul. That's right, from your jive talkin' co-pilot ("Eat THAT, Sucka'!!"), to the strong beats of hip-hop in the background, Core's has deviated from the normal military under tones, but surprisingly, it fits the game perfectly.

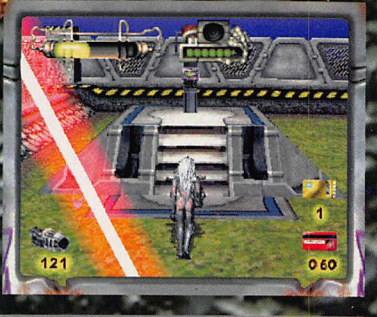
ShellShock is a very enjoyable game, if for nothing more than the unique theme and cool tunes. So, if you're into tank sims, or just want another action/shooter for your PlayStation, there's no need to search any further. -Orion

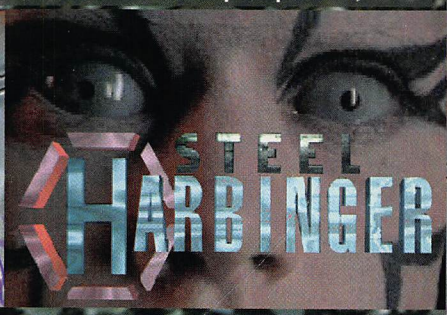


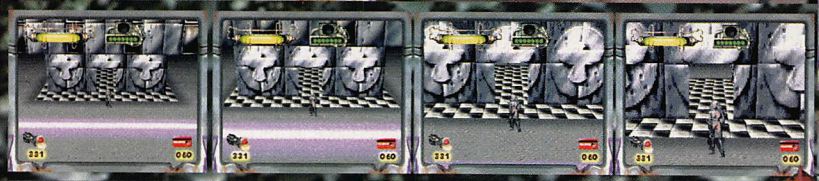












PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - MINDSCAPE

PUBLISHER - MINDSCAPE

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

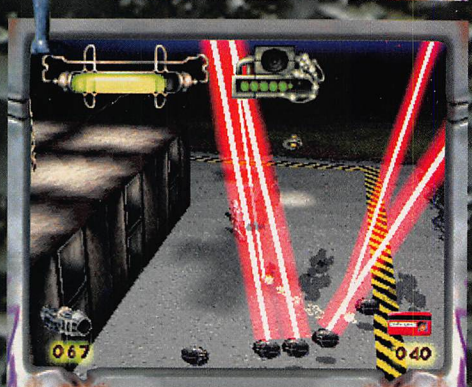
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - SUMMER

As promised, I'm back with more *Steel Harbinger*. If you weren't with us last month here's what we know so far. The earth is under attack. Encapsulated Pods are falling from the sky sprouting huge tentacles which they proceed to pierce through your chest cavity, thus turning you in to a mindless, half human-half pod-person, killing machine. The goal here is obviously the eventual domination of what's left of the planet in the year 2000.

A small band of the world's leading scientists have barricaded themselves into a military installation where they are attempting to find the aliens' weaknesses. Our story begins when a single pod which hasn't opened is discovered and brought to the lab for tests. Miranda, the head scientist's sweet daughter, which is all he has left in the now-dying world, sneaks up to the pod for a closer look when YA-DA! It hatches suddenly and infects Miranda with its infernal poison! Dad quickly comes to the rescue, axe in hand, but it's to late. Miranda's already in alien make-up. They really could have used a better make-up artist in the opening sequence. Miranda however, was such a sweet (obviously sheltered) girl that she has remained somehow human. Rather than becoming a

Are video games violent? No way! Hey, watch those brains pal!



MIRANDA'S HUMAN SIDE STILL DWELLS WITHIN HER DEMONIC HALF MACHINE-HALF FEMALE BODY. SAVING HUMANS FROM INFECTED POD PEOPLE IS ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS.

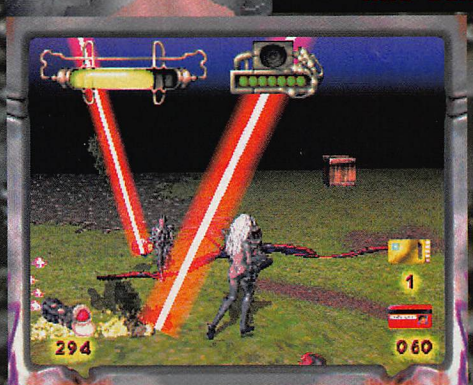
MIRANDA HEADS FOR LA... BIG MISTAKE. YOU THINK IT'S BAD NOW?...

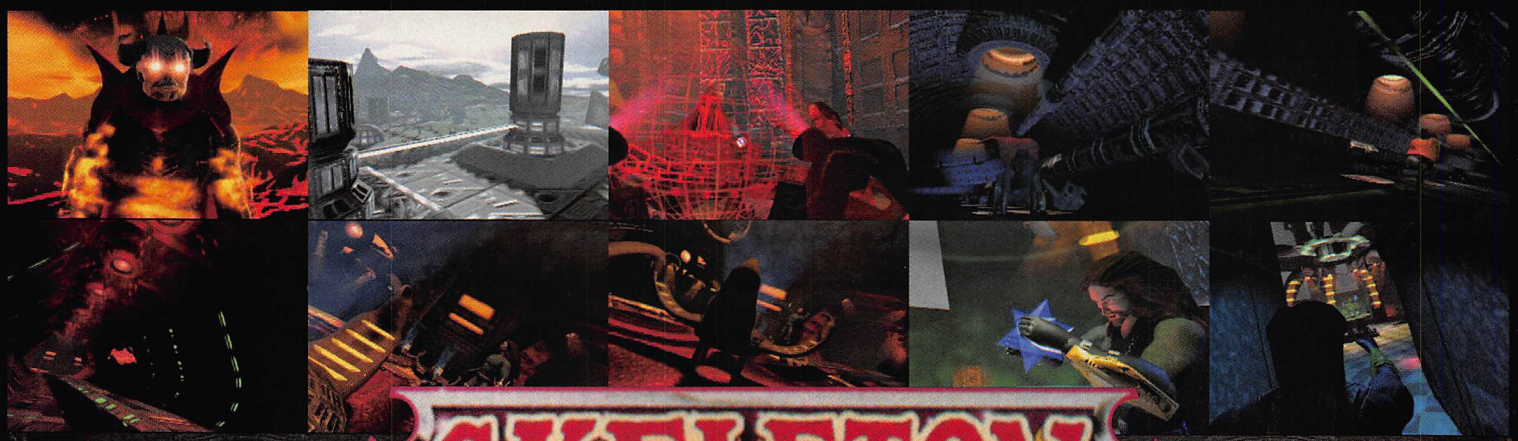
MIRANDA'S LASER RIPS THROUGH TREES LIKE BUTTER. SOMEONE CALL THE SIERRA CLUB!

LAS VEGAS

human killer she turns on her own and has now become the earth's only hope. As this scene concludes, the laboratory is overrun, and everyone is killed except for Miranda's dad who narrowly escapes. Our Version 2.0 of *SH* revealed tighter gameplay and one of Miranda's second destinations, Las Vegas. Glowing texture maps, an annihilated Luxor Hotel (man I loved that arcade) and enemies with transparent motion blurs make for one impressive top-view search-and-destroy. And all this in just the second level! If *Steel Harbinger* stays on this course look forward to one superbly zooming, top-view action adventure. One thing is for sure, you'll never tire of looking at Miranda's fine tush! Stay tuned for more *Steel Harbinger* as the game enters its final phase of development.

ONE OF YOUR FIRST DESTINATIONS AFTER REACHING LAS VEGAS IS THE EXPLODED RUINS OF THE LUXOR HOTEL. THE ROOF'S BEEN BLOWN CLEAN OFF! SCALE THE WALLS AND BLAST AWAY! HEY ! WHERE'S THE ARCADE?!!

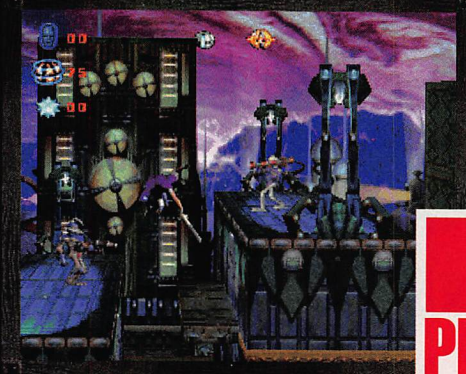




SKELETON WARRIORS

I'm stunned by the mediocre reviews the Saturn version of Neversoft's spectacular *Skeleton Warriors* has been receiving from other magazines lately... "Nothing special," they say, as if there's some glut of traditional, beautiful, *Castlevania*-esque side-scrollers on the new 32-bit platforms! While *Skeleton Warriors* is the best of a small handful of 2D action games on the Saturn, it has even less competition on the PlayStation, and should easily sweep all the awards in the PlayStation 2D category.

While our version was only about 60% finished, Neversoft is aiming for nothing less than a perfect PlayStation conversion, and the levels we've seen show that they just might make it—we won't know for sure till we get the final copy, but they're definitely off to a great start! With many levels still incomplete and no bike sequences in yet, you'll have to tune in next issue (hopefully) to see the final verdict. -Takuhi



PREVIEW

DEVELOPER	NEVERSOFT
PUBLISHER	PLAYMATES
FORMAT	CD
# OF PLAYERS	1
DIFFICULTY	MODERATE
AVAILABLE	MAY

PREVIEW

TOP GUN
FIRE AT WILL

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

PUBLISHER-SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

FORMAT - CD

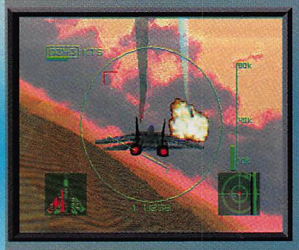
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY

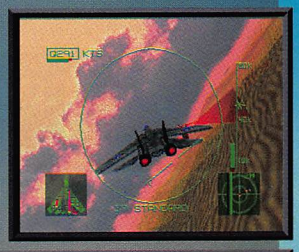
When deciding on what their first PlayStation title should be, Spectrum Holobyte went with their specialty—flight sims.

In *Top Gun: Fire at Will*, you'll bring peace to the world with your trusty F-14, one of the best combat crafts in the world. The first few stages take place in the Top Gun school at Miramar. It's here where you'll learn the tricks and maneuvers—skills needed to fly with the best. But soon after graduation you'll find yourself involved in conflicts high over Cuba, Libya, and Korea. The missions entail everything from destroying enemy bombers to taking out ground targets, and each have a specific goal to complete before moving on.

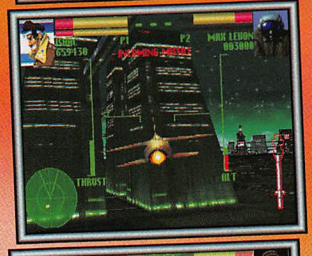


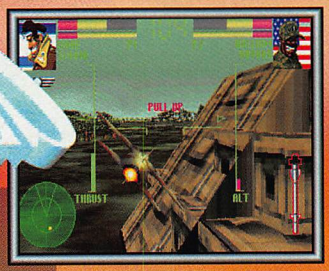
In the attempt to separate *Top Gun* from the many other jet fighter games available today, Spectrum Holobyte endowed this game with something rare: a plot. Told entirely in high-quality FMV sequences, and featuring (gasp!) good actors, these cinemas reveal a bit of the shocking story between each mission.

Although our version of *Top Gun* was quite early, it had one glaring flaw: maneuvering. The plane is almost impossible to fly at times, thanks to the super-touchy control. Hopefully, this is one feature Spectrum Holobyte will tweak before the final's released. Look for a full review soon. -Orion



DEADLY SKIES





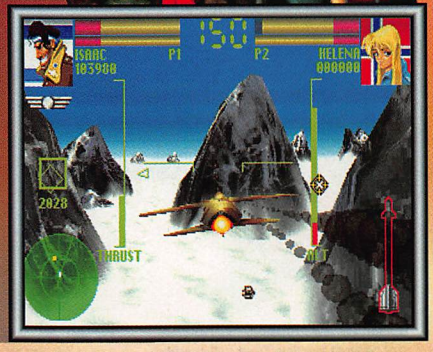
Although JVC isn't a name that springs to mind when we think of game producers, that all might change with their latest release, *Deadly Skies*.

Combining features from fighting and jet combat games, JVC has created one of the more unique 32-bit games you'll find today. Just as in every fighting game, there's a life bar and special moves, but everything takes place in the air! Using combat jets, you can take on a friend (or the computer) to see who's the ace of the skies.

Each of the selectable characters has a different aircraft, complete with their own special moves. These allow you to perform everything from simple loops to cloaking your ship. You'll need these to fight through the other pilots, but even after you defeat them, hell awaits.

The music in *Deadly Skies* won't win any awards, but the backgrounds are amazing. Every volcano and temple, even the towns and mountain tops above the clouds, they're all rendered beautifully.

Our current version of *Deadly Skies* isn't quite finished, but it's already an incredible game. As soon as the final product's ready, look no further than GameFan for the full review. -Orion



PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - JVC

PUBLISHER - JVC

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - JUNE

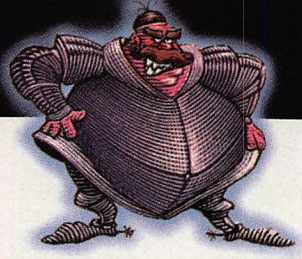
The knight's a pathological liar.
Rapunzel's schizophrenic.
And **Cheech** is blazing again.

Forget the sword. Bring a psychiatrist.

Flicker–The inventor/hero in this demented and deranged adventure. Smart. Enthusiastic. Resourceful. Think *MacGyver* in tights.

Rapunzel–Not quite the same long-haired maiden from your childhood. Buzz-cut. Walking time bomb. Advice? Keep your distance.

Trivet–The smarmy court jester. You know the type. Bitter, rude, cynical, ignored. Classic middle-child syndrome. Marsha Marsha Marsha!



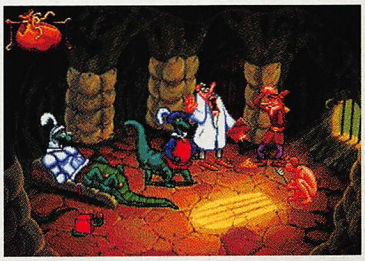
Sir George (Cheech)–Referred to in English Lit. as The Protagonist. Greedy SOB. Steer clear. Unless, of course, you're driving a Mack truck.

BLAZING DRAGONS™

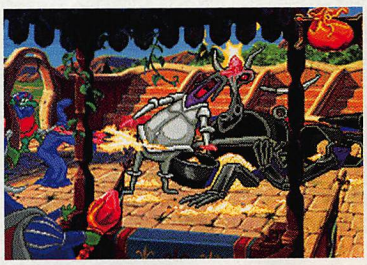
The pursuit of the crown in the King's Tournament will have you seeing stars all right. Blazing Dragons™—a warped medieval adventure boasting a freakish mix of voice-over talents like Cheech Marin, Harry Shearer and Jessica Hahn—spills from the twisted mind of Monty Python Troupe member Terry Jones. And between the wicked, kitty-hurling villains and brain-liquifying puzzles, your grip on reality (not to mention self-respect) will be seriously tested.

Available on Sega Saturn™ and the PlayStation™ game console.

As the evil dragon-morphing Sir George, Cheech Marin shows us there's indeed a cuddly, funny side to vicious, criminally insane behavior.



Bizarre cast of over 40 characters. From syrupy-sweet critters to redneck hillbilly hunters. Like a twisted Brady/Manson family reunion.



Highway *Bingo* & Nude *Clue* can't hold a candle to the awesome challenge posed by this adventure's tricky puzzles & brain-teasers.

Over 50 scenes with Monty Python-esque sequences/sub-plots. Collect objects to engineer your way into the Princess'...um, heart.

™ PlayStation™

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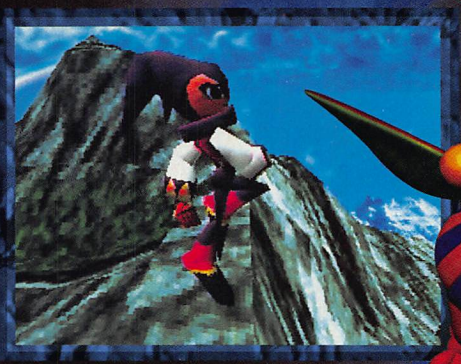


2 years ago, gaming deity Yuji Naka (the man who brought us the *Sonic* series and the first two *Phantasy Stars*) was returning from a 4-year stint at Sega of America, in order to get started on developing Saturn software at Sega's home base in Japan. While on the plane, he decided that he wanted to make his next game about flying. And now, 2 years later, Sonic Team's attempt at creating a Saturn mascot hero has arrived. After many character changes (the game was originally supposed to be about a flightless bird in a world similar to Sonic's), Sonic Team has decided upon two street-smart 15-year olds and a Jester-like nightmare named *Nights*.

Here's how the game works: You take your choice of the two kids; basketball fan Elliot Edwards, or young Claris Sinclair, who dreams of being in musicals. The two have never met, and couldn't be more dissimilar. But when they enter the world of dreams, their one common factor becomes clear—they both possess the dim light of courage in their hearts. And only by summoning this courage and combining it with the power of Nights, a renegade nightmare creature, can the dreamworld of Nightopia be saved. The play mechanics are largely unclear at this point, but we do know that you begin as one of the two kids, walking and climbing through the world of Nightopia. But when you save Nights, the two of you merge, and then—you're flying.

NiGHTS into dreams

PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SONIC TEAM

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - 4TH QTR. (US)

TAKUHI
You'll be hearing a LOT about this one.

We're not talkin *Panzer Dragoon*-like flying here. This is real—you can fly anywhere: up down, left, right, towards or away (this complete freedom of movement may require Sega's upcoming analog controller, which is rumored to be packed in with the US version). Nights' attacks are particularly cool. By looping his flight path completely around an enemy, he creates a vacuum in space that sucks the enemy in. He can also do a special bullet-like dash through loops, and do some sort of "push" attack on his enemies. It sounds pretty complex, but everything's done with the D-pad and just 1 button (*Nights* may also employ the L and R buttons, if you're not using the analog pad).

Not much information about *Nights* has been released yet, but Sega's hinting that this game will be unlike anything you've ever played. Sonic Team seems to be ready to completely ignore any and all standard video game conventions, especially in terms of level design and game flow (one example is the music, an odd mix of House, Jazz, Surf, and Orchestrated tunes that varies in intensity to reflect the game's current level of intensity). *Nights* is officially slated for a summer release, but we've heard that Sonic Team may be taking

an even longer time to perfect their creation. Either way, *Nights* looks to be the Saturn's most important game yet; it's by the people who brought you *Sonic*, and Sega expects it to do to the Saturn exactly what Sonic did to the Genesis. And if any game can accomplish that lofty goal, this would be it.

STORY...

Nights is the story of the dimension of Nightopia, the place each and every one of us visit every time we fall into REM sleep. The world of Nightopia is made of a mysterious light called "Ideas," that reflect the inner nature of its visitors. There are 5 different "Ideas," White Ideas (purity), Green Ideas (maturity), Blue Ideas (knowledge), Yellow Ideas (hope), and Red Ideas (Courage). The Ideas exhibited by various visitors swirl around them in the form of balls of light. You can have a number of ideas, but visitors who have the red Idea of courage are incredibly rare. Although they don't realize it, Claris and Elliot, two city kids who don't know each other and have very different personalities, both possess the red hint of courage.

Originally, Nightopia was a place of only pleasant dreams. But one day Nightopia resident Wiseman tired of the constant stream of human visitors in his dimension. In order to get rid of them, he started to create the world of Nightmare... And now Nightopia is in danger of being completely absorbed by Nightmare... With every Idea of a visitor that Wiseman steals, Nightopia gets just a little bit smaller. To help him out, Wiseman created an army of "Nightmarens," and sent them to invade Nightopia.

LEGEND OF OASIS

PREVIEW

LAYOUT - TAKUHI

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - ANCIENT

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - CHALLENGING

AVAILABLE - SUMMER

TAKUHI
Infuriatingly delicious!

Both in Japan and the US, the original *Thor* game (*Beyond Oasis* in the US) was unfortunate enough to come out within a month of the Saturn's heavily-anticipated launch. As a result, only a very few people noticed this unique little action/RPG. *Beyond Oasis* wasn't great—it was very short and had some of the worst music ever, but its unusual mix of *Zelda*-style puzzle solving and almost *Streets of Rage*-esque play mechanics made for many (well, a few) fun-filled nights at the Takuhi household.

Fortunately, both Sega of Japan and Sega of America green-lighted the sequel, and now a far superior version of *Thor/Oasis* is getting its chance to shine on the Saturn. The leap of quality from the first to the second is astounding—*Legend of Oasis* is longer, harder, and a lot more fun (music's better too, but it's nowhere near vintage *Actraiser/Streets of Rage*-era Yuzo Koshiro).

Very little about *Oasis 2* screams "32-bit." Polygon enemies, transparencies, FMV, etc., are used sparingly, if at all. Odd as it sounds, that was probably the smartest thing Ancient could have done. Instead of the short, stunning (but somewhat shallow) quests of *RayEarth* and *Wrinkle River Story*, *Oasis 2* has unspectacular but solid hand-drawn graphics and (more importantly) a long, enjoyable quest with plenty of depth and substance. That's a trade-off I wish game companies would make more often.

In the play mechanics department, *Oasis 2* brings back the original's immensely satisfying, heavily-animated, fighting game-inspired combat system, but with a lot of new twists. For example, weapons can now be used an unlimited number of times, and each can get a special type of magic power that interacts with different obstacles in the game's environ-

ment. The ultra-cool elemental system is back, with an increase from 4 elementals to 6, and even the old ones have a couple of new uses.

In the dungeon design department, *Oasis 2*'s peers include the *Zelda* series, and really, that's about it. The domains of the various elementals are constant puzzles, and each have a ton of variety. The entire game is, basically, a long series of dungeons, but since these dungeons have so much variety, and plenty of length (you can spend up to 3 or 4 hours in each of the later ones), the game never gets tedious. The only unfortunate consequence of this is that when you're stuck, you're STUCK, which tends to cause my attitude towards the game to go through many violent changes. ("What an awesome game! I really can't believe how much I'm enjoying this... Now I'll just use my sound elemental, and on to the next area. [silence] Hmm. Okay, that didn't work. It's okay... It's okay... grrr.. SO WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO!? IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE FUN? Cause it definitely is NOT! I hate Ancient! I bet Yuzo and his sister are laughing at me right now! To hell with them and their crappy little adventure ga... er... oh, OH! Didn't see that staircase there. Heh heh...") The point, I suppose, is that if you're easily frustrated, don't forgot the Prozac. I know I'm sorry I did.

I have to stop short of giving the final thumbs up to *Oasis 2* here, 'cause we still haven't seen the final English version, and I've gotten enough death threats from *Virtua Fighter* fanatics ("But their hair DOES move!") to know that any number of small changes could occur in the next few weeks. Still, I'm looking forward to writing out that viewpoint next issue, and I expect to give *Oasis 2* a very high score—provided I'm not stuck at the time. -Takuhi

ULTIMATE MK3

REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - WILLIAMS

PUBLISHER - WILLIAMS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

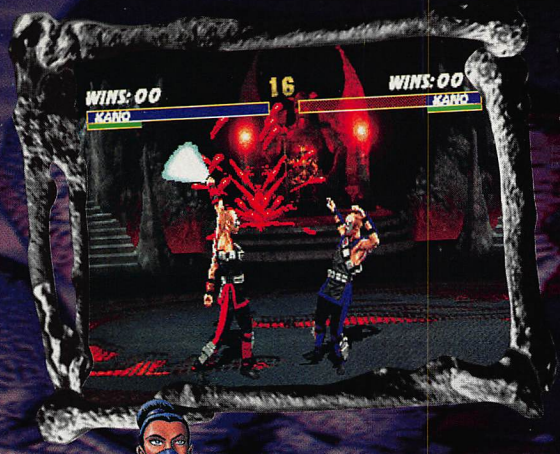
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - MAY

Mortal Kombat! Those word have echoed in the halls of arcades around the world for over 5 years. As most *MK* fans probably already know, *UMK3* is on its way to the Saturn...and not a moment too soon. After the embarrassing conversion of *MK2* on the Saturn, it's good to see *UMK3* translated over to Sega's 32-bit console, and what a translation it is. I must commend Eurocom for recreating the arcade classic pixel for pixel and sound sample for sound sample. Well enough butt-kissing, let's get on to the game, shall we?

Let me start off by telling you what this game has. *UMK3* for the Saturn has the coin-op's versus screen codes, combos, pits, friendships, babalities, and fatalities.

For those of you unfamiliar with the story of *Mortal Kombat*, it unfolds with a battle in the Earth Realm. The Emperor Shao Kahn has entered the Earth Realm from an evil, parallel universe. His aim in life is to take over our world (don't any bad guys have any original ideas?) and make it his own, by dismantling our universe and stealing the souls of all the humans he can get his greedy lit-



tle hands on...BWAAAAA, HA, HA, HA, HAAA!...oh...sorry...I think I got a little TOO involved in the storyline there...

Anyway, in this installment (called the Ultimate Mortal Kombat tournament for those of you not paying attention), Shao Kahn brings back some old warriors to aid him and some new ones as well. Both Reptile and Jade are sent forth to retrieve the princess Kitana. Jade is ordered to bring her back alive, and Reptile will return the princess to Shao Kahn at any cost. Scorpion escapes from hell to enter the tournament under "Wild Card" status, and his main objective is a mystery to all. The original Sub-Zero also makes a Wild Card appearance in the tournament via the "Ultimate Kombat Kode." The legendary Ermac enters the tournament for the first time with the "Ultimate Kombat Kode." Mileena also returns to the tournament via the Kode.

UMK3 is one of the best arcade-to-home translations I've seen in a long time. All the arcade game's animations, backgrounds (the Soul Chamber and Cemetery are included...big joy!), sounds and (most importantly) gameplay have been kept intact. I don't want to sound repetitive or anything, but I am very impressed at the attention

to detail Eurocom put into *UMK3*. Nothing has been left out. Stryker's gun, Kano's upward roll, Scorpion's spear...it's all here for you to enjoy at a fraction of the cost of the arcade game...amazing.

The music and sound effects are just as good as the PlayStation version. Arcade perfect. New to the *MK* series are the tournament modes. In the 4-on-4 tournament mode, the player gets to choose two character and engage in a 2 round fight to the death. In the 8 player tournament mode, the player chooses only one character and gets placed in a circle of fighters. Like *MK3*, you get to "Choose Your Destiny" from 3 different columns. The longer the column, the harder the tournament.

There is one flaw in *UMK3* and it's the same one that plagued the PlayStation *MK3*. The Shang Tsung morph. Unfortunately, when mor-

phing into another character, the game freezes for about 4 or 5 seconds as the Saturn accesses the new character in RAM. In the option screen, the morph can either be turned off, limited to morphing into the character you are playing against (which cuts down the freeze to about 3 seconds), or full morph capabilities.

Overall, *UMK3* is the best *Mortal Kombat* ever. It combines all the graphics and sounds of the arcade, the gameplay is perfect, plus the fatalities and babalities are all here. The Shang Tsung morph freeze is a slight annoyance, but it's not enough to tarnish the polish of this great game. Whether you're a hard-core MK player or just enjoy good fighting games, *UMK3* on the Saturn is a must. What else can I say about this game other than it's a "Flawless Victory." -K. Lee

PRIMAL RAGE

REVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - PROBE

PUBLISHER - TWI

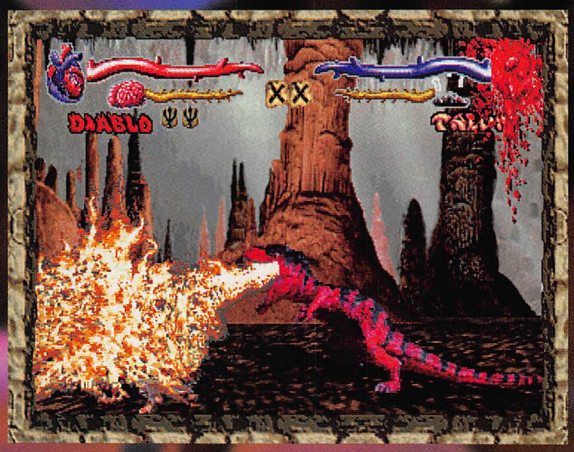
FORMAT - CD

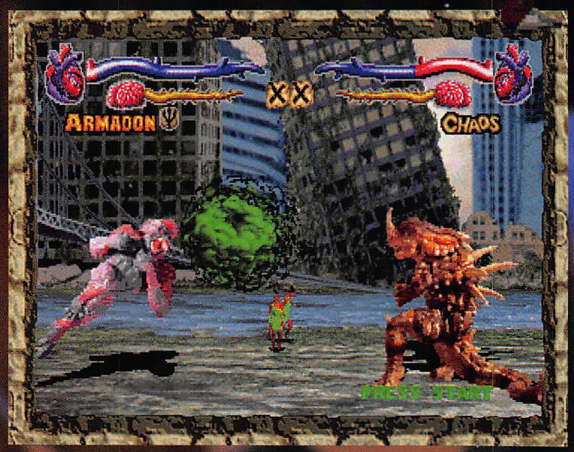
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJ.

