# VIDEOGAME

## ADVISOR

# *Corporate Restructuring*

# The **Changing** of the **Guard** at **Capcom** **Entertainment**

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Capcom joins the ranks of electronic entertainment industry restructuring with the recent appointment of a new president. Capcom announced L. Gregory Ballard as president of its newly-named, U.S. based consumer products arm, now known as Capcom Entertainment, Inc. Capcom hopes that the arrival of Ballard and the unveiling of a new corporate name will mark the beginning of a dynamic new decade for the software manufacturer.

As president, Mr. Ballard will be responsible for charting the strategic direction of Capcom Entertainment, Inc., where he will oversee sales, marketing, licensing and distribution of Capcom game titles and original properties. He will also work closely with over 40 game designers, artists and programmers that comprise the company's new Digital Studio.

Ballard brings with him twenty years of business experience in a variety of relevant, high-profile markets. Most recently, he served as COO and CFO of Digital Pictures, a videogame publisher who helped pioneer the use of full motion interactive software. Prior to Digital Pictures he served as president and CEO of Warner Custom Music, a strategic business unit of the Warner Music Group. While there he successfully exploited the group's music assets in the consumer arena. In addition to the above, Ballard is a practicing attorney in Washington D.C., and served as the Washington counsel to Turner Broadcasting and was the legal assistant to the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

"A proven entrepreneur who brings tremendous business savvy and strategic vision to Capcom, Greg is poised to guide our North American operation through the next successful generation of interactive entertainment," comments Kenzo Tsujimoto, chairman of Capcom Co., Ltd. "As the driving force behind Capcom Entertainment, Greg will capitalize on our existing pool of resources, reinforce our stellar reputation and strong brand recognition while expanding and strengthening our market presence to meet the challenges of a new decade. We're extremely confident in his ability to keep Capcom in the forefront of the industry." **VGA**

# **Corporate** **Restructuring:** The Newest Industry Trend

**By Matt Harding**

As any veteran of the E3 would reveal, the videogame industry is undergoing some rather drastic changes. Whether it be credited to growing pains, a drop in sales, the advent of 32-Bit, mergers with entertainment companies, or just plain boredom, large scale restructuring has become the latest trend in corporate fashion. Hurrying to prepare for the brutal fourth quarter ahead, manufacturers and developers alike are streamlining, replacing, enhancing and cutting back to meet the maturing demands our industry must face. Growing pains are being felt on every level and those who do not adjust will be left in the evolutionary process.

So what does corporate restructuring mean, and why are some companies so fervently pursuing it? Well, beside the fact that it usually just needs to be done, it's also a way to let outsiders know the company is still in 'the game' and working to maintain a strong presence. This is an industry that tends to age exponentially, and when a stretch of even a few months passes by without any new titles, companies may run the risk of being forgotten. The creation of a new development branch (like Vic Tokai's Nova Spring), or a

# **Escom Gives Life** to **Amiga**

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Commodore's name, patents and intentions that were to go into production were recently purchased by Escom AG for $10 million in a bankruptcy court auction. Escom Computers, founded in Germany in 1987, is the second largest indigenous European PC manufacturer. It's range of 486 and Pentium-based PCs are sold through their retail network which includes approximately 1500 European computer stores.

Escom plans to revive Commodore's entire line of products and also use the technology in set-top control boxes, virtual reality units and a series of multimedia peripherals. They are hoping to have Amiga products in retail throughout Europe by August, utilizing independent and multiple outlets. The corporation has not yet revealed which products will arrive first. **VGA**

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# DEPARTMENTS

# Letter From the Editor

**W**ithin the next few days you shall be receiving the second issue of Videogame Advisor. Undoubtedly, you will notice several major aesthetic and artistic changes which we feel have thoroughly enhanced the 'value and worth' of the publication. These changes were made in an effort to disseminate information in a more organized and efficient manner thereby eliminating any remaining confusion in regard to our "consumer-ish look".

The response from the past Electronic Entertainment Expo not to mention letters, faxes, e-mail and phone calls has been overwhelming to say the least. The resulting conclusion drawn can only be termed as a success in terms of attaining the next level of maturation in which our industry finds itself. This is not to say, however, that there remain no questions regarding this, the trade's first comprehensive industry magazine. The following and the enclosed information should clear-up any remaining ambiguity. The results of our survey of subscribers was attained by a random sampling of the 35,000+ monthly circulation base which is researched by our staff on a continual basis.

We are rigorously pursuing various additional enhancements which shall be reflected in upcoming issues. In the interim, our graphic development team has begun work on our new World Wide Web site which we tentatively hope to have operational within the next four to six weeks. Additionally, the publishing company continues its research in other circulation diversifying methods such as on-line services, multimedia pack-ins and the like.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have been contacting the staff and delivering your feedback personally. As I wear several 'hats' I am typically the one who will hear comments and compliments from buyers any manufacturers alike. However, our magazine is very much a team effort whereby every individual listed in the credits, (as well as several who prefer to remain anonymous), has not only contributed to each issue but the creation of the first industry 'bible'.

We hope that you enjoy the changes we have made and those we intend to make in the future. As always, we appreciate your feedback in regard to aiding you in purchasing decisions. Thank you in advance for your time, patience and interest.

Best Regards,
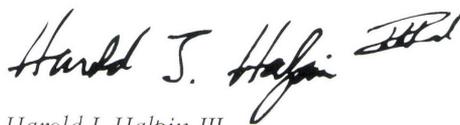
*Harold J. Halpin III*
*Editorial Dir./Publisher*



**Harold J. Halpin III**
*Editorial Dir./Publisher*

# VGA Readership Analysis

Published monthly, *VIDEOGAME ADVISOR* Magazine (controlled circulation: 35,000+) is an educational tool for professionals within the interactive gaming industry. As a trade publication, VGA is written for buyers, distributors, agents, managers and representatives in a timely, objective and informative fashion so as to increase general product awareness.

- **Gender: Male**
- **Age Range: 25 – 40**
- **Lifestyle: Affluent**
- **Income: $40,000+**

## Business

- **57%** Retail
- **14%** Distributor
- **16%** Manufactuer
- Other **9%**
- Manufacturers Rep **3%**

## Gender

- **89%** Male
- **11%** Female

## Readership Profile

- Buyers/Exec. **73%**
- Other **5%**
- Manager **11%**
- Research **8%**
- Marketing **3%**
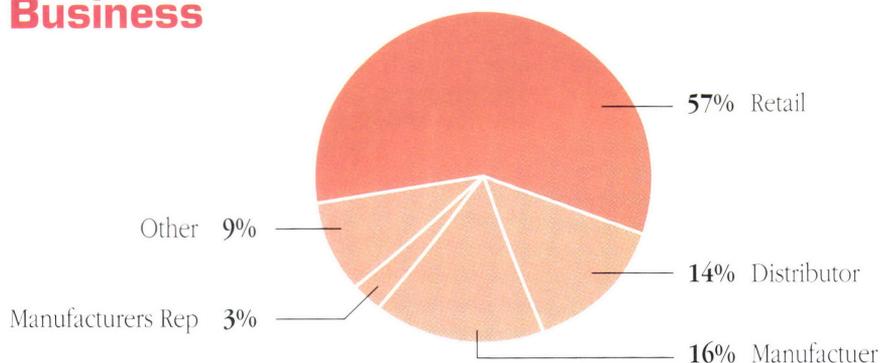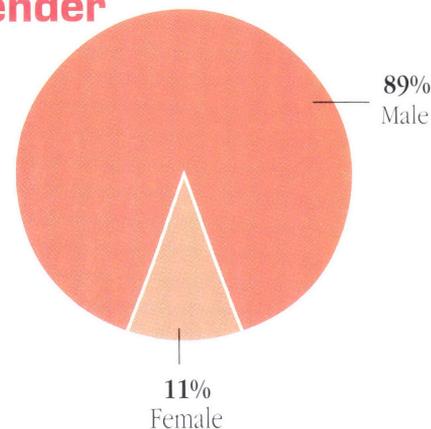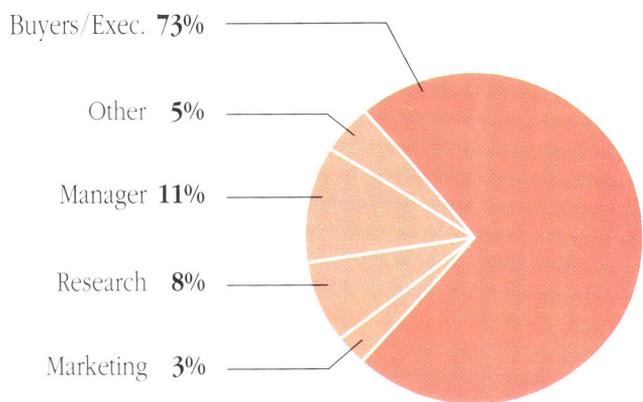
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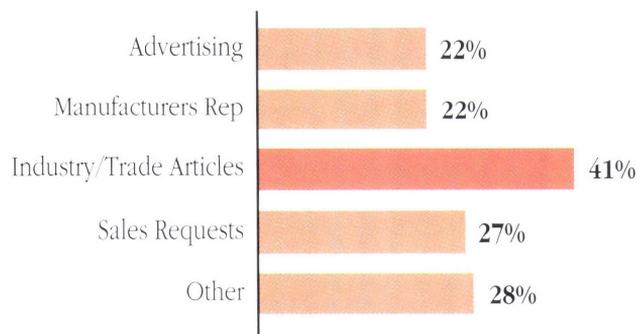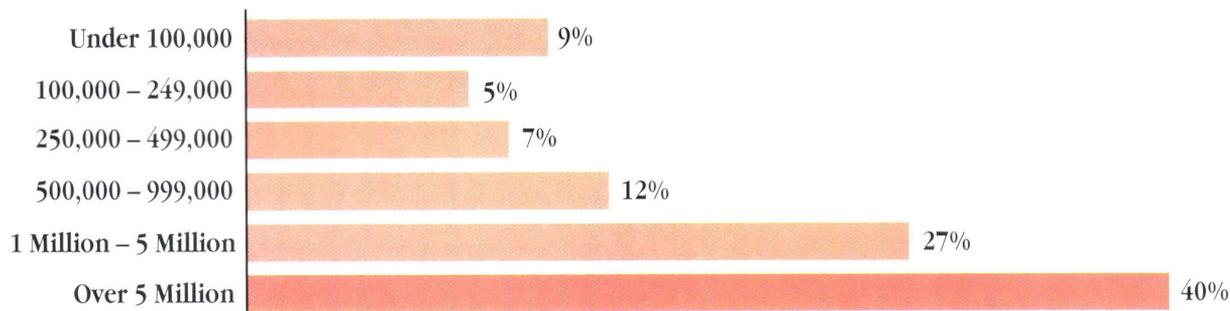
- Advertising **22%**
- Manufacturers Rep **22%**
- Industry/Trade Articles **41%**
- Sales Requests **27%**
- Other **28%**

## Gross Sales Income

- Under 100,000 **9%**
- 100,000 – 249,000 **5%**
- 250,000 – 499,000 **7%**
- 500,000 – 999,000 **12%**
- 1 Million – 5 Million **27%**
- Over 5 Million **40%**

Analysis derived from Reader Survey & Subscription Request forms

*...pay close attention to whether the manufactures adapt to the maturation process or simply conduct business as usual.*

general reshuffling of the organization is a reminder that there will be more to come.

1995 was predicted by many to be the year when the bottom of the barrel would fall out and the companies that had been continuously pouring out low-grade products would fold. In some cases that prediction has come true, with software houses like Sunsoft selling off their unreleased products to Acclaim and others like Taito crumbling all together. But for the most part, the software publishers that were in trouble have managed to generate the funding to keep going on the grounds that they improve the quality of their titles.

The neighboring computer industry is receiving strong attention by the media, with significant portions of editorial space in national magazines like Time and Newsweek being filled with talk of the 'Information Superhighway', 'Multimedia', and the 'World Wide Web', not to mention the buzz/hysteria surrounding Dreamworks' interest in creating videogames. This interest has drawn a fierce spotlight on the videogame market, where entertainment companies from all corners have begun to take notice of the outrageous profits made by small development companies. A production house of ten or less programmers and designers can churn out a title that will go on to gross hundreds of millions of dollars, (such as Earthworm Jim). This has made it very easy for developers to get the funding they need to keep going, as film companies with money to burn start forming alliances left and right, hence the term Siliwood (Silicon Valley meets Hollywood for those not inclined towards cheesy wordplay). But lately these hundred-million dollar successes have become few and far between, as cartridge manufacturing prices remain high and in inefficient in their timeliness of production. Thus, many platforms have become glutted with bland, redundant games with delayed release dates becoming the rule rather than the exception.

The new 32-Bit platforms are causing major tremors in the land of Silicon this year as well. With hardware that can handle pretty much anything that is thrown at it, many developers are finding themselves to be outdated in terms of their own technology. In gamer's minds, when products like Virtua Fighter and Ridge Racer are possible, mere side-scrollers of the past just won't cut it anymore. Hardware prices have skyrocketed and the end-user has most definitely matured. The customer is no longer one who believes the hype plastered in the younger-scewed consumer magazines, (and those who

believe so will be in for a financial surprise).They are educated and their disposable income is their precious commodity which we shall seek.

To meet their growing expectations of us textured polygons and crisp Full Motion Video with large production values are rapidly becoming the norm. Software companies like Psygnosis and Sony Imagesoft have been forced to bring themselves up to speed and producing titles by which others shall be measured. This year's major players; Sony Computer Entertainment of America and Sega of America, must struggle more than anyone to prepare for the new demands being placed on hardware manufacturers. With the 'quadruple-backflip-somersault' Sega pulled last May by releasing the Saturn and the resultant pressure placed on Sony, both companies are struggling to get all their ducks in line by the time consumers start looking at what to buy for themselves this Christmas. This fact shall be emphasized again for sake of clarity... the purchasing consumer this season will not be the mother who is caving to the pressure imposed by an eight or twelve year old - it will be the older, mature, technologically aware and fickle Generation X'ers and slightly younger.

So as these corporate calisthenics carry on throughout the 2nd and 3rd quarters, buyers and retailers are all wondering how these changes will affect them. How can any assumptions be drawn out of an industry that can, without exaggeration, be turned upside down overnight then flipped backwards the following day? How can questions like "What system should I buy?" be answered when every major player seems bound and determined to make the issue more complicated? The best advice that can possibly be given, is to simply pay close attention to whether the manufactures adapt to the maturation process or simply conduct business as usual. Be cautions of companies who attempt to spend little ad money in older-skewed consumer magazines and continue to bombard the children with exaggerated facts. Don't support software that is not being supported by the manufacturer - if they don't feel its worth making posters, counter cards and the like, their trying to tell you something. Look at what the companies want you to see, keep an ear to the ground, evaluate the situation as it evolves and, most importantly, listen to the opinions of your consumers and sales people. In the end, every penny that is spent in marketing and advertising is an attempt to make a dent in the opinions of those who are expected to shell out the money. **VGA**

# An interview with:

## Capcom Entertainment's new president, Greg Ballard
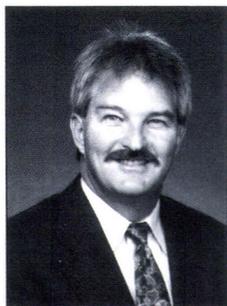
**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

**VGA: Typically, a name change like that of Capcom to Capcom Entertainment signifies some important change in a company's approach to the marketplace. What does the new name represent?**

GB: Our new corporate name signifies the overall broadening of our business. Capcom Entertainment is no longer just a leading software publisher, but a leader in mass market entertainment. With our ongoing success in character licensing and the creation of high-profile TV and film ventures, our new name better describes the full scope of our game related activities.