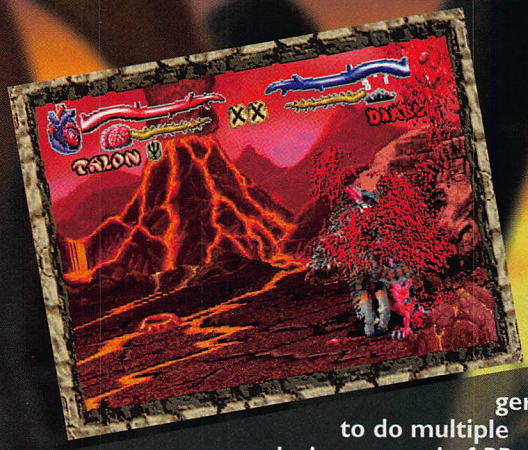
AVAILABLE - NOW

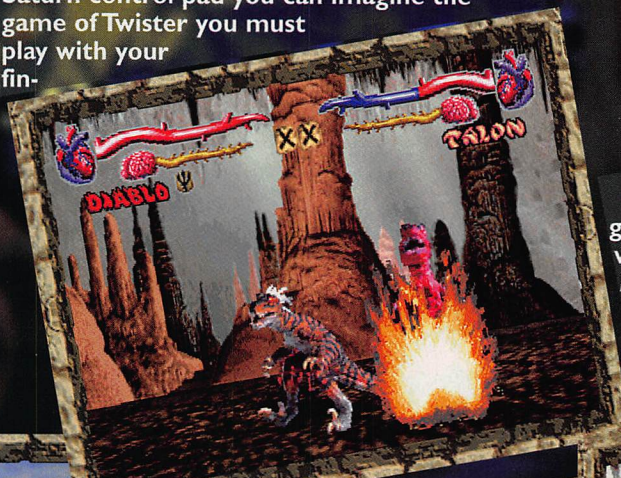
E. STORM
EXTINCT?... I DON'T THINK SO.

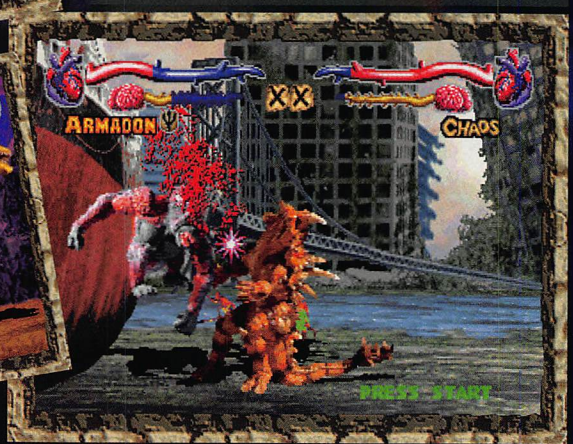


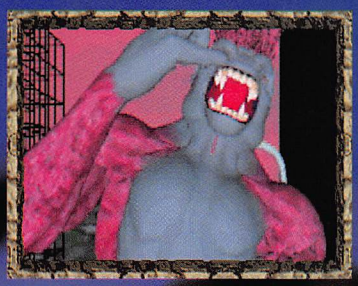
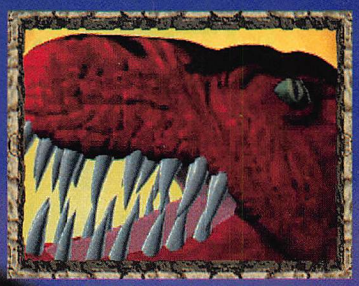


As I attempted to hold high quick + high fierce + low fierce, and while doing so press down, down, away, up, toward to finish my opponent, I stumbled across a vivid realization... I've just about had my fill of *Primal Rage*. The reality of it is that when I just go nuts on the buttons or repeat the same simple move over and over, I almost always win. Why? Well, if you've seen the tiny buttons on the Saturn control pad you can imagine the game of Twister you must play with your fingers to do multiple moves during a round of *PR* against a friend. Vs. play strategy in this game is nearly non-existent. I'll admit, that when it was fresh and new, I liked *Primal Rage*. The novelty of it all when it debuted, coupled with the excellently modeled and animated dinosaurs was (and remains) appealing. But since, fighters have progressed rapidly with the inception of



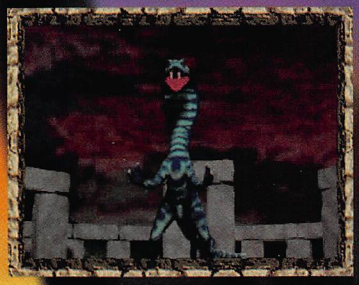


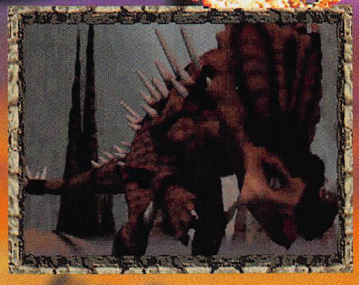


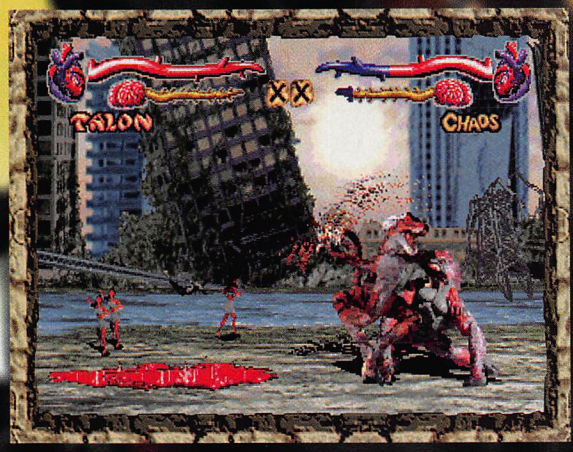
Killer Instinct 1 & 2, NightWarriors, SF Alpha & Alpha 2, Soul Edge, Tekken 2, Psychic Force, Fighting Vipers, VF2, MK3, and the list goes on and on. This is the toughest, most scrutinized category in all of gaming, and the hold, twist, then release technique just doesn't cut it. Adding insult to injury is the mundane soundtrack that just kind of whistles and moans.

I think thunderous symphonic accompaniment would better serve the dinosaur theme. *PR* fans





(who by now I'm sure just love me) should know that the Saturn version is a perfect arcade port except for the added FMV which is the worst quality I've ever seen. Loading time on our reviewable press disc was fifteen seconds but the release version will hopefully have less. The FMV may get cleaner too. I can't imagine letting it go as-is. A huge dinosaur fan, I hope that *Primal 2* addresses some of the control concerns, plays faster and easier, and incorporates some humans into the action. Imagine Chaos vs. some little villager with a spear and some cool moves...



CONGO

REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - AWAY TEAM

PUBLISHER - SEGA

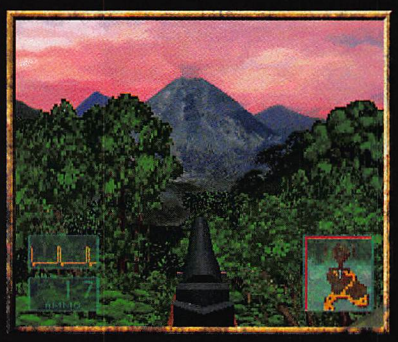
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW

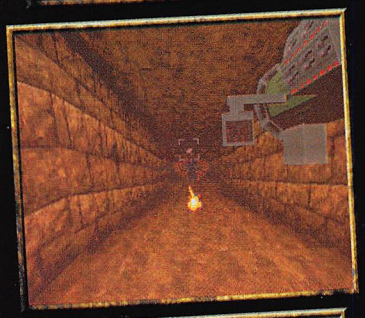
ORION

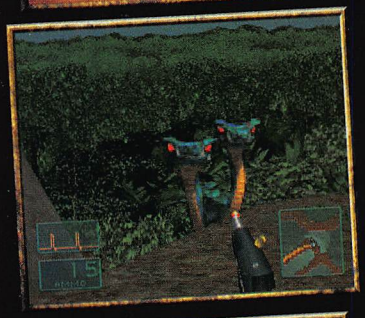


Movie-to-game translations that accurately portray the film they're based on are rarely accomplished, but in the case of *Congo*, that's definitely a good thing. Thankfully almost everything from the movie was forgotten. That's right, no one's running around in an ape suit, no terrible acting, and, thank God, no talking monkey. In fact, the only film details we're left with are a quest to find giant diamonds, and a city older than time... inhabited by its dark protectors.

You take on the role of a man weak from fever, stranded in the jungle; the only survivor of a failed expedition. Your team was hired by TraviCom to find giant diamonds (to be used as superconductors), but tragedy struck and you bailed from your plane as it went down in flames. Now you must not only locate the crash site if you want recover some medicine (to heal your illness), but you must go on and find the diamonds so TraviCom will take you home. This won't be an easy task though, as the jewels are few and far between before you reach the ancient city of Zinj, and the jungle is full of predators.

You'll find yourself attacked from all sides by everything from spitting wasps to mad apes, but thankfully (just as in every first-person shooter) you have a gun. And although the creatures in the Congo become stronger each level, there's always new weapons to be found to even the score. A shotgun and machine gun can be discovered early on (if you explore the levels a bit, you might find them sooner than expected), but many more powerful weapons will be at your disposal later on. And don't worry about running out of ammo, every stage is littered with shells along the ground, or hidden behind objects. Even with everything else you'll find, don't forget about your most useful weapon, the standard





radar detector, as the creatures often hide in the thick foliage on either side of the trails.

While *Congo* has paths to follow, enemies waiting in pre-set locations, and lots of hidden things to discover, it also has quite a few original features setting it apart from *Doom*. Most notably, the floor is not always a level surface. Using the *Ghen War* engine, Sega has given this game a sense of realism rarely seen in first-person shooters. If a path goes up a hill, there's no elevator to ride or stairs to climb, the trail just gradually rises in elevation. There's also major amounts of parallax in the background (the trees seem to go on forever), giving an amazing feeling of 3D depth. *Congo* isn't just made up of dirt paths either, there's also ditches to jump over, bridges to cross (with entire other playing areas in the rivers far below), ruins to explore, and later in the game, *Doom*-ish corridors await.

Yes, this all sounds amazing so far, but *Congo* does have one problem: the enemy sprites. Even though the levels were created with huge attention to detail, the creatures that inhabit them seem to have been left unfinished. These animate poorly, are quite pixelly at times, and look almost out of place in the backgrounds. The only other real problems are that it's hard to turn around (slooww), and everything can get a tad framey, but these are small nuisances.

The last thing that needs to be mentioned is that *Congo* is a hard game, a very hard game. The first few levels are fun to tromp around in and explore (there are many secrets to be found), but after level three you'll find the enemies are tougher to kill, and ammo is scarcer. While this isn't exactly bad (games shouldn't be walk-throughs), you might find yourself throwing the controller once or twice. In fact, if it wasn't for *Congo's* addictive gameplay, I'd have given up long ago.

So, if you enjoy first-person shooters, but want a new twist on the genre, look no further than *Congo*. It's a tough ride, but if you can face the challenge, a solid adventure game awaits. -Orion

cont'd. from p. 18

SQUARE SOFT, INC. MOVES TO LOS ANGELES

Seattle, WA—In order to be closer to the "synergy—art, game design and programming—between Hollywood and Silicon Valley," Square Soft, Inc. is moving its U.S. Headquarters to Los Angeles. Since its start in 1989, the company has been based in Redmond, Washington. No official date has been given at this time for the final close of the Washington office.

WILLIAMS AND MIDWAY TO USE VOODOO GRAPHICS

Mountain View, CA—Williams Electronics Games and Midway Manufacturing Company have announced they will be using 3Dfx Interactive's Voodoo Graphics chipset in its next-generation coin-op game platforms to bring a new level of 3D realism and real-time performance to the market. "We are excited that Williams will be the first to deliver our technology to the coin-op market," said Kristin Montgomery, entertainment markets sales manager for 3Dfx Interactive. "Williams' tradition of producing hot games, combined with Voodoo Graphics' explosive 3D realism and performance, will result in the ultimate 3D game experience. This strategic relationship clearly demonstrates the ability of 3Dfx's 3D technology to span both the PC and coin-op markets. Williams chose Voodoo Graphics because of its superior technology and performance. By using 3Dfx technology, Williams will be able to accelerate game development, dramatically improving the performance and realism for the gamer," said Ken Fedesna, vice president and general manager of Williams Electronics Games. "Williams will set the standard for the next generation of 3D coin-op games and then bring that experience home." 3Dfx Interactive introduced Voodoo Graphics last November, featuring texture-mapped graphics, performance exceeding one million triangles (polygons) per second. Voodoo graphics will enable a new class of photo-realistic and highly interactive 3D games for both coin-op and PC game markets. Voodoo Graphics offers advanced capabilities and performance well beyond the elementary 3D technology found in commodity Windows and multimedia accelerators.

MILLIONTH PLAYSTATION SOLD

Foster City, CA—Sony Computer Entertainment America announced that over 1 million PlayStations have been sold since its launch on Sept. 9, 1995. Taking the industry by storm, the PlayStation game console has consistently outsold its competitors by a significant margin, enabling it to capture 76 percent of the "next-generation" unit sales since September. "A little over a year ago, SCEA had one mission: to become the leader in next-generation gaming, and we have made that a reality," said Jim Whims, executive vice president, SCEA. "We have delivered the ultimate game machine with a steady stream of software that has provided consumers with an entertainment experience they could not find anyplace else." In addition to the hardware sales, software sales have also been extremely strong. First and third party titles combined have resulted in sales in excess of 7 million units. During the September-through-December period, PlayStation software outsold even its closest next-generation competitor by a 3-to-1 margin. Entering 1996, the sports category is leading the way among SCEA's titles. NFL GameDay has sold more than 300,000 units, with NHL Face Off sales in excess of 200, 000.

LEARN THE MYSTERIES BEHIND "D"

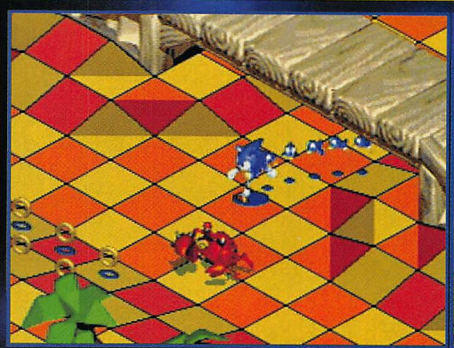
Glen Cove, NY—Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. is allowing online visitors into the minds of Laura Harris and her father Dr. Richter Harris, the two main characters in their top-selling game D. D: The Awakening is available on the D web site. This "game about a game" allows players to delve "into the shrouded world of the subconscious...experience multiple storylines for each character as they search for the true meanings behind the personalities and actions of both characters. The road into the mind is convoluted and users who select the wrong path may find themselves trapped in pockets of insanity which populate each character's mind."

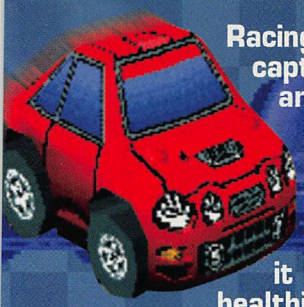
SCEA TO PUBLISH AND DISTRIBUTE NEW UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE TITLE

Foster City, CA—Sony Computer Entertainment of America is going to publish and distribute Universal Interactive Studios/Naughty Dog's new title, Crash Bandicoot, exclusively for the PlayStation. "Numerous product proposals are submitted to me by developers for the PlayStation. Crash Bandicoot stood out because of its great graphics, ingenious character designs and innovative controls," said Bernard Stolar, SCEA's vice president of business development. "This typifies the standard of game we expect to see demonstrated in the second generation of software for the PlayStation." "We are pleased to be tying into the international marketing and distribution prowess of SCEA as we launch our first product for the PlayStation," said Rob Biniaz, Chief Operating Officer of UIS. "We believe that Crash Bandicoot is a landmark product for the PlayStation, and for 3D gaming as a whole." SCEA executive vice president, Angelo M. Pezzani, said, "We have enjoyed tremendous success in our first year of release. Crash Bandicoot, a premiere title in the historically important character-based action genre, will cement the PlayStation's position as the platform of choice in 1996."

SONIC 4!!

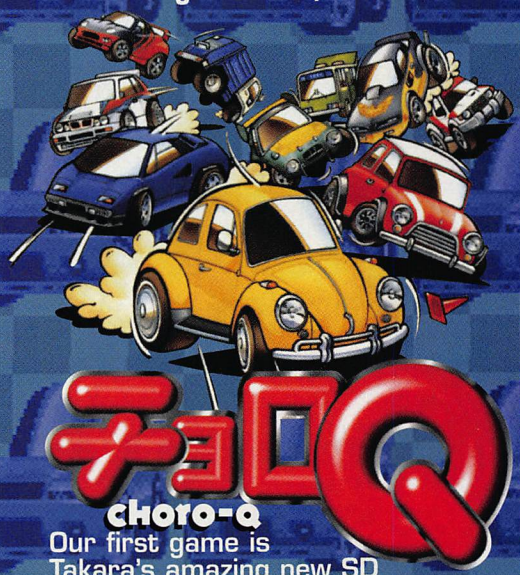
Wow, I knew S4 was 3D, but nobody ever said anything about rendered characters and BG's! The Genesis lives! Fire up those Nomads, folks, we're going back one more time! We'll have more on Sonic 4 in the July issue.



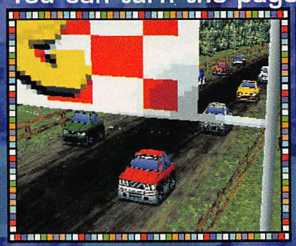


Racing games have captured the hearts and minds of gamers around the world since the days of *Pole Position*. Besides fighting, it has remained the healthiest genre in gaming. This summer a broad range of co.'s will attempt to keep that fire burnin' with a variety of high powered racers. I'll return again next month with the remaining Summer/Fall releases.

GAMEFAN'S SUMMER GUIDE TO RACING BLISS... PART 1



Our first game is Takara's amazing new SD racer, *Choro-Q*. I'm not sure what that means, but this game hands *Ridge Racer* its lunch in my opinion. You can turn the page now.



REVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TAMSOFT

PUBLISHER - TAKARA

FORMAT - CD

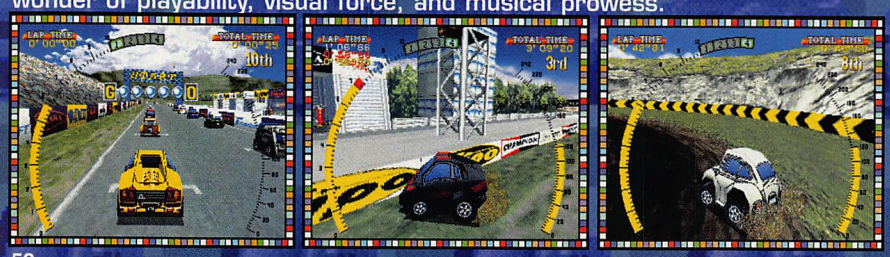
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INT/ ADV.

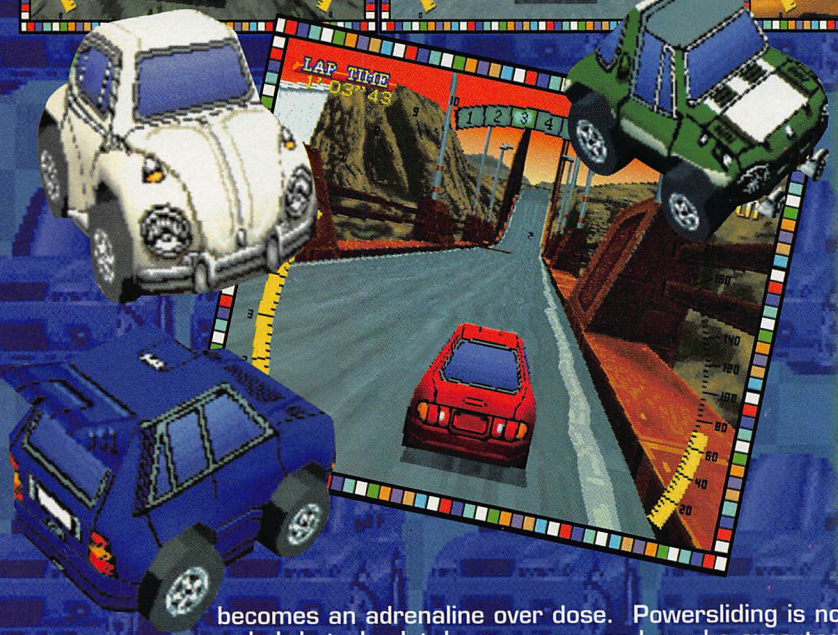
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

E. STORM
IS THAT *LUPIN*?

Niche racers. It's true they're cause for apprehension, as much of the time the emphasis is placed too much on the uniqueness of the theme and too little on the gameplay itself. Once in awhile however (as with *Motor Toon 1 & 2*, and *WipeOut*), they exceed expectations and you end up with a visually stimulating, unique, and very replayable racer. Such is the case with Takara's *Choro-Q*. Designed by Tamsoft, the creators of *Toshinden 1 & 2*, *CQ* reaffirms their position as 3D masters. For a first time racer, besides the tiny seam glitches, *CQ* is a wonder of playability, visual force, and musical prowess.



CQ's strongest point lies in its instinctive control. Like *Ridge Racer*, you're forced to re-adjust at first but once you find the zone, the game



becomes an adrenaline over dose. Powersliding is not only recommended, but absolutely necessary, and can be executed so perfectly you're tempted to do one at every turn.

In the options mode you can paint your car, buy every conceivable upgrade, choose practice or tournament, and finally, after completing the grueling 10 track tournament, enter the rally. If you're like me, a racer's soundtrack is paramount and I'm happy to report *CQ* delivers. Besides the single Tijuana parade song, the music is lovin', easily surpassing *Toshinden*'s. I guess the only question that remains is when *CQ* will make its US debut.

As *Toshinden 1 & 2* did I'm sure *CQ* will make the grade and surface soon. Super-deformed vehicles like Mini-Coopers and Saabs with *Ridge Racer/Rally* environments? Who could resist? -E. Storm

RACING

SATURN

REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

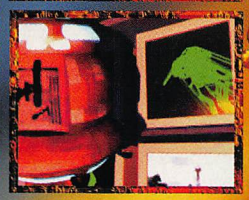
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY

E. STORM

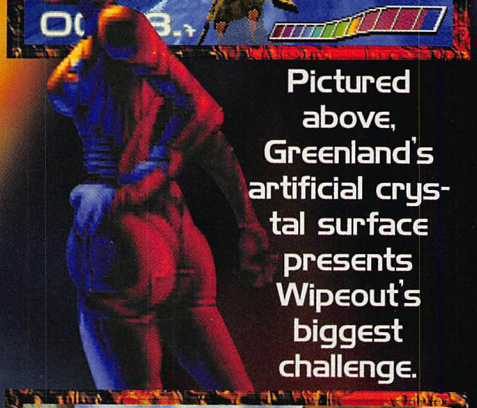
Wipeout



ONE QUESTION...

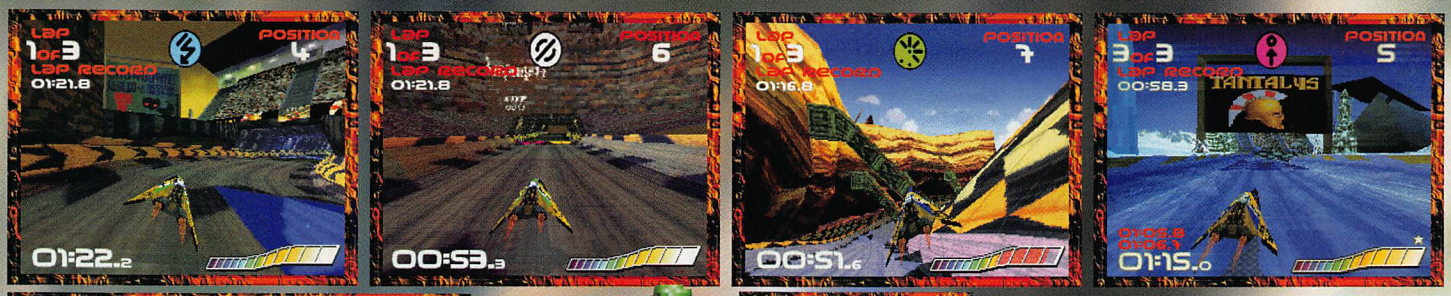
How did Psygnosis get Wipeout to run this good on the Saturn?

For those of you not familiar with Wipeout, a brief history. Wipeout was released on the PlayStation last fall. For many, well for almost every-

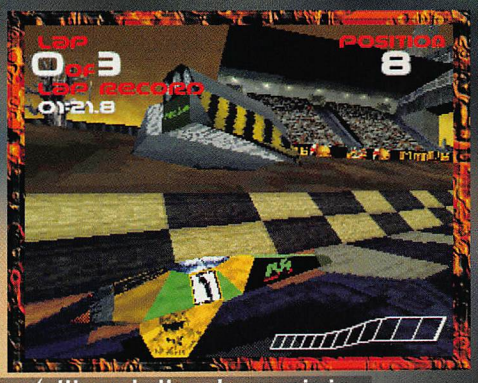


Pictured above, Greenland's artificial crystal surface presents Wipeout's biggest challenge.

one I know, it has remained to this day the pinnacle of PS racers. Wipeout helped solidify Psygnosis as one of the PS's premiere developers and proved to many just how high powered the PlayStation could be early on. The detailed texture mapped polys in Wipeout provide a great sense of being there. Signs, grandstands complete with cheering hordes, and even the enemy craft all have a decidedly finished look to them. There's a minimum of pixelization, little break up, and re-draw is held to a remarkable minimum for a Saturn racer. Light source shading was used generously throughout the PS version

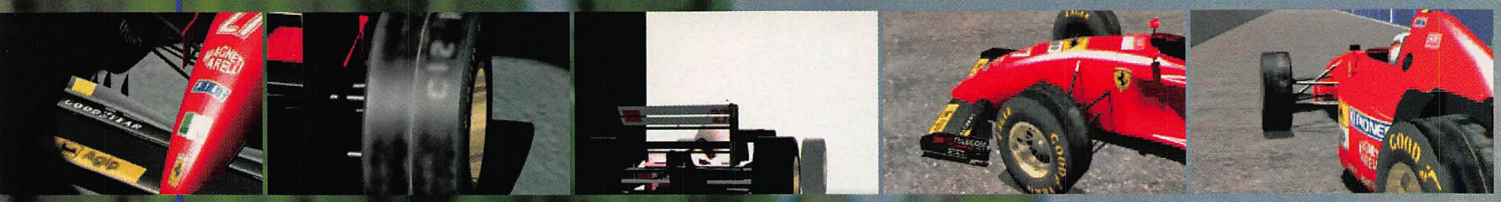


WIN POSES
Wipeout's female team members love to win. Talk about incentive...

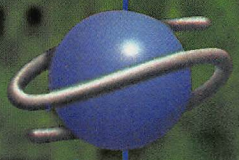


and is one of the few ingredients missing in the Saturn game (although they have mimicked it nicely). Wipeout's gameplay however, is really the star of the show. Never has hovering produced such a euphoric and instinctive racing experience. And the weapons, which are awarded by passing over glowing track fragments add a unique dimension to each and every run. Besides all of its spectacular visuals and consuming gameplay, WO has one of the best techno soundtracks ever recorded. All of this splendor is made even better with the joyous Saturn control pad in hand. I don't know if it's just the pad,

but this version seems to play just a bit better than its PS counterpart. Either way, the fact that a near-perfect Saturn version exists at all is reason enough for celebration. With two levels of difficulty, Venom and Rapier, which provides new visuals, championship, single race, and time-trial modes of play, plus all of its masterful techno, there's more than enough game here to make Wipeout my favorite Saturn racer, easily surpassing Daytona and just squeaking by Rally. It's that good.



REVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA JAPAN

PUBLISHER - VIRGIN

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - JUNE

K. LEE
If only Tina was in the soundtrack!

OK, you just bought a Saturn, you love racing games, you've played *Daytona* and *Sega Rally* to death, and you just noticed that the PlayStation is getting a hot Formula One game. You say to yourself, "You know what the Saturn needs? An awesome F1 racing game."

You are absolutely correct, and the F1 game you wished for is about to become available—sort of. Sega Sports' newest racing game, *F1 Challenge*, is due out in July and is one of the best racing games I've ever played on the Saturn.

Although *F1 Challenge* sports the official F1A license, there are only 3 F1 circuits (Hockenheim, Monaco, and Suzuka), 5 F1 cars (Ferrari, Tyrrell, McClaren, Benneton and Williams) and 5 F1 drivers (Jean Alesi, Ukyo Katayama, Mikka Hakannen, Michael Schumacher and Damon Hill). The other 3 tracks (Neo City Novice, Neo City Advanced, and Neo City Expert) are fictional circuits and offer nowhere near the challenge nor the appeal of the real tracks. Although this is somewhat of a downer, *F1 Challenge* has more than enough redeeming features to make up the difference.

For starters, the texture-mapped graphics, while not incredible, are very good. There is some pop-up on long straights and sweeping turns (the grandstands at Suzuka first come to mind), but it's not overly bothersome and is actually much better than *Daytona* (but not as good as *Sega Rally*). There's a good amount of accuracy in the F1 circuits (elevation changes, chicanes and grandstands are pretty much where they should be) and the sensation of speed is just that: sensational.

Where the game really stands out, however, is in gameplay. Simheads expecting an endless list of car adjustments will be disappointed. The only choices the player gets are: front wing adjustments (high to low downforce), rear wing adjustments (high to low downforce) fuel level (to optimize the weight of the car) and just 2 tire compounds (high grip and long wear). This simplification of the car set-up process shows who this game is really targeted at: the arcade enthusiast, raised on games like *Virtua Racing*, *OutRun*, *Ridge Racer* and *Daytona*. Nuttin' wrong wit' dat! Once you start playing the game, you'll find

F1 CHALLENGE

yourself saying "Ahhhh, I'm home."