**VGA: We are currently in the middle of a major shift in videogame platforms that will affect virtually all facets of the industry, from developers to retailers, and on to consumers. What is Capcom's strategy for entering the 32-Bit market?**

GB: As Capcom Entertainment enters the 32-Bit market, we'll exploit our existing strengths as never before. Capcom titles have always offered not only tremendous graphic appeal, but fantastic, compelling game play that our competitors have been hard pressed to match. There are hundreds of titles out there that look great, but don't deliver the action and challenge found in our games. That's where we have the competitive edge in creating new titles that will take full advantage of the new systems, both visually and through game play. Adding to our strength, we'll also be leveraging the talents of over 40 talented, U.S. based programmers, designers and artists who work in our new digital studio.

**VGA: What systems will Capcom be focusing on with its line of software?**

GB: Capcom Entertainment plans to support a wide variety of platforms with a strong emphasis on the 32-bit market and CD-ROM.

**VGA: Will well-known properties like the Street Fighter and Mega Man series be continued in the near future?**

GB: With two of the most prominent and successful product lines in entertainment software, we're pleased to bring a number of new titles featuring Capcom Entertainment's famous software super heroes to market. The classic action of Mega Man X for CD-ROM is coming late this summer, and Street Fighter Legends, a collector's edition showcasing our unstaoppable brand of head-to-head combat, will hit store shelves in December.

**VGA: What other notable titles will Capcom be releasing?**

GB: Capcom Entertainment has an incredible line-up ready for launch on the new systems. Some of these titles include Fox Hunt, a great cinamatic adventure featuring an all-star cast and unmatched combination of innovative features; DarkStalkers, the one-on-one monster fighting game based on the hot arcade version; Street Fighter Legends, the largest title in our incredible combat series; and a frightening new game with the working title Biohazard, which features state-of-the-art graphics and Killer action.

**VGA: How will the separation of Capcom's arcade and home divisions affect their respective markets?**

GB: The separation of our arcade and consumer products groups is merely a matter of geography. Just as the Silicon Valley is the nation's center for technology, the greater Chicage area is the hotbed of activity for the coin-operated games market. The moving of our arcade division now brings Capcom closer to the heart of both industries. Despite location, there will be constant interaction between the groups as we continue to bring the hottest arcade hits to the home market.

**VGA: What is the specific role of Capcom Entertainment within the framework of Capcom on the whole?**

GB: Capcom Entertainment, Inc., is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Capcom Co., Ltd. of Japan, whose promary focus is to design, develop, market, license, and distribute cutting-edge entertainment software for leading platforms. **VGA**

# Big Plans for Europe's Premier Entertainment Show - ECTS

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Following the success of the spring ECTS, exposition organizer Blenheim is now planning an even bigger show for the fall. Due to the show's tremendous growth in the past year, the location of the event had to be moved to accommodate the demand to the Olympia facility from the Business Design Centre. Blenheim's breakdown of visitor registration shows ECTS appealing more and more to a truly global audience of trade and press. A breakdown of the attendance at the spring ECTS showed; Retail 34%, Publishers & Developers 29%, Distributors 16%, Press 10%, Hardware Manufacturers 6% and Marketing & Advertising 5%.

ECTS event director

Adrian Broadbent commented, "The successful format of ECTS is based on six years experience of running the event. Together with our ongoing close relationships with every aspect of the European interactive entertainment industry, it is simply the right environment for all in the European industry at the right time of year. Our track record of unbroken success within the market allows us to remain in tune with exhibitors needs for today and for tomorrow."

ECTS Autumn 1995 will once again take place at London's Olympia between September 10 - September 12. More information shall follow in the coming months. **VGA**

# Glazman Returns To Williams Bally/Midway

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Williams Bally/Midway welcomes Marty Glazman to the new position of Operations Manager-Redemption Games. Glazman who has more than twenty years experience within the gaming industry spent his most successful years with Williams Bally/Midway.

Joe Dillon, Vice President Sales/Marketing Comments, "Marty is no stranger to Williams. He is a veteran who has distinguished himself both here and elsewhere as a true professional and someone with an acute understanding of industry needs and

industry opportunities."

As for Glazman, who most recently worked as a representative for redemption and novelty games at Gizmo Enterprises, he offered, "I'm truly excited at the prospect of contributing to such a vital and important undertaking by Williams. Obviously, the commitment is there to establish a strong presence in the entire category of redemption equipment and build upon the tradition of success that has marked the company's fortunes throughout its history." **VGA**

# Gamelogs Here To Save the Rental Retailer

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Retailers have long faced the problem of rental customers losing the original instructions that come with the product. That makes it difficult to re-rent the game, or sell it after its rental life. Finally a product has hit the shelves to help stores that rent videogames keep their game instructions with their games. Gamelog created by Andi Chatwood and Debbie Minihane is a program that provides a brief instruction manual that offers useful hints and tips to help a player be more successful and have more fun.

Both Andi & Debbie

have extensive background playing videogames and have marketed their knowledge by producing game instructions for 1,900 Nintendo & Sega games which can be sent out on diskettes for Windows-based PCs. When a customer does not return the instruction manual it can be printed out by the stores' computer and inserted in the rental case, providing game renters a quick read that gets them going immediately.

Gamelog debuted at the Video Software Dealers Association in May and is already used in over 300 stores. Gamelog is a division of Trade Service Corporation Entertainment in San Diego. **VGA**

# Phylon Announces PlayLink Modem for the PC

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Phylon recently announced that it would be releasing the PHY-2000 PlayLink Interactive Chipset. The PlayLink allows gamers to play PC games over standard phone lines with a partner (similar to the X-Band videogame modem). One of the features that differentiates the PHY-2000 from standard PC modems, is its ability to transmit both the players'

voices and the game data at the same time. This allows players to talk to their opponent during play, thereby drastically enhancing the competitive aspects and general fun of the game. The PlayLink is compatible with all existing modem games including *Doom, Heretic, Descent, NASCAR Racing, Rise of the Triad* and many others. **VGA**

# Major Players Choose IDSA Expo Over CES

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Nintendo of America, Sega of America and Sony Computer Entertainment of America have chosen not to exhibit at the winter CES, (Consumer Electronics Show), while continuing to support the one single trade show sponsored by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA). E3's immense success in Los Angeles two months ago attracted over 40,000 attendees. The show is planned to return to Los Angeles again next year, May 16-18.

One of the main concerns of the manufacturers is the incredible expense incurred, spending as much as $4 million to attend CES. According to Video Business, Sega spokesperson Lee McEnany comments, "We've always wanted to do just one trade show a year. CES is costly to do, and we can accomplish what we want to do in other ways." A percentage of the videogame manufac-

turers that also produce PC-software will continue to partake in the Winter CES, including GTE Interactive and Philips Media. Most surprising was Nintendo's decision not to attend winter CES because they had planned to introduce their next generation system, Ultra 64 which is due out in April 1995.

In the past two years the videogame industry has slowly pulled away from the CES to create a show of their own. In 1994 Sega decided not to attend CES but to hold their own private meeting instead, the "Sega Summit". Next came the E3 which replaced the spring CES this year. Following the overwhelming success of E3 top executives decided it was time to attend only one major trade show a year. Evidenced by VGA's existence, the maturation process for the interactive electronic gaming industry has finally begun. See you next spring at E3! **VGA**

# Alias Research, Wavefront Technologies and Silicon Graphics Underway with Merger

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Alias Research Inc., a world leading developer of software and Wavefront Technologies, Inc., an innovator in 2D and 3D computer graphics imaging and animation software products has voted to approve their merger with Silicon Graphics, Inc. The voting took place at a special stockholder meeting held in both Toronto and Santa Barbara.

Silicon Graphics, Inc. is the leading manufacturer of high-performance visual computing systems. The company delivers interactive three-dimensional graphics, digital media and multiprocessing supercomputing technologies to technical, scientific and creative professionals. SGI is also responsible for a vast majority of world wide web visual presentations and for much of the work put into Nintendo's Ultra 64 chip-set.

Wavefront's software is in widespread use by profes-

sionals in the entertainment market, including electronic games development, location based entertainment and premier special effects for feature films.

Alias Research Inc. has developed software for digital media creation, providing strategic technology for markets such as design, entertainment and graphic design.

Under the terms of the agreements, Alias stockholders will receive the equivalent of 0.90 shares of Silicon Graphics' common stock for each share of Alias common stock owned. Wavefront stockholders will receive 0.49 shares of Silicon Graphics' common stock for each share of Wavefront common stock owned. Silicon Graphics will issue approximately 14 million shares. The companies expect the mergers will be finalized on June 15th. **VGA**

# SCEA Announces New Key Personnel

**By A VGA Staff Reporter**

Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SCEA) announced the appointment of two videogame industry veterans to key posts within the company, marketers of PlayStation, the next-generation CD-ROM-based videogame system. Jack Tretton has been tapped as director of sales, and Jean Galli has been named director of consumer services.

"Obviously with a new product, it's important that we have a very motivated strategic thinker managing our sales efforts," said Jim Whims, senior vice president of sales at SCEA. "Jack

has the experience and industry savvy to make things happen."

In his new position, Tretton will work closely with the SCEA marketing team directing and implementing sales strategies and managing the company's sales force. Prior to joining SCEA, Tretton served as general manager for JVC Musical Industries, Inc., where he directed sales and managed product development, marketing, finance and operations activities for the international videogame publisher.

SCEA is also announcing Jean Galli's appointment to direc-

tor of consumer services. "An important mechanism we will use to differentiate ourselves from our competition is the delivery of unsurpassed customer support," said Stretch Andersen, SCEA's vice president of operations. "In Jean, we are getting a true team builder capable of creating a department that will define the industry standard."

Before coming aboard SCEA, Galli held the post of consumer service manager for SEGA of America. At SEGA, Galli directed the operation of the company's American and Canadian inbound

teleservice center, developing training programs, forecasting budgets and overseeing telecommunication strategy planning.

Sony Computer Entertainment of America, a division of Sony Electronic Publishing Company, is based in Foster City, California. The company markets the PlayStation console for distribution North America, produces and markets PlayStation software for the North American market, and manages the US third party licensing program. **VGA**

# Fallon McElligott Berlin Lands "Zoop" Ad. Campaign

By A VGA Staff Reporter

Viacom New Media, a unit of Viacom Inc. has chosen Fallon McElligott Berlin to develop a breakthrough, multi-million dollar advertising campaign for ZOOP, its new video and PC game being introduced nationally on eight platforms in October. Viacom New Media serves as Viacom's interactive entertainment software publishing division.

Unveiled at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in May, ZOOP is an exciting puzzle game that catches players in a four-way crossfire of shape and color with only their reflexes and wits to take them to the next level.

Fallon McElligott Berlin will develop all creative for local print national print and broadcast with the campaign kicking-off in mid-September. Located in New York, Fallon McElligott Berlin handles billings totaling approximately $300 million. Some of their clients include The Coca Cola Company, The National Basketball Association, Conde Nast, Marithe Francois Girbaud, VH-1 and The Washington Post.

"We are confident that Fallon McElligott Berlin, with its depth of experience and firm understanding of the opportunities and challenges in creating memorable campaigns for some of the world's leading companies, will develop an outstanding campaign that will make ZOOP the most talked about game of the year," said Ms. Jacobs. **VGA**

# Playmates Video Game Star Turns Action Figure

By A VGA Staff Reporter

Earthworm Jim, star of his own Warner Brothers Network animated television series has received the ultimate honor, his own action figure line from Playmates Toys. Named the best new video game character of 1994, Earthworm Jim mania has taken off. Included in the new action figure line-up are a host of bizarre bad guys that Jim must battle in order to rescue the object of his desires, Princess What's-Her-Name. Packaged with all Earthworm Jim toys is a special "Jim Vision" worm decoder.

"The Earthworm Jim personifies the '90s," says Karl Aaronian, vice president of marketing for Playmates Toys. "He is humorous, witty, hip and totally insane. Jim is a real '90s kind of dude."

Supporting the fall launch of the action figure line and debut of the "Earthworm Jim" MCA animated series will be an on-line computer bulletin board, Earthworm Jim collectible trading cards, a comic book, a home video and Earthworm Jim II, a sequel to the highly successful video game. **VGA**

# Interactive Magic and Numerical Design, Ltd Sign Agreement to Develop New 3-D Rendering Technology

By A VGA Staff Reporter

Interactive Magic has announced a joint agreement with Numerical Design, Ltd. (NDL) of Chapel Hill, NC to develop a new high speed 3-D rendering system. Interactive Magic, which produces action simulation games for home computers, will use the new technology in their upcoming CD games.

NDL developed the rendering programs Rendition and rPlus, which have been published widely in animation, illustration, and CAD applications. NDL also developed Dimensions for Adobe Systems, a Macintosh application which won the 1992 Mac World Class Award for best selling Macintosh graphics application.

The 3-D rendering system will produce highly detailed and visually accurate terrain for Interactive Magic's action simulation games. "In very simple terms, this new technology will allow people playing our flight simulations to see a much more clear and accurate landscape below as they soar through the sky," said Interactive Magic's Chairman J.W. "Wild Bill" Stealey. "We want people playing our flight simulation games to feel as though the wind is whistling through their hair."

"Interactive Magic is a great addition to the high tech community in the Research Triangle park area," said NDL Co-Founder Robert Whitton. "The opportunity to work with a company of their capability and vision is very exciting for us. Plus we are having a lot of fun!" **VGA**

# CH Products to lower price on two Flightsticks

By A VGA Staff Reporter

CH Products is announcing new lower prices and bonus pack-ins on two of their most popular products, the CH Flightstick and Flightstick Pro. The award-winning joysticks will not only be at a more competitive price points, but they will now come bundled with one of ID software's hit tiles, *Doom* (for CH Flightstick) and *Heretic* (for Flightstick Pro).

Both highly durable Flightsticks are a basic, ergonomic, gaming joystick consisting of a trigger and firing buttons, as well as a throttle control. **VGA**

# VGA Stock Report

| Company | Symbol | Closing Price 6/13 | Closing Price 6/20 | Annual High | Annual Low |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3DO | THDO | 13.00 | 11.88 | 25.00 | 8.75 |
| Absolute | ABSO | 1.63 | 1.63 | 2.75 | .06 |
| Acclaim | AKLM | 16.63 | 17.50 | 21.25 | 13.25 |
| Activision | ATVI | 6.25 | 6.88 | 8.00 | 3.25 |
| Apple Computer | AAPL | 44.00 | 47.38 | 48.06 | 24.63 |
| Atari | ATC | 2.69 | 2.63 | 7.75 | 2.50 |
| Disney | DIS | 59.50 | 58.25 | 59.63 | 37.75 |
| Electro Brain | EBICC | .53 | .53 | 1.50 | .21 |
| Electronic Arts | ERTS | 26.00 | 28.00 | 29.25 | 12.75 |
| Game Tek | GAME | 2.88 | 2.50 | 5.63 | 1.56 |
| Matsushita | MC | 144.25 | 148.00 | 188.00 | 131.50 |
| Microsoft | MSFT | 83.88 | 91.38 | 89 .50 | 46.88 |
| Sony Corp. | SNE | 46.25 | 47.00 | 63.25 | 42.50 |
| Spectrum Holobyte | SBYT | 14 .06 | 16.00 | 17.25 | 7.75 |
| Symantic | STMC | 27.13 | 29.25 | 29.25 | 9.88 |
| Time Warner | TWX | 39.13 | 42.38 | 40.38 | 31.50 |
| Viacom | VIA | 45.88 | 45.00 | 49.50 | 32.75 |
| | | | | | |
| Ames Stores | AMES | 2.50 | 2.13 | 4 .31 | 2.19 |
| Bradlees | BLE | 3.63 | 2.25 | 17.25 | 3.00 |
| Caldor | CLD | 19.88 | 19.38 | 32.50 | 16.88 |
| Circuit City | CC | 30.38 | 31.38 | 30.25 | 19.75 |
| Egg Head | EGGS | 10.69 | 12.38 | 12.13 | 6.13 |
| Good Guys | GGUY | 11.25 | 11.00 | 14.00 | 9.25 |
| Hills Stores | HDS | 23.75 | 24.63 | 24 .25 | 18.00 |
| K Mart | KM | 14 .63 | 14.63 | 18.63 | 11.88 |
| Staples | SPLS | 30.13 | 31.13 | 30.50 | 15.81 |
| Tops Appliance | TOPS | 5.00 | 4.63 | 10.75 | 3.88 |
| Toys R Us | TOY | 28.13 | 27.00 | 39.00 | 23.75 |

# Doing Business On AOL

**By Jeffrey Tschiltsch and Sam Hamilton**

*a quick read*

*through the Video*

*Game Magazines*

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In the beginning there was one on-line service, and life was simple. Now it seems that the phone lines are clogged with endless numbers of useless services, all promising the same thing: unlimited information and endless fun. In all actuality there are only three major services that feature true videogame forums. One of those, and definitely the largest, is America Online. The leading service has an enormous amount of information on videogames. Is it worth your time and energy though? Will it make you a better buyer? You might just be surprised.

America Online has a forum for every major platform, where players can post messages about their favorite games, seek tips and tricks and speculate on upcoming hardware and software. Lately, members have focused their concentration on the "platform wars," debating the merits and viability of the Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation, and Nintendo Ultra64. Since most of those posting messages are not industry insiders, little of what is said has any basis in fact, but as a buyer you'll no doubt find it interesting to see which way the public opinion is swaying and to see the extent that "brand loyalty" drives the players' arguments.

Gamers also enjoy sharing information about upcoming games that they can't wait to play and this is truly where AOL shines for buyers. What better way to find out what the



players want than to observe the posts and ask, anonymously or not, for yourself. Players are constantly talking about upcoming games and the technology that is going into the product. Just like the movie industry, the "buzz" on a game or platform is nearly as important as the product itself and there is no quicker way to get "plugged in" on what the buying public thinks than AOL's message boards. One can read all the consumer magazine reviews in the world, but only the gamers know what they want. They don't believe the hype anymore, because they're older and more savvy. If you're buying product based solely on your interpretation of the loud advertising bombardment, you should seriously reconsider. Gamers hate being "talked down to" and a quick read through the Video Game Magazines folder will provide some interesting insight into their thoughts about some of the younger-skewed consumer magazines.

Unlike traditional print magazines, AOL has no "lead time" due to its electronic medium. While a preview picture or article on an upcoming game might not make it to the magazine stand for two to

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## VIDEO GAMES FORUM

Welcome Video Game Enthusiasts!

**About the Video Game Forum**
WHAT'S NEW!
Company Support
News and Previews
Dr. Gamewiz
Video Game Buzz
Video Game Reviews

Keyword: Video Games

**Plug In**
Wanna know what's new and where to find it? Get the word from other plugged-in players!

**Show n' Tell**
Got a great hint? A neat picture? Some cool sounds? Share them with fellow gamers.

**Talk'n Games**
Real-time chat with video game players from all over the nation! Share your video game wisdom.



three months, the same press release or preview can be accessed by AOL's 2.5 million members as soon as it becomes available. No longer strictly a text-based service, AOL's online articles now feature photographs and graphics that bring its features closer to that of an "electronic magazine". Take the "E3 Wrap Up" feature found in AOL's Video Games Forum for example; within days after the show, articles showcasing the new Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation appeared featuring screen shots and descriptions of games that wouldn't appear in the traditional gaming magazines for at least a month. The Video Games Forum has also been a leader in providing digitized full motion video clips of soon-to-be released games. The video clips provide the gamer with a better expectation of what animation and sound can be expected from a game than a simple still image can. Of course the process of downloading and actually playing these clips requires either a lot of patience and low standards for video quality, or a T1 server and and some major processing power.

Game players aren't the only ones found in AOL's Video Games area; as you read through the message boards you'll also find posts from employees of major game publishers. Folks from companies like Electronics Arts and Accolade routinely post information on upcoming games, answer members' questions and ask players for their feedback on particular titles. Several companies have set up extensive online areas of their own within the Video Games area, including Nintendo, Atlus, Acclaim, Crystal Dynamics and The 3DO Company to name a few. Buyers will find these areas an invaluable resource for information on upcoming titles as well as information on how popular current titles are across the nation.

Another new feature offered on America Online is access to the World Wide Web, (with a free upgrade to version 2.5 or higher), giving the buyer another route into the videogame market. Nintendo, Sega, Sony, and various third parties have web sites that preview new games and offer customer support (See Discovering the

World Wide Web, VGA v.1, i.2.). AOL's Web Browser gives the average member much easier access to the Internet; navigation is as simple as a point and click of the mouse. The WWW pages are usually quite graphical in nature, allowing online images of games to be viewed and then downloaded for storage. Since the Internet spans the globe, some of the more interesting WWW pages originate in Japan and Europe. Sony of Japan's PlayStation page, for example, is a favorite among AOL members. While most of the Japanese text is meaningless to the average American, the screen shots of games about to be released overseas are invaluable to players with imported PlayStations and can also give buyers for import game stores a leg up on the competition.

The Web is one of the fastest growing information technologies and most major game publishers are starting to taking advantage of it. AOL will soon offer something very unique to all of its members: the ability to create your own WWW page that can be accessed by anyone in the world (whether they are on AOL or not!). AOL plans to offer free as part of its service up to two megabytes of storage for each member, allowing them to create a WWW home page with graphics and links to other pages and Web sites. This will allow even the smallest independent game developer or mail order company to create their own place in cyberspace.

Besides the World Wide Web, AOL offers a variety of other Internet services such as EMail, FTP (file transfer protocol), and access to the Newsgroups. Newsgroups are very similar to the message boards found on AOL but can be accessed by anyone in the world with an Internet account. The newsgroup topics run the gamut from Atari 2600 games to the latest platforms and even include buy, sell and trade groups. It's quite clear after reading some of these messages that players around the world can have very different opinions on the same game. AOL's new "flashmail" feature allows you to download the messages you haven't read yet from your selected newsgroups, allowing you to peruse them offline without incurring connect charges.

Online services are quickly becoming a major source of video game information, and with its strong membership base, excellent Internet access and its own strong video game community, America Online provides in a single service nearly everything the videogame buyer would need online. Based upon our random survey, (found in this issue), over 90% of you own computers, the vast majority with modems, so all you'll need is a copy of AOL's software which is available free of charge and includes your first 10 hours online. Once you're online, use the keyword: "video games" or "VGS" to get connected with some of the most savvy game players and manufacturers around. **VGA**

# Interviewing the Big Guys

By Glenn Rubenstein

At the E3 in LA, everyone was talking about the new hardware platforms coming into the market, the viability of the platforms currently in the market, and the general future of this industry. Amidst all the speculation, rumor, and unconfirmed information, we got a chance to sit down with the heads the five companies that, through their hardware platforms, (and the software on those platforms), will shape the future of this industry. (Part 3 & 4 of 5)

## Trip Hawkins, the *3DO Company*

**VGA: Describe where 3DO is at now in the "next generation" marketplace.**

**TH:** Well, we have clearly sold more units of the "next generation" hardware than anyone else. We have a much larger software library than anyone else. And through the end of this year we'll continue to release more software than anyone else particularly in categories like sports. We're building up a great library. We also have lower manufacturing costs than our competitors. Of course our competitors are making announcements about what they plan to do in the future in terms of pricing, we feel that we will continue to be the price leader. We're already the price leader in Japan where all the systems are on the market.The products are now arriving in the US, and we think we'll continue to be the price leader.

**VGA: What is your biggest asset?**

**TH:** For the 3DO company the biggest asset is the technology and the team of people we have. Basically you have 4 different industries that we have knitted together into one culture. These are all industries that developed in Silicon Valley and invented their product categories. First home computing, semiconductors, videogames, and workstations. So basically we brought together people from all of those backgrounds and that's how the original 3DO was invented. One of those advantages is that we are already working on our "next generation" which will come on the heels of our competi-

tors' first generation and we will be able to incorporate all of the things we learned with our original 3DO machine into our "next generation".

**VGA: What is the biggest challenge you face?**

**TH:** We have a more complex way of doing business because it's an alliance of companies. It's a lot easier when you have one big monolithic company doing everything to make decisions and do the things that you want to do. So it's a little more complicated for us to manage that consortium of companies. We think it's worth it in the long because we're trying to build an alliance that can set a standard in the long run.

**VGA: Where do you see 3DO in a year?**

**TH:** The company is steadily improving it's financial position and is marching towards profitability, so hopefully in a year we'll be much stronger financially. Of course we're not dependant just on ourselves to provide the cash to run the business. We have Matsushita, Goldstar, and Electronic Arts and other companies, so when you add it up we have the financial resources that our competitors have.

From a product standpoint I think the current 3DO will be a popular system with a good price and software library. Then we have the M2 which is a quantum leap in terms of quality and we hope it can be a standard. The jumps we have seen in technology haven't been as great as say the jump from an audio tape to CD where it is so good your ear can't even tell how good it is. We think the M2 is a jump of those proportions and we think it can become the standard.

**VGA: How should the industry view 3DO?**

**TH:** We're really delighted at the progress we have made because we invented this company out of thin air a few years ago and we're a major factor in the marketplace right now. We're at a poker table with companies that are multi-billion dollar companies. I think

we're now an accepted part of the industry. If anyone is going to be a leader they are going to have earn it and I think we're making steady progress. Obviously it's a very competitive business and in the long run for us if we're clever at making great technology and clever in finding ways to find good hardware and software partners and increasing support we have than we have a shot at being the leader.

**VGA: What will be 3DO's three hot titles this Christmas?**

**TH:** Good question. I think some of the better products haven't been announced yet, so I got a few secrets up my sleeve I can't even talk about yet. Of the ones who have been announced- I look at the sports category as a hot group. We're gonna have a great sports lineup, our competitors won't by the way, they won't be there yet. BladeForce is going to be a hot title, also Primal Rage.

**VGA: Starting with Sony, what are your thoughts on your competition?**

**TH:** I have a lot of respect for Sony, they are a great company. They have done a pretty good job approaching this business. They're creative, and very thoughtful about a number of things about it. I think the honeymoon period for Sony is nearing an end because they set expectations very high and they've done some things that are starting to alienate developers and retailers. At the same time that is just a natural part of what comes with the territory and I am sure that they will deal with that. From a product

standpoint they are coming to market about two years after we did with a product that is not better enough to become a big winner but it is very competitive, it will be a very strong product. We sort of look at all the competitors the same way which is that no one is going to win and no one is going to lose in the market in the next year. And beyond that, we're going to try and win with the M2.

**VGA: Nintendo?**

**TH:** I think Nintendo is a company that is over 100 years old and has a very long history in the amusement business and toys. When the industry started to become more sophisticated six or seven years ago, and as it became further and further technology driven, they have fallen further and further behind. The fact is, their market share has declined over the last seven years. That's a long time to have a declining market share without really addressing the problem. I don't know that Ultra 64 the way they have currently defined is the right answer because they announced the product concept two years ago and the market has changed completely since then. I don't know that what they have is the right answer. They might be better off if they had a cheaper cartridge product for children or a more expensive and better product to compete in the CD market. So I don't know even at this point if they'll follow through and deliver Ultra 64 in the way they have currently announced it. It wouldn't be a big surprise, they have done products and ultimately canceled them before.

**VGA: Sega?**

**TH:** Sega clearly is the marketing leader, the brand leader, and they also have a handful of key "best" titles which they bring over from their high end 3-D coin-op business and that gives them a great nucleus of software titles to build around. I think they have problems with their hardware technology - Saturn is very expensive to manufacture and it is not powerful enough to really be the winning 32-bit system. So I think Sega needs to go back the drawing boards to figure out what they are going to do next.

**VGA: And Atari?**

**TH:** The problem with this whole industry is that you need at least 300 million dollars in capital to compete effectively. Between us and our partners we have that amount, so does Sega and Sony. Atari has about 100 million and to be the company that has to develop the technology, and manufacture and sell the hardware, and manage all the inventory, and do the marketing, and do a lot of the software development - they just don't have enough money to be a major player.

**VGA: Where do you see the industry heading?**

**TH:** There is a trend that continues towards advances in realism, and we think the M2 is our step in improving the realism. And with every step the industry takes in improving realism, the audience base expands. With the original Nintendo the average player was 11 years old, once there was a system good enough to do things like team sports the audience became older. With each leap it becomes more mass market.

**VGA: If you could, summarize 3DO's plans for the coming months.**

**TH:** In the short term we are completing our software library to help drive the sales of the current 3DO system, bringing down the manufacturing cost making it more competitive. Expanding distribution so it is in more stores. We are actually the largest selling hardware system in most stores we are in, but we are not in all of the stores we want to be in. Then of course, the M2.

**VGA: What message is 3DO trying to send?**

**TH:** The message is that "It's the software stupid!" For the retailers it's a very unique situation, most retailers that sell hardware, all they sell is hardware- tv's, VCR's, whatever. This is a unique business where the same retailer can sell the hardware and the software, and there is much more money to be made on the software. Even the big companies now that manufacture now know that, and they want to be in the software business. That is one of the trends that we are going to see and it will benefit the consumer, there is going to be real aggressiveness on the pricing of hardware. Plus with CD it is so much cheaper to manufacture that it gives everyone more flexibility.

**VGA: How do you respond to your critics? It seems like sometimes you are the industry's favorite punching bag.**

**TH:** I am very accustomed to being a pioneer, I did a lot of pioneering when I was at Apple, and when I was at Electronic Arts and 3DO has been the same thing. Pioneers always get arrows in the back. We were the first company to produce an advanced CD system so of course we were the ones who had to make the first mistakes and learn those lessons so that everyone could benefit. What everyone should remember is that when we got into the market, the 16-bit market wasn't more than 2 or 3 years old so of course it's harder to sell the "next generation" if you are in that early. But we have learned from what has happened over the last three years and we have done a lot of things to improve every aspect of how we do the business and you can see that now in the price, the product, the quality of the software, the effectiveness of the marketing we're doing, the reputation that the product has. Of course our competitors are happy to be skeptical and criticize us because it is in their interest to do so.

A lot of journalists enjoy doing that also because when someone has been successful once and they try and be successful again, climb another mountain, it makes a good story for the press to predict that that person is going to fail. I think a lot of journalists have had some fun predicting that Trip Hawkins, who was successful with Electronic Arts was going to fall on his face. But people that know me, and a thing I heard said a lot about myself is "Don't bet against Trip." I'm very resourceful. There is no one in the history of this industry that has the determination that I have. There are a lot of people that have come into the business and gotten out of the business and I have been doing what I do as long as Bill Gates has been doing what he does and he is another guy that I look at as being extremely determined and resourceful. So I don't tend to worry too much about the skepticism because I have always been a pioneer and that has always come with the territory.
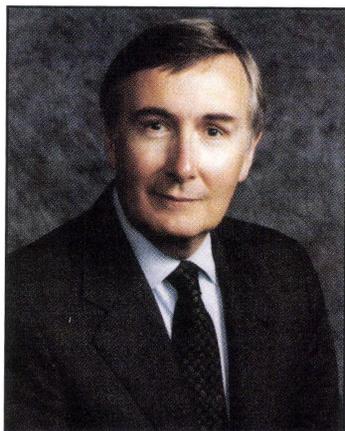
**Howard Lincoln, Nintendo:**

**VGA: Describe what you feel is Nintendo's position in the marketplace.**

**HL:** I think we have the market share lead of 16-bit now coming out of a successful Christmas with Donkey Kong Country. We see a very good market for 16-bit in the back half of this year with titles like Killer Instinct and Donkey Kong Country 2.. and Earthbound. Gameboy has always been the predominant in the hand held category and we have a number of excellent titles including Donkey Kong Land, Arcade Classics, and Killer Instinct in November. Virtual Boy we are quite excited about. That will ship in mid-August and we have delayed the Ultra 64 launch until next April in North America and Europe.