If there was any doubt about it before, *F1 Challenge* certainly solidifies Sega as the King of Racing Games. These guys don't know how to program a racing game that isn't fun and playable. Complex physical interactions like drafting and over/understeer are not only accurately applied to the gameplay, but the learning curve is easy and the control is forgiving. It doesn't matter if you're a novice, an aspiring Alain Prost or somewhere in-between, it's still easy to jump in and have a blast with this game. Amazing!

Other than the fact that there aren't enough cars and tracks in *F1 Challenge*, the game is fantastic. I did notice one thing that I found a bit...odd. The guys at Sega must be big fans of the prancing horse, because Jean Alesi's Ferrari is the fastest and best handling car on the track (it also has a better engine note than the other cars and is the only car shown in the SGI intro). I too am a huge fan of Maranello's finest, but come on, when was the last time you saw a Ferrari reel in a Williams FW17 like it was nuttin'. *Puh-leeeze*. Since *F1* isn't available for the PlayStation yet and none of Geoff Crammond's PC FIGP games are available for any of the home consoles, Sega's *F1 Challenge* is the reigning champion of 32-bit *F1* games—for now. -K. Lee

Prep your F1's fuel level, tires, even the rear and front wing adjustments before the race!!

ROCK N' ROLL RACING

One of '96's most highly anticipated racing titles is Interplay's sequel to one of 16-bit's all-time best combat racers:: , *Rock & Roll Racing*. I'm not sure yet if good ol' Larry Huffman is coming back to bark out the on-screen action but I *can* tell you that besides the change in perspective (from 3/4 top view, to 3D),

WORLDS PICTURED: NEO TOKYO, LA 2027 AND HELL WORLD

PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - INTERPLAY

PUBLISHER - INTERPLAY

FORMAT - CD

 # OF PLAYERS - TBA

DIFFICULTY - TBA

AVAILABLE - SUMMER '96

the theme has remained predominately the same. If you thought *R&R* had attitude, wait until you get a load of *Red Asphalt* (I was informed of the new title after making the logo). Let's begin with the gameplay itself. Our video (which resulted in these less-than-glamorous screen captures) contained only one perspective, so I'm not sure whether or not a behind-the-car camera will be available. My money's on a big yes to that question however, as the vehicles in *R&R* were one of the game's main attractions. Besides, someone spent a long time modeling all those beauties! The frame rate in *RA* is blistering and the polygons... smooth as a babies backside! As for the locales, well, take a look... LA 2027, Neo Tokyo, Hell World... you get the picture. I think it's safe to assume that power's comin'. Look for more on *Red Asphalt*, coming soon!

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY IN A SHORT TIME. ANYONE SEEN LARRY?

Motor Toon Grand Prix 2

PREVIEW

LAYOUT BY NICK ROX

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - BANDIT

PUBLISHER - SCE

FORMAT - CD-ROM

OF PLAYERS - 1-2 (LINK)

DIFFICULTY - VARIABLE

AVAIL. MAY 24 JAPAN

It was not until I went back and replayed *Motor Toon Grand Prix* that I realized how much better its sequel really is. Over a year ago, the original *Motor Toon* captivated with its until then never-before-seen Gouraud shaded graphics, stretchy, deforming cars and a highly Nintendo feel. The gameplay wasn't really there, especially in the lame two-player mode, but this is the case no longer.

SCE and Bandit, the game's creators, have fixed nearly all the problems with *MTGP2*, adding five tracks, among them a Haunted Castle, the tracks you see here, Toon Village and Toon Island II, Crazy Coaster and the one we at GameFan are most looking forward to: Gulliver House II. This time, weapons have been added to the game, ala *WipeOut*. You can lay mines, fire "Crazy Mushrooms" and missiles, become invisible, etc. You pay for the power-ups with coins collected at certain places along the track. Also added are at least three new characters - Chin Tong Shang in a screaming F1-type vehicle, Vanity on a motorcycle, and Billy the Tough in a train. The intro boasts of "secret surprises like hidden characters," as well.

The gorgeous graphics are a gigantic step beyond *MTGP1*, with much more texture mapping and even software-driven mip-mapping, which replaces textures with higher-resolution versions as you get closer to them. The screen update is also incredibly fast, easily higher than 30fps.

Motor Toon 2 doesn't come out until May 24th, so you won't see a review until issue after next, but stay tooned!

- Nick Rox

CHIN TONG SHANG

VANITY

BILLY THE TOUGH

POW

SUPER MARIO 64

PREVIEW

DEVELOPER - NINTENDO

PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

FORMAT - 64(+) MEG CART

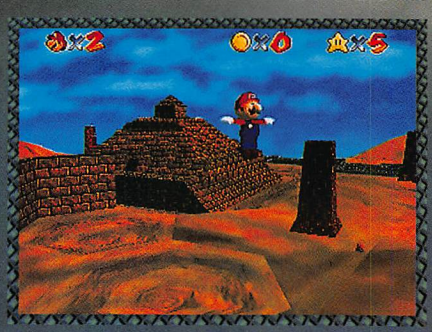
OF PLAYERS - 1

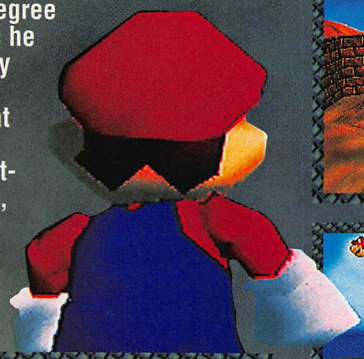
DIFFICULTY - N/A

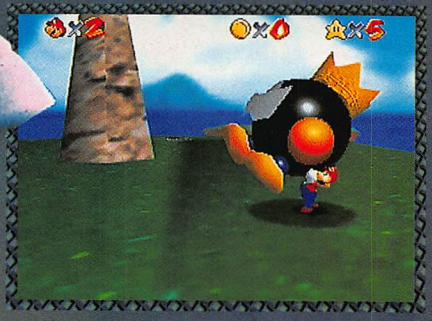
AVAIL. JUNE 23 JPN. SEPT. US

From Wall Street to the Nikkei Exchange, from Japan to America and just about everywhere in between, Nintendo's critics will be awaiting the news of the day when the Nintendo64 is unveiled in the US for the first time on May 14. Two of the initial launch titles, scheduled for take-off this June 23rd in Japan, are *Mario 64* and the sequel to the game that helped launch the Super Famicom so successfully in '90, *Pilotwings 64*. This latest batch of *Mario* shots reveal some interesting gameplay characteristics. Right off, you can clearly see the multiple-angled, panning and zooming cameras and 100% real time gameplay. As you manipulate Mario with fluid 360-degree control via the analog pad, it's obvious he changes perspectives almost constantly in relation to the environment. You'll also notice, at least in these shots, that *Mario 64* is heavily obstacle-based. Combined with Miyamoto's famous platform savvy and *Mario*-esque situations, the end result will no doubt be a legendary 3D experience.

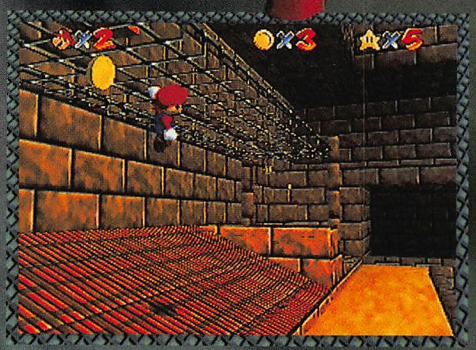
Some claim that Mario is too cute and that Nintendo would have been



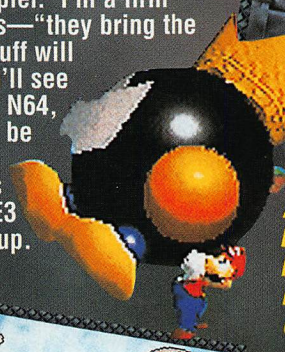




It seemed like an eternity, but the wait is almost over. Let the games begin!

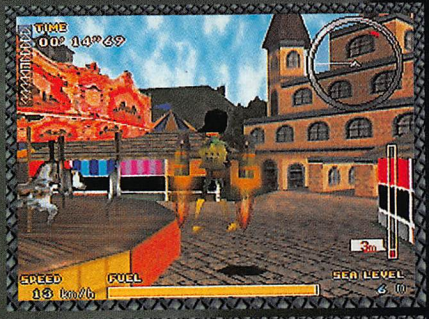


better served with a more serious theme for their launch title. I beg to differ. Miyamoto+Mario has always equaled legend. Besides this *Mario* game, a blazing 2D version is in the works as well. Personally, I couldn't be happier. I'm a firm believer in company mascots—"they bring the flava." The more serious stuff will follow, although I doubt you'll see any exploding skulls on the N64, which is fine by me. We'll be back with more on *SM64* and all the US launch titles in our E3 wrap-up.

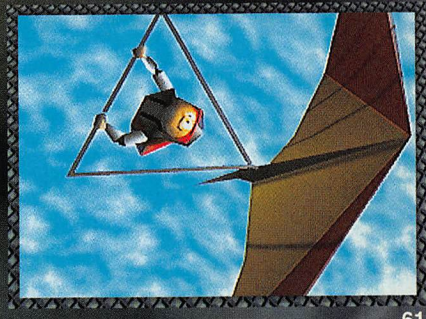


ABOVE, MARIO TAKES A LIQUID METAL DIP. EFFECTS LIKE THIS ARE COMMONPLACE ON THE N64

PILOTWINGS

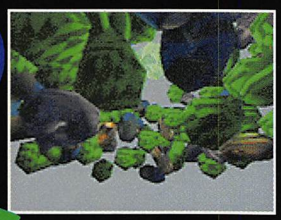


Ah, *Pilotwings*. This game conjures up memories of my first days with the Super Famicom. If you look closely you'll see the rings (in between the buildings at left) which you must fly through. Of course, the environments in this version will dwarf the originals, but that aside, look forward to more of the same addicting gameplay found in the original. See those trees behind the Statue of Liberty? Well, I hear you can fly right up to them. If that's the case, sign me up!
-E. Storm



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE M2 64 BIT

DNN DIEHARD NEWS NETWORK



HEM TOO

Over the past 12 months, the M2 has been the subject of much speculation, doubt, excitement, ridicule, anticipation and even awe. Just like the way its 64-bit rival, the N64, is for Nintendo, the M2 is 3DO/Matsushita's hype machine, corporate image-booster, propaganda tool and technological icon all wrapped up in one. In addition to all this, it may even play games!

When the M2 was officially announced last May, it was done so in the face of healthy skepticism. Put bluntly, many people didn't think the M2 had a chance of becoming a major player in the next-generation console race. Indeed, some people still don't think the M2 has a chance. However, a funny thing has happened to the M2 over the last year or so that's kind of unique in this industry... It grew on people.

In our fickle industry, where the opposite is usually true, the M2's status among the media, developers and consumers alike has increased dramatically. When a machine's launch period nears, the gloss of vast expectations fade and reality sets in—and we all know reality can fall well below our expectations. One just has to look at Nintendo's newest console to realize that. As it turns out, one of the M2's greatest allies turned out to be its lackluster predecessor. Since the 3DO had mediocre success, people didn't take the M2 too seriously at first. But the times, they are a-changin'... Why is irony so ironic?

Here, for your reading enjoyment, is a quick recap of the M2 journey from also-ran wanna-be to possible console legend. Let's see...it all started on...

HEAR YE, HEAR YE

May 2, 1995—The 3DO Company today unveiled its highly anticipated, next-generation M2 technology. 3DO's M2 64-bit architecture is designed to create a quantum leap in advanced CD entertainment technology. Leveraging 3DO's high-end 3-D image and sound processors and IBM and Motorola's PowerPC microprocessor, M2 technology rivals the image quality and performance of high-powered workstations and the most popular arcade machines.

THE QUOTES

"It's a quantum leap for the industry in both graphics speed and quality. We're raising the bar again." –Trip Hawkins, President and CEO of 3DO.

"The superior price and performance of the PowerPC 602 is enabling new classes of advanced home entertainment software. 3DO's 64-bit M2 system architecture will forever change the way people play, learn and interact." –Phil Hester, General Manager, Systems Technology and Architecture Division, IBM.

IN ENGLISH

Hype, hype and more hype. Beyond the fact that Sega and Sony would both be showing off their next-generation systems at the '95 E3 just days later, Nintendo was expected to drop the Ultra 64 bomb at the show. Is it any coincidence Trip decided to reveal a super system of his own a mere 9 days before the show? I think not.

You see, sales of the 3DO were victim to the "something better is just around the corner" syndrome during 1993 when information "leaked" out about Sega, Sony and Nintendo developing next generation consoles of their own. Could this announcement of a game machine that was supposedly better than anything showcased at the E3 (plus it was scheduled to be launched in December of 1995, no less) be a tactic to rain on the Nintendo/Sega/Sony parade? Well....let's just say that revenge sure ain't bitter...

Regardless, the next-generation console race was getting more crowed and confusing by the minute. Surely, the M2 didn't stand a chance against the powerful Japanese trio...right? And with the more established game consoles to worry about, who's going to develop for the M2? Who, indeed? That question was answered on...

HEAR YE, HEAR YE

May 11, 1995—Major computer and electronic entertainment industry players are supporting 3DO's next-generation 64-bit M2 technology, which was unveiled last week during East and West Coast press and analyst briefings hosted by The 3DO Company.

THE QUOTES

"We are very pleased with the image quality, speed, processing power and overall performance of this technology. Our commitment to delivering M2 products is very strong." –Hiroyuki Tachibana, Director, Interactive Media Division at Matsushita.

"The M2 technology blows away everything we've seen or are going to see from the competition. LG Electronics is already investing significant time and resources into making M2 the next standard in the advanced gaming market. We support the M2 technology 100 percent." –Jim Ireton, Vice President of the HiMedia Group at LG Electronics.

"The M2 technology has features that we believe will be able to provide the foundation for creating dramatically new, intensely compelling games." –Luc Barthelet, Vice President of Technology at Electronic Arts.

"M2 promises to deliver exceptional performance in a home game system. The technical challenges of bringing major arcade titles to home systems will be substantially reduced with this new technology." –Justin Heber, Vice President of Business Development for Williams Entertainment.

"The M2 technology features, like Gouraud-shading, filtered textures, 30 frame per second animation, and Onyx-level performance, will take gamers into a new level of immersion." –Steven Weinstein, Vice President of Research and Development for Spectrum HoloByte.

IN ENGLISH

Although the list wasn't long, 3DO could at least prove that it had support for the M2 from some established companies. What was even more impressive were the things they were saying about the raw power of the M2. Bold statements indeed. Some important names were missing from that list (Namco, Capcom and Konami to name a few), but Trip made his point and all went along as planned.

Of even more significance was the absence of the (then titled) Ultra 64 on the show floor which left some antsy show-goers hungry for some 64-bit joy. A quick trip (so to speak) to the 3DO booth would reveal an M2 demo that was too good to be true. As luck would have it, not only did Trip land on his feet, but the triple-toe-loop he did by accident on the way down impressed some judges (he must've wanted to send Nintendo a thank you card for the early X-mas gift).

As a result of this well timed introduction, it was becoming harder and harder to ignore the M2. But did Trip's small American company have what it takes to enter a full scale war with the Japanese goliaths? Turns out they didn't have to...

HEAR YE, HEAR YE

Oct. 25, 1995—The 3DO Company and Matsushita Electrical Industrial Co., Ltd. today announced that they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to be followed by a definitive agreement to become partners in the development and exploitation of 3DO's 64-bit M2 graphic technology. Under the agreement, Matsushita will pay 3DO a $100 million license fee plus additional royalties. Matsushita in turn will have the exclusive rights to use the M2 technology to power next-generation consumer and commercial products including 64-bit video games, Digital Video Disc (DVD) players, and interactive television set top-boxes.

THE QUOTES

"Today's announcement combines the vast resources of a consumer electronics leader with the industry's most powerful 64-bit technology. Matsushita has been a world leader in audio and video and is again poised for success with their central role in the emerging DVD standard. By combining these capabilities with 3DO's interactive graphics and computing technology, Matsushita is well positioned for success in many new digital businesses." –Trip Hawkins, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The 3DO Company.

"In order to succeed in this business, we need to acquire the rights and become the licenser of interactive, high-speed, high-performance

graphics processing and operating system technology offered by the M2 architecture. We will implement this technology in a wide variety of applications in both the consumer and commercial AVC (Audio, Video and Computer) businesses." –Mikio Higashi, Managing Director and Member of the Board of Directors, Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd.

IN ENGLISH

The significance and breadth of this mega-deal is difficult to comprehend. Matsushita (MEI) is by far, the largest (and richest) consumer electronic firm on the planet. They are twice as big as Sony. They have over a quarter of a million employees in 161 countries around the world. They grossed more than 78 billion dollars last year alone. *78 BILLION DOLLARS.* Unlike you and me, they NEVER have money problems. They make TVs, VCRs, CD players, laserdisc players, portable radios, microwave ovens, refrigerators—and now M2s as well. Rumor has it, these guys are so big they could BUY Nintendo, Sega and Sony in a single gulp, let alone compete with them.

It seems as though Trip's luck knows no bounds. Not only does his 64-bit baby get to enjoy all the world-class tech support, marketing savvy, distribution strength and raw intimidation power that Matsushita is sure to provide for the M2, his company also gets to pocket a cool $100 million AND around three bucks for every M2 game sold...oy vay! The way it stands now, nobody even has enough money to pay Trip to go away.

As a little side benefit, the M2 will ride the huge DVD tsunami that is sure to arrive. Like it or not, DVD *IS* the future and its link with the M2 makes the system impossible to ignore. On the MEI side, is everything over before it's begun? Well...no.

They have a lot of learning to do and work ahead of them before they can challenge the Big 3. They have to set up the distribution channels, they need a solid marketing plan, but most of all, they need a well respected game company in their pocket (like Sony has with Namco) to supply the M2 with a steady stream of killer games—and they need it FAST. Well, they get it...

HEAR YE, HEAR YE

February 8, 1996 Konami Co. Ltd. and Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., announced today that they will jointly develop a new 64-bit motherboard for video game machines used in amusement arcades. The motherboard will be released with Konami's related game software by the end of 1996. Konami plans to adopt Matsushita's 64-bit M2 system to develop action video game software using three-dimensional computer graphics. The price of the motherboard will be under $2000. Konami will supply 5,000-10,000 boards for each software title to amusement arcades worldwide. Konami expects total annual profits to expand $20 million or more as a result of the new product. Although Konami also develops motherboards, it decided to use Matsushita's motherboard for 3-dimensional computer graphics to cut development costs. Matsushita has already announced a plan to apply 64-bit graphic processing technology in a wide number of areas, including arcade games and personal computers.

IN ENGLISH

Someway, somehow, Trip's luck manages to kill 2 birds with one Uzi 9mm. Konami is a well respected game developer, has an extremely loyal following worldwide, is capable of making great games in every genre and, in general, is just, well...*bitchin'*.

Imagine the possibilities: 64-bit *Contra*, 64-bit *Axelay*, 64-bit *Turtles*, 64-bit *Castlevania*...the mind reels. This is just the type of stuff fans thought they would be saying about the Nintendo 64 but still aren't, and would never dream they would say of a console with 3DO roots, but in fact are.

Currently, Konami doesn't have the type of 3D coin-op game presence Namco has (and to a greater extent,Sega...Boy wouldn't that be something if Matsushita had both Konami and Sega in their back pockets... Don't laugh, Trip's luck has performed greater feats). With the M2, Konami has a cheap way of producing games capable of crushing Namco's Super System 22 arcade hardware at a fraction of the cost. Plus, they'll likely be translating the games to the home M2 console, lickety-split. Think about it: If Konami is joining the M2 bandwagon, who could be next...Capcom, Square, maybe even Namco?

EPILOGUE

Watching the M2 evolve into it's current state over the last 12 months has been downright fascinating. We are now at a point where there are more things going for the M2 than against it. Think about it. 64-bit power, Matsushita backing it, Konami supporting it and surely more will follow, it'll be able to play better-than-laserdisc-quality movies and games with up to 17 gigabytes of memory will be a reality when the DVD kicks in. Overall, it's a decent package—to say the least.

At the recent Devcon show (developers conference) a little bird told me a few interesting tidbits. First of all, Matsushita is one of the largest manufactures of semiconductors in the world (behind Intel, Motorola, 3M, BASF and IBM). The reason this is important is because Matsushita owns a foundry that produces RAM chips. From what I understand, Matsushita will manufacture their own 8 Meg RAM chips for the M2. Believe it or not, Matsushita's 8 Megabytes of S-DRAM will cost them less than what 6 Megabytes would've cost 3DO.

The M2 will have at least a quad speed CD drive—know why? Yup, you guessed it... Matsushita also manufactures CD drives and I hear they're cutting themselves a pretty good deal for the M2.

The juiciest news of all is how much the M2 is going to cost. Matsushita is prepared to introduce the M2 at a suggested retail of around $250 bucks. Sign me up!

P.S. For those of you who want another look at the M2 specs, here they are:

MAIN SPECIFICATIONS

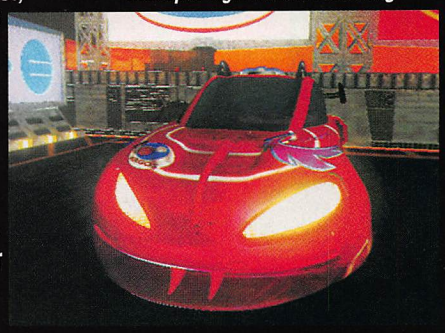
CPU type: Power PC 602x
528 Megabytes per second memory bus bandwidth
100 Million pixels per second rendering speed
1 Million polygons per second peak rendering speed
500+ thousands polygons per second (with all features added)
8 MBytes S-DRAM
Cache-coherent memory system
64-bit memory bus
4X CD drive
320x240 to 640x480 (configurable) at 24-bit or 16-bit color depths
MPEG-1 video built-in (upgradable to MPEG-2) also supports JPEG
DVD compatibility
Internal non-volatile memory
Game Save Storage Cards (memory card)
3DO Card slots for peripherals
PCMCIA expansion slots
Digital/Analog control pad

AUDIO

32 PCM sound channels (MIDI compatible)
Hardware interpolation on all channels
66 MHz DSP with 2:1 hardware audio decompression (all channels)
Supports Dolby Surround, SRS, AC-3 and Q-sound in hardware
44.1 KHz sampling frequency

HARDWARE GRAPHIC FEATURES

Texture Mapping
Gouraud Shading on RGBA channels
Hardware texture decompression
Run-length coded compression and decompression
Destination-based rendering
MIP-mapping
Destination-based blurring
Filtering (linear, bilinear, trilinear and point-sampled)
Z-Buffering
Perspective Correction (x, y and z axis)
Alpha Channel Support
Specular lighting
Multiple light source shading



ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE M2's GRAPHIC FEATURES

The M2 architecture includes several key features for achieving advanced image quality and performance. Unlike other game consoles, which can perform some of the effects in software, these features are built into and performed by the M2 hardware with little or no performance loss. Game designers simply apply these advanced effects to an image (a polygon, for example) and the M2 automatically does the rest of the work for them...joy! Listed below are some examples of how the M2's graphic features. Enjoy!

• Texture mapping—Texture mapping is used to apply a graphic texture (a picture) to polygon-based models to give the modeled object the desired look. 3DO's M2 texture-mapping capability renders polygons delivering more than 100 million pixels per second and supports a wide range of data types, including video. A texture-mapped polygon with no filtering added to it is called a "Point Sampled" texture map. All current 32-bit systems support Point Sampled polygons in hardware. A good example of Point Sampled texture mapping is *Virtua Fighter Remix* vs. *Virtua Fighter*. The characters in *VF* only had flat-shaded (single color) polygons, while *VF Remix* added Point Sampled texture maps.

• Gouraud shading and lighting—M2 technology allows designers to apply a significant number of lighting effects to an object or scene. Light sources are then reflected realistically off of objects based on where the light source is in relation to the object. Gouraud shading is applied to the object to create the appropriate colors and shadows in the scene. The result is images and scenery with brilliantly curved and smooth surfaces. The graphics in *Motor Toon GP* for the PlayStation and *Cybermorph* for the Jaguar show-off Gouraud shading techniques.

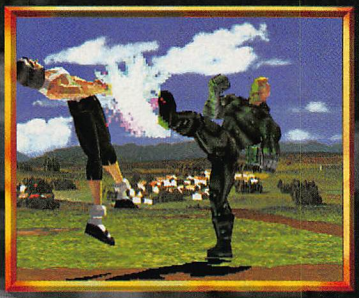
(Continued on page 81)

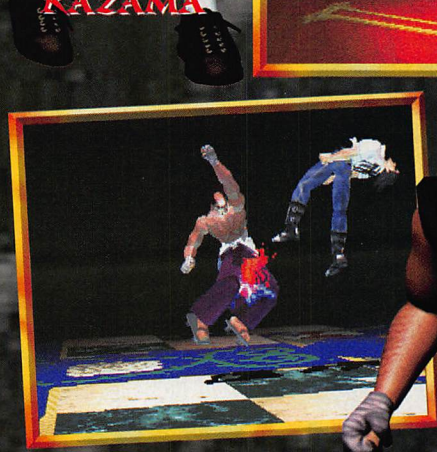
鉄拳 TEKKEN 2

Usually, I hate having to preview arcade translations. I mean, everyone's already played the game and formed their own opinions, so once I've pointed out the few subtle differences between the two versions, I'm forced to kill space with idiotic things like plot summaries and boring personal anecdotes. And since the arcade *Tekken 2* runs on PlayStation hardware anyway, the differences are trifling at best.

But I don't think I'll have too much trouble filling out my 500 words on *Tekken 2*. Because after the quickie conversion from System 11 to home PlayStation hardware, Namco spent the remainder of the 8 months adding tons of options, codes, and CG to the final version. As it stands, Tekken 2 sets the standard for home arcade translations.

The most glaring addition is, of course, the CG. *Tekken 2*'s minute-and-a-half intro is easily one of the best video game intros of all time (Gack! Look at Nina's HAIR!). And what's even more impressive is that each and every one of the game's 25 characters (each character's sub-boss becomes playable when you beat it with that character) has their own CG ending (that's including different endings for Roger/Alex and Devil/Angel). They're only





PREVIEW

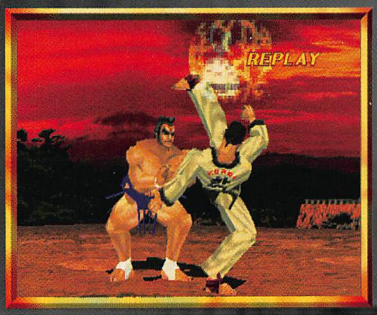
PlayStation

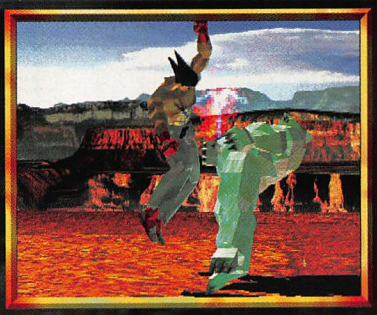
DEVELOPER - NAMCO
PUBLISHER - NAMCO
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

TAKUHI
The new standard in arcade translations

about ten or twenty seconds each, but the quality is so high that you know it took Namco weeks to make each one.

The home version allows you to chose original or arranged soundtracks (the arranged is pretty good, but a bit too ambient for my tastes), and has the usual compliment of fighting game options (allowing you to change the difficulty, # of rounds, time before time out, set the pads, etc.). You also get a number of very cool extra modes, in addition to *Tekken 1*'s VS. and Time Attack modes. In Team Mode, you can pick a team of up to 8 characters and fight it out *King of Fighters* style. Survival Mode lets you see how many enemies you can take out with one life bar. Most welcome of all is the Practice mode, where you can practice your moves against a character who doesn't fight back. At the bottom of the screen, all of your movements appear, so you can tell if you're doing the moves right, and if not, where you're screwing up. During this mode or any other (including the arcade mode), you can pause the game and pull up a list of most of your character's moves, which is pretty handy if for some reason you're unable memorize the game's total pool of 500+ moves. And after you've beaten it with all 25 characters, a number of secrets open up, from the very cool *Punch-Out* style wire-frame mode, to a way of horribly deforming your character in a sort of SD mode.





The translation itself is, of course, pretty much perfect. There are a few subtle changes (in the floor textures and explosions), but nothing that will detract in the least from your enjoyment of the game. Most amazing of all is the loading time: After a brief initial load, there is almost no perceptible loading time, an amazing achievement on Namco's part. (The only downside to the lack of loading time is that there's no boot-up game [like *Galaxian* in *Tekken 1*]... Awww...)

The addition of the practice modes makes all 25 characters relatively easy to learn, and the individualized endings give you plenty of incentives to beat the game with all of 'em. *Tekken 2*'s new features compliment a great game perfectly, making for a fighter that's overflowing with replay value.

-Takuhi

MASTER YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER'S COMBOS IN PRACTICE MODE!

DRAGON FORCE

REVIEW

LAYOUT - TAKUHI

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM

AVAILABLE - NOW - JAPAN

When the gods were creating the world of *Dragon Force*, they took their time in perfecting the continent of Legendra. It was to be their finest work, a utopian paradise of peace and prosperity for all. And it was. But eventually, the gods moved on to create new worlds... and when they got to the site of their next creation, they evidently forgot to take a roll call, 'cause none of them noticed that one of their number was missing.

The god who stayed behind was the demon Madruk, and he wanted to put a few finishing touches on Legendra before he moved on, such as obliterating the land with natural disasters and slaughtering its residents one by one. And he did. But just when all hope seemed lost, the dark clouds of the hell that Legendra had become opened up, and the mighty Star Dragon Hawthgart went to war with Madruk. After a long battle, the golden dragon emerged the victor, but was too weak to finish Madruk off. So instead, he sealed the demon away, and split himself into 8 orbs, which he sent to the far corners of Legendra. Many generations later, it's time for the bearers of those orbs to come together and finish Madruk for good.