**VGA: What about Nintendo's position in the "next generation" marketplace?**

HL: Well, we clearly have the technology advantage and the price advantage. But we are not satisfied with the quality of the software yet given the quality of Killer Instinct and Donkey Kong Country 2 on the Super N.E.S. So I think we have not only have the luxury, but the obligation to the game players to wait until we get the software level at a quality level that we are satisfied with. We only have one bite at the apple. 3DO proved that and we don't think

that the software that we have seen from Sega and Sony is any better than out 16-bit software titles like Killer Instinct and Donkey Kong Country 2. Given that quality level it has to be a big leap in quality using the 3D graphics and quality of SGI to warrant a consumer buying a new hardware system.

**VGA: What do you see as Nintendo's biggest asset?**

**HL:** Our biggest asset is that it has the strongest financial position of any of the competitors in the video game wars. Sega is burdened with debt, Sony has its own problems with a myriad of businesses it is in. Nintendo is a very focused business – it has 3 and a half billion dollars in cash, no debt and less than 3,000 employees worldwide. That's a very significant position to be in. But our strongest asset going into the next war of the video game industry is the SGI technology which is exclusive to Nintendo.

**VGA: What is the biggest challenge that you face?**

**HL:** Probably the biggest challenge is to get the software right. It is so easy to fall victim to the hype, to get pushed along by the media, to get caught up in this trap of new technology – new and different, "let's just launch it and hype it up." But we have been faithful to our game players over the years in trying to come up with really great games. And every time we have strayed from that we have suffered, and every time we have stuck with it we have prospered like with Donkey Kong Country. The biggest problem we have is finding people that can make these games. That can exploit the technology. And the problem is there aren't a lot of video game developers out there who have experience with programming in a 3D real-time environment. So we almost have to start all over again. That is one of the reasons we are associated with companies like Paradigm and Angel Studios – companies that are already in that 3D graphics environ-

ment. It should be a big challenge to find people that have a talent from a technical standpoint to deal in that environment and also to make video games that are compelling.

**VGA: Where do you see yourselves one year from now?**

HL: I think in the 16-bit category everybody is going to come out of Christmas shaking their heads saying "they did it again, they sold millions of those damn cartridges!" 16-bit cartridges of Donkey Kong Country 2 and Killer Instinct. I think we'll still be selling 16-bit games and Gameboy games and Virtual Boy and we will just be launching the Ultra 64. So I think financially a year from now we will be even stronger on a worldwide basis.

**VGA: What are your predictions for the hot three titles this Christmas on SNES?**

HL: In the back half, our strongest will be Killer Instinct and Donkey Kong Country 2. We expect to sell 4 million Killer Instincts and 3 million Donkey Kong Country 2's. There is some good third party stuff. Earthbound will be a sleeper. It's an RPG game, a good game. It doesn't have the same graphics as a Donkey Kong Country 2 or Killer Instinct, but it's an excellent game. We have pulled a lot of good 16-bit software and decided not to launch it. The only downside of Donkey Kong Country is that consumers think that once you have a Donkey Kong Country, everything else has got to be the same. So the market is changing. That is what is happening with a lot of third party publishers saying "I gotta get out of the 16-bit market." It is not that the market is dying, it's that the quality level went up. Both for 3rd party and Nintendo, we got the same problem they do and we're the ones that created that problem by creating a higher standard so we have pulled some games that are quite good – Star Fox II, Comanche, games of that caliber.

**VGA: Let's shift the focus to your competition for a second, how do you feel about Sony?**

**HL:** Sony will be a very big competitor, I think the Playstation is a better piece of hardware than the Sega Saturn and I think that is the consensus of our people at Nintendo comparing the two- the game players, the technical people. So they are going to be a real competitor however they are going to spend an enormous amount of money in this back half and they are going to be trying to put their hardware out at a loss, and that gets to be an expensive proposition. The biggest question is whether Sony itself, not third parties, but Sony can make a world class video game. And Sony can not survive just on third party efforts. In order to be successful they have got to be able to make their own games. And that question is still an open question. They certainly have not made any great video games as a third party publisher, so time will tell but they are going to be tough competitor.

**VGA: Sega?**

**HL:** Sega's got problems. They have got a credibility gap with their consumers because it's either 32X or it's Neptune now it's Saturn. It's this, it's that. That's gonna be a problem that is going to grow on them. That problem is not only a consumer perception problem it is also a problem with their developers. One day it's 32X, then it's Neptune, now it's Saturn. That'll be a problem. They have financial problems in the sense they have a lot of debt that is coming due. Ventures where their stock is under water. And from a technical standpoint, I don't think Saturn is the equivalent of Playstation. So they probably have the weakest of the new hardware platforms. Strengthwise they still know how to make good games but some of their focus has been lost. Thrashing around, they have lost some key people to Sony so they are having a little bit of a down situation but that's typical and they'll be a survivor and they'll be a competitor in the market.

**VGA: What about 3DO?**

**HL:** I don't see much hope for 3DO, um, I only think you get one bite at the apple in this business and they've already had that bite. It will be an uphill struggle for them to survive.

**VGA: Then finally, Atari.**

**HL:** The same way (as 3DO). Whether you like it or not, Jack and Sam Trameil have managed to destroy a lot of relationships or not build relationships with the trade, or the media or 3rd party developers, that comes back to haunt them now. Financially they don't have the strength to give it a go with companies like Sony and Sega, let alone Nintendo.

**VGA: Where do you see the industry now?**

**HL:** I think it's in kind of a transition. I think there is a lot of good software out in the marketplace that is being discounted. I don't think there are a lot of people who are going to be making money in the video game business this year, so in that sense it is a transition. I see a tremendous future if we can figure out how to keep entertaining people with games that are the caliber of Donkey Kong Country or Killer Instinct. I see a tremendous future for the high end platforms, especially Ultra 64 if we can get it right – and we will. We'll be patient, and we'll get it right.

**VGA: If you could, outline Nintendo's time line for the coming year.**

**HL:** The hardware is essentially completed, the SGI chipset. We'll continue to be working on that. But between now and the Shoshinkei show all the hardware will be finalized we'll start manufacturing the hardware. We will be making a series of very interesting and important announcements in the next 30-60 days announcing more developers, games exclusive for the Ultra, more information on our forthcoming multi-storage medium, and there will probably be more increased awareness of the imminence of Ultra 64 coming. The whole thing will be rolled out at Shoshinkei in November in Japan. It 'll may be launched in December in Japan. Mr. Yamuichi has not made a final decision on that. It'll be previewed, CES in Vegas will be our big show, and it will be launched in April shortly thereafter.

**VGA: What message is Nintendo trying to send right now? A lot of** people are a tad confused with the Ultra delay and all.

**HL:** Quality takes time. We have the best technology and the best price, now give us the time to get the quality right.

**VGA: Who do you see as your target audience? And do you see it expanding with Ultra 64?**

**HL:** I would like to think that the demographic will expand, I hope they do. With the seamless 3D tech I think we can expand the demographic I think Sony and Sega think the same way. Right now the avid video game players are in the 7-14 range.

**VGA: In the 16-bit market, Nintendo and Sega were fierce rivals. Who do you see as the closest competition in this new system race?**

**HL:** Probably Sony.

**VGA: Nintendo has been the subject of criticism recently due to Ultra 64's delay. How do you respond to the critics who think Nintendo is in trouble?**

**HL:** I think that the best thing I can say is that Nintendo has an enviable track record on a world wide basis. We have successfully launched in the last ten years 3 new platforms, hundreds of millions of cartridges. We have a name that is a household word around the world. World class distribution. tremendous creative talent for the development of video games. 3 billion in cash with no debt. There is no other company in the video game business. with a record like that. I think people tend to forget that type of track record, so I am not particularly concerned in a short delay of launching Ultra 64. In fact, since our obligation is ultimately to our shareholders had we rushed the launch of Ultra knowing we had the best technology and the lowest price, our shareholders would and should take us out and shoot us because quality takes time and I don't think there is any consumer I have talked to who has been disappointed with the quality of Donkey Kong Country and that level has to be exceeded with Ultra 64. **VGA**

# The Jaguar Plan:
## Atari's Fun N' Games Media Day

### The Christmas '95 Line-up

**By Will Tosado**

*The Jaguar CD will be available in early August, and will retail for $149.00.*

The Atari Corporation has come under much criticism for the lack of software on it's 64-bit Jaguar console. Over a year has passed since the release of the Jaguar and roughly 25 titles are available at present. On Tuesday June 20th Atari invited the gaming industry media to their Sunnyvale, California headquarters. The event was aptly titled "FUN N' GAMES" Media Day. It was an opportunity for Atari to present new peripherals and more importantly new SOFTWARE to the gaming community.

The presentation began with Atari's marketing plans for the remainder of the year, (see attached article). Following the marketing presentation was a discussion with Leonard Tramiel, brother of CEO Sam Tramiel. Mr. Tramiel's main objective was to dispel the rumors that the Jaguar is not a true 64-bit machine. He explained that the Jaguar architecture is structured around a 64-bit risc processor with a 64-bit data bus, a 32-bit ALU and 32-bit registers. The system also uses a 32-bit DSP to produce CD quality sound. Mr. Tramiel also explained that the Jaguar uses components that are not 64-bit in nature, such as the Motorola 68000. He states that this processor is used for secondary functions and does not prevent the Jaguar from being 64-bit.

The announcement of new peripherals followed Mr. Tramiel's presentation - five of which were announced, most of which are slated for 3rd and 4th quarter release. They are as follows:

• Jaguar CD: The Jaguar CD is a double-speed devise. It has a storage capacity of 790 megabytes, and 352 Kbyte/second data rate. Built into the hardware is the virtua light machine which pulsates and contorts different color patterns according to the type of music played. The unit will come bundled with three pieces of software; Vid Grid, the Tempest 2000 audio CD and Blue Lightning. The Jaguar CD will be available in early August, and will retail for $149.00.

• Jaguar Team Tap: The Team Tap is Atari's multi player adapter which will allow up to four players to compete at once. If two Jaguars are networked using the Jag Link, up to eight players will be able to compete on games such as White Men Can't Jump. The Team Tap is set for simultaneous release with White Men Can't Jump and suggested retail is about $29.00

• Jaguar Modem: Jag Modem will allow two players to play networked games against one another while having the ability to speak to each other. A very practical feature of the modem is call waiting. If gamers receive an incoming call they may pause the game and put the fellow gamer on hold while he/she answer the phone. It is slated for a 4th quarter release and should retail for about $99.00

• Jag Link Cable: Jag Link allows two players in the same house to play networked games from up to 100 feet away using two Jaguars and two television sets. Jag link should be available 3rd quarter and retail for $29.99

• Jaguar VR: The Jaguar VR helmet was jointly developed by Atari and Virtuality. (See review in VGA

V.1, N.1) It is the first practical home VR unit. Two games will be available when the unit is launched – Missile Command 2000 and Zone Hunter. The VR helmet should be out by Christmas and retail for $300.00

Following the presentation we headed for our designated test station to try out new software. While there, I had the good fortune to meet Bill Rehbock, vice president of software business development for Atari. Bill filled me in on some interesting new software for the Jaguar which was not on display but was definitely in advanced development. The most interesting of the games he mentioned where, Alien vs. Predator CD, Magic Carpet and a yet to be named motorcycle racer which he claimed 'will blow away Road Rash on 3DO!' There were some great titles for both the Jaguar and the JAG-CD. The following is a listing of the most promising titles and their tentative release dates.

One of the most interesting things I heard was that Atari is working on the Jaguar 2 and that it will be backward compatible with the Jaguar. More than one person there told me that it possess four times the processing power of Sony's Playstation. The Jaguar 2 is tentatively scheduled for Christmas '96. The VR helmet was not up and running because the optics were not quite ready but Missile Command 2000 was running off the hardware and looked quite impressive. I had a chance to view the VR helmet at the E3 and the 3D effect was very good in comparison with other head-mounted units currently on the market.

The best of the CD software was definitely Highlander which uses multiple camera angles like Alone In The Dark, but the backgrounds are vastly superior to those seen in AITD. The character animation is very fluid and all characters in the game will also be texture mapped for an added realistic effect. Of all the cart software that was on display I would have to say Power Drive Rally was the best of the bunch. The attention to detail was very impressive and the game is a blast to play.

The message Atari was conveying was one of aggressive marketing, advertising and retailer support with lots of software on its way. If Jaguar is to be around after this Christmas they must hit on both counts. Atari plans to have events such as "FUN N' GAMES" Media Day on a quarterly basis to keep us updated on any new developments.

*The message Atari was conveying was one of aggressive marketing, advertising and retailer support with lots of software on its way.*

## Jaguar
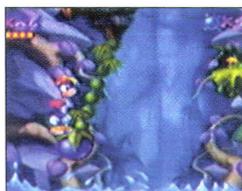


**Rayman**
Side-Scroller
*July*



**Power Drive Rally**
Racing
*August*



**Hover Hunter**
Flying/Shooter
*October*
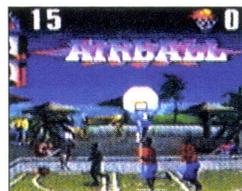


**White men Can't Jump with Team Tap**
Basketball
*June*



**Defender 2000**
Shooter
*October*

## Jaguar CD



**Battlemorph**
Flying/Shooter
*September*



**Dragon's Lair**
Interactive Movie
*September*



**Black Ice/White Noise**
3D Shooter
*November*



**Primal Rage**
Fighting
*December*



**Demolition Man**
Interactive Movie
*September*

# Atari expliots it's low price point in new marketing plan

**By Aaron Zachlod**

Is Atari's outlook on the industry today simply 'Fun 'N Games', or a cleverly fabricated plot to take consumers and buyers by surprise this holiday season? At this point, the videogaming marketplace is becoming increasingly volatile. Software for the 16-bit platforms will eventually fade away to make room for their 32 and 64-bit successors. In order to introduce this new technology into the marketplace, the price the average consumer will have to pay will jump from 'reasonable' to 'obscene'. I can see wide-eyed young gamers going to extremes to get their hands on a 'next generation' system. Let us turn back a few pages; back to when the 3DO was released for $700. Gamers who had to plea bargain with their parents so that they may wield 32-bit power for themselves. But the present stakes a greater fear into the hearts of parents; multiple systems. This fact could easily thrust the average age of the end-user up ten years, a category of discerning consumers that have a limited amount of disposable income. Unlike the previous generation they are techno-savy and don't fall for hype. Now both groups must be addressed - but so must you, perhaps most importantly.

This is where Atari plants it's roots, tightening it's grip around the market with both a 'next generation' system, and a 16-bit price tag. Videogame households spent nearly $5 billion in 1994 on game hardware and software. Sixty-five percent of these sales were accounted for by the holiday season. A pole taken by Alexander & Associates, Inc. shows that consumers are very price sensitive at the $300 to $400 range. Seventy-six percent of the gaming population poled were very unlikely to spend the money required on the new next generation hardware. Thus, a new niche market is born.

As the holiday season rapidly befalls us, the gaming public will be bombarded heavily with promotions in the hope of stimulating foot traffic in the retail environment. Alongside the high-priced systems sits the Atari Jaguar. With the new SRP of $159.95, it is sure to make gamers look twice. But price alone will be no match for the marketing prowess of Sony and Sega. So, how does Atari plan on baiting the unsuspecting gamer? The answer is with a reconstructed marketing department that plans on reaching the masses with an aggressive advertising campaign. Atari plans on making 20 million impressions through print and at least 380 million through television. September through December of this year will, undoubtedly, be the biggest hardware war ever.

It would seem that Atari has been doing some homework after all. The aforementioned research reported some very interesting statistics, indeed. They know exactly who to attract and when to strike. We've seen a few of the commercials for the Jaguar that will air later this year. One spot in particular, which was created for the MTV network, should stir-up quite a controversy. I will say no more.

Tuesday, June 20th was known as 'Fun 'N Games' Media Day. Invited to the Atari headquarters were representatives from all major gaming publications on the consumer side and several of our staff, representing the trade-side. The goal was to educate the editorial press on what the Atari Corporation has up their sleeve in the next few months. Coinciding with this presentation was demonstration of new software on both cartridge and CD formats, an event which they now plan to hold quarterly. This was definitely a step in the right direction. With the Jag CD and numerous software titles, always changing release dates, and previous marketing efforts that were erratic at best - it was reassuring to see that progress is being made behind those closed doors. Atari is fully cognescent of what they are up against in the impending 3rd and 4th quarters. Now that they have repositioned themselves for the initial battle, only time shall tell how they will do in the war. We can tell you this... expect the odds to change in 'Vegas. **VGA**

*With the new*

*SRP of $159.95,*

*it is sure to make*

*gamers look twice.*

# VGA Service Directory

By A VGA Staff Reporter

## COMIC BOOKS

**Dolphin Cove Distributors, Inc.**
800-254-COVE

## COMPUTER SOFTWARE

**Aladdin Software Systems**
800-326-7893

**Complete Software Solutions**
800-922-4556

**Computer Dataware**
800-545-0029

**Foresight Data Systems**
800-438-3371

**GDS Services Corp.**
800-684-8448

**Ghost Software**
800-443-5806

**OCI Retail Computer Sciences**
800-949-5002

**Personal Touch Systems**
800-950-6767

**Streamlined Information Systems**
801-476-9200

**Take 1 Software**
800-454-4434

**Unique Business Systems**
800-669-4827

## FIXTURES/SIGNS

**Chicago One Stop**
800-822-4410

**Can-Am**
800-387-9790

**CDI**
800-222-7469

**Contemporary Wood Designs**
800-249-9663

**J.D. Store Equipment**
800-433-3543

**Retail Design Solutions**
800-725-5551

**Shannon Display**
800-247-8389

**Specialty Store Services**
800-999-0771

**Video Marquee**
800-228-5768

**Video Products USA**
800-926-0538

## GAME INSTRUCTIONS-

**M. Cheeley**
800-845-1470 Ext. 25

## GAME TIMERS

**System Machinery Engineering**
314-642-0022

## IMPORT GAMES

**Cutting Edge Ent., Inc.**
203-384-9401

**Game Star**
818-281-9282

**Tommo Inc.**
213-680-8880

**W.I.T.**
305-668-0141

## LABELS/BAR CODES

**Par Code**
800-524-0599

**Video Debut**
800-533-0116

**Video Store Services**
800-999-0771

## SHRINK WRAP

**Video Pak**
800-538-8803

**Specialty Store Services**
800-999-0771

## VIDEO GAME & CD ROM PLAYERS

**Shannon Display**
800-247-8389

**Specialty Store Services**
800-999-0771

## VIDEO GAMES

**BRE Software**
800-431-4263

**Captron G&G**
800-262-7462

**Chips & Bits Inc.**
802-767-3033

**FatBoy Video**
919-562-0509

**Dolphin Cove Distributors, Inc.**
800-254-COVE

**Game Star**
818-281-9282

**Game Stuff**
213-724-5733

**Movies 4 Sale**
800-883-0303

**Tommo Inc.**
213-680-8880

**Universal Video Games**
919-872-2440

**W.I.T.**
305-668-0141

# Video & Multimedia Show Calendar

## JULY

**12-14 Comdex/Summer**
Toronto, Canada
*617.449.6600*

## AUGUST

**6-11 Siggraph '95**
Los Angeles, California
*312.321.6830*

**28-9/1 PC Home Expo**
New York, New York
*800.829.3976*

## SEPTEMBER

**10 -11 ECTS (Electronic Consumer Trade Show)**
London, England
*+44.181.742.2828*

**11-14 Information Super Highway Summit**
Santa Clara, California
*800.225.4698*

**16-18 Focus on Video**
Mississauga, Ontario
*416.531.2121*

**18 Object-Oriented Technology Symposium**
New York, New York
*800.829.3976*

## OCTOBER

**6-8 Home & Family Computing Supershow**
Boston, Massachussetts
*800.717.SHOW*

**3-5 PC Expo**
Chicago, Illinois
*800.829.3976*

**20-22 Home & Family Computing Supershow**
Atlanta, Georgia
*800.717.SHOW*

**24-26 East Coast Video Show**
Atlantic City, New Jersey
*203.256.4700*

# Understanding Your Inventory & Its Cycle

**By Jeff High**

*Millions of dollars are tied up in static stock which would have fueled the break into 32-Bit for many.*

**B**y now, the effects of the fourth-quarter 1994 videogame explosion are wide spread, well known, and feared. Few of us who rely on this industry have escaped the post-apocalyptic wasteland that remains and many of those less prepared have simply curled up and gone the way of the dodo.

This past holiday season, when vendors unleashed more than three hundred titles on a deflating market, it was an act akin to thermonuclear bombardment for some retailers. Everything was thrown into the "hopper" (in spite of economic forecasts) with hopes that the holiday frenzy witnessed these past several years would justify the glut of product that was suddenly circulating. Well, we responded to the onslaught by following the 'experts', though any communication that was released was consumer related, and we spent those seasonal budgets on ridiculously oversized inventories. So what happened?

There is a factor in this trade that has been long ignored by most of our peers. It is true that the videogame market has all the problems and pleasures of both a product and service oriented business, but we are also an entertainment and media industry. We cater to a very large, very alert, and very discerning audience, and it's no longer possible to drop any old title onto the shelves at anytime and expect the profits to roll in. When we laid out everything at once, we forced the cream to the top and made it very easy for the consumers to be extremely selective in their purchases. Later, everything that remained was old product and without appeal. With nothing left to captivate the crowd, they all just got up and left. Might the situation have been different if manufacturers helped back product, say, twenty-five percent of that total, and trickled it out slowly over the past five months to the game-starved consumers?

The global result of this is a drop in spending in our industry which, as we have seen in the past, leads to market-wide economic decline. Our saving grace, ironically, is the very technological media storm that caused sudden 16-bit bailout in the first place. The next generation of videogame systems have created an anticipated boost to consumer demand, currently lacking due to the fact that price points have escalated the age of our captive audience and the end-purchaser up a notch. In the meantime, the casualty count continues to rise while assets are tied up in stagnant inventories. This excess inventory is weighing many of us down to the extent that we have to be extreme on our stance toward purchasing practices, in order to survive long enough to usher in the new systems.

But there's another problem. Millions of dollars are tied up in static stock which would have fueled the break into 32-Bit for many. This has further added to the list of those "killed in action" as they can see no place for themselves in the coming revolution due to financial liabilities.

Manufacturers are suffering with problems not all together different from retail and distributor concerns. Several have filed either Chapter 7 or 11, and the truly wise are reorganizing under the sudden realization that we simply aren't dealing with kid stuff any more. (See article on Corporate Restructuring on page 1). Most companies have over-burdened inventories of their own, thereby setting the pace for the vast majority of us in unloading dead product. Layoffs now occur on a weekly basis on the west coast, and reporters such as myself find simple tasks such as keeping up with who the new director of marketing/advertising at XYZ company - a part-time job.

Are you detecting a pattern here? We were gorged on product in late 1994 in an attempt to hasten the natural life span of 16-Bit games and extract, in a vampiric frenzy, every possible dollar from the consumer. This was a fatal move for many manufacturers as income losses throughout this passing summer have devastated the paltry reserves that were gained over the holiday season. The fears and capital crunches that ensued battered most and left many expelled from an industry that could no longer support its constituents.

This is bullish economics, and congratulations, you are a part of it and almost completely at its mercy. It begins with force-fed markets when vendors push buyers and retailers to purchase through powerful media manipulation of consumers. We are left to factor all the variables and make decisions based upon guesses and half truths. If you remember Sonic and

Knuckles, you know what I'm talking about. In spite of its high-quality game-play, new technology, and enormous advertising campaign, it was a nearly-universal flop when compared with expected numbers. This is the most visible example, but, as I'm sure you know, there have been countless others. Perhaps it is too late to stop this trend, but we can survive it, hopefully learn from it, and by remaining educated and alert, even profit from it.

'Great', you say enthusiastically, 'But I'm still stuck with bulging warehouses thick with dust.' There are a variety of things you can do to stimulate the market and regain some of those dollars for re-investment. They won't make you rich, as most of them mean you will be selling at a loss, but this will serve your purposes by downsizing your stock and liquidating assets which otherwise would remain buried in useless product.

First, the next time you speak with your distributor or rep, ask if you can speak with their buyer or your rep. Be prepared to negotiate hard. But if you're lucky you might be able to swing a deal that will please you both. Your objective here is to unload as much of your current stock as possible, whether you actually sell it off or work out a trade to bring in fresher product, you come out in a much better position. Don't expect miracles though. Remember that they have been hit as hard as you so don't plan to get even money. If you are very lucky, you might have something they need and make both a friend as well as a profit. Oh, yeah, don't forget to ask about stock balancing or authorized returns. The worst anybody can do is say 'no'. Distributors may also be able to give you tips on unloading product and other sources. The more questions you ask, the firmer ground you stand on. Those of you who have built-up solid relationships with your distributors will benefit greatly from the advise they will be able to give. For those of you who deal in large enough volume to deal with the factory rep, you have a clear and distinct advantage, as the pendulum is again swinging in their professional field and many are being replaced by manufacturers for inadequate representation. (We have even had advertising inquiries from some who wish only to show the manufacturers their dedication.) They realize how important your business is to their livelihoods, so remind them that they, in a sense are working for you too.

Okay, now the retail side. Assemble your own multi-game packs; sports bundles, role-playing bundles, travel bundles, and so-forth to encourage multiple sales. Combine 'hot' titles with moderate and poor sellers and offer them as a special at a one-time-only rate. Maybe advertise them as gift sets and offer to wrap them and perhaps even

ship them for a modest fee.... Try shopping around for premiums, cost 'freebies' that can be offered with a purchase to encourage sales. Maybe a free $5.00 gift certificate with any purchase over $50.00, or 50% off a title when you buy two at regular prices.

If your company doesn't rent games, but could - give it a try. Start off slowly since the market is down this time of year, but it's a chance to recoup some of your investment capital. Perhaps you could adopt a 'Game lease program', a long-term rental for a reasonable fee. This will give consumers a less expensive alternative to purchasing and add other retailers to your potential market as well. Leasing is also a solid option for distributors and sub-distributors to do with smaller-sized accounts as it can be applied to nearly every market medium.

Now, I realize that many of our readers have very little to do with the retail or selling process, but I feel obligated to include a word about it as a means to an end. You will get more from the consumer than from any other source and the bottom line is, of course, the dollar.

One of your final options is dealing with used game subdistributors. You will receive less money from them than nearly any other source, but the response will almost always be significantly better. Pick up a consumer magazine and turn to the back. You will find a horde of used game dealers who would be more than happy to take some of your product off your hands. Most of them will have set prices, but don't be afraid to ask for more, especially if you're selling in quantity. More often than not, they will be willing to negotiate. Two of the more prominent companies are B & E Software and Funcoland Inc., but there are dozens more so don't settle for your first offer.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The current buzz that 16-Bit is as dead as the hula-hoop is exaggerated, but be assured that it is and will be, firmly out of the spotlight. Having some leftover stock is not necessarily a bad thing, keeping in mind that there are around 30 million of Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis systems in America whose owners aren't going to simply lob them into the circular file. Now is the best time to down-size 16-Bit to manageable levels, for a minimum of loss and for you super-stores to regain some of your liquid assets that can be put toward newer and more profitable ventures. However, it is, and will be, very important to follow the market into 32-Bit this fall. Be sure you are able to stock at least a minimum quantity, but selectively so. Most buyers we speak with are not going to carry all or even most of the next generation systems. Let the manufacturers win you back. Watch to see who is providing retailer support, who is advertising and educating, and who will provide you with a superior product - not just MTV commercials directed toward the kiddies who no longer purchase the products. This industry has most definitely matured in every facet and those who do not grow-up along with it will surely become another of its statistics. **VGA**
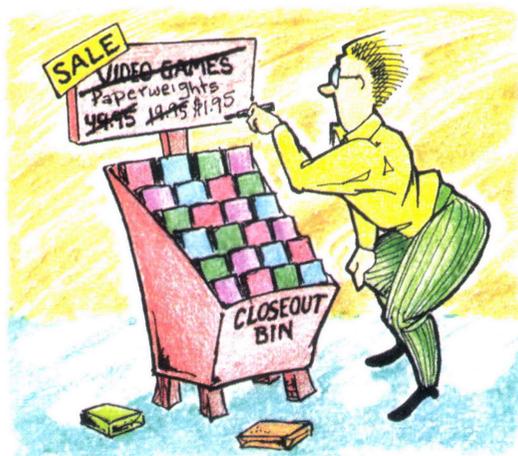
# PC EXPO

**June 20-22,1995
Jacob Javits Convention Center
New York, NY**

**By Greg Angelo**

*...videogames and multimedia as a tool for entertainment purposes are greatly limited as far as floor space and exhibitors are concerned.*
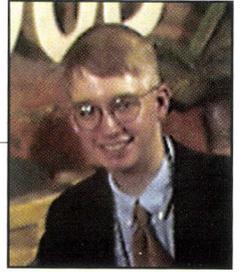
The leaders in the computer/electronic entertainment world were out in force during the 1995 PC Expo in New York City, which took place from June 20 through the 22nd and served as a showcase for anything and everything that had to do with computer systems, multimedia, and the internet.

The show itself was geared toward marketing and retail and, unlike the E3 and Consumer Electronics shows, videogames and multimedia as a tool for entertainment purposes are greatly limited as far as floor space and exhibitors are concerned. The few gaming companies that were there, however, were showcasing some of the best of their present software and tantalizing crowds with their upcoming titles. Access software was one such company, running a looping demo of their hit title, Under a Killing Moon, and showing off the latest in their always-growing library of golf titles for the PC. I spoke to Steve Witzel, Access's Vice President of Marketing, about prospective Access games and the future of the company itself. Regarding the limited variances in his company's software, Steve stated: "[Access], right now, is a two-genre company; we create golf games, and we create interactive movies. We expect to stay in that mode. In order to produce the quality of product that the consumer wants, you really have to focus." In our discussion, Steve did not hesitate to mention the upcoming sequel to Under a Killing Moon, The Pandora Directive, due out in the 4th Quarter, and the "next generation golf title," (to quote Steve), set with a tentative January release date.

A surprise booth at the show was constructed by Atlantis Interactive, a subsidiary of Vivid Interactive, manufacturers of adult-oriented games for the PC, 3DO, and CD-i. Atlantis Interactive, however, was not showcasing any adult CD-ROMs, but instead a virtual-world mystery with a western theme, called Mirage. The game is packed with FMV which players can interact with, all accompanied by rendered backgrounds in the tradition of Myst. Mirage marks what Eric Goldie, marketing representative for Atlantis, says is the company's "first main thrust into the mass market." Atlantis does not plan to slow down after the release of Mirage, in fact, according to Eric, the company has six other titles in the works and, if Mirage is as successful as many are foreseeing, Atlantis's next game will follow shortly after Mirage's release.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment also made an appearance at the show with a kiosk encompassing five computers displaying such games as Monopoly, Flight Unlimited, and Command & Conquer. The only representatives from the company however, were from Westwood Studios, who were more than pleased with the response they received from audiences who looked upon the five-minute demo of Lands of Lore II: Guardians of Destiny, content simply to watch and be amazed. The game itself was running smoothly on a 486 DX2 100MHz system but when I spoke to Jeff Fillhaber, Chief Designer of the game, he insisted that the minimum hardware requirement would be simply a 486 66MHz system. Fillhaber states that PC game producers should try to be inclusive of all existing hardware, while still maintaining a superb standard of quality. Lands of Lore II has been in development for two years and on this extravagant delay Jeff comments: "It's kind of funny; every

once in a while [the programming team] will sit back and say, 'This is it - this is how we want the game to be,' but then someone always says, 'Wait a minute, wouldn't it be better if we do this...?' And so we refine the game." Judging from the quality of the demo, which Jeff stated is the actual game (rather than cinematics), Lands of Lore II should be well worth the wait.