A cool twist on your typical RPG storyline, but *Dragon Force* is no RPG. Though this may be a strategy/RPG by definition, *Dragon Force* has almost nothing in common with more well known S/RPG's, such as *Arc the Lad*, *Shining Force* or *Langrissa*. Despite the cool characters and constantly-evolving storyline, *DF*'s most direct ancestors seem to be *Lords of the Rising Sun*, or *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

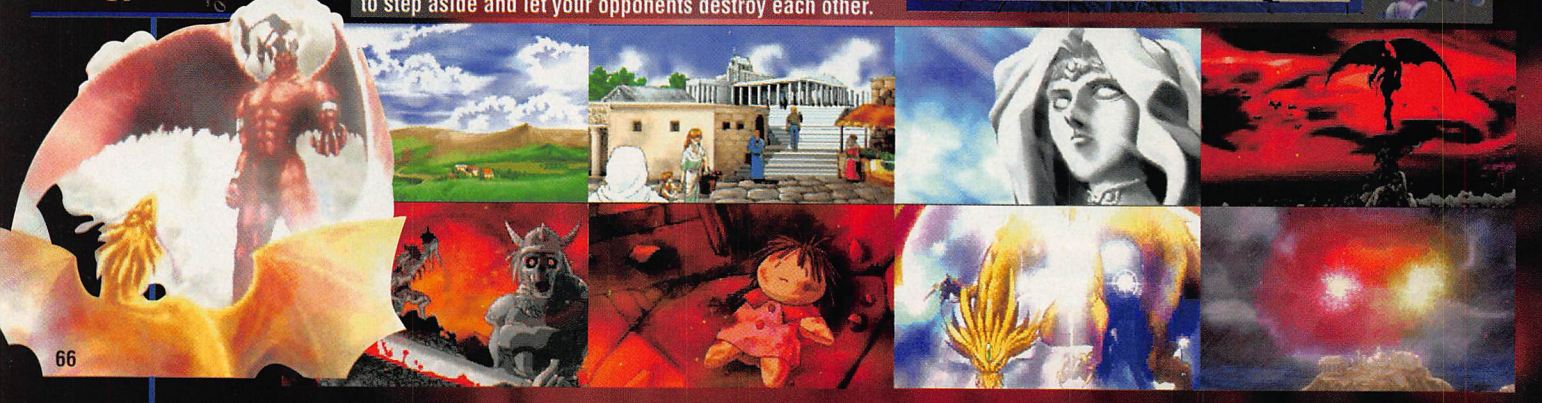
When I say that, I mean that the strategic emphasis is not on winning battles, but in the long-term strategic goals of taking over Legendra. Unlike your typical S/RPG, you can lose dozens of battles with little negative consequence, as long as you continue to win the right ones. The winning strategies here are knowing which areas are worth defending, and which enemies are worth going to war with: There are a dozen or so competing factions when the game begins, and whenever it's possible, the best strategy is always to step aside and let your opponents destroy each other.

Though the battles are visually amazing, some featuring over 200 sprites at once, there's not a whole lot of strategy to be found in them. Like I said, the real strategies are in the overhead maps, and in the preparations you make before the battles begin.

The coolest thing about *Dragon Force* has to be the RPG aspects... You're not moving around "units" in this game, you're moving generals with their own names, faces, and allegiances. Instead of sending 30 horsemen south to fight, you're sending your old pals (or subjugated enemies) Gustaf, Kidd, and Tilis. And though you begin the game with the simple desire for domination of your continent, the frequent intermissions display your gradual change to a role as the leader of the 8 chosen heroes.

There's a lot going on in *DF*, and I've explained it the best I can on the page to the right. Though the game has some annoying quirks (such as the way enemies try to bore you death by sending weak single-general armies who just pick a fight and then run away time and time again), this is one of the best and most innovative strategy titles I've played in a long time. If you can handle the menacing Japanese-Kanji, I heartily recommend you pick up the import. If you can't, Working Designs is nearly ready to go with a US version.
-Takuhi

TAKUHI
An enjoyable and original mix of strategy and RPG



10 years ago, Fandaria's emperor, Goldak, tried to take over the Northernmost empire of Tristan. Tristan's king fought to the end to protect his kingdom, and though he lost his life, his kingdom survived. Now his daughter and successor, Junorn, who hides her gender under an intimidating black helmet, feels the time for revenge has come.

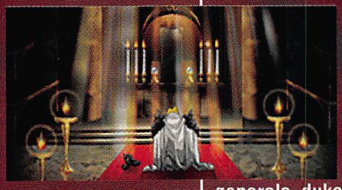
Tristan is a pretty miserable place to live. It's cold, and there isn't much farmable land, so the people are few and the least developed in all of Legendra. Tristan is a totalitarian military state, and you have the complete loyalty of its well-trained standing army.

To the south is Gustaf, a miserable little kingdom that doesn't deserve to exist in Tristan's brilliant shadow. Let's have Junorn lead the expedition to annex it personally. It should be a cinch. Pick a castle, choose an away team from the available generals, and arm them with men.

The armies line up; our invading force is on the bottom. Both sides choose a general and their armies fight one on one. Some units are better than others at certain things, so look at your enemy's choice and choose wisely. For example, if your opponent is using horsemen, use archers. If they're using zombies, use monks.

The battle begins! Junorn's fighting this one personally, with her army of harpies. Kidd's petty foot soldiers are meat in the harpies' claws.

Here's how the battles work: Pick an arrangement of soldiers, one that emphasizes frontal strength, or defense of your general, or whatever. Then you can choose your strategy: have them all rush, send them out in squads, whatever. When your meter at the bottom is charged (and if you have MP), you can cast your magic, as on the left. Killing the soldiers doesn't matter if you can kill their general.



If you both eliminate all of your opponents' men, the generals duke it out one-on-one. You can't control this, just watch as they get in a heavily-armed slap fight. If you're low on health, best just to run away. If you lose, you'll be taken prisoner, but if you win the battle you'll be freed.

After a set amount of time, the administrative mode begins. In this mode, you can give promotions to your generals (allowing them to enlist more men), have your men build up your castle defenses (so you get a higher defense bonus when you're attacked), and search your conquered territory for rogue generals and items. Most importantly, you can talk to your prisoners (defeated foes) and ask them to join you (if they agree, you can then control them directly). This is also when all the storyline advancements occur.

The world map is constantly being updated. Our empire, in black, is doing pretty well, but our southernmost castle is bordered by two enemy groups, who are relentlessly trying to take it over... We can't have that.

We headed south and took over two orange castles—a big mistake. Now we've effectively divided the orange kingdom in half, and they're putting their entire resources into getting it back. We got a break on the eastern front, though, as Tilis (above) agreed to an alliance with us and handed Junorn her Moonpalace empire and her many able generals.

Despite our rash decision, Tristan's army succeeded in completely subjugating the (orange) Topaz empire. Meanwhile, in the story scenes of the administrative mode, Junorn has learned that she is one of the eight chosen heroes. As the story progressed, Tilis discovered that she was too, and Topaz empire leader, Leon, ended up being one as well. Leon and Junorn put aside their differences, and the three will be among the eight fighting in the final battle...

REVIEW

LAYOUT - TAKUHI

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SNK

PUBLISHER - SNK

FORMAT - CD+CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW-JAPAN

Remember NES *Ikari Warriors III*? Yeah, me neither, but if I recall correctly, that was SNK's last game as a third party developer. Well, as you can see, they're back. *KoF '95* isn't a licensed product, but a real SNK game, and one of the best arcade translations I've ever played. Ah, SNK... it's good to have you back.

A relatively inexpensive 7800 yen (around $75) gets you not only the CD, but a ROM cartridge that has all the background data (and probably more) packed into it. The ROM cartridge was a great idea—it may add a few bucks to the price tag, but the zippy loading time is well worth it. Although the game does load between characters, the loading time is mercifully quick (4 to 5 seconds), nearly half the time it takes even the double speed Neo•CD drive (and no damn juggling monkeys!). Best of all, *KoF '95* has every frame, voice sample, background layer, and sound effect that was in the Neo•Geo versions. And hey, for some reason it's just cool to hold a Saturn *cartridge*. After all these years of war, a cartridge and a CD working together, in harmony. It just brings tears to my eyes.

Just in case you've never played it in the arcade, here's the ubiquitous game summary: Both competitors pick a team of three, and then the team members fight it out one by one. Control is *Street Fighter* style, with a hearty helping of special moves, combos, and super moves. As a fighting game, it's great—it's not the most balanced game in the world (there are 26 characters, after all), but the variety of char-

acters, fighting styles, and team combinations ensure you won't soon tire of it. My one complaint with the game's system is that the damage is set a bit too high—something that I'd hoped you could turn down in the option mode, but you can't. Let's hope SNK doesn't make the same mistake in the upcoming *Samurai Shodown III* (in which the damage is set WAY too high).

The Saturn version is absolutely identical to the arcade, with almost nothing added, and nothing taken away. The music is the arcade original (not that the arranged music in the Neo•CD one was that great, but they could have given you a choice). There aren't any options that significantly transform the game, although the boss code is much easier to do (all you need to do to make them playable is beat the game once). One other new feature is a brief extra ending sequence in which Kyo heads off to the *King of Fighters '96* tournament.

In the GameFan tradition of anally harping about every single subtle change in a game translation, I should point out the game's one small flaw: in the *Art of Fighting* characters' stage, when the elevator hits the top and the screen spreads out, the game sometimes glitches up and slows down for a second or two. That tiny glitch is this translation's worst flaw. Heck, it's the only flaw.

I loved *King of Fighters '95* in the arcade, but found the Neo•CD one unplayable. I'm usually not one to complain about loading time, but that was just *way* too excessive. But now, thanks to SNK's far speedier, new Saturn conversion, I can finally truly enjoy this excellent fighting game in the comfort of my own home. Hopefully owners of American Saturns will be able to enjoy it soon too... Though *KoF '95* hasn't been officially announced for a US release yet, I've heard that it will be at the upcoming E3, released domestically by Sega themselves.

Japan's Saturn Magazine had a year-end readers poll recently, and its readers overwhelmingly voted the Sega/SNK licensing deal to be the best thing to happen to the Saturn that year. With this impeccable translation already out, and *Samurai Shodown III* on the way, I'm starting to see their point... -Takuhi

Play as the Bosses!

No codes necessary, simply beat the game once (any level of difficulty, any number of continues), and the bosses become selectable, even in team edit.

New ending: Kyo heads off to *KoF '96...?*

VAMPIRE
The Night Warriors

REVIEW

LAYOUT BY NICK ROX

PlayStation

DEVELOPER: ?

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM

FORMAT: CD

1-2 PLAYERS

DIFFICULTY: *MADNESS*

AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN

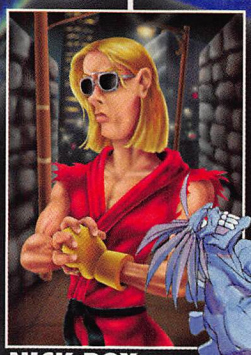
The game that would never be—*DarkStalkers/Vampire* on the PlayStation. A quick glance at the serial numbers of two games released on March 29th in Japan confirm (as if we need any confirmation) *Vampire*'s years of delay: *Tekken 2*'s serial is SLPS-00300, *Vampire*'s is SLPS-00036. Still, it was worth the wait: *Vampire* is an excellent conversion of the arcade game.

Vampire was a beautiful arcade experience with numerous gameplay flaws (like Aulbath's insane ducking Fierce!), most of which were corrected in *Vampire Hunter/Night Warriors*. The PlayStation version is a flaw-for-flaw translation of the arcade game, most of which anyone other than fighting purists won't even notice or care about.

The quality of this version is truly astounding. The developers of the game (rumored to be Psygnosis, but the name appears nowhere in the game or the packaging...go figure.) managed to replicate the arcade's five layers of parallax, deep line-scrolling and hundreds of frames of animation on a system with no hardware parallax and supposed weakness in the 2-D arena. In fact, *Vampire* has more animation frames than the Saturn version of *Night Warriors/Vampire Hunter*.

Indeed, the only graphic deletion I noticed was in Gallon's stage; the clouds don't animate. Unlike the Saturn version, which features arcade-exact colors, Capcom went one step further and replaced colors to take advantage of the PS' vast palette. Even things that weren't transparent in the arcade, like Aulbath's rainbow and Zabel's ghosts, have been made so. Some, such as myself, would say this isn't arcade exact and therefore lame—there should have been an option to choose between the two. Most people probably won't care, however.

The sound is godly, with crystal-clear samples direct from the original masters, rather than sampled from the arcade board. Also, the music has been fully arranged, but not fruitily as in Alpha. This is the original music with higher-quality samples. There is no original/arranged option, but you



NICK ROX

"Get my legs!"

Art by Bengus

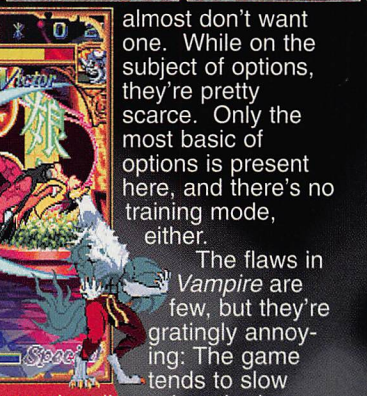
almost don't want one. While on the subject of options, they're pretty scarce. Only the most basic of options is present here, and there's no training mode, either.

The flaws in *Vampire* are few, but they're gratingly annoying: The game tends to slow down occasionally, and on the boss Phobos' stage it's practically as bad as first-generation SNES games. No kidding. Well, okay, maybe it's not THAT bad. Secondly, the game is brain-burstingly difficult. I tried putting it on eight stars at the outset, as any true Capcom fan does when he receives a new fighter by his favorite company, and quickly learned I made a BIG mistake. I consider myself to be a fairly good fighting game player, but it took me 3-1/2 hours to beat the game on the four-star setting. Madness!

Maybe the game really WAS made by Psygnosis, and Capcom doesn't want you to get to the credits and discover the truth. The final, and most disturbing flaw of *Vampire* is the intro. Yes, Capcom has joined Takara in the "worst intros of all time" hall o' shame. The cool CG from the preview versions is all but gone, replaced with choppy, zoomed-up FMV of the characters doing their supers. This lovely visual treat is accompanied by an 80's rock number with lyrics such as "Gonna be trouble/Baby I'm a trouble man/Want a fighter come on/Don't you understand/I give you double/Baby I'm a trouble man." Funnily enough, the lyrics are by 80's rock, er, icon Andrew Gold. Now you know what one-hit wonders do when their fame subsides.

This game would have been met with much ecstatic glee (by myself at least) if the Saturn *Night Warriors* wasn't already out. I can't see much point to buying this version unless you own only a PlayStation, but even then I can't say you're not missing much, because you are. Hopefully, Capcom will be slightly more rapid with their upcoming arcade translations.

- Nick Rox



Vampire: Saturn VS. PlayStation

PlayStation

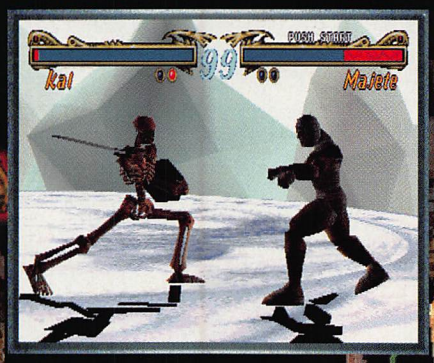
Saturn*

PlayStation

Saturn*

* "Classic" mode

KILLING ZONE



REVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NAXAT SOFT

PUBLISHER - NAXAT SOFT

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

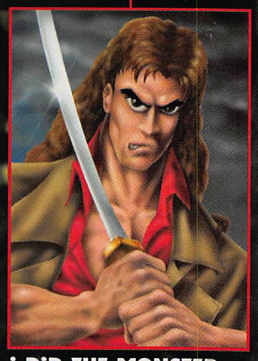
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

It's no secret around here. In fact, I'm often reminded of just how twisted I am for liking Naxat's first fighting game, Battle Monsters (an import Saturn fighter featuring digitized monsters). So you can imagine how elated I was when a 3D PlayStation sequel was announced. Would I again be the game's lone fan?

As luck would have it, Killing Zone came in the same day as Tekken 2, the lord of all 3D fighters. So even I'm having trouble remaining neutral on this one. T2 is just so amazing, it's hard to review another 3D fighter in the same month.

For the few, the proud, the insomniacs that have a love for the macabre (and a cool 3D fighter now and again), here's the word on Killing Zone.

KZ, like Toshinden, and uh, Criticom, takes place on high pedestals, where fighters can strafe and move as far apart as the area allows, all in real-time (is there any other kind) 3D. In the latter two games this equals ultra-cheap gameplay to the novice and nerve-wracking pain to the expert. I don't care how good you are at Toshinden 1 or 2, I can beat you half the time using Ellis and two buttons. KZ thankfully does not suffer this fate. If your goal is to tempt the CPU toward the edge (Criticom) only to watch



I DID THE MONSTER MASH. IT WAS A GRAVEYARD SMASH.

him, her or it run off it like a dumb goon, you won't have any luck here. When lured towards the edge, the CPU opponent will usually attempt to reverse the situation.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that KZ has better AI than the two games it's patterned after. KZ also has some very cool moves. For the most part, the button presses are like VF's (tap-tap-button, etc.) with a couple of fireball motions thrown in. Thankfully, there's no block button.

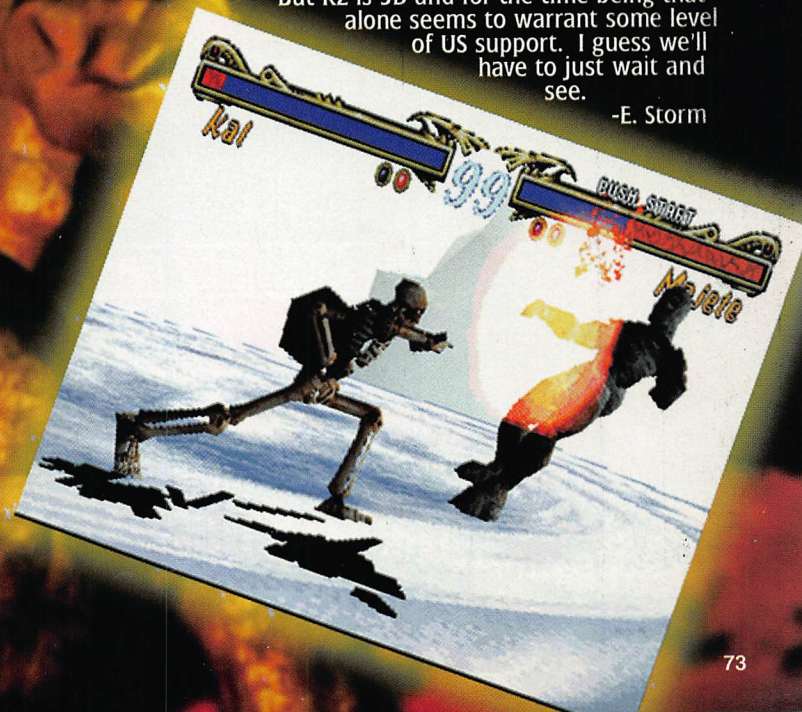
Each monster has about 16 moves, some of which connect, depending on the character. Inherently, some are far from nimble. Frankenstein, for instance, is a heapin' helpin' of a monster but three devastating sky drops from Frank will render any opponent DOA.

The characters in KZ are really the stars of this show, and although that TM polygon break-up during replays is here to annoy me once again, for the most part they're pretty cool. The Mummy and Skeleton have especially cool characteristics, with the two humans bordering on completely lame.

Graphically, KZ ranks just below Toshinden 1 (which isn't bad), has cool light sourcing, and even a descending playfield.

So, is Killing Zone good enough for an American release? Well, I thought Battle Monsters was and no one cared. But KZ is 3D and for the time being that alone seems to warrant some level of US support. I guess we'll have to just wait and see.

-E. Storm



REVIEW

LAYOUT - WAKA

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - HARD

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

K. LEE

SAME BAT TIME, SAME BAT CHANNNEL

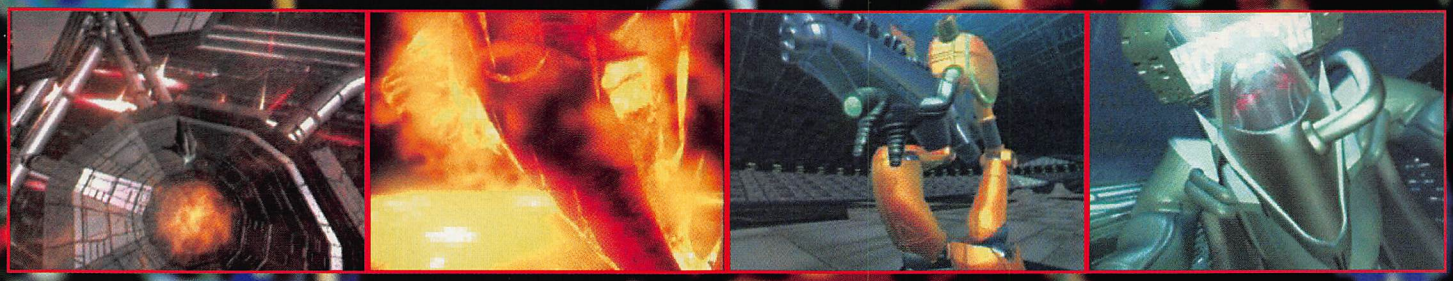
The Vic Viper has returned! There has been a recent trend of re-releasing classic arcade titles on compilation CDs (Namco's *Museum* series and Williams' *Arcade's Greatest Hits* are two examples). Konami has now released *Gradius Deluxe Pack* for the Japanese Saturn and PlayStation, the third compilation of their classic coin-op shooters (the first two being *Parodius Deluxe Pack* and *Twin Bee Deluxe Pack*).

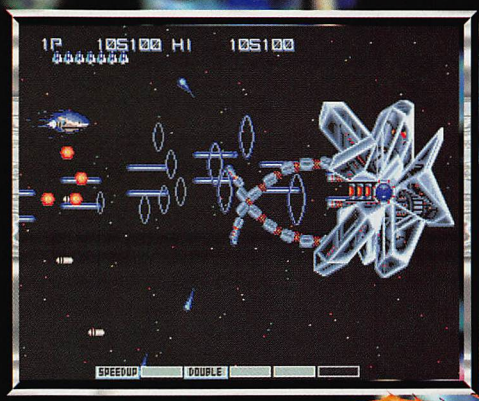
As with both of Konami's other *Deluxe Packs* (and all other classic coin-op-to-home-console compilation CDs), the two *Gradius* games are pretty much pixel for pixel, sample for sample, exactly the same as the arcade games. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if Konami used an emulation program to make these arcade games. They may have re-created the games from scratch, but I don't think so. The reason I say this is because there's a boot-up screen at the beginning of *Gradius 1* that has a 99-second timer saying "Warming Up Now." If my memory serves me correctly, this is the same boot-up screen that appeared when you first turned on the arcade machine. Oh well... only Konami knows for sure.

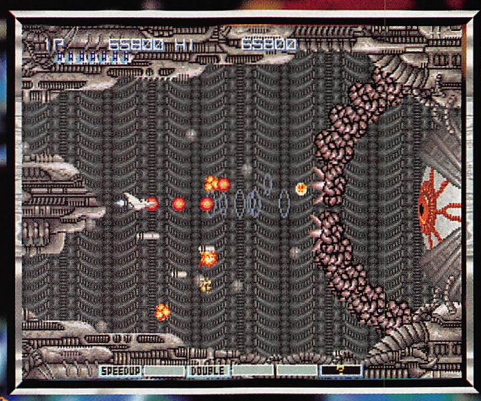
The first game is the classic horizontal shooter, *Gradius*. Fans of

GRADIUS

GRADIUS 2







Gradius III on the SNES may notice many similarities between the Super Nintendo game and coin-op game. This is because *GIII* was based mostly on the original *Gradius*, although some of the bosses and levels are similar to *Gradius II* as well. *Gradius* was the first horizontal shooter to use four layers of parallax scrolls and was *way* ahead of its time. Even though this shooter was first introduced way back in 1985, it's still a challenging and fun game to play. The shooting patterns of the bosses and enemies (while not advanced by today's standards) are still challenging enough to keep you on your toes.

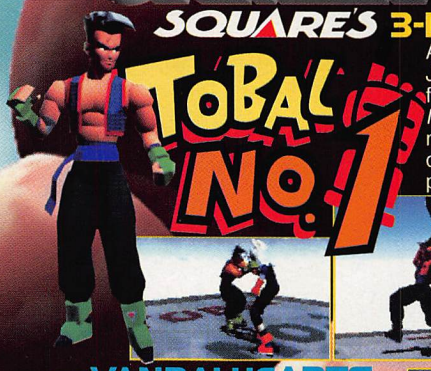
Not surprisingly, *Gradius II* is the more sophisticated game of the two. Introduced in 1988, *Gradius II* features longer levels, improved graphics, harder gameplay, many new power-ups, better music and more voice samples than the original *Gradius*. In fact, the new options and power-ups added some well-needed diversity to the *Gradius* series and actually encourages you to play the game over and over again. Choosing different options actually requires you to play the game slightly differently each time (some options are stronger against some bosses and weaker against others). *Gradius II* was the first vertical shooter to incorporate different options.

Clearly, Konami's *Gradius Deluxe Pack* is targeted towards hard-core *Gradius* fans. However, I feel that both games are distinctive enough, challenging enough and above all, fun enough to satisfy all shooter fans. After all, no game is quite like *Gradius* (except, perhaps, for some other shooters in Konami's stable). Of course, I also feel that Konami's shooters are the games that brought the company into the limelight to begin with, along with *Contra* and *Castlevania* (calm down, I didn't forget). If you can get past the '80s graphics and give the games a chance, I'm sure you'll see why I feel Konami shooters are so special.

-K. Lee

GAMEFAN: UP TO THE MINUTE

SQUARE'S 3-D FIGHTING GAME!



As you may have read in last month's Japan Now, *FFVII* is not Square's first PlayStation game... it's *Tobal No.1*! With character designs by manga god Akira Toriyama and game design by no less than FIVE people from AM2 and three from Namco, Square plans to corner the fighting market this July. Forgive these pathetic screenshots...we'll have more soon!

CAPCOM'S '96 LINEUP & MEGAMAN 8

Capcom's Official '96 Lineup:

- *Street Fighter Alpha 2* - SS&PS
- *Nazomakaimura* - SS&PS
- *MegaMan 8* (right) - SS&PS
- *Resident Evil 2* - PS
- *CyberBots* - SS
- *Megaman X4* - SS&PS
- *Breath of Fire III* - PS
- *X-Men* - PS
- *Marvel Super Heroes* - SS &PS
- *Super SF Alpha* - SNES
- *Star Gladiators* - PS

VANDALHEARTS

Konami just keeps rockin' on, on 32-bit. Their latest announcement is the 3-D polygonal strategy RPG *VandalHearts*. *VandalHearts* has gorgeous 3-D backgrounds and impressive spell effects, but unfortunately it won't be available till August.

PSYCHIC FORCE

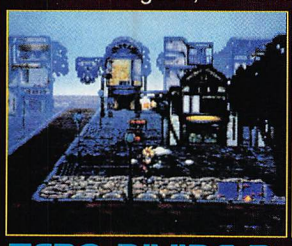
Taito's brand-new arcade fighting game *Psychic Force* is making its way to the PlayStation! This comes as no surprise, as the hardware it runs on is PlayStation-based. *Psychic Force* can arguably be called the first 360° fighter... you can go anywhere at any time. We'll be back with more ASAP!

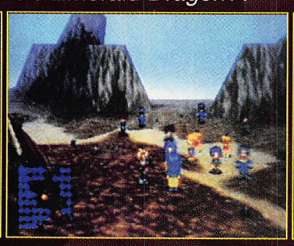
RURONI KENSHIN

The popular manga (and now anime) *Ruroni Kenshin* is coming to the PlayStation as a 3-D fighting game this summer. *Kenshin* is being programmed by Zoom but published by SCE.

THE WINGS OF ALNAM

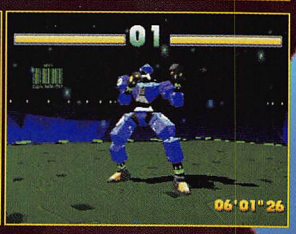
Right Stuff's 1994 PC-Engine RPG *The Fang of Alnam* gets a sequel on the PlayStation this summer. *The Wings of Alnam* features truly amazing, 100% polygonal environments and the art of Right Stuff's phenomenal Kimura-san. All well and good, but where's *Emerald Dragon*??





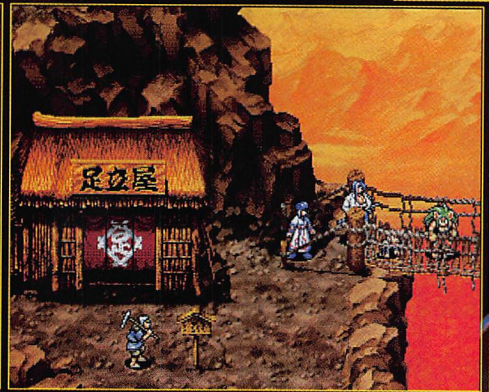
ZERO DIVIDE 2

Zoom, the makers of last year's PlayStation *VF* clone *Zero Divide*, have a sequel in the works for this summer. These advance shots look terrible when compared to the original, however. Time will tell if the game improves...



SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG

At last! More shots of SNK's *Samurai Shodown* RPG, *Samurai Spirits: Bushido Retsuden* for the Neo•Geo CD! And, joy of joys, it has a release date! *Samurai RPG* is now coming in July! We'll have more coverage of this awesome title as soon as we're able.



WIN! The Ultimate Gaming Rig!!

OVER $20,000.00 IN PRIZES!

You have the POWER. In this contest you don't rely on the luck-of-the draw. You determine if you win or not. You win by outscoring others in a game of skill. Can you solve the puzzle below? Then you have what it takes. It looks simple, but it's only the start. Each of five more puzzles gets a little harder. But this time it's all up to you. Stay in to the end with the highest score and the gear is yours. With whatever options you want. Do you have what it takes? Then play to win!

Computer Contest. Win a blazing fast computer with Pentium 166 Mhz processor, 16 meg. ram, 1.2 Gig. hard drive, CD-ROM, 17" monitor, modem and more!

Video Game Contest. Play on the hi-tech cutting edge with this line-up: Sony Playstation; Sega Saturn; Virtual Boy; 3DO; and Atari Jaguar. Get all five or trade the ones you don't want for CASH! Bonus options include: 33 inch monitor, $1,000 in games, cash, accessories and more!

Media Rig Contest. The Ultimate Gaming Environment, 40 inch monitor, 130 watt receiver w/ Dolby Pro Logic Surround Sound, and all components shown. Win DSS Satellite Receiver as a BONUS OPTION! This rig will blow you away!!

We're talkin' GAMING HEAVEN!

Directions. Fill in the Mystery Word Grid with words going across that spell out the Mystery Word down the side. Hint: use the Mystery Word Clue.

In the future. There will be four more puzzles at $2.00 each and one tie-breaker at $1.00 which will be sent to you by mail. You will have 3 weeks to solve each puzzle. We don't know how many will play but typically 55% will have the highest score possible score to Phase I, 43% to Phase II, 36% to Phase III, and 32% to Phase IV. The tie-breaker determines the winner. If players are still tied they will split the value of the grand prize they are playing for.

Mystery Word Grid

	H				
		E			
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				
S					

MYSTERY WORD

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS .....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK .....D
BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO V
STOMP .....T	STAND .....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM .....O
CRUSH I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE .....P

MYSTERY WORD CLUE:
WORLD RULERS HAVE IT AND IN THIS CONTEST YOU HAVE IT

Yes!

ENTER ME TODAY, HERE'S MY ENTRY FEE:

- ☐ ($3.00) Computer Contest
- ☐ ($3.00) Video Game Contest
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- ☐ ($5.00) SPECIAL! Enter them all (SAVE $4.00)

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GUMBARE GOEMON
SPACE PIRATE AKOGING

Short of driving a truck through their lobby, I've driven our friends at Konami mad with my constant begging and whining, "Where's my *Castlevania*, where's my *Contra*!?"

For some reason I can't consider a system as fully 'arrived' until I see *Contra*, *Castlevania*, *Ghouls & Ghosts* and *MegaMan*. These titles have been events among themselves since the day I picked up a NES pad. I know all four are coming, but it's gonna be awhile.

In the meantime, here's something to tide you over: *Gumbare Goemon*. A few of you will recognize Goemon and Ebisumaru from *Legend of the Mystical Ninja*, the first 16-bit *Goemon* which Konami released here in '93 to an over-saturated market. If you missed that game and still have your SNES then by all means, go and find it.

REVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

NO ONE DOES IT LIKE KONAMI.

Born way back in the Famicom (NES) days, long before baggy pants, the series is nearing the teens in sequels.

For the most part, *Goemon* consists of two things: fun, and more fun. Exploring vast towns and villages, you can upgrade your character with all sorts of ancient Japanese goodies, rest up in a nearby dojo or sauna, and even play a few mini-games. From there, it's off to some of the most creative 2D landscapes in all of platform gaming.

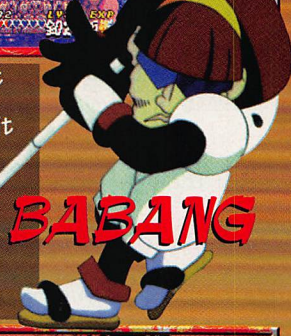
Goemon has consistently provided those fond of jumping and boss killing with ample gameitude. The first SF/SNES *Goemon* introduced us to rotating rooms along with more switches, descending floors and hair-raising timing jumps than we had ever seen. The second 16-bit *Goemon* (the series proved too foreign for the US palate so it's remained an import since) introduced *Goemon Impact*, a huge *Goemon* replica mech-fighter which has now become a mainstay in the series. *Goemon*'s always been about diverse gameplay and crazy humor. Now imagine all of this legendary gameplay (plus more, due to additional RAM) with high-powered PS visuals (well mostly at least) and two all new characters, and you've got a rare commodity. A long, challenging, traditional PS action game.

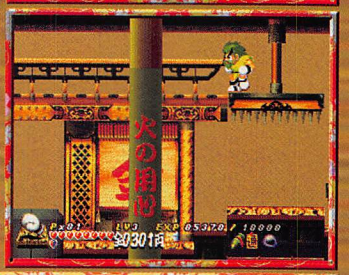
3D MAPS HAVE REPLACED THE TRADITIONAL 2D TOWNSCAPES

EBISUMARU

A TASTE OF THE TRADEMARK HUMOR THAT'S HELPED MAKE GOEMON A LEGENDARY SERIES AMONG JAPANESE GAMERS.

The visuals in this version boggle the mind at times with vast line-scrolling 3D maps unlike anything I've ever seen. In some areas however, the graphics are just good. Good is as bad as it gets, though, and to make up for those rare moments there's extra helpings of both length and gameplay. Of course, like *Hermie Hopperhead*, the other deep PS action game, I'm quite sure *Gumbare Goemon* will remain an import forever. Holding back games results in people being forced to buy Japanese hardware, money they could be spending on American games. Make any sense to you? Me neither.





(Continued from page 63)

• Run length-encoded compression and decompression—This technique saves valuable RAM space as textures are moved onto the screen buffer. All textures on the M2 are stored in compressed form until they are needed. The M2 calculates what textures need to be utilized on-screen and when. Using this "time model," the hardware extracts (decompresses) the compressed texture in real-time and loads it into the frame buffer in preparation for use in the game, milliseconds later. Since the M2 and the Nintendo 64 are the only game consoles that can perform this technique in real-time, no real-world examples are currently available.

• Destination-based rendering—This technique speeds up the process of applying textures onto polygons of various shapes and sizes. The M2's destination-based rendering is designed to increase the on-screen resolution quality of highly-reduced textures. Since the M2 and the Nintendo64 are the only game consoles that can perform this technique in real-time, no real-world examples are currently available.

• MIP-mapping—MIP-mapping is used to provide a smooth texture appearance as an object moves closer to or farther away in a scene. Through MIP-mapping, the system dynamically uses multiple levels of texture detail, based on the object's distance from the camera. The images will appear to scale more smoothly and maintain their visual clarity regardless of camera distance, yet only the original texture is needed. In practice, MIP-mapping maximizes detail when objects are viewed up close, and cuts unnecessary detail when objects are viewed from far away. Since the M2 and the Nintendo64 are the only game consoles that can perform this technique in real-time, no real-world examples are currently available.

• Destination-based blurring—The M2 uses this feature for "motion picture" style destination blurs. Objects in the background can be an "out of focus" blur while foreground objects can be "in focus" and vice versa. For example, when two polygon characters are in an environment (one in the foreground and one in the background), the M2 can shift between the two characters through "destination blurs." Whichever character speaks could be "in focus" while the other one would be blurred. Only the M2 and Nintendo64 can do these features in hardware.

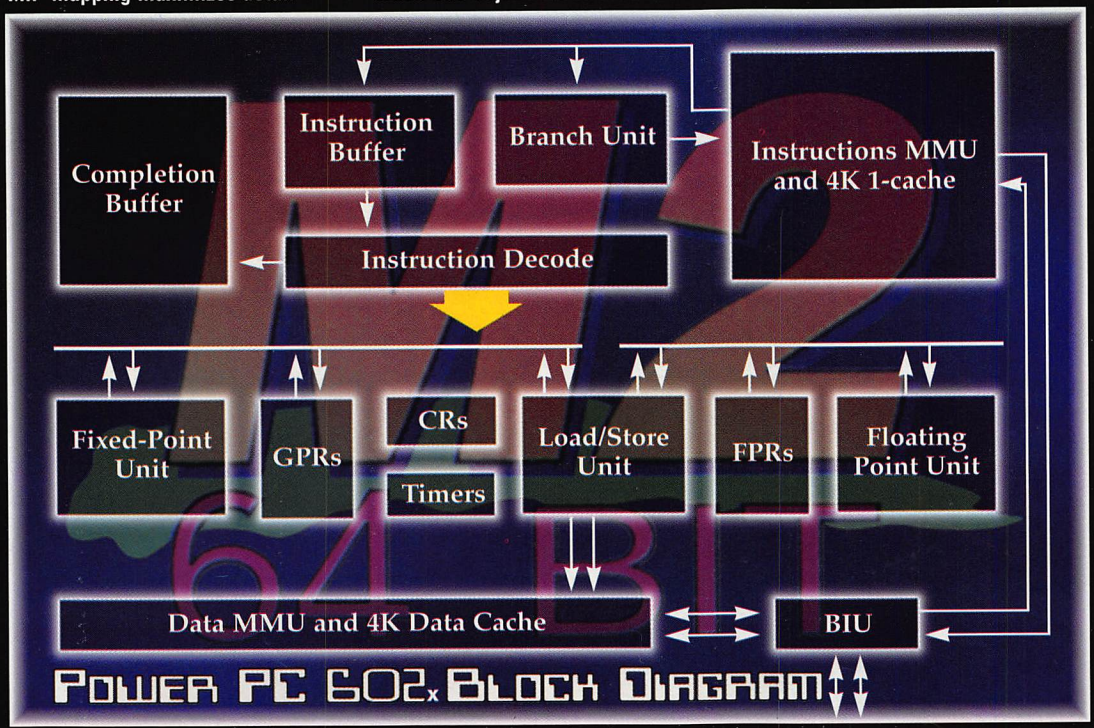
• Filtering—Filtering is the process used to make objects and textures appear smoother and more natural by averaging and softening an image's pixel edges. Filtering creates more realistic images while using simpler geometry. The M2 supports linear, bilinear, trilinear and point-sampled filtering. Since the M2 and the Nintendo64 are the only game consoles that can perform this technique in real-time, no real-world examples are currently available.

• Z-Buffer—A two-dimensional world is described by two axes: X and Y, or horizontal and vertical. A three-dimensional world adds a third axis, Z (depth), which allows objects to be placed anywhere within a three-dimensional space. When one object sits in front of a second object, the Z dimension tells the system where each object is relative to others. The Z-buffer manages complex objects intersecting dynamically and enables automatic hidden surface calculations. The system automatically knows for any given visual perspective what the user will see, and therefore which polygons to render. For example, if a car drives in front of a tree, the system automatically determines that it does not need to render that portion of the tree which is hidden behind the car. M2 Z-buffering is provided in the hardware as with coin-op arcade machines and workstations, while other systems only allow for Z-buffering to occur in software. Z-buffering provides a big performance gain when using complex graphic models. Since the M2 and the Nintendo64 are the only game consoles that can perform this technique in real-time, no real-world examples are currently available.

• Perspective correction—3-D perspective correction takes the Z dimension into account when mapping a texture to a polygon. For example, let's say you're looking at a polygon environment where a character is walking down a narrow alley with a billboard beside you on the wall. The M2 would automatically modify the texture of the wall and billboard in that scene so that everything would appear with the proper perspective. The part of the wall and billboard closest to you would appear larger and would realistically scale down the further you looked down the alley. This results in fewer artifacts and simpler geometry than for competing systems. Only the M2 and Nintendo64 can do these features in hardware.

• Transparency—Transparency enables complex images and special effects to be built with simple geometric models. The M2 architecture also provides alpha channel support, which enables software designers to control the level of transparency in a model pixel by pixel in real time. Let's say you wanted to render a polygon hand or plant. Instead of using individual polygons for each finger or leaf, one large polygon can be drawn and a texture can be mapped with transparency applied to appropriate pixels to create the desired effect. Although the PlayStation supports transparent Alpha channel effects, only the M2 and Nintendo64 can control (and make transparent) each individual pixel on screen, and that's a huge difference. Only the M2 and Nintendo64 support "per pixel" Alpha channel effects in hardware.

• Hardware-based MPEG-1 video decompression—The M2 technology is designed with built-in MPEG-1 video decompression to provide VHS-quality digital video capability. In addition to using digital video decompression for playback, M2 treats decompressed video like any other type of data. This advanced technique enables designers to apply decompressed running video to an object like any other texture. For example, the M2 can apply a 640x480 video running at 30 frames per second onto a polygon. With this feature, M2 hardware has the video effects capability of machines costing many thousands of dollars. Additionally, multiple streams of digital video can be incorporated in a title at one time. The M2 is the only console that features built-in hardware MPEG-1 decompression.

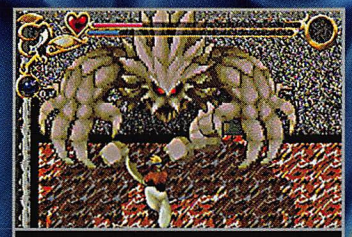


PowerPC 602x Block Diagram

Power PC 602x Specifications

- Clock Frequency: 66MHz
- 132 MFLOPS (single precision)
- SPEC int 92 rating of 40
- 3.3V
- 0.5u(micron) COMS fabrication
- TTL compatible I/O (input/output)
- 7.07 x 7.07mm die
- 4KB instruction and data caches
- 1.2W power consumption (2MW in standby mode)
- 144 pin PQFP (plastic quad flat pack) package

WIPEOUT™ BY PSYGNOSIS LIMITED



LEGEND OF OASIS™

GUARDIAN HEROS™

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VIRTUA FIGHTER™ 2

NHL® POWERPLAY™ '96
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CLOCKWORK KNIGHT™ 2

{ IN CASE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE, }

THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL, NAKED WOMAN ON THIS PAGE.

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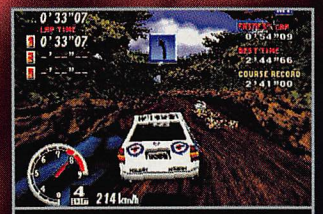
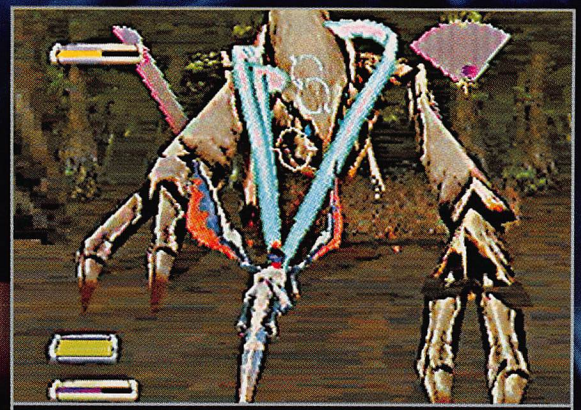


SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP™


PANZER DRAGOON™ II ZWEI

When you've got Sega Saturn™'s triple 32-bit processing power NOTHING ELSE MATTERS.

She's got blonde hair, blue eyes and the best body her money can buy. SO WHAT! There's no time for distractions when you're deep into Sega Saturn. Besides, check out those screen shots. Ba-dah-boom, ba-dah-bing, know what I mean?

You want curves? Try Sega Rally! Want a thrill? Panzer Dragoon II Zwei. Want a real knockout? Check out Virtua Fighter II. And lots of other incredibly cool games you can play on Saturn. But don't be fooled. Sega Saturn games offer more than just great looks. Like three 32-bit processors (that's two more than Playstation™, if you're scoring at home – or even if you're alone). Saturn's triple processing power means better gameplay and better graphics. So if you're looking for some real action, HEAD FOR SATURN.

SEGA SATURN™

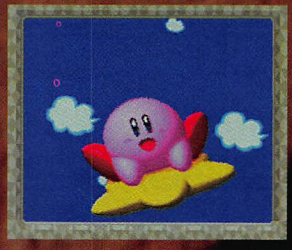
星のカービィ スーパーデラックス
SUPER DELUXE

PREVIEW

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

- DEVELOPER - NINTENDO
- PUBLISHER - NINTENDO
- FORMAT - 32 MEG CART.
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - EASY
- AVAILABLE - MAY

K.LEE
I'M GLAD THIS GAME ISN'T CUTE



Seemingly out of nowhere, a game that I've been wishing for (along with *Super Kid Icarus*) has arrived for the SNES. Due out in May, *Kirby's Super Deluxe* (that's the game's title in Japan) is not just a new version of the 8-bit *Kirby*, but a compilation cartridge that includes 8 different games.

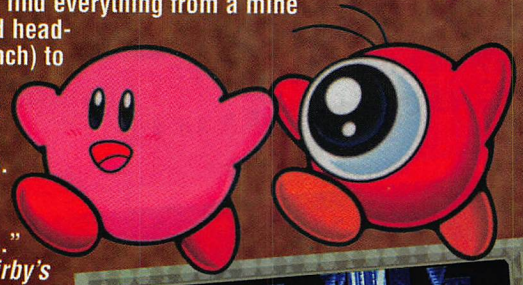
For this preview, we got our hands on a production Japanese Super Famicom version of *Kirby Super Deluxe*. Although some of the names of the games will change when it comes to the US (the names in this article are the Japanese names, translated into English), *Kirby's Super Deluxe* on the Super Famicom ought to have the same look and feel as the SNES game.

The games are broken up as follows: three main adventure games, one racing game, two mini-games, and two hidden games. All the adventures have little snippets of other *Kirby* action games (the bosses, characters and some levels are similar). Most of *Kirby*'s 32 megs is devoted to the 3 superlative adventure games.

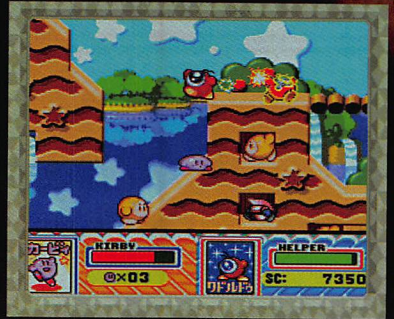
The first adventure game is called "Together with Harukaze" and it bears a strong resemblance to *Kirby's Dream Land* on the Game Boy and NES. This game has plenty of horizontal and vertical platforming elements and has 100%-rendered backgrounds.

The second adventure is entitled "White Wing Dynablade." This game is sort of a mixture of all the NES and Game Boy *Kirby* action games in one. This game also features fully rendered backgrounds and lots of platforming action.

Adventure game #3 is called "Cave Strategy" and is my favorite game of the bunch. Cave Strategy has little bits and pieces of other great games. In this game you'll find everything from a mine cart level (a la *DKC*) and a Ryu powerup (Kirby dons a red headband and can perform a fireball and a flaming dragon punch) to a sword-wielding Kirby, complete with Link's green hat. In fact, Cave Strategy has a *Zelda*-ish sound and feel to it (alas, one of *Kirby's Super Deluxe*'s producers is the legendary Shigeru Miyamoto... No wonder this game rocks!).



The racing game I mentioned before is called "Violent Clash! Gourmet Race." Violent Clash! is the first of *Kirby's Super Deluxe*'s three sub-games.



The entire game consists of Kirby running against King Dedede in three races. The "Gourmet Race" part of the title stems from the fact that each racer has to eat little Kirby snacks along the way. Whoever accumulates the most snacks wins.

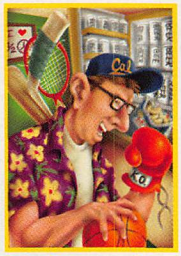
The second sub-game is a cool-looking but simplistic game called "Finish Them Instantly." This is a game based upon pure reaction time. This *Samurai Shodown*-looking-and-sounding sub-game pits Kirby against many of his in-game adversaries. The object of the game is to hit your opponent as soon as a signal sounds. The first one to hit the other (measured in hundredths of a second) wins.

The last sub-game (called "Kachiwari Megaton Punch") is reminiscent of *Sonic Blastman* and the bonus level in *Street Fighter 1*. The premise is very simple: He who can hit the block hardest, wins. Once a player beats all six games, two more hidden games appear ("Metal Knight Counter-Attack" and "Make a Wish to the Milky Way").

In the coming months, we'll have a full review of *Kirby's Super Deluxe*. In the meantime, all I can say is that it's sure to go down in history as another Nintendo classic... Trust me. -K. Lee

GAMEFAN SPORTS

Chip



Cal Cavalier

CAL'S CORNER

The tail end of this NBA season has got to be one of the most entertaining in the sport's history (that I can remember, at least). As I write this, the Chicago Bulls have matched the 69 regular season wins record of the 1971-72 Lakers and there's still 4 games left in the season... Exciting stuff.

Where the real excitement lies is in Los Angles where just 5 days after Nick Van Exel pushed a referee (and subsequently, got suspended for the remainder of the regular season and got fined a record $25,000), Earvin "Magic" Johnson bumped a ref and got fined $20,000 and a three-game suspension. Beyond the fact that Magic isn't known to have a bad temper, what makes his ejection and suspension so ironic is that after the game in which Van Exel got ejected, Magic said to reporters, "You don't push referees in the NBA, you just don't do that."

Another thing you don't do (especially if you're Mike Tyson), is go into a Chicago bar and lean on a member of the opposite sex. Mike got into a little trouble during a recent trip to Illinois for a "prayer convention." Yeah, prayers for his next opponent, maybe. C'mon, Mikey, I'm havin' too much fun watchin' you wax guys.

2 years ago when Magic and Jordan were both "officially" retired from the NBA and Tyson was behind bars, none of these events could've happened. Yet here we are being entertained, watching history in the making. What's next, is Susan Smith going to escape from prison and win the "Mother of the Year" award?

1996 is truly a special year. Beyond the 3 "events" previously mentioned, the Olympic Games in Atlanta are just around the corner, the 32-bit consoles are alive and well with the introduction of two new 64-bit machines just a few months away and (lo and behold) its an election year to boot. What do all of these things prove? That games can come in many different forms, and it's up to you to decide which are worth your attention.

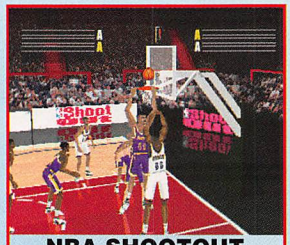
-Cal Cavalier

VIEWPOINTS

"Chip"

What can I say? *NBA Shootout* is the best basketball game I've ever played. The early collision problems have been totally repaired, leaving behind perfect control to go along with the *"Am I watching TV?"* graphics, and great AI. This game could be unbeatable!

G	C	P	M	O	
10	10	9	8	7	99



NBA SHOOTOUT
PLAYSTATION
SCEA

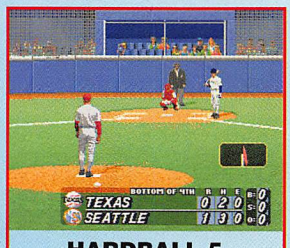
"Cal Cavalier"

This is by far the best 32-bit basketball game. *NBA Shoot Out* easily has the best 3D of any sports game, and it's also a blast to play. The computer AI (while hard) isn't frustrating, and the control is perfect. The thing is, it's so easy to fall in love with the graphics in this game, it overshadows the gameplay. Without the graphics, *NBA Shoot Out* would still be one of the best basketball games around. With them, the game is a legend.

G	C	P	M	O	
10	9	9	8	7	97

HB '95 is indeed a good game of baseball. Everything you could possibly want in terms of gameplay is here, along with accurate sights and sounds. The visuals, however well-animated, leave much to be desired. If you're looking for gameplay, look no further, but if eye candy rocks your world hold out till something better comes along.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	8	8	5	6	70

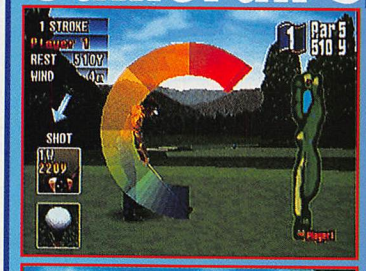


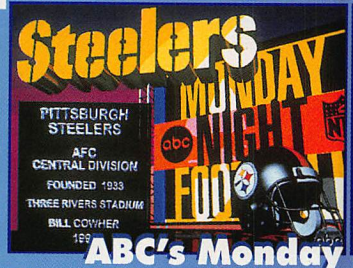
HARDBALL 5
PLAYSTATION
ACCOLADE

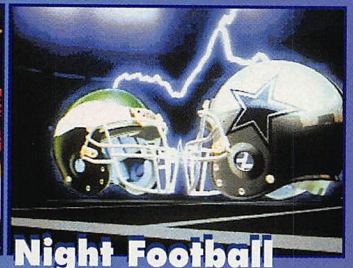
Hardball 5 is a decent baseball game for the PlayStation, with good sound effects, great control over the players an a ton of options. The only serious problem in *H5* is the digitized graphics. Everything has a grainy, pixely look that's nowhere as good as the PC version, and overall, doesn't look very 32-bit. Too bad, because there's enough cool features (home run derby, legendary moments in baseball, etc.) in *H5*, great graphics should've been included as well.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	8	7	6	7	76

GameFan Sports Previews







ABC's Monday Night Football

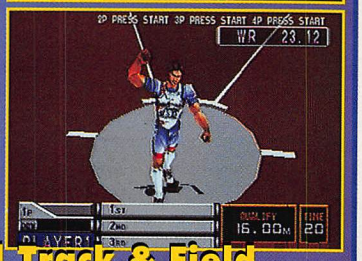
Three pre-E3 quickies for you here...

On top is *ABC's Monday Night Football* (by newbie OT Sports), featuring motion-captured, texture-mapped players (all real players, all real teams), commentary by Al Michaels and co., and even that dreadful Hank Williams, Jr. theme song!

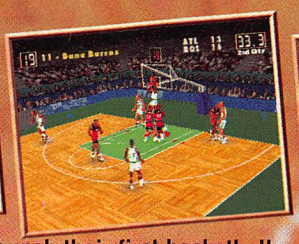
To the left is Konami's new golf game... We don't know very much about it yet, but it might be based on their awesome arcade golf title... Stay tuned, we'll keep you posted.

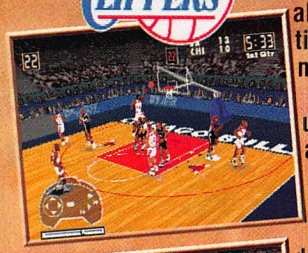
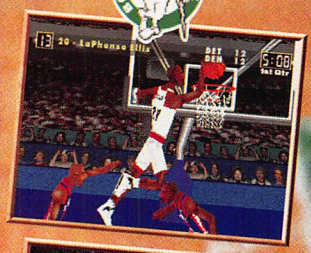
And finally, that's Konami's *International Track & Field* on the right, a 4-player polygon game that includes all the classic *Track & Field* events, plus one or two new ones (they should call it *Track, Field & Swimming Pool*, maybe?).

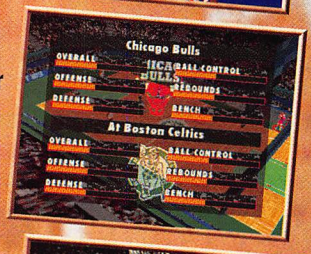
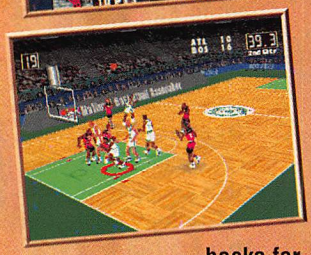
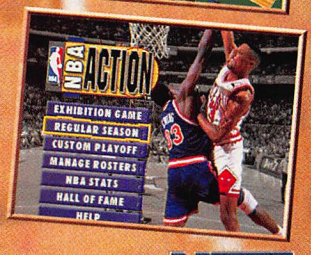
Konami's Untitled Golf



International Track & Field



Sega is getting ready to launch their first basketball game for the Saturn. Due out in July and currently only about 75 percent done, *NBA Action* is Sega's big sports title for the summer and will be expected to pull in big numbers in the sales department.

As you can tell from these screen shots, the game uses 3D texture mapped polygons for the basketball arena and all the players. This enables the game to have multiple camera angles (our version had four: sideline, overhead, three quarter, and backcourt). There's a frame-by-frame replay feature and slam dunks can also be replayed. *NBA Action* also features play-by-play commentary by Marv Albert.

Sega is counting on *NBA Action* to provide the player with the most realistic gameplay experience possible. This is one of the few basketball games on the market where home arena advantage and road team disadvantage are figured into every game. In-depth playbooks for both offensive and defensive play calling are incorporated as well as in-game stat tracking. *NBA Action* also features team and player profiles, player photos, 6-player multi-tap compatibility, an option to create your own players, injury report and more. During the game, players can perform no-look passes, behind the back passes, touch passes and a variety of slam dunks ranging from alley-oops to the "tomahawk slam."