The Quarterdeck corporation was at the show, exhibiting their newest memory manager. Their booth was also filled with promotionals and posters for their new Game Runner, a memory manager designed specifically to combat the all-too-frequent "not enough conventional memory" error message present with so many of today's cutting edge games. Game Runner will also include a Game Genie-like feature, a cheat program designed to get the player more money, better weapons, and level skip codes depending on the respective game operating with Game Runner.

The Microsoft area of the PC Expo was also packed around the clock with people eager to get a peek at Windows '95, which is still slated for an August release, (although unconfirmed rumors insist otherwise). Basic features and schematics were highlighted at one post, and yet another post on the Microsoft pavilion was devoted solely to Windows '95 multimedia capabilities. Used as demonstrations were Pitfall: the Mayan Adventure, which looked surprisingly smooth and vivid on the platform; Alice in Chains Interactive, which was an interactive guide to the band and its videos and numerous other graphics and rendering programs designed to dazzle and show the audience just what the newest videogame platform and operating system,

Windows '95, is capable of doing.

Intel's display was nothing to write home about. A live show highlighting the power of their new 133MHz-based Pentium processor was informative, but did not push the limits of the hardware. Strangely, mum was the word on the P6 chip, with members of the Intel exhibit claiming that they knew no details of the chip or its release date.

The Sony Corporation of America was also present, displaying its "CD-ROM Solutions," a group of CD-ROM and multimedia tools designed to serve as solutions to the future of business complications. Later Wednesday evening, Sony threw a press party at the acclaimed Harley Davidson Cafe, which although highly entertaining, showcased little in terms of different software than seen on location.

Creative Labs, Inc. was pushing its 32 Blaster, a bare-bones and inexpensive way for the consumer to get truly great audio on their computer without having to shell-out for the full AWE 32 board. Despite clamorings and questions about it, the 3DO board for the PC marketed by Creative was nowhere to be seen.

In all, the PC Expo accomplished its goal - it reached out to the common consumer and some corporate buyers doing so in an ideal fashion, featuring hands-on workshops, seminars and presentations designed to spark interest in both consumers and retailers alike. The shows, generally speaking, do not end in New York, though; other computer business Expos will take place in September, including the Networks Expo in Dallas, Texas; the HRMS Expo in San Jose, California; and the UNIX Expo in New York. Chicago will hold its own PC Expo from October 3rd through the 5th. **VGA**

*...other computer business Expos will take place in September...*

## RATINGS SYSTEM
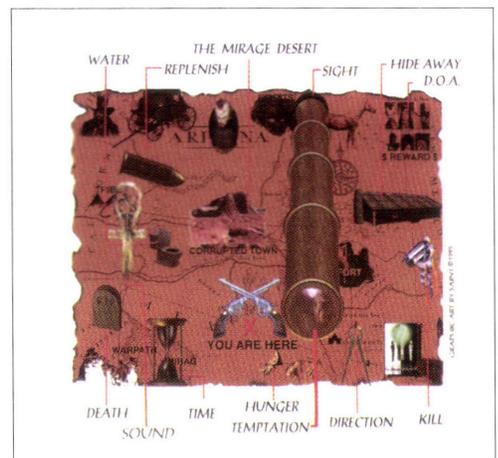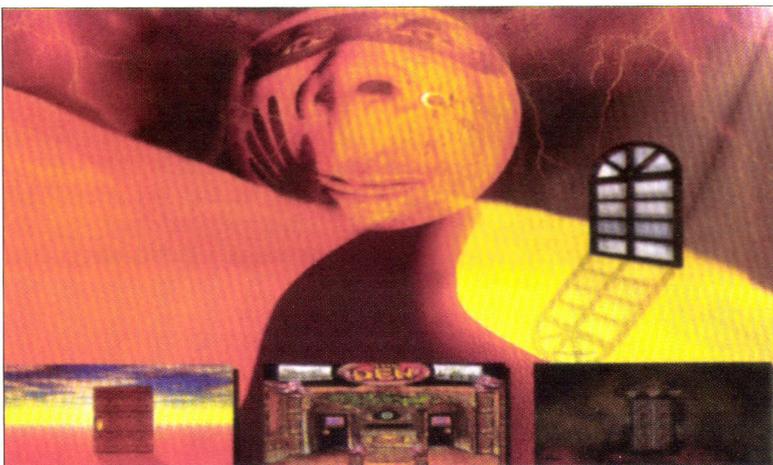
**A** One of the best selling games for that particular platform. Great sound, graphics, playability, etc. This title will literally grow wings and fly off the shelves of any retail/rental store.

**B** A great game that is just lacking in some areas. It will sell well and bring in the masses, but just not to the extent of an "A" title. Retailers should make sure to buy this product deep enough to satisfy their individual store demands with some to spare.

**C** A good game that will sell about 'average' in terms of sales. It is lacking in a few departments, therefore not worthy of a "B" rating. However, this is still a quality product.

**D** A game that is unsupported by the manufacturer, lacking in quality and generally should have stayed in development longer. This category may rent occasionally but will not sell well to anyone other than a 'platform fan'. Poor gameplay, bad plot and just better than an "F" rating.

**F** A product that never should have been considered, much less released. This is a thoroughly unimpressive title that will only become an inventory nightmare. Only at drastically discounted prices could this category sell.

## FYI

As a courtesy to those readers who use our magazine as a guide in making purchasing decisions for their stores, we have made our review section as upfront and honest as possible. Our ratings system is held to a very high standard. We believe that maintaining our credibility is of the utmost importance to our audience. And for that reason, we use a full spectrum of grading levels to determine ratings. We also take into account the manufacturers retail support program in the final determination of the rating given.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Primal Rage |
| **Platform:** | Genesis |
| **Genre:** | Fighting |
| **Size:** | 3 MB |
| **Publisher:** | Time-Warner Interactive |
| **Developer:** | BitMasters |
| **Available:** | August |
| **Wholesale:** | $46.95 |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | B |

Atari's first foray into the realm of arcade fighting games, *Primal Rage*, is making its way onto the Genesis (among others platforms) this August. The game broke new ground in the arcades by replacing the usual digitized or animated fighters with hand-sculpted, stop-motion puppets. Essentially, *Primal Rage* is the result of frozen gods from prehistoric times being brought back to life by an alien-born cataclysm. Once restored, the 7 gods duke it out for domination of the new "Urth." Each god is empowered with 70+ standard moves, 8 special moves and 3 fatalities. *Primal Rage* was moderately well-received in the cut-throat arcade market, and should perform fairly well in its console release too.

The Genesis version manages to include many of the game's unique features. However, the limitations of the 16-Bit platform do detract from the fluidity of the fighters' movements, and the quality of the game's sound. These negative aspects aside, Primal Rage for the Genesis is a good game. The gameplay is faithful to the arcade as are the controls.

***Bottom Line:*** *Combine the game's relatively small but loyal following with Time-Warner's $8 million marketing stategy and your left with a product that will definitely sell. Expect it to move steadily until at least December, when "Primal Rage's" market blitz for the next generation systems will end.*

– Glenn Broderick



| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Fatal Fury Special |
| **Platform:** | Sega CD |
| **Genre:** | Fighting |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | JVC |
| **Developer:** | JVC/SNK |
| **Available:** | Now |
| **Wholesale:** | $42.00 |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | C- |

*Fatal Fury Special* is the newest, and quite possibly one of the last 16-Bit games for Sega CD, although there are different versions of this game for other systems. The head to head fighting of *Fatal Fury Special* on Sega CD was disappointing after playing it for the Super Famicom and Super Nintendo. The Sega CD version played much slower than its counterparts on the various entertainment systems. The graphics and sound are decent, but did not fulfill the expectations of a CD-based game.

*Fatal Fury Special* seems to be targeted toward a younger or less experienced gaming audience. The strategic moves involved are easily completed and therefore fairly unchallenging. For an experienced videogame player this could not provide more than a moment's entertainment. Many things could be done to improve the quality and desirability of this game, beginning with the background graphics and the sound. *Fatal Fury Special* is in the style of *Street Fighter* but cannot live up to the *Street Fighter* glory.

***Bottom Line:*** *Although "Fatal Fury Special" for Sega CD is not a game I would personally pick off the shelves the title does retain a fairly loyal following and certain brand recognition. As usual JVC is pumping a fair amount of marketing funds into the consumer magazine market which could easily translate into a rentable property. However, sales are likely to be sluggish at best.*

– Eric Berube

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Hagane |
| **Platform:** | SNES |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller |
| **Size:** | 2 megs |
| **Publisher:** | HudsonSoft |
| **Developer:** | HudsonSoft |
| **Available:** | Now |
| **Wholesale:** | $54.00 |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | C+ |

The Super Nintendo Entertainment System has been aching for a side-scrolling shoot-'em-up title like *Hagane* since *Contra: Alien Wars* two years ago. Fans of that genre can now rejoice over *Hagane,* a fighting-oriented side-scroller that does an excellent job of executing the various details that make a game like this stand out from the rest.

In *Hagane,* gamers play the role of a futuristic, ninja-like warrior who must save the world from total destruction. In order to prevent Armageddon, they must complete numerous stages protected by huge, robotic warriors. At gamers disposal are bullets, grenades, ninja stars, lasers, and a slew of futuristic weaponry that must be used sparingly so as not to deplete the ammunition supply.

Again, this title will fill a current void that exists for the SNES, a marketing angle which should not be overlooked. Conversely, we are not aware of any point of purchase or other retailer support which is typically offered from the manufacturer.

**Bottom Line:** *Do not expect "Hagane" to fly off your shelves. A lack of consumer and trade advertising will prevent this game from mass recognition. If you are in the rental business however, a bit of pushing from your sales staff will certainly earn you your money back and perhaps increase potential interest in sales.*

*– Greg Angelo*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Prehistorik Man |
| **Platform:** | SNES |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller |
| **Size:** | 2 MB |
| **Publisher:** | Titus |
| **Developer:** | Titus |
| **Available:** | July |
| **Wholesale:** | $47.00 |
| **MSRP:** | $54.99 |
| **VGA Rating:** | C+ |

Titus Software's new side-scroller depicting the life of primordial man is finally ready for release. Gamers play as a hungry *Prehistorik Man* by the name of Sam. In order to satiate this hunger, one needs to fight their way through 10 huge levels and ultimately destroy the game's boss, Jeroboam Baobab Racinus. Each of the 10 levels is riddled with secret areas to explore. In addition to the standard club, Titus has endowed Sam with a scream capable of killing all enemies on the screen. Throw in some unique gameplay and you're left with a slightly above-average title.

Titus, not normally known for their marketing blitzes, has managed to create a great deal of pre-release hype about this title. Despite Titus's poor reputation in the past, *Prehistorik Man* has already received attention from many consumer magazines, and in some cases very high acclaims. This will no doubt have an impact on its rentals, although the chance of it selling may be undermined by thunder-stealing 32-Bit software.

**Bottom Line:** *"Prehistorik Man" will rent fairly well, but probably won't generate many sales. Stock this title in a fashion similar to that of "Joe & Mac", or any other slightly below average side-scroller.*

*– Glenn Broderick*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Greatest Nine |
| **Platform:** | Saturn (Japan) |
| **Genre:** | Baseball |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Available:** | Now (Import) |
| **Wholesale:** | 75.00 |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | B |

Sega's *Greatest Nine* is simply put, the best baseball game for the Saturn, then again its the only one. Seriously, the game is a wonderful baseball sim. Sega has done an excellent job at recreating the feel of the baseball park, as well as including the needed features to wow gamers. *Greatest Nine* will come to the United States under the name *Grand Slam Baseball* late this summer.

Graphically, *Greatest Nine* is nothing spectacular, however, the graphics do the title justice and only add to the best part of the game, its playability. The gameplay is incredible, it is easy to learn and quickly takes the player into the game. *Grand Slam* also offers statistic tracking and complete seasons. Multiple camera angles, manual or automatic defense, and three different stadiums are also included options that add to the play value.

**Bottom Line:** *The game is exactly what Saturn owners want, and any Import Saturn owner will buy this game in an instant. The game has been hyped by the consumer magazines to the point that gamers know what it is and want it. This game should sell wonderfully, (relative to the import market), and will also have a long shelf life.*

*– Sam Hamilton*

| **Title:** | Hi Octane |
|---|---|
| **Platform:** | PC CD |
| **Genre:** | Racing/Shooter |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | EA Studio |
| **Developer:** | Bullfrog |
| **Available:** | Now |
| **Wholesale:** | N/A |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | B+ |

Rapidly approaching legendary status among gamers, Bullfrog has just released another jaw-dropping achievement in the realm of the PC CD-ROM, showing players once again that their computers could do things they never thought possible. Best described as a cross between Crash 'N Burn (3DO) and Ridge Racer (PSX), Hi Octane uses the now obligatory post-apocalyptic future as a backdrop for the ultra-fast missile-infested hover-car racing that is the game (pardon the over-hyphenation). With six cars, six tracks and lots and lots of bullets, the game manages to keep a steady amount of adrenaline pouring into players arteries.

Unfortunately, Hi Octane may become a victim of its own relentless quality. The game demands so much processing power that it ends up completely excluding low-end users from reaching a tolerable frame rate for play. SVGA, however pristine, is out of the question on anything less than a Pentium 90, and most players will have to strip the game of all of its beauty just to play. The fact is, the vast majority of PC's in the marketplace are still 486 or less, and denying this category of users is seriously restrictive to sales.

**Bottom Line:** There are plenty of Magic Carpet fans eager to see what Bullfrog will do next, but "Hi Octane" will not be able to break out into the all around PC hit that it could be if it were even a little more 486-friendly. This should sell almost as well as "Magic Carpet" did a few months earlier - stock it similarly.
— Matt Harding
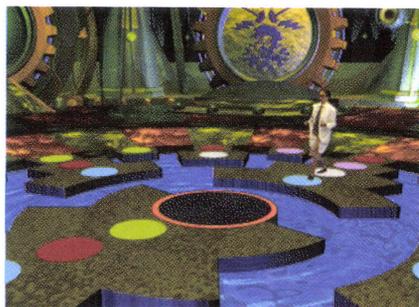
| **Title:** | Zhadnost: The People's Party |
|---|---|
| **Platform:** | 3DO |
| **Genre:** | Puzzle |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | Studio 3DO |
| **Developer:** | Studio 3DO |
| **Available:** | Now |
| **Wholesale:** | $49.00 |
| **MSRP:** | $59.95 |
| **VGA Rating:** | B- |

As an early 3DO adoptee, (I bought mine at the $699 price point -ouch), I fondly remember Twisted, one of the best games from the first wave of 3DO software. Zhadnost is the semi-sequel to Twisted: both games were designed by Jim Eisenstein, an industry veteran with a wicked sense of humor.

Zhadnost is filled with full-motion video, but it's not a typical FMV game; it's a very playable collection of game segments that use FMV to represent the Russian contestants. As with Twisted, Zhadnost supports up to four players, and there are at least two players involved in the action at all times. Zhadnost requires a minimum of two people, so it's being bundled with the new and improved 3DO control pad. (The MSRP is wisely the same as other 3DO offerings.)

Studio 3DO should be commended in regard to their marketing of this title. Promotions include on-line information retreivable from the America On-line videogame forum, within the 3DO section. Again, by packaging-in the control pad, the manufacturer has also significantly added to the value of this product in terms of both the sell-through and rental markets.

**Bottom Line:** "Twisted" was well-received by the consumer magazines, and "Zhadnost" should benefit from good reviews and word of mouth among 3DO users. The question is whether or not consumers will be able to get past the lame title; they should have stuck with the original name of "The People's Game Show". I think the game is great, but from the jaded retailer's perspective, I have the bad feeling it won't sell as strongly as it should despite the marketing.
— Zach Meston

| **Title:** | Super Turrican 2 |
|---|---|
| **Platform:** | Super NES |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller |
| **Size:** | 2 MB |
| **Publisher:** | Ocean |
| **Developer:** | Factor 5 |
| **Available:** | August |
| **Wholesale:** | $53.00 |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | C+ |

Reviewing this game conjured up many warm and fuzzy thoughts of my Amiga-playing days, when I first played the original Turrican on my beloved Amiga 500 in 1989. The game has changed a lot in the years since then, but the essence of Turrican remains the same. Gamers play as a robot, running left and right, shooting, jumping and having a rather good time in the process.