As soon as we receive a done copy, we will give you a full review of *NBA Action*. One thing is for sure, this game has a lot of excellent competition standing up against it. We'll just have to wait and see if it stands up to the test. -Cal

GAMEFAN SPORTS

PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SEGA

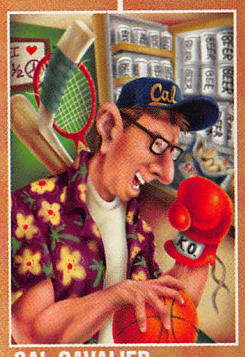
PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

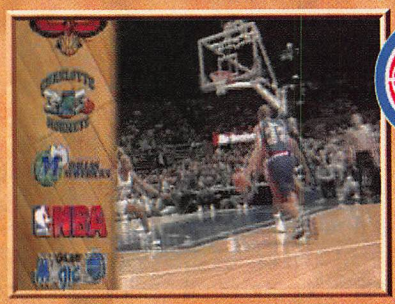
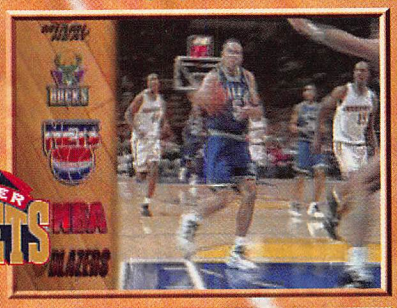
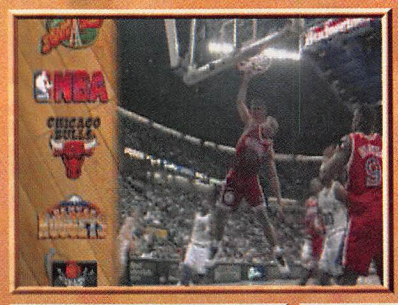
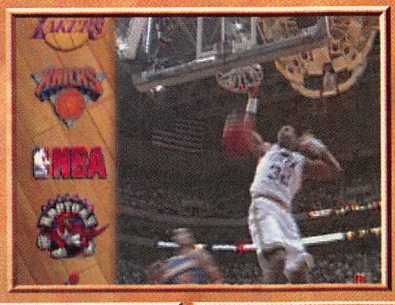
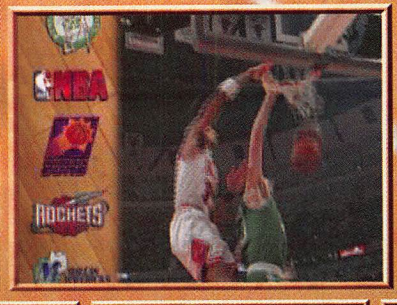
OF PLAYERS - 1-8 (TAP)

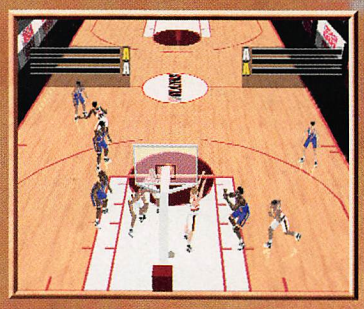
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - JULY

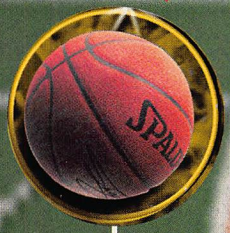


CAL CAVALIER
WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE ABOUT THIS ONE!



GAMEFAN SPORTS



REVIEW

NBA Shoot Out

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SCEE

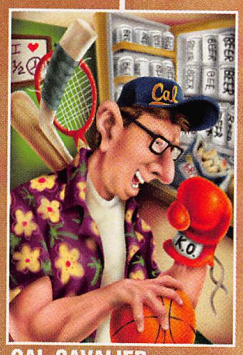
PUBLISHER - SCEA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1 / TAP

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW



CAL CAVALIER
DON'T PUSH THE REF!

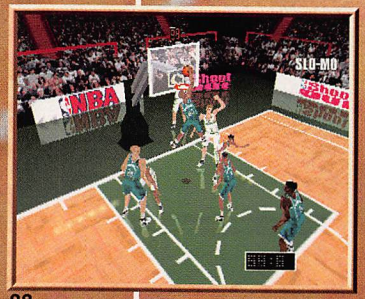
Wow! What an improvement!

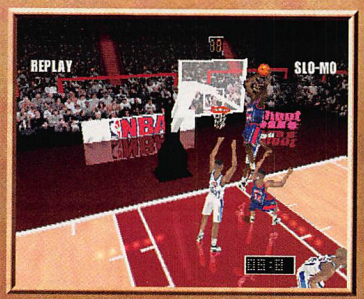
When I played the early version of *NBA Shoot Out*, I was awe-struck at the unbelievable graphics of Sony's polygon basket-fest. However, the gameplay left much to be desired. The main problem was that the collision detect on each player was *way* off base. It was as if each player had an invisible barrier that circulated about 2-1/2 feet around them. With nine other players on screen (all about four or five feet wide) it was pretty much impossible to drive to the hoop. Even worse, the AI was programmed to cut you off like a linebacker if you chose an outside approach to the paint. Overall, the game felt more like a wrestling game than a basketball game, with most of the time being spent fighting the joypad just to get an open shot. Doesn't sound like fun, does it? Last month I thought sure the sloppy gameplay was a by-product of the huge amount of polygons on screen.

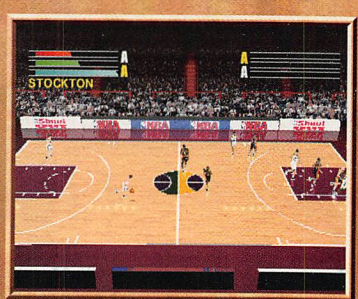
I have to admit it... I was totally wrong. *NBA Shoot Out* IS the pinnacle of PlayStation basketball enjoyment. Now, I know what you're thinking: "Hey, you said *NBA Live* was better than *Shoot Out*!" Well, as it turns out, *Shoot Out* is the better game... Sorry, guys. The gameplay has had much fine-tuning in the final version. The collision detect now feels like it's flush with the jerseys instead of floating out in space somewhere—subtle, but significant. Although scoring in the paint still ain't easy, a combination of luck and skill will get you points on the scoreboard from your inside game, like the real-life NBA. I also liked the fact that shooting from the free-throw line requires actual skill and concentration.

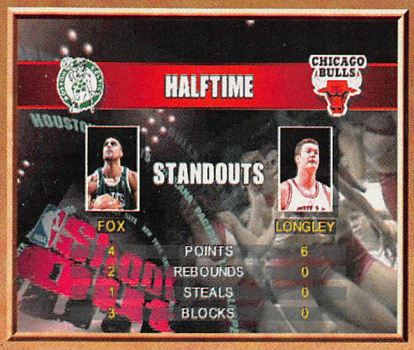
The only gameplay flaw I could find was with the rebounds. In *Shoot Out*, it's useless to jump for a rebound. Even if you play as Dennis Rodman under the hoop, you'll miss the rebound 9 out of 10 times... huh? Most of the time, gaining possession of a missed shot is regulated to scrambling around for the ball after it bounces 2 or 3 times on the court. Now, I might be slightly anal, but I would've preferred boxing out another player and yanking down a rebound like a man, rather than chasing after the ball like a crazy person... that's not right!

Graphically, *NBA Shoot Out* is the best looking basketball

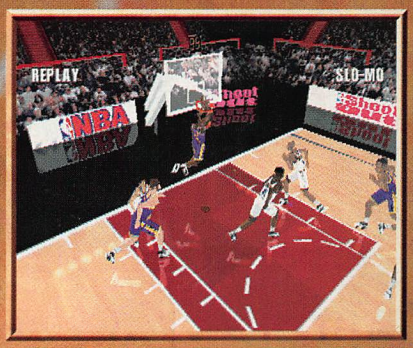


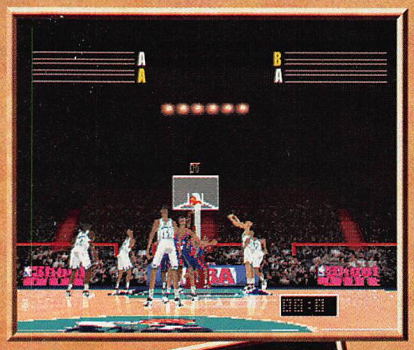


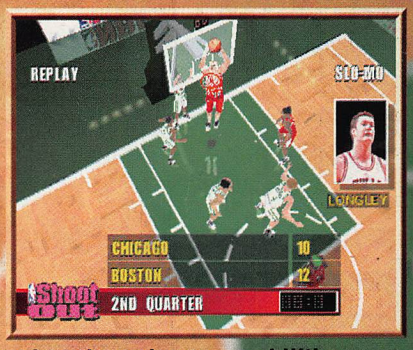




PARQUET FLOORS AT BOSTON GARDENS!

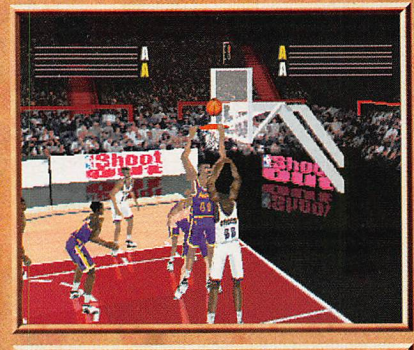


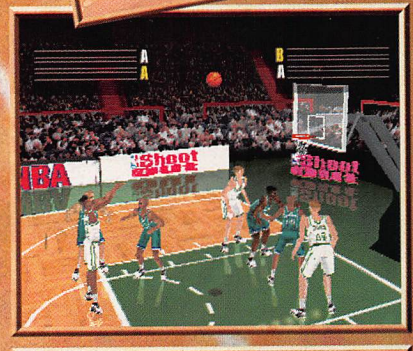


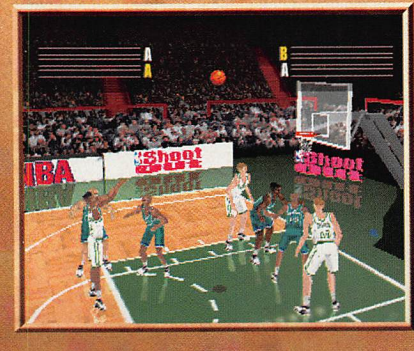


game on the face of the planet. In fact, *Shoot Out* is the most graphically detailed 3D sports game there is. The game is simply smooth as silk. Even though *Shoot Out* pushes the polygon capabilities of the machine out near the edge, there's hardly any 3D warping, drop out or other polygon foibles the PlayStation is so famous for (or infamous, depending on your point of view). No matter how many polygons are on screen (up to 225,000) the game never slows down at all... Wow!

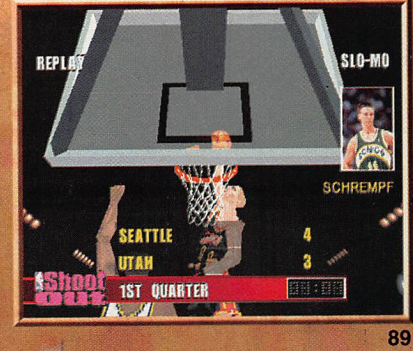
But besides the collision detects, the realism, the polygons and all that stuff, *NBA Shoot Out* is, above all, very fun to play. The control and playability is forgiving enough for you to be creative every time you run down the court... You never know what's gonna happen next! Not only does this lack of monotony add to the enjoyment of the game, but it also gives the player who's way behind a feeling of "It ain't over till it's over" (just like the NBA). As it stands, Sony has just set the benchmark for basketball games. With *Game Day*, *Face Off* and now *Shoot Out*, Sony is now 3 for 3. Is there no stopping them...?







MANUALLY SET CAMERA ANGLES!



GAMEFAN SPORTS

PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

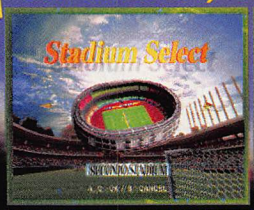
FORMAT - CD

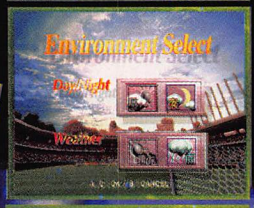
OF PLAYERS - 1/TAP

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

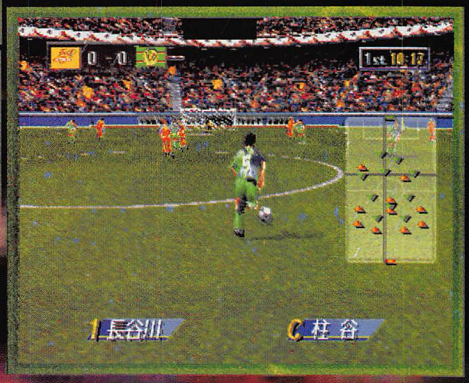
AVAIL. NOW JPN/SUMMER US

OPTIONS, OPTIONS, OPTIONS...





OF COURSE, YOURS WON'T BE IN JAPANESE. BUT IF YOU COULD READ THIS YOU'D BE MIGHTY IMPRESSED. CHANGE THE STADIUM, WEATHER, CHOOSE 7 MODES OF PLAY, AND TOGGLE THE BGM, CAMERAS AND MORE, DURING GAMEPLAY!

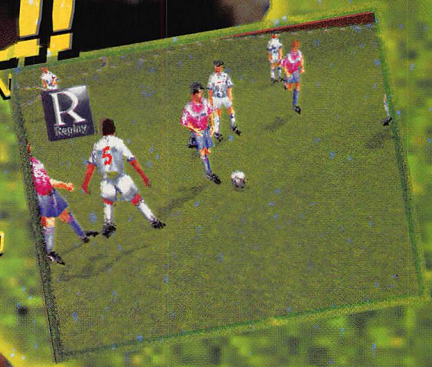


VICTORY GOAL '96

I am quickly learning a valuable lesson about 32-bit sports titles: They just keep getting better and better. With each passing batch, month to month, I find one better than what I thought was king the month before. Case in point: Sega's *Victory Goal '96*. Last month I reviewed Interplay's *VR Soccer* and was (and still am) thoroughly impressed. But now *VG '96* has taken over my number one soccer spot as this game is, simply put, real life. *VR* looks like a video game, with its impressive texture-mapped, motion-capped players who move at a faster-than-humanly-possible rate. In VG '96,

GOAL!!

CELEBRATE IN STYLE! WATCH THE DIAMOND VISION AND INSTANT REPLAY!



SEGA SPORTS

however, you're actually controlling people, or so it would seem, at a brisk 60fps. They move and react so life-like that it's as if a small race of soccer players populated the inner sanctum of your monitor. Very neato.

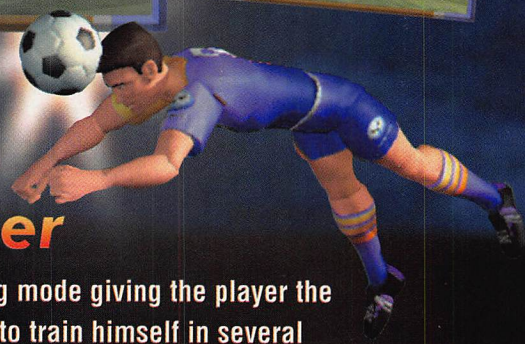
Options are a vast commodity in *VG '96* and include six camera angles, 3 soundtracks or live commentary that can be toggled during a match, 7 modes of play including a Superstar mode where you choose from a pool of soccer's finest, 3 different AI settings; the list goes on and on. Speaking of the soundtrack, B-Univ, whose tunes have graced the *Virtua Fighter* series, *Sega Rally*, *Daytona*, *Virtual Cop* and just about any other Sega coin-op you can think of, are again at the helm and have spun the best arranged sports soundtrack I've heard thus far. This game just excels in every category. For preview purposes I used the released import version of *VG '96*, but I'm quite sure the US version is close behind. I'll review *VG '96* as soon as it arrives. -Chip

GAMEFAN SPORTS

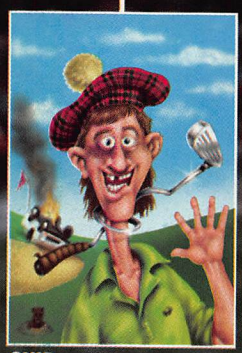
PREVIEW

PlayStation

adidas Power Soccer



DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS
FORMAT - CD
 # OF PLAYERS - 1/TAP
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - JUNE



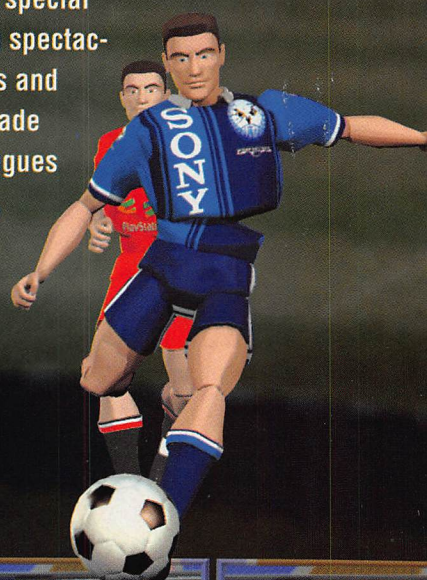
CHIP
GOOOOOOAL!....

Psygnosis' ultra-top-secret sports game for the PlayStation has finally been unveiled. *Adidas Power Soccer* is said to be one of the most advanced 3D sports games of all time, even rivaling Sony's superlative *NBA Shoot Out*. Set for release in June, *Adidas Power Soccer* is Psygnosis' bid to "push the envelope" in the sports-gaming genre.

Featuring a real-time 3D environment with multiple camera angles and realistic motion capture technology for the player, *APS* is one of the most convincing soccer game of all time. Developed by Psygnosis' French division, *APS* features four game modes that include: Friendly Match, Tournament, Season and Arcade. There is also a ingenious in-game FMV training mode giving the player the ability to train himself in several fields of the game.

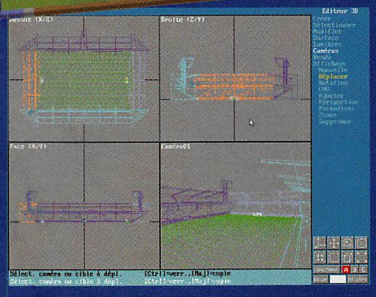
In season play, each player has their own characteristics and individual AI (artificial intelligence). These attributes are based on physical (weight, height, speed, endurance, tackle resistance), technical (strength, precision, tackle level, dribble level) and mental (discipline, willpower,) qualities. These parameters will change between matches, and during matches with players getting tired and injured as the season progresses.

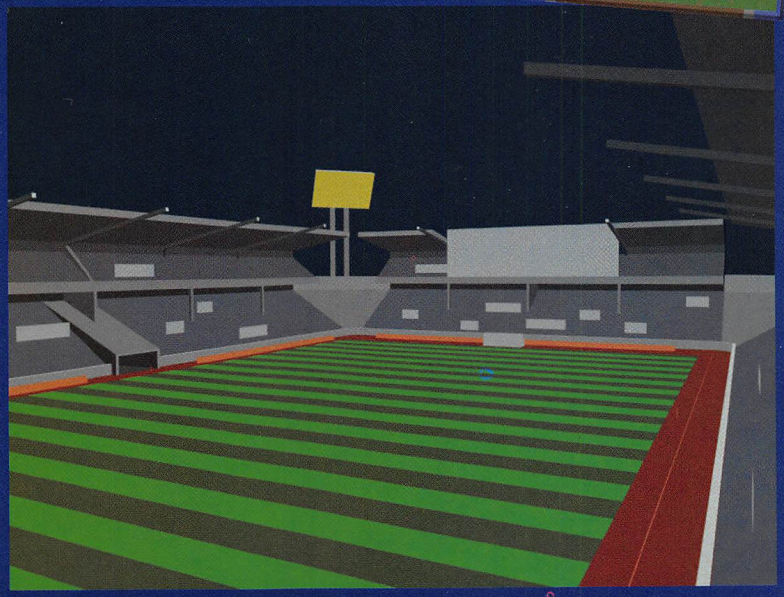
Players have special moves allowing spectacular fouls, skills and shots in the arcade option. The leagues feature English,

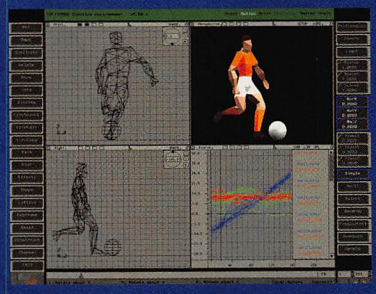


French and German teams, plus there's also the exclusive 'Adidas Dream Team' available as well. *APS* also has real-time commentary in your choice of either English, French or German.

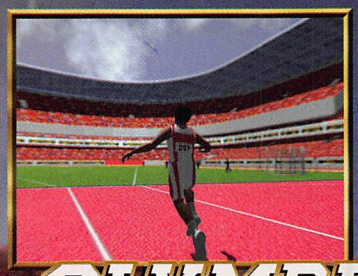
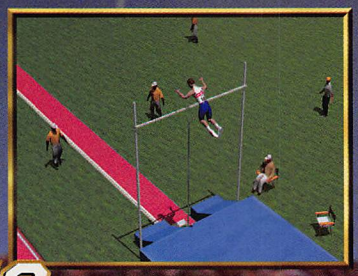
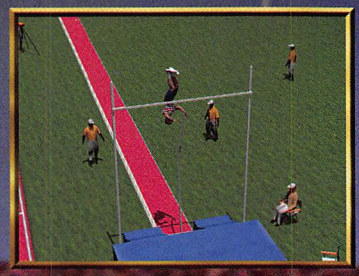
From what we hear, *Adidas Power Soccer* has one of the most advanced 3D engines on the PlayStation with over 100,000 texture mapped polygons per second. This game (along with *Wipeout XL*, *Destruction Derby 2* and *F1*) promises to be a big hit for Psygnosis. Next month, we will have an in-depth review of *Adidas Power Soccer*. This could very well turn out be one of the best soccer games of all time. We'll just have to wait and see. -Chip





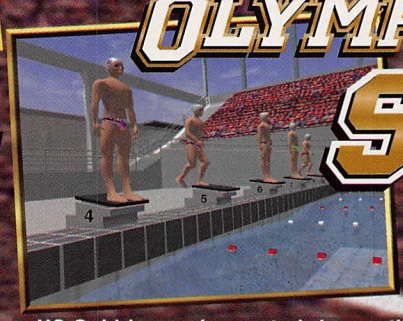


3D STADIUM CONSTRUCTION SCREENS

GAMEFAN SPORTS PREVIEW

OLYMPIC SUMMER GAMES



PlayStation

DEVELOPER - US GOLD

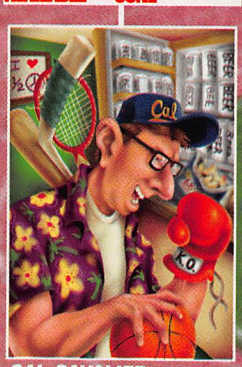
PUBLISHER - US GOLD

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1 -8

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - JUNE



CAL CAVALIER

I WON A GOLD MEDAL... FOR CHUGGIN' BREWS

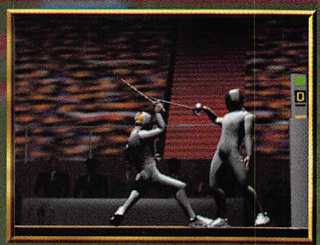
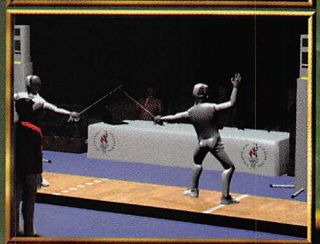
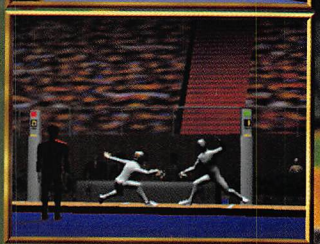
US Gold is gearing up to bring us the first of what's sure to be many '96 Olympic video games. Due out in June for the Saturn, PlayStation and PC (coinciding with the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta) US Gold's *Olympic Summer Games* could become the most comprehensive Olympic video game ever.

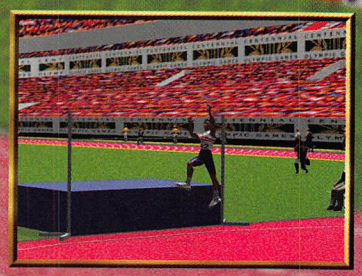
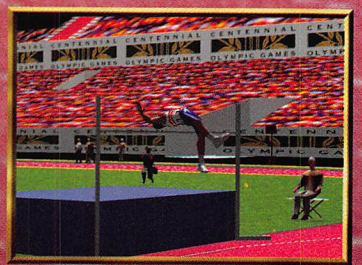
Players will be able to compete in 15 events including the 100-meter dash, 400-meter race, pole vault, high jump, triple jump, long jump, discus, javelin, hammer, fencing, 100-meter swimming, archery, skeet shooting, rapid-fire pistol, weightlifting, etc.... Whew!

Olympic Summer Games is also said to feature TV broadcast-style graphics, complete with multiple camera angles and live sports commentators. All the in-game athletes are fully rendered on SGI workstations and feature motion-captured movement for increased realism.

There are 3 modes of gameplay: Full Olympic Tournament, Arcade and Challenge. The Arcade mode allows the player to select any event, the Challenge mode places two players head-to-head and the Full Olympic Tournament challenges players to all 15 events. *Olympic Summer Games* also has user-selectable control (standard button press or *Track and Field*-style rhythm control). The game has a save feature which allows you to continue at any time and up to 8 people can compete against each other with a multi-player adapter.

We haven't had a chance to play *Olympic Summer Games* yet, but judging by these screen shots, the game could be a major contender. Next month, we should get a hands-on test of US Gold's new baby. -Cal Cavalier

OLYMPIC SOCCER

GAMEFAN SPORTS

PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - US GOLD

PUBLISHER - US GOLD

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-4

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - JUNE

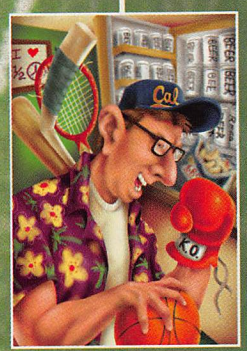
Hot on the heels of *Olympic Summer Games* is US Gold's other sports release, *Olympic Soccer*. With *Olympic Soccer* due out in June for the Saturn, PlayStation and PC (as is *Olympic Summer Games*), US Gold is hoping to knock the soccer world on its ear.

US Gold sent us some screen shots and details of *Olympic Soccer* and the game sounds interesting indeed. First of all, US Gold claims that *OS* is the first TRUE 3D soccer game ever. One would take this to mean that everything in the game (stadium, players, ball, etc.) is polygonal.

As the name implies, the game takes place in an Olympic setting rather than a professional setting. In all, 32 international teams battle against each other for the Olympic Gold Medal. *OS* also features 3 different modes of gameplay. In the Exhibition mode, players can hone their skills and practice competitively before going for the Gold. Arcade mode is a single game competition. Full Olympic Tournament is the real deal; here, players get to fight it out against the best teams in the world for the glory of the Olympic Gold Medal!

Up to 4 players can compete simultaneously and there are even changeable game conditions. For example, players can choose between 6 different stadiums, 5 different field types and 5 different weather conditions.

Next month, we will have the full lowdown of *Olympic Soccer* (along with *Olympic Summer Games* as well) in our full-blown review. US Gold feels that they have the hottest 32-bit soccer game on the block. We can't wait to put *Olympic Soccer* to the test. -Cal Cavalier



CAL CAVALIER

I'D HATE TO BE IN ATLANTA

GAMEFAN SPORTS

PREVIEW

3DO

DEVELOPER - EA

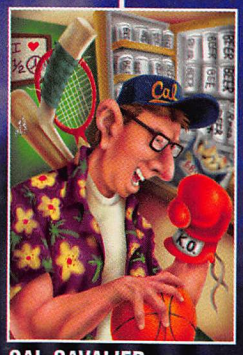
PUBLISHER - EA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - JUNE



CAL CAVALIER
HARD HITTING BASEBALL ACTION ON THE WAY

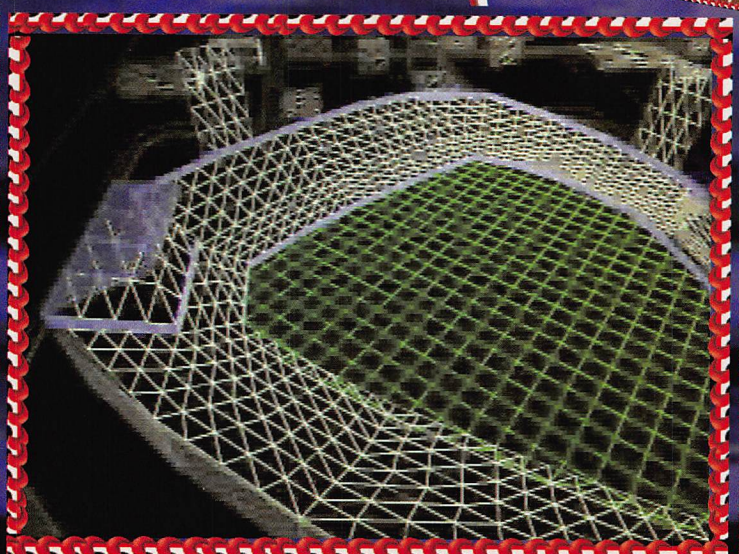
The mighty EA Sports is getting ready to unleash *Triple Play '97* for the PlayStation. Due out in June, *Triple Play '97* is the latest game to use EA Sports' much-touted "Virtual Stadium Technology."

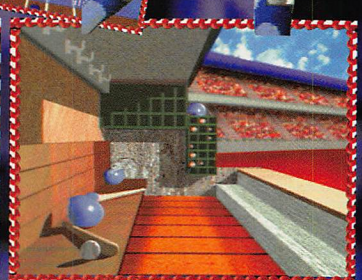
Seen first in *FIFA '96* and *NBA Live '96*, Virtual Stadium Technology uses a combination of real-time textured polygon play arenas (in this case, the baseball field and grandstands) and 100% SGI-rendered sprites (the players themselves).

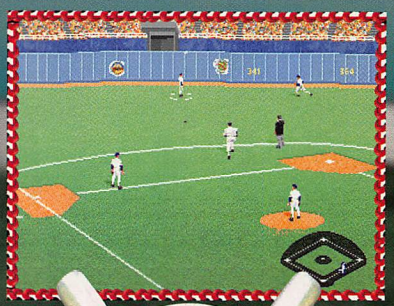
EA Sports sent us a Japanese 3DO version of *Triple Play '97* as a sort of preview of the PlayStation game. One of the most impressive features of this game is its virtually unlimited camera angles. Through a view edit mode, players will be able to place the camera wherever they want, and possibly even save it on memory card... cool!