Super Turrican 2 from Ocean of America yanks out every last goodie in the SNES's bag of tricks, inundating the player with Mode 7 scaling and rotation, Dolby Surround Sound, and amazingly colorful backgrounds. These graphics are about as cool as you'll ever see on the 16-Bit Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

The enormous installed user base of the SNES, combined with the high quality of this title will certainly represent a significant rental market. We are unaware, however of any significant marketing being done by Ocean in terms of retailer support for this product specifically. It is for this reason that this game may not be recieved as openly by consumers considering the late summer release date.

**Bottom Line:** "Super Turrican 2" is an excellent game, but it's going to need to be carried by word of mouth and glowing reviews in consumer and trade magazines in order to succeed. With all its hot licenses, I don't see Ocean spending much on promoting ST2 - a real shame when it's quite obviously a better product than most games of its type.
— Zach Meston

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Bug! |
| **Platform:** | Saturn |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Available:** | July |
| **Wholesale:** | $29.00 |
| **MSRP:** | $39.95 |
| **VGA Rating:** | A |

The Sega 'Away Team' has really out-done itself with *Bug!*, its first Saturn title. Using the title character, players works through 18 levels of intense gameplay in order to reach the final show-down with the Evil Queen Cadavera. The game is played in typical side-scrolling fashion, but the actual levels are fully-realized 3D environments that Bug is able to navigate freely (think: best of both worlds). Bug can walk up, down, back, forward, into and out of the screen while the camera perspective zooms respectively. As for weapons, Bug's arsenal consists of the quaint but effective tactics of spitting and jumping. These and other features combine to make Bug! one of the strongest Saturn titles to date.

The important question is not "Will this title sell?," but really "How many will it sell?" Sega had a limited roll-out of Saturns in May and early indicators are encouraging. By the time this title hits the stores, the Saturn should have a relatively large installed user base.

**Bottom Line:** *Bug!'s success on the Saturn is virtually assured. However the size of a Saturn hit is tough to judge at this point. Bug! will be almost as much of a necessity to a Saturn owner as Sonic was for the Genesis. If your customers own Saturns, then you'll sell a lot of these games. In short, you need to know how much of the hardware is floating around among your customer base before you buy.*
*– Glenn Broderick*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Fight Unlimited |
| **Platform:** | PC CD |
| **Genre:** | Flying/Simulation |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | Virgin Interactive |
| **Developer:** | Looking Glass Technologies |
| **Available:** | Now |
| **Wholesale:** | N/A |
| **MSRP:** | $69.95 |
| **VGA Rating:** | A |

It is public knowledge that PC gamers like simulations more than arcade games. Looking Glass realized this fact and created *Flight Unlimited*. They have taken every aspect of flight and incorporated it into the game. Both the mechanics and photo-realistic graphics are incredible. The developer has chosen some of the best areas in the world to fly and some of the best planes to fly through them in. Gamers have a choices ranging from a bi-plane to a glider.

Flight is currently the best flight sim on the market and a must-own for most PC-based simulation fans. *Flight Unlimiteds'* two downfalls are that it may be too real and therefore many players may find the realism scary and will be somewhat intimidated. The other problem is the hefty requirements of this title in terms of memory, a Pentium is almost a must. These downfalls aside, Flight should fly off shelves... no pun intended.

**Bottom Line:** *Looking Glass Technologies has created one of the best flight simulations of the year. Not only have they created a great game, but Virgin has done a great job of marketing this title. A good solid title with excellent selling potential. Stock this title.*
*– Sam Hamilton*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Lunar: Eternal Blue |
| **Platform:** | Sega CD |
| **Genre:** | RPG |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | Working Designs |
| **Developer:** | Game Arts/Working Designs |
| **Available:** | July 28 |
| **Wholesale:** | $45.00 |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | B |

*Lunar: The Silver Star* is one of the best-selling Sega CD titles ever, and this long-awaited sequel is considered by most consumer magazines to be the last "must buy" Sega CD game before 'The Big Shift' to 32-Bit. It's a sprawling role-playing game with many hours of gameplay and several dozen minutes of Japanese anime. As with all Working Designs products, what makes *Lunar: Eternal Blue* stand out is the great voice acting and the great storyline – Working Designs always turns out top-quality translations of the Japanese RPGs they import.

Working Designs usually goes all-out on magazine advertising - they pushed the original *Lunar* for a good six months after its release and they've already been promoting Eternal Blue for months. *Lunar: EB* also has the benefit of a cool title, unlike WD's previous two games, *VAY* and *Popful Mail*, which turned off both retailers and consumers.

**Bottom Line:** *The success of the original Lunar, combined with Working Designs' heavy advertising and marketing plus a fanatical fan base, should insure strong sales for "Lunar: Eternal Blue". This title is definitely worth wedging into whatever 16-Bit shelf space you have left this summer.*
*– Zach Meston*
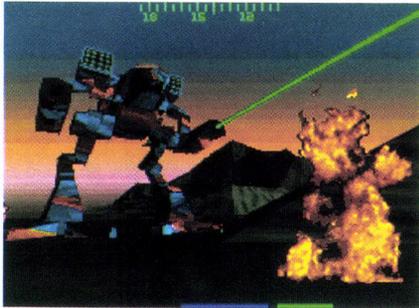
**Title:** MechWarrior 2
**Platform:** PC CD
**Genre:** Strategy/Simulation
**Size:** CD
**Publisher:** Activision
**Developer:** Activision
**Available:** July
**Wholesale:** $48.00
**MSRP:** N/A
**VGA Rating:** A-

The long awaited sequel to the popular PC simulation, *MechWarrior,* is finally completed and ready for release this month. The game is riddled with the results of high production values and the relentless pursuit of complex, immersive, simulation-style game play. *MechWarrior's* massive and detailed background comes from FASA's popular line of BattleTech role-playing games, giving it a built-in devoted audience. In the 31st century, mankind has been broken up into warring clans who wage battle on distant planets in towering, heavily-armed robots known as Mechs. The player can fight for either of two clans in dozens of intricately designed missions that take place in a wide diversity of settings, from barren deserts to disheveled city-scapes.

The textured-polygon Mechs look fantastic, the cinemas are incredible, and although rarely worth mentioning in most games, *MechWarrior 2's* sound effects are absolutely stunning. One of the only drawbacks to the game is its somewhat demanding system requirements. This is a constant problem for developers, torn between alienating players and compromising the quality of the game. (See VGA interview with Producer Josh Resnick v.1, i.1)

**Bottom Line:** *This title will receive high marks from gamers who enjoyed past battle-simulation blockbusters like "Wing Commander 3", "MetalTech: Earthseige", and "X-Wing". With a 1.5 Million dollar marketing campaign, "MechWarrior 2" will no doubt hit the shelves with a bang. This is another 'must stock' PC title!*

*– Matt Harding*

**Title:** Samurai Shodown
**Platform:** Sega CD
**Genre:** Fighting
**Size:** CD
**Publisher:** JVC
**Developer:** JVC/SNK
**Available:** August
**Wholesale:** $43.00
**MSRP:** N/A
**VGA Rating:** C-

A year or two ago, *Samurai Shodown* was a strong title; it was popular in the arcades, and Takara's Super Nintendo and Genesis versions did good business. But time marches on, and games tend to age in dog years, so *Samurai Shodown* is definitely not the marquee draw it once was. And even less so now, considering that its sequel was released well over six months ago. The game has long ago proliferated onto the dominant platforms where it had the best chance for success, and anyone interested in the Sega CD version could have purchased the Genesis version when it was released last Christmas. Whereby, customers would be sacrificing only moderately better graphics and sound quality and avoiding the annoying load times

The Sega CD version of *Samurai Shodown* was originally glimpsed about 18 months (10.5 dog years) ago, but kept getting pushed back as the programmers struggled with the hardware. The final result is still far from perfect; there are long pauses between fights, and the controls don't feel as tight as the other versions.

**Bottom Line:** *The constant delays of "Samurai Shodown's" release have put a serious dent in its sales potential. If this game had shipped when the Sega CD was at its "peak" a year ago, it might have done well; in its current condition, I'd be amazed if JVC sold more than six thousand copies. Add "Samurai Shodown" to the endless list of "Mortal Kombat/Street Fighter" wannabes that don't play or sell as well.*

*– Zach Meston*

**Title:** Syndicate
**Platform:** Super NES
**Genre:** Strategy
**Size:** 2 MB
**Publisher:** Ocean
**Developer:** Bullfrog
**Available:** August
**Wholesale:** $53.00
**MSRP:** N/A
**VGA Rating:** C

Here's a case of a game that worked and sold well on computer formats, but didn't work as a videogame - particularly the Genesis version. It's hard to say exactly why *Syndicate* hasn't been successful in the cart format, but I'm willing to guess and make myself look stupid: 1) The gameplay is too complicated. 2) The gameplay is too slow. 3) The Genesis version was a major rewrite of the PC game with lame graphics and all the cool violent bits taken out.

Much to my disappointment, Ocean of America's SNES version of *Syndicate* isn't a faithful conversion of the PC game, like their Jaguar cart, but instead a port of the Genesis version from Electronic Arts. It may be that 16-Bit machines just aren't powerful enough to cope with the original game - however, the dilution of its former self, quite simply, isn't up to snuff considering the timing of the title's release.

**Bottom Line:** *"Syndicate" probably did decent business on the Jaguar, where new games are more precious than blueberry Pop-Tarts but on the Super Nintendo, it's going to get lost in the shuffle, and Ocean's weak marketing efforts won't help. Unfortunately, this game has "Christmas Bargain Bin" written all over it.*

*– Zach Meston*
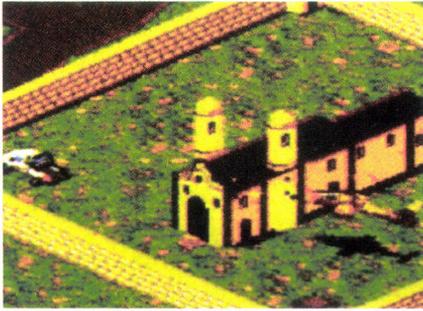
| Title: | Jungle Strike |
|---|---|
| Platform: | Super NES |
| Genre: | Isometric Shooter |
| Size: | 2 MB |
| Publisher: | Electronic Arts |
| Developer: | Electronic Arts |
| Available: | Now |
| Wholesale: | $44.00 |
| MSRP: | N/A |
| VGA Rating: | C+ |

Electronic Arts might have snuffed *Super Strike Trilogy* for the Sega CD, but they're going ahead with plans to release *Jungle Strike,* the second game in the series, for the SNES. Good call, because *Jungle Strike* is the best of the series, and will definitely win over a good segment of the SNES-owning populace.

In case you haven't seen, (or sold) any Strike games, *Jungle Strike* is a helicopter sim/shooter that puts the player through a gauntlet of obstacles in nine levels located around the world. The graphics aren't spectacular (especially since they look almost identical to the Genesis original), but the gameplay is solid and addictive, and better than the disappointing *Urban Strike*, (which, barring a supernatural rebound of SNES sales, won't be ported over).

**Bottom Line:** *"Jungle Strike" is a good conversion of a good game on an ailing platform. It's no "Donkey Kong Country", but "Jungle Strike" should do decently on the strength of the Strike name and the positive reviews it's certain to receive in consumer magazines.*

*– Zach Meston*

| Title: | Maabus |
|---|---|
| Platform: | PC CD |
| Genre: | Action/Adventure |
| Size: | 3 CD's |
| Publisher: | Microforum |
| Developer: | Advanced Multi. Prod. |
| Available: | Now |
| Wholesale: | N/A |
| MSRP: | $39.95 |
| VGA Rating: | B- |

*Maabus* represents yet another venture into the "interactive" marketplace of gaming. Like many of its predecessors, the game boasts outstanding graphics, full motion video, and a virtual world where the player is in control.

In *Maabus*, a national warning has gone out as the result of an excessive amount of radiation coming from a small island in the Pacific. An expedition team was sent before you, and they were never heard from again. Now it is up to you and your remote-controlled, armored mini-tank to explore the entire island, piece together the mystery of the radiation, find its source and end what could eventually become a global catastrophe.

*Maabus* is an entertaining game. Excellent sound effects and surprisingly realistic graphics add to the feel that you are actually moving through the island. The full motion video of "The Admiral", who pops up on your monitor intermittently to warn you of impending danger, is done very well... although I wish the same thing could be said of the character's acting ability. In all, *Maabus* is a fun game that is enjoyable to play through but impossible to play through again.

**Bottom Line:** *"Maabus" has been hyped for a number of months now, but customer demand for this title over other games will not be great due to a distinct lack of widespread advertising. Additionally, their marketing and poor retailer support restricted the rating of this title from being graded higher. Place an order for your average number of copies, and see how well the game fares.*

*– Greg Angelo*
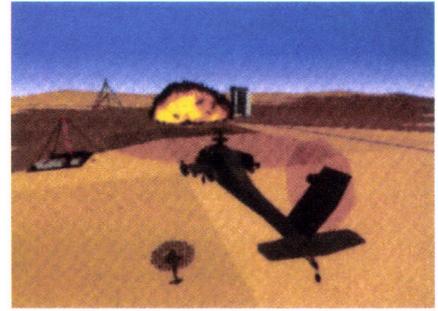
| Title: | Apache |
|---|---|
| Platform: | PC CD |
| Genre: | Flying/Simulation |
| Size: | CD |
| Publisher: | Interactive Magic |
| Developer: | Digital Integration |
| Available: | Now |
| Wholesale: | N/A |
| MSRP: | N/A |
| VGA Rating: | B+ |

There's one reason for the surprising amount of buzz about the new game company Interactive Magic, and his name is Wild Bill Stealey. This retired Air Force pilot is a grizzled veteran of the game industry: he formed MicroProse back in 1982 with Sid Meier (*Civilization, Colonization*) and presided over the company during its mid-'80s glory days. After laying low for a few years following the sale of MicroProse to Spectrum HoloByte, Wild Bill is back with a new venture and a new "hands-on" management style.

*Apache* has already gotten plenty of prerelease coverage in consumer magazines, because it does two things: 1) It harkens back to the days when games put the fun factor ahead of pretty graphics (although *Apache* does have quite nice SVGA visuals), and 2) it looks and plays a bit like MicroProse's classic helicopter sim *Gunship*, and magazine staffers like myself simply love to reminisce about the old days. I get the feeling Interactive Magic knew this, as *Apache* was originally called *Apache Gunship* until Interactive Magic received a not-so-nice letter from Microprose's lawyer-weasels.

**Bottom Line:** *"Apache" is striking a chord with the finicky fans of the flight sim genre, and retailers are noticing. Interactive Magic bragged in a recent letter that, "We have already pre-sold close to 100,000 copies to retailers". Make sure you help boost that figure, because "Apache" looks like a hit.*

*– Zach Meston*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Primal Rage |
| **Platform:** | Super NES |
| **Genre:** | Fighting |
| **Size:** | 3 Megs |
| **Publisher:** | Time Warner Interactive |
| **Developer:** | BitMasters |
| **Available:** | August |
| **Wholesale:** | N/A |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | B |

*Primal Rage* was one of those arcade games that got incredible hype in every gaming magazine under the sun and still did just above average in the end. The game has a lot of good attributes, namely the graphics which are decent, but have incredible animation. The developers have had to make some small changes, they have made the characters physical size smaller, but it really isn't a noticeable difference. The sound has made a faithful translation to the SNES version - almost exact and very good. Time Warner has done a great job of marketing this game thus far and that fact can only help the overall sales.

Unfortunately, the game has some minor problems. The control is slow and the moves are very difficult to do on the Super NES pad. The overall game play is the most important factor in a game and that is where this game is lacking. The best suggestion for the developer is to spend some time tweaking the control. What remains to be seen is what retailer support will be provided.