TP '97 is also said to feature team edit, box scores, trades, pitching changes, DH's, Home Run Derby, practice modes and even more. As I said before, the screen shots you see here are from the 3DO version. Keep in mind the PlayStation version should have crisper graphics with even better 3D. Next month we'll bring you a sneak peek at actual PlayStation graphics... Stay tuned.

-Cal Cavalier







HARDBALL 5

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - ACCOLADE

PUBLISHER - ACCOLADE

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE MAY

Accolade's hit PC baseball game is about to make the home console transition. *Hardball 5* combines all the detailed baseball simulation, digitized graphics, accurate sounds, play-by-play announcing and real stadiums PC gamers have come to love and translates it into one neat PlayStation CD.

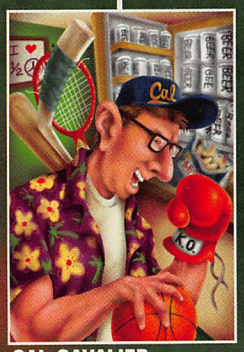
Before I get into the huge amount of positive features in *Hardball 5*, let me address the one thing in this game I didn't like: the graphics. After seeing how much attention to detail and realism Accolade lavished in *H5*, I can understand their reasoning in utilizing digitized graphics for all the players. After all, drawn graphics (while pleasing to the eye) can only provide a realistic look up to a certain point, and real-time polygons can give a game realistic movements, but how many baseball players have pyramids for noses? Since the PlayStation can't render millions of polygons in real-time, digitization was a logical choice for the realistic look and feel Accolade was seeking. The only problem is, the digitization in *Hardball 5* has a rough and grainy look to it. To make matters worse, the animation is jerky as well. However, beyond the visuals, I feel that *Hardball 5* is the best baseball game Accolade has ever done and the best baseball game to date for the PlayStation.

You want accuracy? Well how about this: Although there are no real teams in *H5* (for example, you can play as San Francisco or New York instead of the Giants and the Mets...no big deal) each team has the complete 40 man roster, you can draft rookie players, there's active and disabled lists, players have "streaks" and "slumps" and there's even a minor league. In all, *H5* features 40 real stadiums and over 1100 MLBPA players. Impressive numbers to say the least.

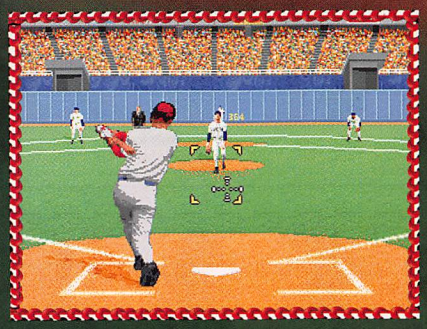
You can also select the "Legends" league where you can play as one of 12 all-time great teams from history and 12 old-time stadiums. Or, maybe constructing your own all-star team is more to your liking—the choice is yours.

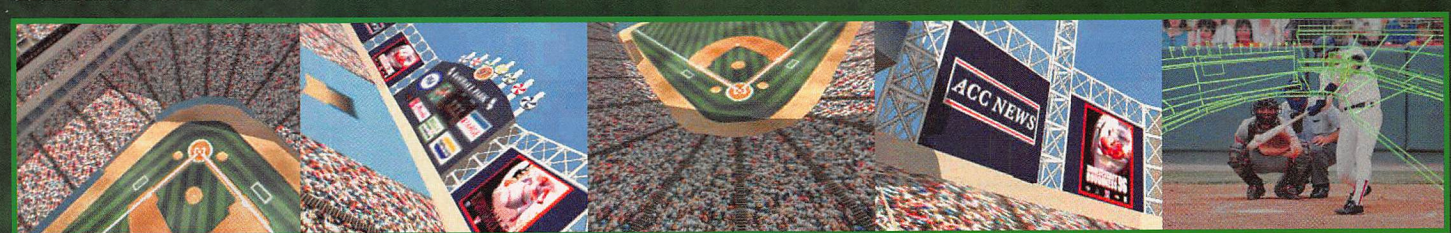
The realism extends to the actual gameplay. Besides the usual choices of contact hitting and bunting, a batter can actually select hitting strategies like a squeeze play or a hit-and-run play for every pitch. Although *Hardball 5* scores high for accurately recreating the sport, it also has an easy and playable feel. Whether you are a novice looking for arcade-style gameplay, a sim freak who desires every stat under the sun or somewhere in-between, a simple trip to the option menu will tailor *H5* to your liking.

When it all comes down to it, I would have to say that Accolade has created the best PlayStation baseball game I've seen so far. Although the graphics left a bad taste in my mouth, the intelligently laid-out option menu, easy-to-pick-up gameplay, extensive in-game choices and tons of customizable teams and game statistics put *H5* in a class by itself on the PS. Now if someone could come up with a PlayStation baseball game as good as Sega's *World Series Baseball*, we would *really* be getting somewhere. -Cal Cavalier



CAL CAVALIER





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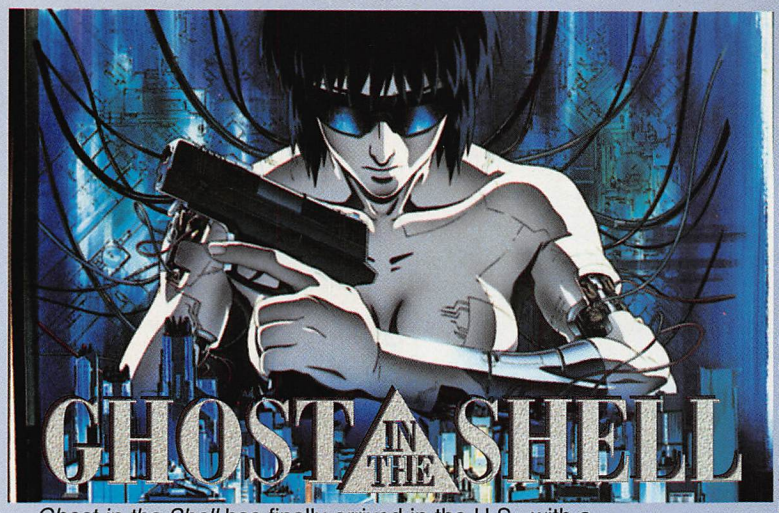


Ghost in the Shell has finally arrived in the U.S., with a current theatrical tour and a home video release expected as soon as this June. And after many months of hype and anticipation, I'm glad to report that it's well worth the wait.

Though every new sci-fi animated release gets painted by its distributors as "the next *Akira*," *Ghost in the Shell* is the first I've seen that actually seems worthy of that monicker. Not that the two have much in common; both the directorial style and scope of the story are radically different. But what they do share is high-budget animation, a creepily plausible view of the future, and brilliantly-directed, immensely satisfying action scenes. *Ghost in the Shell* is one of only a handful of animated films that truly deserves to be in theatres.

The storyline is too complex for me to fully explain here (this is reviewers' code for "the storyline is too complex for me to fully understand"), but fans of the *Patlabor* movies (by *Ghost* director Mamoru Oshii and screenwriter Kazunori Ito) will feel right at home with it. As was the case with *Patlabor*, the plot revolves heavily around the conflict between competing government agencies, but also attempts a new level of depth with the much-visited question "What makes us human?"

Though I was kind of bored by the few relatively dull "soul-searching" scenes, *Ghost*'s dazzling vision of the future never let my attention wander far. The technology was astounding, and the action scenes were just plain awesome. No detail was ignored (how can you not be impressed when spent clips that splash into puddles actually produce steam?), and the seemless integration of anime, computer graphics, and sound effects made for true edge-of-your-seat enjoyment. And while we're on the topic, *Ghost* is by far the best attempt at integrating CG and animation seen yet... Even more impressive than *Ghost*'s straight computer-generated scenes are the scenes in which subtly but effectively used graphics overlay traditional animation to give life to such Masamune Shirow conventions as Motoko's cloaking device.

Fans of the Masamune Shirow manga on which *Ghost* is based (still available from Dark Horse Comics) will be surprised by how little the movie and comic have to do with each other. The entire plot of the film seems to be based just on issue 6 of the comic series, with a few scenes borrowed from other issues. The direction dwells much more on the futuristic cityscapes and high technology, making the movie's vision of the future seem much more foreign and impressive. Most striking of all is the change in Motoko's character; the comic's wise-cracking, hard drinking, disobedient heroine is miles away from the film's cold, unblinking, far less human main character. I didn't read the comics until after seeing the film, and anyone who's seen the movie can imagine my shock when I saw the manga Motoko speaking with little hearts at the end of her text bubbles.

In just about every way, I prefer the more focused, more technologically-oriented film to the comic (Orion, my ungrateful "guest" to the screening, violently disagrees). My only problem with the movie adaptation would have to be the ending which comes abruptly and unsatisfyingly, nary 80 minutes after it began—one of those "Wait, that's *it*?" endings. But, short though it may be, *Ghost* is so densely packed with fast action, awesome technology, vivid settings and subtle details that you'll feel you've gotten far more than your money worth.

Too late to see Ghost in the theatres? Probably, but if you live in or near one of the following cities, your local, participating theatre should be showing Ghost sometime in the month of May. Good luck! Portland, ME (The Movies) / Cleveland Ohio (Cedar Lee Theatre) / Houston, TX (TBA) / Dallas, TX (TBA) / Philadelphia, PA (TBA)

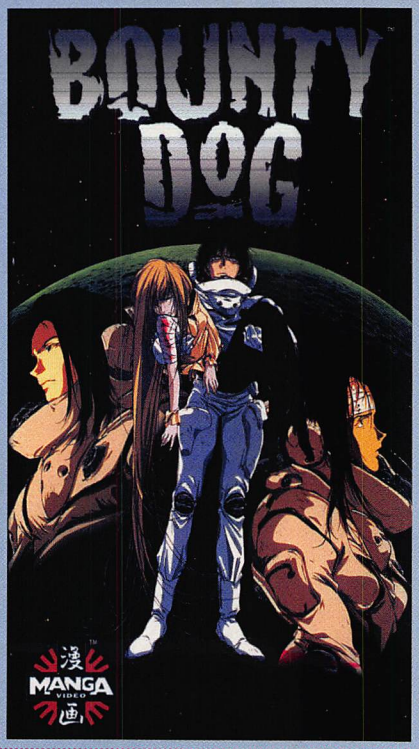
A lot of people say that anime has become too cliche and predictable, and is totally stuck in a rut. And among the major releases, to some extent, that's true. But if you explore the fringe titles, there are all sorts of great stories waiting to be discovered. And *Bounty Dog* is a perfect example.

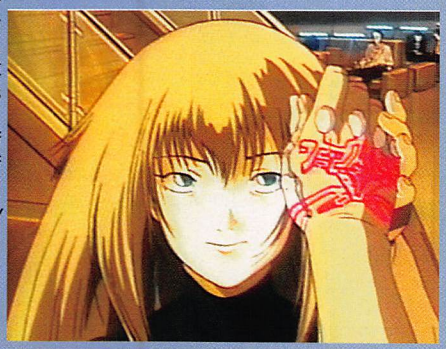
The storyline is original, unpredictable, and unfolds at just the right pace... Our hero is Yoshiyuki, a man who lost his wife many years ago in an accident that also cost him his arm. His wife's last words to him were "I'll see you on the moon," and when he came to, his arm had been replaced with a mysterious prosthetic limb.

Now, his job at "Bounty Dog" (a sort of mercenary intelligence agency) has led him to the Earth's vast new colony on the moon, where, posing as tourists, his team hopes to find out whether or not a large corporation is illegally developing a new kind of weapon. Unfortunately for Bounty Dog team leader Shoko, though, distraction awaits Yoshiyuki at every turn. What appears to be a number of identical young women, all who have an uncanny resemblance to his wife, constantly appear in Yoshiyuki's way, and alternate between trying to kill him and protecting him.

Though I love the art style, *Bounty Dog* has one glaring visual flaw—the dreadful urine-yellow color that permeates just about every frame of the movie. I guess this was done for impact (and to save a few bucks), but the end result is awful. It's as though the actual film stock somehow contracted jaundice or something. Otherwise, I have no complaints, save to protest the lame voice actor that plays the part of Kei (but the remainder of the cast, especially Shoko's well-fit actress, makes up for it).

Bounty Dog has an involving storyline, with a lot of new themes and fresh ideas, and doesn't fall into any of the traditional anime cliches I find myself getting so tired of. And icky yellow color or not, that alone gets *Bounty Dog* a high recommendation from me.

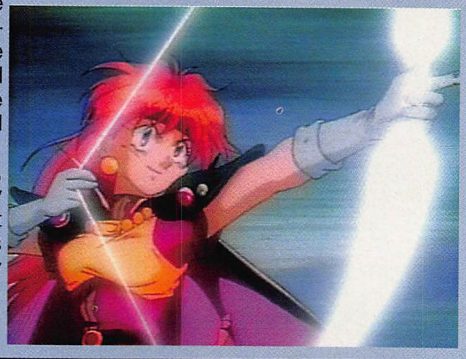




スレイヤーズ
THE SLAYERS

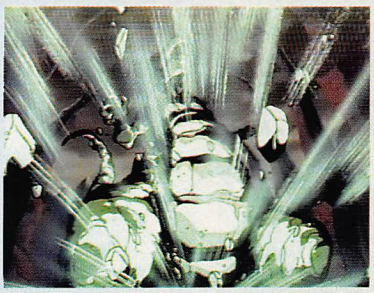
It's good to see *Slayers* in Software Sculptors' responsible hands. Anyone else, and I'd be worried... I mean, I have no problem with dubbing as such; some are good, some are bad. But there are some things that should never be dubbed, and *Slayers* is one such thing. I don't know quite how to explain it, but whether you know Japanese or not, you have to admit that the thing that makes *Slayers* great is Megumi Hayashibara's voice acting skills. The only way to describe it is to say how much I yearn to take Megumi's character, Lina Inverse, and just squeeeeze her until she bursts into a puddle of shiny, pleasant-smelling goo.

After that last paragraph, you probably think I'm totally deranged (which may or may not be true), but if you watch *Slayers*, you'll understand. How can you not fall in love with cute little Lina, the super-powered sorceress who seeks "justice" by stealing the treasures of society's criminals, and keeping it herself? She cheats, she manipulates, and she steals, but its all okay 'cause she's just so darn cute.

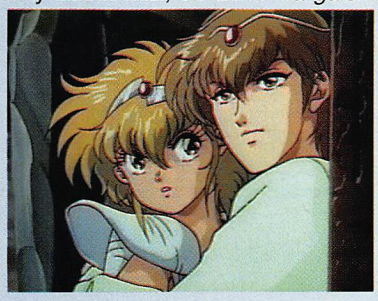


And in addition to lovely Lina, *Slayers* also has a cool storyline, pretty good animation, and an excellent soundtrack. But it's Megumi (who's played a part in just about every anime or video game ever made) who makes it such a worthy addition to Software Sculptors' line-up.

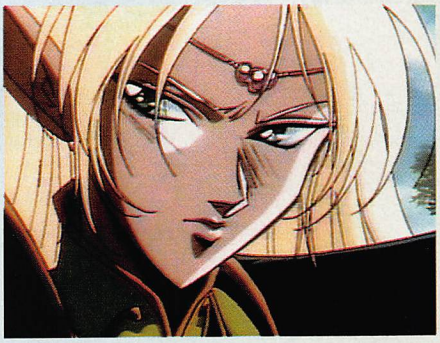
Princess Luna has big problems. In order to protect her tiny kingdom from the Dunbas Empire's invading army, she summoned a Godzilla-like dragon called a "Varga," which had been sealed away in the depths of her castle. The Varga needs a "brain" to control it, and Princess Luna was forced to take that position, which means physically merging with her dragon. The thing is, when the battle ended, the dragon didn't go away, and Luna basically has to go through four 30-minute OAVs with a gigantic dragon stuck to her butt.

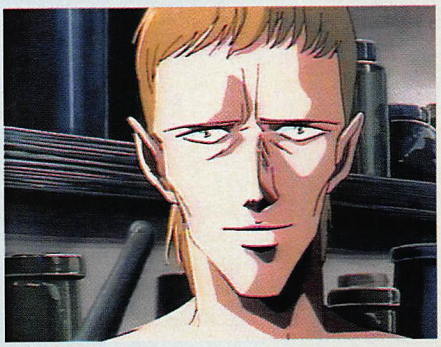


Of course, poor Luna won't have much time to worry about that, as *Luna Varga*'s hectic pace has her (with the dragon reduced to just a protruding tail, most of the time) and her wacky companions running all over both kingdoms and fighting off enough creatures to keep plenty of adrenaline flowing throughout the series.



Though some of the monster vs. monster fight scenes seem horribly cliche, *Luna Varga* has enough variety, humor, and animation quality to forgive that small offense.





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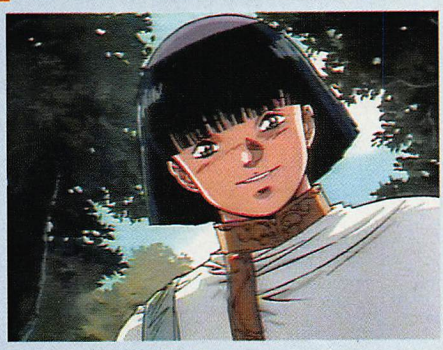
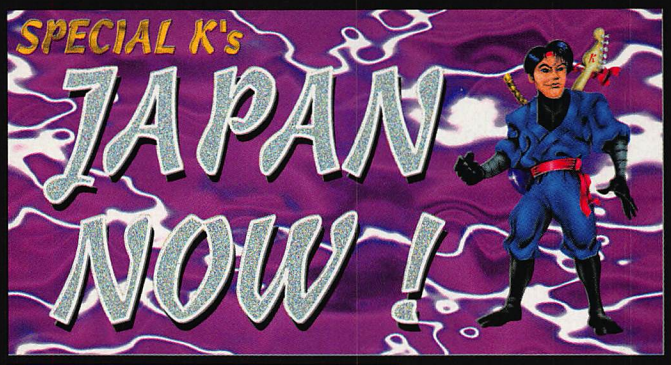


Many months after the completion of the subtitled series, the dubbed *Lodoss* is finally here. I've reviewed *Lodoss* before, and if you haven't seen it, well, you MUST. It's the single best fantasy anime ever, and its artwork is amazingly good.

And if what's kept you from seeing it is the lack of a good dub, well, it's a happy day for you. The voice acting is generally well done, and US Manga Corps even went so far as to translate the opening and ending theme songs, with a lot better results than I dreamed possible. Now there's a quality *Lodoss* translation for everyone.



JN'S WORLD-WIDE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Welcome to the Emergency Interview Special Edition of Japan Now! I, Special K, had to fly to Japan and back again in ONE DAY to do this totally exclusive GF interview with ARIKA CO., LTD. Most of you are probably wondering just what ARIKA is. Read on to find out what this incredible company, headed up by the creator of *Street Fighter II*, is all about!

AKIRA NISHITANI (Y.O.B.: 1967)
President of ARIKA CO., LTD.
Masterpieces (Main Planner):
Arcade: *Forgotten Worlds*
Arcade: *Final Fight*
Arcade: *Street Fighter II*
Arcade: *Street Fighter II Champion Edition*
Arcade: *X-Men*

GF (GameFan): Mr. Nishitani, could you tell us the reason you're no longer at Capcom and decided to establish your own company?

AN (Mr. Akira Nishitani): First of all, let me set the record straight... The reason I left Capcom was not because I didn't like it there. Some time back, Capcom decided that they should avoid creating games at only one location. They asked themselves "If we keep making games at one R&D facility, won't they be based on narrow thinking?" Therefore, Capcom decided to form a new development house. Upon hearing the news, I volunteered to head it up. That's pretty much how the whole story started.

GF: So ARIKA is a subsidiary of Capcom?

AN: Heading up a subsidiary of Capcom was fine with me. However, I've always wanted to run my own game company. The president of Capcom, Mr. Tsujimoto and I discussed the details of the plan to start my own company. As a result, both of us came to an agreement which allowed ARIKA to become my company.

GF: So you're no longer affiliated with Capcom?

AN: No, that's not true. Don't forget, Capcom is the company that pretty much raised me to become who I am today (laughs). In fact, Capcom was kind enough to help me structure the company. When I wanted to bring some of their staff members to my enterprise, Capcom gave me their blessings. They could have easily prevented any of their staff from going to ARIKA. Instead, they even suggested some of their top employees come work at ARIKA. We even have Mr. Ohno, the creator of the *Vampire/DarkStalkers* series.

GF: You mean you'll be releasing your games through Capcom from now on, right?

AN: No, that's not exactly the way it is. Capcom's offer coincided with what ARIKA was looking for. As a result, we may be releasing our first coin-op game through Capcom. Since I didn't want to minimize ARIKA in any way, we won't be creating games for Capcom exclusively. Like I said, Capcom has been very very good to us.

GF: So, could you tell us about the current title you're working on?

AN: The game's really too early for me to talk about, but it's a fighting game. And it's also 3D...

GF: 3D!?

AN: The motherboard we're using is PS-Arcade, hardware which is very similar to Namco's System 11. The polygon power is not as strong as Sega's arcade board (laughs), but we will try our best to maximize the potential of it.

ICHIRO MIHARA (D.O.B: 1968)
Vice President
MASTERPIECES (MAIN PLANNER)
Mega Man 5 & 6
Street Fighter II series for all home systems

GF: If that's the case, will the game run at 30 frames per second?

AN: No, the game's moving at 60fps right now and it won't be any less than that. The graphics are an important element, but we think the most important thing in a fighting game is the control. We found that having the game run at 60fps was the best way to keep the control where we want it. But, of course, we can't have cheap backgrounds marring our game, so we've been working very hard on this element as well.

GF: When do you plan to release this game?

IM (Mr. Ichiro Mihara): Well, since we've only just started the project I can't really comment, but I'd like to show it at the fall AM Show. That's just my personal hope, though.

GF: Since it's a PS-Arcade game, will it be translated to the PlayStation?

IM: Yes, that's our plan. It was fine with us to release it on the Saturn, but since the PS-Arcade board and the PlayStation are compatible... (laughs). We're planning to publish the PlayStation version through DigiCube.

GF: You mean, SQUARE's subsidiary company? Do you have anything to do with SQUARE?.

IM: The only reason we went with DigiCube is because they were easy to talk to (laughs). In the year or so since I was forced to leave Capcom because of my family, I had an opportunity to work at SQUARE. However, I was originally from the arcade field and I always wanted to develop arcade titles. As you know, SQUARE is not known for their arcade games so this was a difficult situation for me. As soon as the opportunity came up, I walked up to Mr. Suzuki (Vice President of SQUARE) and Mr. Sakaguchi (Vice President of SQUARE and President of SQUARE LA) and said "I have to quit because I want to work on arcade games." Then we all talked about it, and the rest is history.

JUNICHI OHNO (Y.O.B.: 1965)
R&D Dept. Manager
MASTERPIECES (MAIN PLANNER):
ARCADE: *CAPTAIN COMMANDO*
ARCADE: *DARKSTALKERS*
ARCADE: *NIGHT WARRIORS*

GF: There's a rumor that SQUARE headhunted employees from Capcom...

IM: That's not true! There's only one person besides myself who used to work at Capcom and now works for SQUARE, and he has nothing to do with all of this. None of the ARIKA staff members were headhunted. On the other hand, I moved from SQUARE to ARIKA. As it turns out, SQUARE's the company that suffered, not Capcom!

GF: Oh, so it was ARIKA who headhunted from SQUARE, right?

IM: Well, you could say that (laughs).

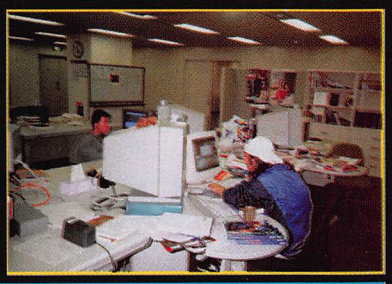
GF: Would you like to men-

tion anything else?

AN: We really want to work with a high-spec machine. If Model 3 is as good as people say it is, I'd love to work on it. When I was working for Capcom, my boss use to tell us, "Create something that can't be done on a home system!" Lately, the specs of home systems are getting closer to the arcade and it's easy to transfer arcade games to the home. That's really unfortunate... I want to create games that make people want to run to the arcades to play. Model 3 seems to be leading the arcade market right now.

IM: Although we're making games for the home market, the philosophy of ARIKA is "Arcade comes first." However, we'd love to release original consumer games for the US in the future, too.

GF: Thank you very much!



Even though Akira Nishitani is now the president of ARIKA, the fact that he created *SFII* will never change. I knew it wasn't the best thing to do, but I asked Mr. Nishitani a few more personal questions regarding *SFII* and his opinions on the gaming industry.

GF: What do you think about today's fighting games?
AN: I feel that fighting games have gone as far as possible in the realm of gameplay. With hardware becoming higher-spec rapidly, however, there will soon be brand-new ways to express graphics. This may lead to entirely new genres of games in the future.
GF: How about 2D games?
AN: I think 2D games will be around for a long time. Most game makers won't be able to develop high-cost 3D boards for a while, and there's lots of things that can still only be done in 2D. I think of games as just that: games. 2D or 3D, it doesn't matter—the gameplay's far more important than the graphics.
GF: What do you think of Capcom's games since you left them?
AN: All of Capcom's games have that "Capcom feel" and so I like them. Capcom really knows how to make great games. You know you're going to play a good game if it carries the Capcom label.
GF: Who's your favorite *Street Fighter* character?
AN: My favorite character is, of course, Ryu! I feel something in common with he way he lives... (Laughs)
GF: What do you think of the block button? How about *Tekken* and SNK games?
AN: Since games that have a block button are usually 3D and have lots of perspective changes, I feel a block button is more suitable than a joystick. The block button can be used for other purposes as well. However, for me personally, I can't think "Okay, now I have to block!" so I don't like it that much.

The *Tekken* series has a totally different feel, so I like it too. Namco did a really good job with the specs of that board. I feel sorry for the people releasing games on it later on (laughs). [NOTE: Nishitani's new game is also on PS-X based hardware.] I was shocked when I saw one of SNK's fighting games. I thought, "Wow! There are so many cool concepts here! I shouldn't be sitting here and playing this... I'd better try harder!" After that, however, none of their games had the shock potential of that first one. I still play them, though.
GF: What do you think about the current state of fighters, and where do you see them going?
AN: This genre has been growing dramatically lately. There are many reasons why, but the basic reason is the underlying coolness of fighters. People just like them. I can even see fighting games becoming a set competitive genre like mah jongg or chess. As I mentioned before, the graphical expression of fighting games will increase more and more. This also means, of course, that many people—including myself—will have to learn lots of technical things in many different fields. What I want to avoid is the technology of hardware evolving so fast that games just can't keep up. I'll also try my best to contribute to this industry's future.
GF: Can you see yourself working in any other genres?
AN: I don't have any plans right now. I just want to work hard on my current project. I haven't expressed everything I want for fighters yet. I'm thinking about launching the ultimate fighting game in the future, however. Personally, I'd like to work in the action/shooting genre, but I'm also interested in exploring brand-new genres too.
GF: Lately, lots of foreign games have been released in Japan, but none of them have become big hits. What's your opinion on foreign games?
AN: I personally think most Japanese games are very precise. Foreign games have a lot of visual impact, but most don't feel very tight. When the gameplay doesn't match the visuals, people feel ripped off. Nevertheless, foreign games have excellent graphics and game design.
GF: The *Mortal Kombat* and *Killer Instinct* series are among the most popular fighting games in the US, but are completely ignored in Japan. What's your opinion on these games?
AN: Well, there are a few reasons why they simply couldn't be popular in Japan:

1.) The design of the game doesn't match the tastes of Japanese gamers. The graphics may be incredible, but the character designs and color choices are way off from the Japanese mentality.

2.) The gameplay is tasteless and rough. The control isn't very tight and they seem to be just for fun, not for true competitive play. For instance, the *Street Fighter* series may not have flashy graphics, but it provides highly-skilled competition. I think ¥100 ($1) is too much to pay just to have fun.

3.) The majority of foreign fighters always have hidden codes and the distribution of game secrets over the Internet is just part of game play. Some foreign games can't be played by just reading an instruction card on the machine. There are many opinions in Japan, too, but most gamers here don't like titles that have too many hidden things.
GF: And finally, can you please tell us your favorite games of all time.
Nishitani: *Crazy Climber* by Nichibutsu. So far, there are no video games that surpass the concept of this one.
Mihara: *Robotron 2084* by Williams. I wouldn't be in the industry if I didn't play this game.
Ohno: *Tetris* by Sega [Sega released Tetris in Japanese arcades]. My family and I were totally into this game

This interview is just an introduction to ARIKA... Stick with us as we bring you updates on this powerful new company and their first 3-D fighter! -Special K

Welcome to another edition of Other Stuff. As this is being written, E3, the greatest show on earth, is just around the corner. This month, we gaze into the vast gap in time between this show and the '97 E3.

Namco's volley...

Namco is currently developing *Tekken 3* in an effort to answer the *VF3* gauntlet that's been thrown down by Yu Suzuki-san and co. Unlike the first two *Tekkens*, *T3* will utilize brand-new ultra high-spec hardware that's said to put the Model 3 to shame (that'll be a neat trick). Codenamed System 33, Namco's new hardware is said to push 3D polygon graphics to dizzyingly new heights. From what we hear, *Tekken 3*'s motherboard is a souped-up version of the Power VR architecture Namco is licensing from VideoLogic. Unlike Namco's old, Evans and Sutherland-designed System 22, the new System 33 is based on the Power VR chipset, a stackable, scalable 3D accelerator for the PC. On the low end, a basic Power VR set-up runs about 30% faster than a PlayStation with all its effects turned on. When running in parallel with multiple Power VR chips (the System 33 guise), it turns into a different beast altogether, cranking out a sustained 2 million polygons per second. Currently the System 33 has just been finalized (convenient, since Sega already showed the Model 3) and *Tekken 3* will be ready in early 1997, leaving *Soul Edge* as the sole Namco banner-carrier of PlayStation fighting games from here on out..... Speaking of *Soul Edge*, *SE2* is due in arcades at the end of the year. *Soul Edge 2* will be a chip upgrade to the existing System 11 board (PlayStation) and feature new, time release characters, ala *Tekken 2*. Namco is also going to announce that they will be making N64 games for their long-time enemy, Nintendo. Namco's first N64 game is being programmed by the same team who did *Tales of Phantasia* for the Super Famicom and is an RPG done in a similar vein, if not an outright *Tales* sequel.

Nintendo's Overhead Slam...

Beyond the well-publicized 2D *Mario/Yoshi* action game for the N64/64DD, Nintendo and Rare are rumored to be introducing *Killer Instinct 2* for the SNES, sometime in 1997. Of more significance is a rumored letter of intent sent to Nintendo from Trip Hawkins, CEO of 3DO. From what we hear, the letter contained non-stop kudos to Nintendo and their new console, the N64, and made no mention of the M2 at all. Seems as though Trip desperately wants Studio 3DO to become N64/64DD developers. The reason behind this remains a mystery, but we'll let you know more about it as soon as the information becomes available. Beyond that, we've learned that a non-working 64DD upgrade could be on display at this year's E3 and that Nintendo has scored a major coup by snatching up an exclusive deal with Capcom to have the home version of *SFIII* on the N64, a year before any other game consoles get it (fall of 1997). I smell a segue on the way.

And Now, the Moment We've *All* Been Waiting For... (okay, exhale...)

On the subject of *Street Fighter III*, we have learned that Capcom's biggest fighting game will be the first title to run on their new 32-bit CPS III (get it, III) arcade board. *SFIII* is still a 2D fighting game although the CPS III enables each sprites to be up to 256 colors and an in-game screen resolution twice that of the 16-bit powered CPS II. *Street Fighter III* was recently announced to be a winter arcade release (December 1996—March 1997) for Capcom. Capcom's second CPS III fighting game will be *DarkStalkers III* (get it, *III*) aka *Vampire III* in Japan. *DarkStalkers/Vampire III* was also officially announced to be a winter arcade release.

Poly-Blood is Coming, For You

Midway is currently developing a fully-3D *Mortal Kombat 4* for the arcades. Due out in the spring of 1997, MK4 uses 3Dfx Interactive's Voodoo Graphics 3D technology. Based on the Voodoo Graphics 3D accelerator for the PC and spitting out around a million polygons per second, *MK4* will be the most advanced American coin-op game ever. Midway's new arcade board continues the recent trend of using PC accelerator based hardware in high-end coin op games. For example: the Mode 3 graphics board uses 2 of LMC's new Real3D pro-1000 chipsets which are a direct descendant of the Real3D 100 accelerator for the PC. Namco's System 33 is said to use several VideoLogic PCX1 PC accelerators. With Midway also going the PC route with the Voodoo Graphics chipset, it seems as though arcade-perfect, PC conversions of the top coin-op games are just a matter of time...DOH!...On a different note, Williams is working on the sequel to *Cruisin' USA*. It's called: *Cruisin' the World*. Headed up by Eugene Jarvis of *Defender* fame (and creator of the original *Cruisin' USA*) will have improved 3D graphics, 2 Player link-up compatibility and 15 tracks ranging from France to Japan. Look for this one later on in the year.

ECTS... OR WATCH PAINT DRY. YOU BE THE JUDGE.

Unless you just can't get enough of the heavily-saturated world of PC gaming, this year's ECTS was a major bust. Besides the Saturn version of Loaded (which looks cool, by the way), and Ocean's PS game Tunnels, there was little here for a console gamer to celebrate. For the most part, the ECTS was full of stuff you either already have or will soon be able to buy. We sent Jace Fury over there hoping to gain some insight for the approaching E3 but he ended up searching London for old Master System games for the staff instead. Hey, I got Strider and Ghouls & Ghosts for my MS so it wasn't a total loss. No OutRun 3D, though. Darn!! I guess we'll have to go back next year. In all honesty, there are some high-powered PC games out there and unbelievable ones coming. You just have to weed through a lot of scrap to find them.

I said I'd put *Hermie* in every issue until someone re-records the music and brings him over, and so here he is again. Unless you love *Super Mario World* and others like it, and are achin' for a 100% traditional platformer, you need not care about my quest for *Hermie*.

Buy if you do, join me! Write a letter to the Postmeister and we'll pass it along. That, or I'll find I'm alone in my opinions. That's fine, too. The important thing is that I just filled the last piece of blank space in this month's issue. We can go home now!!

I'LL BE BACK!

Dear Postmeister,
Let me start by saying that I respect GameFan's reviews and find them to be accurate and informative. However, your review of *Resident Evil* in my opinion was a bit over the top. Although I did enjoy the 3D novelty of this and a few other 3D type games (*Alien Trilogy*), I feel that these games are way overrated.

To tell you the truth, I would gladly trade *Resident Evil* for *Strider-X*, *Ghouls & Ghosts Special*, *MegaMan Deluxe*, or any other 2D souped-up 32-bit side-scrolling platform action game that Capcom could dream up.

It's not so much GameFan's fault, but definitely other mags seem to think that 2D action is the kiss of death for 32-bit gaming. I couldn't disagree more and I am very dismayed at the apparent abandonment of these types of games by Capcom, Konami, etc. in favor of all this 3D stuff. I hope these companies rethink their position and release the type of games that got them there in the first place.
Thanks for listening,
Mark DeSharke
Garden Grove, CA

While I definitely sympathize with your desire to see 32-bit version of Strider, Ghouls & Ghosts, *and* MegaMan, *I have to disagree about* Resident Evil. *I mean, 3D is being overused by just about everyone, but every now and then someone uses it just right, and a wonderful new genre is born. I guess it's not everyone's thing, but I think* Resident Evil *deserves a place in Capcom's Hall of Fame right along with the titles you've mentioned...*

Speaking of which, there's no news on a new Strider *(Grr!), and the previously announced Saturn/PS* Ghouls & Ghosts *game turned out to be just a translation of some PC puzzle game. But* MegaMan X3 *(3DO, Saturn, PS),* MegaMan X4 *(Saturn, PS), and* MegaMan 8 *(Saturn, PlayStation) are all on their way!*

Dear Postmeister,
1. Why don't we have *Romancing Sa•ga 3* or *Final Fantasy V*? Why were they not translated? They're both great games.
2. When will *Final Fantasy VII* hit the PlayStation?
3. Since Square has abandoned Nintendo, will we see *Romancing Sa•ga 4* and *Seiken Densetsu 4* for PlayStation?
4. If there was an *FFVII* for Nintendo64, wouldn't it be different from the PlayStation version?
5. Who is the artist who designs the *FF* characters, and does he do anything else?
6. Are there any other *FFVII* characters besides Cloud, Aerith, and Bullet?
7. Where and how can I get illustration books for *Final Fantasy* games? (you mentioned this in volume 4, issue 4) Are they expensive?
8. Since all I play is Square games, should I buy a PlayStation and forgot Nintendo64 exists?
9. Howard Lincoln said that they wanted one name, one logo, one system around the world. Does this mean you can play Japanese N64 games on the US system or is Nintendo gonna pull the "it doesn't fit" trick or something even more complicated?
10. Why are Japanese import games so expensive? I paid $140 for *Romancing Sa•ga 3*.
11. I see Nintendo's point about the N64 delay, but why don't they tell us more about it? More hype equals more interest! I hear more about N64 in your mag than in Nintendo Power. Why?
12. In plain English, what is this Bulky Drive supposed to do (besides cost us more money)?
13. Why didn't Nintendo have a 32-bit system a couple of years ago?
14. Can you send me *FFVII* pics?
15. Any chance Square will remake any of their previous games for the Next-Gen systems?
Chris Nolano
Everett, WA

Final Fantasy*-related questions made up about 30% of our mail this month—no joke! Unfortunately, SQUARE (of Japan) won't be releasing any more info on the game until this summer, but we have many other interesting SQUARE rumors...*
1. Who knows? They might be coming out for Windows '95, though.
2. December in Japan; Summer '97 here.
3. Romancing Sa•Ga 4*—probably. And we've heard that* Seiken Densetsu 4 (Secret of Mana 3)*—will likely be announced within the next month or so.*
4. There isn't gonna be an FFVII *for Nintendo64.*
5. If you mean FF1-6*, it's Yoshitaka Amano. He's done a number of art books, and the character and scene designs for two anime that I know of,* Angel's Egg *(which I don't believe came out here) and* Vampire Hunter D *(which definitely came out here). If you mean the* FFVII *character designer, Tetsuya Nomura, I have no idea.*
6. There will be many more, but they'll be released to the press gradually.
7. Try Japanese bookstores! You're lucky, living in CA... You can find Asahiya and/or Kinokuniya bookstores in LA, Santa Monica, Torrance, San Francisco, and San Jose. If they don't have them, they can order them. They run about $30-$50 in Japan, probably around $40-$80 here. Good luck!
8. You ONLY play Square games!? Open your mind, buddy! Zelda *and* Tales of Phantasia *are coming for N64, so don't abandon it quite yet.*
9. Sure sounds like they'll be compatible. Of course, we won't know for sure till September.
10. Because Super Famicom games in Japan are super expensive. Their PlayStation titles should be about half the price.
11. I guess they don't want to get everyone's hopes up so long before it comes out... Hopefully, the information will be flowing after the E3.
12. It's supposed to give the N64 the storage capabilities of a CD system (or near it).
13. When the Super NES and Super Famicom are selling as well as they were, why rock the boat with a new system?
14. Yeah, right! Keep dreaming.
15. We've heard from a number of sources that they intend to re-release all of the Famicom Final Fantasy *games for the PS. Revamped? Arranged music? New graphics? New intermissions? All on one disc, or separately? We're not sure yet... But you'll be the first to know!*

To: The Postmeister
Please answer a few questions:
1) What exactly is the North American release date for the N64?
2) You mentioned that Nintendo wants all

of its developers to use its 3D abilities and analog controller. Does this mean that there's no chance of seeing any of Capcom's awesome 2D fighters like *SFA2*, *Night Warriors*, *Marvel Super Heroes*, etc.? Is Capcom even a N64 game developer? If not, I think that Nintendo should do everything in their power to acquire Capcom. So far, no games have been announced and I'm starting to get worried...
3) Why is *FFVII* being made for the PlayStation and not the N64 as previously announced? Could it be that the N64 is not capable of a game such as *FFVII* and the PlayStation is? If Square made the decision to go along with Sony when Nintendo decided upon the cartridge format, maybe we, the consumers, should also decide on a CD-based system.
4) Is the N64 capable of a perfect conversion of *KI2*?
5) What is the deal with the PlayStation and Saturn getting SNK games (*Samurai Shodown III*, *King of Fighters '95*)? Will this be the case with the N64?

I've always been a supporter of Nintendo and started out planning to get the N64 but now I'm not too sure. So far, other than *KI2*, I don't see much reason for getting the N64 when I can get games like *Resident Evil*, *Street Fighter Alpha*, *Final Fantasy VII* and *Samurai Shodown III* on 32-bit consoles like the Saturn or PlayStation. I'm still trying to choose which "next-generation" system to get and hope that the answers to my questions will help me decide.
Thanks for reading,
John Chan
Nepean, Ontario

1) September 30.
2) Nintendo just wants to make sure that the developers concentrate on the strong points of their system. I can't believe that they'd turn down a hot arcade translation because it didn't meet their criteria! But the news with Capcom doesn't seem so good. In their recent Japanese press conference, in which they announced their line-up through early 1997, no N64 games were mentioned. And here's another bad sign; the presidents of Sony and Sega attended, but Nintendo's president did not. Hmmm...
3) Well, there's probably a lot of internal politics in decisions like this, but SQUARE claims that they did indeed choose to move on because of the CD format. Here's the quote from their Japanese publicity department: "To give full satisfaction to the players, the game creators at SQUARE aim to make high quality games, requiring the large data capacity of CD-ROMs... At the present state, there are many platforms (including PCs) that use CD-ROMs. Among these platforms, we examined each one's capabilities to allow us to create a 'game that excites players sensations,' and we finally decided to use the PlayStation."
4) It would be a crunch fitting the FMV backgrounds and rendered intermissions onto a cartridge... But otherwise, yes.
5) The deal is, SNK's a 3rd-party company now. And they've announced nothing for the N64... The prospect of seeing games produced on SNK's 5-year-old hardware appearing on Nintendo's brand-new 64-bit platform seems pretty slim.

Dear Postmeister,
I'm a very proud Sega Saturn owner, thank you very much. Please answer a few questions I have:
1) What in the heck is with Konami lately? I'm starting to lose respect for them! Do they have anything besides sports titles scheduled for the Saturn?
2) Are there any serious action platform games scheduled instead of these cutesy deals all the time? (*Astal* is cool, but it's like reading a bedtime story to a 4-year-old)
3) What about future shooters (my favorite category)? Say, *Thunder force*. If you read through the credits on the Genesis' *Lightening Force*, you'll notice the very last thing it says is "...to be continued." Hmm? Come on, Technosoft, make me happy!
4) I'm a *Golden Axe* fan!! Seeing as how *Revenge of Death Adder* seemed to come out of nowhere in arcades, is there any chance of Sega giving us a Saturn translation?
5) What about *Streets of Rage 4*?
6) I was previously a... (gulp)... Jaguar owner! OK! OK! Stop laughing! Just thought I'd mention it! Thanks!
Art Webber
Scotia, NY

1) You needn't worry about Konami... After an overwhelming amount of Konami related letters this month, I gave them a call, and things definitely sound good. Just because they're making sports games doesn't mean they're abandoning their heritage, their rep insisted. Contra *IS coming to BOTH Saturn and PlayStation. As for* Castlevania, *they won't be able to really announce anything about that until the E3.* Parodius *(which a lot of other people asked about) is in "limbo." That's all we can say for now (PS owners should check the next letter, too).*
2) Um, well, Skeleton Warriors *was pretty serious. If* Contra *'s an ac-plat title, I'm sure it won't be cutesy. Nothing else really comes to mind, though, sorry...*
3) Well, at least Technosoft's back on the Saturn, doing a version of Reverthion. *Hopefully their next step will be* Thunder Force V...
4) Golden Axe: The Duel *is finally coming here. Other than that, there's not much. One slim hope: In Japan, Sega is releasing the "Sega Ages" series, a bunch of arcade translations of old games like* Outrun *and* Space Harrier. *Maybe they'll get to* Revenge of Death Adder *eventually? BTW, how lame is it that none of the cool* Revenge of Death Adder *characters appeared in* The Duel*? The game would have been 20,000 times better if you could have played as the Centaur. Hmph.*

5) Ancient's done with Thor, *let's hope* SoR IV *is their next endeavor.*
6) It took courage to say that, Art. You make the Postmeister proud.

Two quick thanks before the questions: Thanks to all for the consistently great, unbiased magazine. And thanks for the really well done Japanese animation column.
1. In Volume 4, Issue 4 there was a review for an import PlayStation game called *Genso Suikoden*. What are the odds on Konami bringing that game to the states?
2. Several months ago I read a brief article on Konami's *Snatcher* game. The article stated that the game was being translated for an American release. Now is that still going to happen?
3. Will the sequel, *Policenauts*, ever make it over?
Erich Showman,
San Diego, CA

Just as we did last month, we got a ton of letters about Genso, Snatcher, *and* Policenauts. *We asked Konami, and they couldn't comment, but said that there'd be a big announcement about them at the May E3 show. Since I can't imagine that Konami would have a press conference just to yell "Sorry, SUCKERS!" I'll take this as good news!*

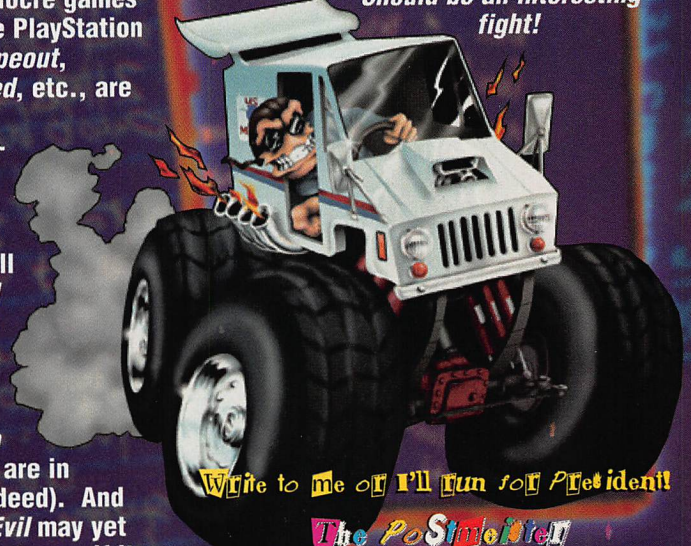
Dear Postmeister!
10 pages!!! That's how much space your section deserves. This is a great place to get great inside information. Now that I have just totally sucked up to you, it is time to get to the issues...
In another magazine I read that the Nintendo64 is unable to produce FMV. Is this true? Well, anyway, imagine what a game like *D* would be like on the Nintendo64. Not FMV, but completely polygonal, rendered on the fly. But this is the good part—it wouldn't be a point-and-click game. You could control the action and make Laura go anywhere you want by using the analog joystick. Imagine how great that would be. Now that would be a truly interactive movie/game.
1) What is the possibility of a *Mario All-Stars*-type game of the *Mortal Kombat* series being released for the N64.
2) Do you remember the shooter *Stinger* for the 8-bit NES? That was a great game. Any chance for a sequel?
3) *Castlevania* N64? When?
4) Any news on a totally original polygon fighter for the N64?
That's it for now. Please print my letter (Remember, I kissed up in the beginning).
Rich Davica
Buffalo, NY

Wow, thanks for your transparent attempts to flatter your way into the letters column. I'm... touched. As for the version of D *you described, are you aware that* D2 *for the M2 is pretty much exactly as you just described it? Can't wait to see it!*
1) Williams is developing an N64 Mortal Kombat *game that's kind of similar... Not so much* Mario All-Stars *as it is* Fatal Fury Special. *You know, elements and characters from all the different games in the series.*
2) That game was actually Twin Bee *with a new American character. So the Japanese-only* Pop'n Twin Bee *and* Twin Bee Deluxe Pack *games were, I suppose, sequels.*
3) When? How 'bout "If?"
4) Surprisingly, no... It could do an incredible one, too.

Yo, Postie,
You recently stated that you received a lot of letters from Saturn owners suffering from inferiority complexes. How can this be? Have these Segaphiles played *Virtua Cop*, *Sega Rally Championship*, and, a moment of silence please, *Virtua Fighter 2*? Hey, I bought a PlayStation about a month after it was released and took it back. *Tekken* is a poor excuse for *Virtua Fighter* plagued with flicker problems and *Twisted Metal*'s graphics left much to be desired.
Granted, there are more Playstation games available now, but look at what they are: a bunch of mediocre games better left unplayed. The PlayStation games worth owning, *Wipeout*, *Destruction Derby*, *Loaded*, etc., are coming soon to a Saturn near you as are most 3rd-party games. Sony may have gotten *Mortal Kombat 3* first, but patient Saturn owners will soon get *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3*. Sony may get *Soul Edge* for the PlayStation, but even that pales before the awesome might of *Virtua Fighter 3* (Saturn owners are in for a Merry Christmas indeed). And don't despair, *Resident Evil* may yet find its way to Saturn. But even if it doesn't, I won't be losing any sleep. I'll be up all night playing *Night Warriors*, *Fighting Sonic*, *Fighting Vipers*, and many other Saturn exclusives.
So please, Postmeister, tell your Saturn readers to cheer up. They have the best Next-Gen system all to themselves and the best games are still yet to come.
Yours Truly,
Gary O'Neal
Murfreesboro, TN

PS: Please answer this: What impact do you think an exact port of *Virtua Fighter 3* would have on the Nintendo64 and what do you think Sega's chances are of pulling it off?

While I love my PlayStation too, your impassioned argument brings tears to this old Sega fan's eyes... (sniff) I hope that as a result, Saturn owners everywhere feel just a little bit more confident... a little bit more prideful... and a little bit more loved as they continue to go about their daily lives. A beautifully written letter, but hey, I can play Resident Evil *and you can't! Ha!*
PS: you forgot to mention the Panzer *series!*
As for VFIII, *let's think about that... It's simply not going to be possible without some sort of add-on chip, but if one is forthcoming, as rumor suggests, and the Saturn is able to up its polygon capabilities to that level, it would instantly become the arcade gamer's system of choice in Japan (especially if* Tekken 3 *is not to be on PlayStation hardware, as I've heard rumored). Nintendo definitely has to be worried about being usurped on the polygon front, because that's where they're putting most of their eggs.*
Should be an interesting fight!



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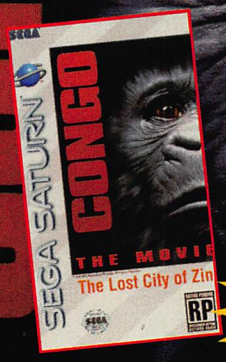

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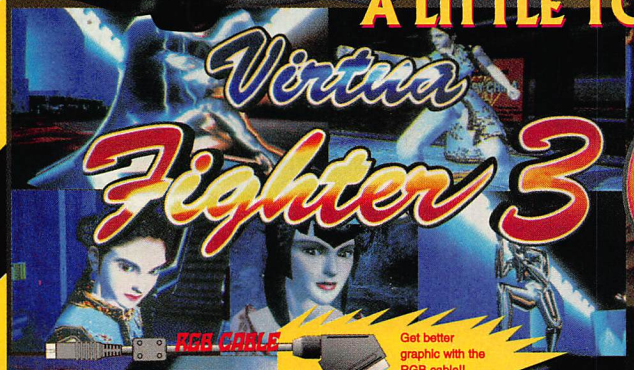

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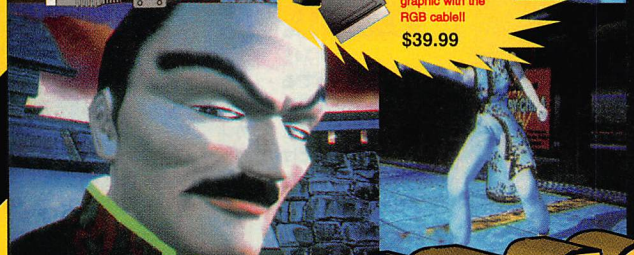

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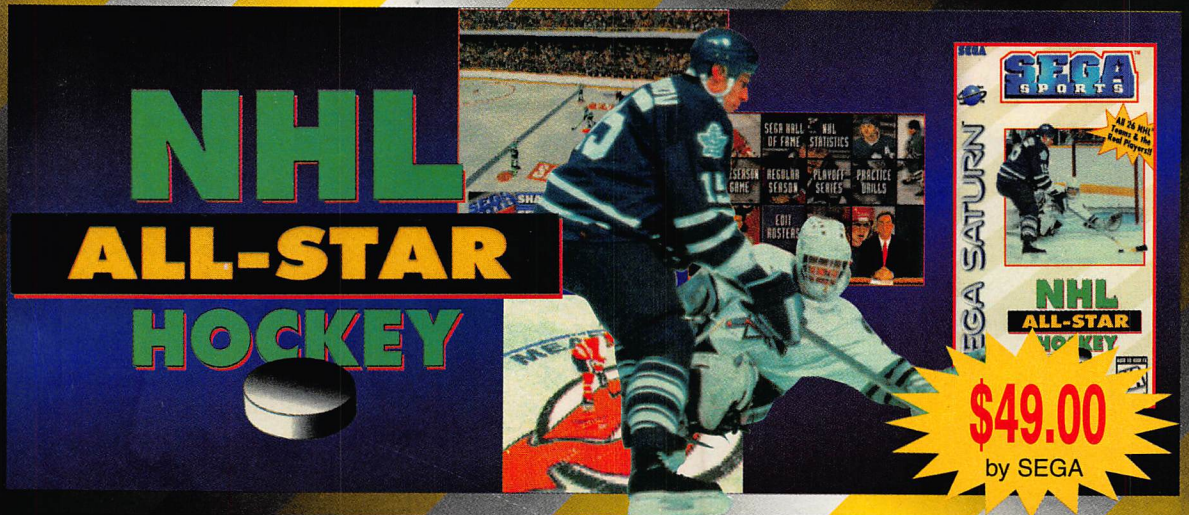

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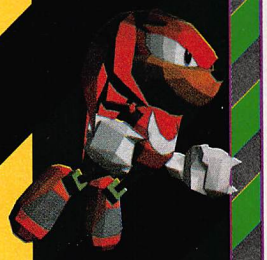

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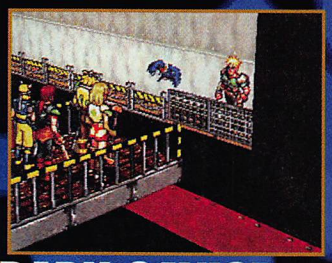

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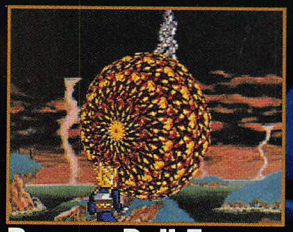

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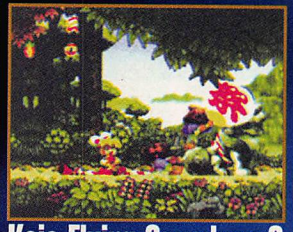

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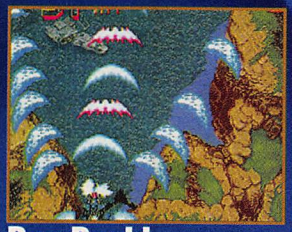

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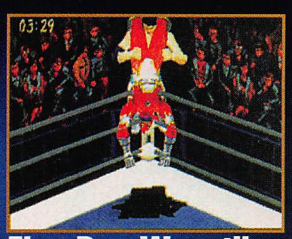

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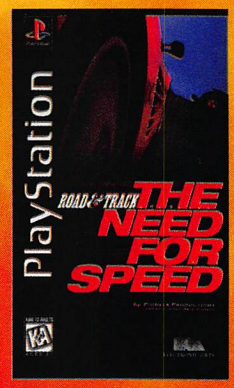

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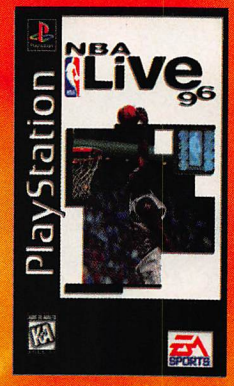

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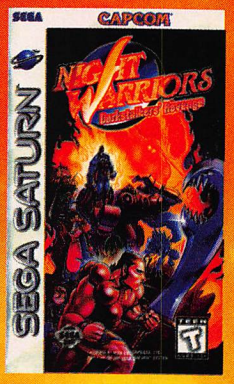

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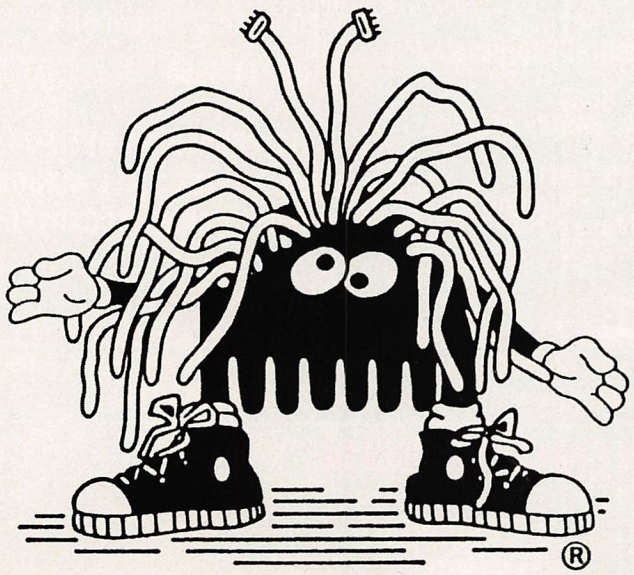

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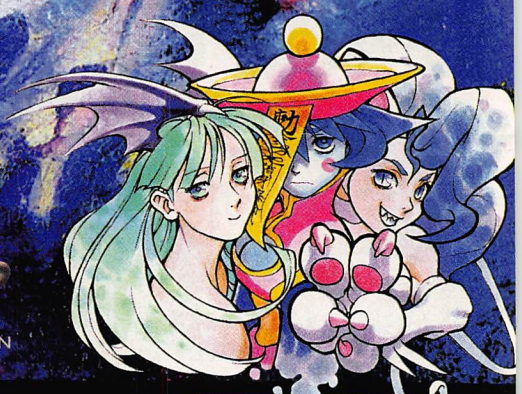

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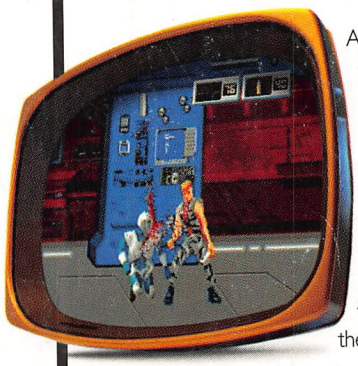

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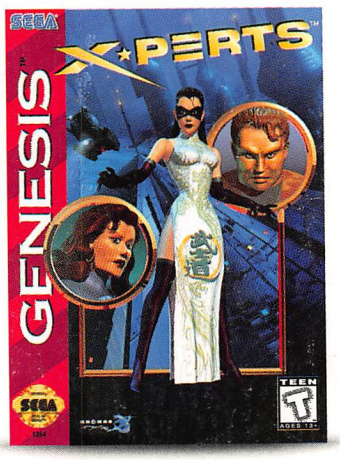

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