**Bottom Line:** *"Primal Rage" is an average title, with above average marketing and sellability. The overall game is nothing special, but expect customers to be curious about it due to the original advertising. The game should do very well with rentals and some decent sales, one should order this game above average the first time around and see how it does before going deep.*

*— Sam Hamilton*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Flip Out! |
| **Platform:** | Jaguar |
| **Genre:** | Puzzle |
| **Size:** | 4MB |
| **Publisher:** | Atari |
| **Developer:** | Gorilla Systems Corp. |
| **Available:** | August |
| **Wholesale:** | N/A |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | B |

*Flip Out!* may turn out to be one of the Jaguar's suprise hits this August as Atari introduces this puzzle game with an alien twist. Enter the "Great Tile Flipping Festival" where, simply put, a 3 x 3 grid filled with tiles exists. There are 10 tiles in total, where the one that remains does not belong on the playing field. At the start of each stage, the tiles are sent airborne and must be matched up with their corresponding space on the floor. The 10th tile adds to the frustration of making the proper match. As the game progresses, the levels become more complex and quite different. As strange as this may already sound, aliens run rampant across the playing field causing the player a great deal of grief.

Atari's newest title includes nine different areas of game play, with multiple games per area. There are also four difficulty levels ranging from normal to psychotic, though I must say that normal is fairly ludicrous in itself. Gamers will have a definite eyeful while trying to keep track of the chaos on screen.

**Bottom Line:** *"Flip Out!" is a well executed launch as the first puzzle game for the Jaguar. This title will not spark the interest, nor leave a lasting impression on the world, as Tetris has, but should hold it's own among Jag owners. This title is different enough to catch the eyes of many. This title may be one of Atari's most addicting games to date. Buyers can expect average sales; but "Flip Out!" should rent well.*

*— Aaron Zachlod*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Shin Shinobi Den |
| **Platform:** | Saturn (Japan) |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Available:** | Now (Import) |
| **Wholesale:** | N/A |
| **MSRP:** | N/A |
| **VGA Rating:** | A- |

One of Sega's oldest and most reliable franchises is back for its much-anticipated Japanese Saturn release. Dating back to the days of the Sega Master System, *Shinobi* was among the platform's first successful games. Later on, the name was used in three more Genesis sequels and is now hitting 32-Bit with *Shin Shinobi Den*. This is one of the games that Sega's hardcore audience (the same audience that went out and bought import Saturns) have been waiting for since last Christmas.

The gameplay is, as was hoped, a straightforward enhancement of the older versions, utilizing many of the Saturn's added capabilities. The relatively bland-looking characters of the past have been replaced with live actors and beautiful computer renderings. Countless subtle effects have been added to keep each level interesting. And several delightfully cheesy FMV intermissions were spliced in for good measure. This is exactly what the Saturn's hardware was designed to do best, and it does indeed do it with utter grace.

**Bottom Line:** *"Shin Shinobi Den" is exactly the game it should be. The enhancements were carefully done, and avoid the common flaw of dragging down the overall level of fun. Many US gamers with an eye towards Japan will seek this title out rather than waiting the painful months for an American conversion.*

*— Matt Harding*
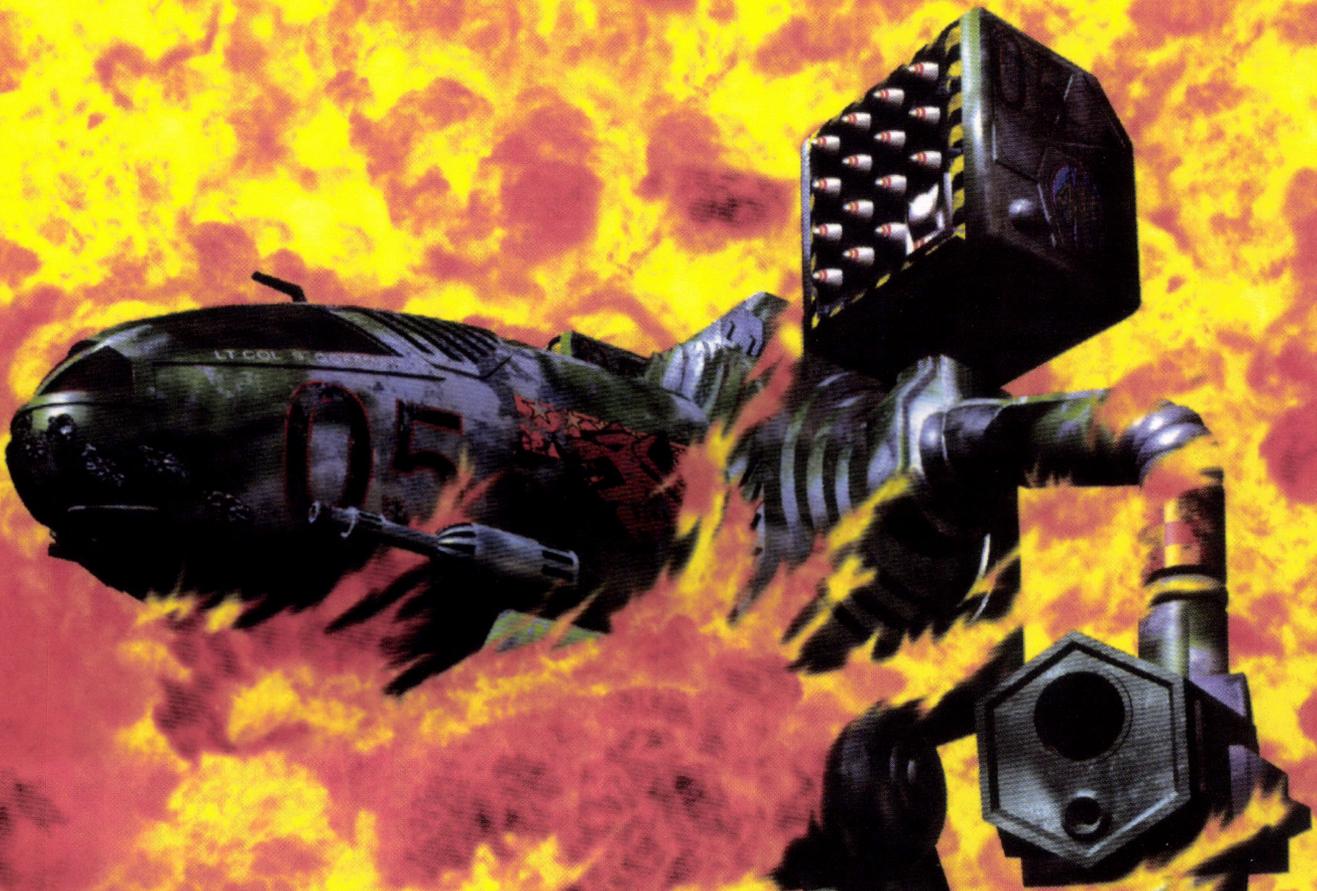
# MECHWARRIOR 2
## 31ST CENTURY COMBAT
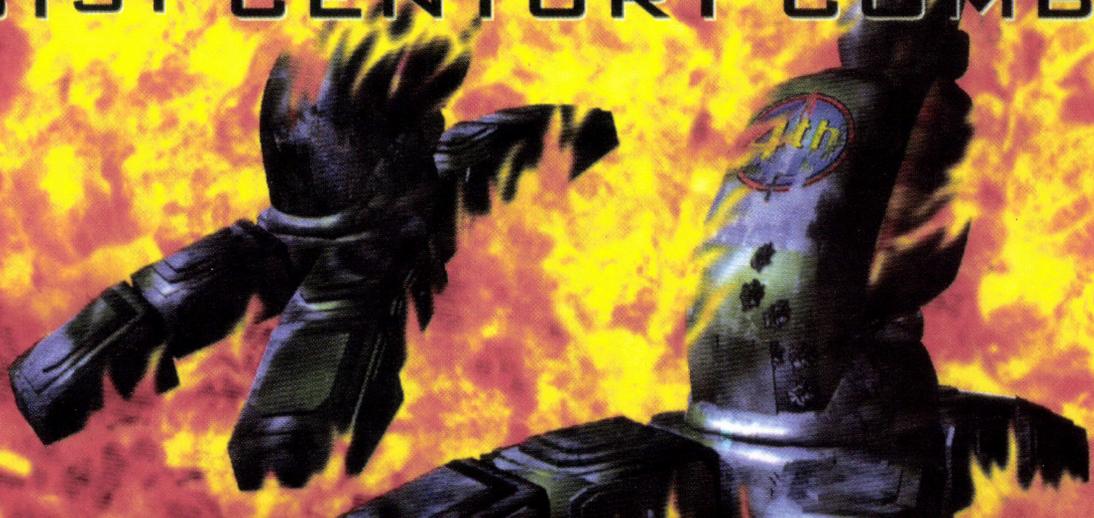
# Cyber Speedway

**By VGA Staff Reporter**



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Cyber Speedway | **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Platform:** | Saturn | **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Genre:** | Racing/Shooter | **Available:** | August |
| **Size:** | CD | | |

*Cyber Speedway* is coming to the Saturn this fall, and promises to be an excellent addition to the system's selection of racing titles. Similar to other hovercar racing games like *Wipe Out* (PSX) and *Hi Octane* (PC CD), *Cyber Speedway* uses a programming engine that is very similar to the highly successful *Daytona USA* and has already been well-received in Japan under the name *Gran Chaser*. With fantastic polygon graphics, lightning-fast game play, and a great two player feature, *Cyber Speedway* should be a big hit when it rolls around to the US. **VGA**

# Power Drive Rally

**By VGA Staff Reporter**
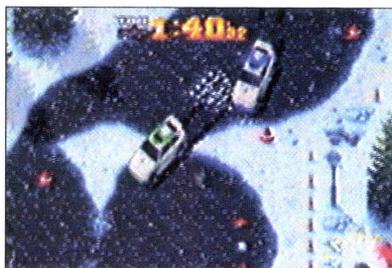


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Power Drive Rally | **Publisher:** | Atari |
| **Platform:** | Jaguar | **Developer:** | Time Warner Inter. |
| **Genre:** | Racing | **Available:** | August |
| **Size:** | N/A | | |

As a few of us here at VGA will agree, Power Drive Rally could possibly be the best Jag game to date. Control of the vehicle takes place at a 3/4 perspective through dirt, snow and mud. TWI has gone to great lengths insuring that the finest of details find their way into this cart. From head lights and break lights, to the light source shaded car, Power Drive Rally should prove to be a major hit this August among Jaguar owners. The game is an absolute blast to play and should appeal to all Jag customers you may have. **VGA**

PREVIEW

VIDEO GAME ADVISOR

# Fade To Black

**By VGA Staff Reporter**

**Title:** Fade To Black
**Platform:** PC CD, PSX
**Genre:** 3D Shooter/Quest
**Size:** CD
**Publisher:** EA Studio
**Developer:** Delphine Software
**Available:** September (PC), November (PSX)

*Unlike its predecessor, "Fade to Black" takes place within a full-fledged 3D environment.*

Years after the successful original, Delphine Software is back with the sequel to *Flashback*, titled *Fade to Black* (previously *Crossfire*). Picking up where the last one left off, Conrad (the main character) finds that his drifting escape pod has been pulled aboard an alien vessel of the same origin as the planet he just destroyed. The less than pleased aliens throw him into a cell, where he is promptly sprung by a group of rebels. Conrad must find his way out of the alien ship and back to Earth in time to stop the new invasion.

*Fade to Black* departs from the platform-based original by taking place within a full-fledged 3D environment, very similar to the recent PC title, *Bio-Forge*. Advanced motion capturing technology was used to convert the fluid movement of a live actor into a detailed polygon framework for Conrad's bofy. The game blends a puzzle-solving quest adventure with sporadic alien shoot-outs and excellent cinemas to create a well-rounded successor to the first. Take note however, as is the case with many recent PC titles, users will need a strong processor to deal with the hefty amount of polygons. Some PC owners may be alienated by the game's hardware demands.

This should be a big hit for EA Studio on both PC and its eventual conversion to the PlayStation. Delphine has developed a strong reputation among players for developing quality products, and will no doubt enhance this reputation with their latest outing. Be prepared for *Fade to Black* to be a big 4th quarter success. **VGA**

# The Ooze

**By VGA Staff Reporter**
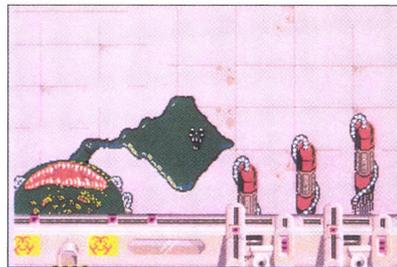




| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | The Ooze | **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Platform:** | Genesis | **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Genre:** | Adventure | **Available:** | August |
| **Size:** | N/A | | |

One of the most original adventure games to be released in a long time, *The Ooze*, will be coming out on the Genesis late this summer. When the mild-mannered scientist, Dr.Caine, stumbles onto his bosses plans to release a deadly virus on the Earth, he is captured and exposed to radioactive matter, thereby transforming him into The Ooze. The player must control this hunk of green slime through challenging levels, battling genetic mutations and other biohazards in an attempt to save the world from this diabolical force. As it devours enemies, the ooze's size increases in a *Blob*-like fashion, and when damaged it shrinks down to a more weildy but less threatening puddle. The Ooze is a maze-oriented adventure game that sets itself far apart from the pack with its one-of-a-kind main character and unique style of play. If gamers prove to be hungry for something different, The Ooze could end up being one of the surprise hits of the fall season. **VGA**

# Fight For Life

**By VGA Staff Reporter**





| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Fight for Life | **Publisher:** | Atari |
| **Platform:** | Jaguar | **Developer:** | Atari |
| **Genre:** | Fighting | **Available:** | July |
| **Size:** | N/A | | |

Now that both buyers and consumers have probably been scared to death of this titles reputation, please read on. *Fight for Life* needed some serious adjustments and Atari has come through. Set in hell, players have the choice of eight different fighters striving for the chance to gain redemption and live again. As they defeat each opponent, players can select up to two of each fighter's five special moves. The special moves that can be pulled off replicate other games in this genre, but remain interesting nonetheless. Visually, the game looks like a cross between Tekken and FX Fighter. The polygons actually remain intact during each bout. *Fight for Life* should do very well among the Jaguars user base. Atari's software lineup and reduced hardware price will prove highly attractive to consumers in the months to come. **VGA**

# Earthworm Jim 2

**By VGA Staff Reporter**
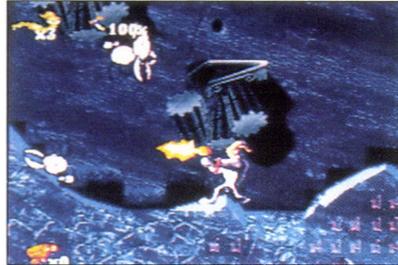
**Title:** Earthworm Jim 2
**Platform:** Super NES, Genesis
**Genre:** Side-Scroller
**Size:** 3 MB
**Publisher:** Playmates Interactive
**Developer:** Shiny Entertainment
**Available:** October

The hottest new videogame character in the past year, *Earthworm Jim*, is getting ready to hit console systems once again in the guaranteed success, *Earthworm Jim 2.* This time out, Jim has lost his job as a fry-cook and decides to head off to the Planet of the Monsters with his trusty sidekick, Snott. While in search of Divine Revelation, Jim's problems begin mounting up. Over the course of 7 levels, Jim must save a litter of six-hundred falling puppies with nothing but a marshmallow and his wits about him, fly through a butcher shop, cope with being turned into a blind cave salamander trapped in a demonic fun house, battle the paperwork from a million lawyers, save his cows from attacking aliens, and rescue Princess-What's-Her-Name from an arranged marriage with the evil Psycrow. The new and improved Jim features five slick weapons, hidden special moves, and the ability to exploit Snott's elasticisity by using him as either a parachute or a rope swing.

With a cartoon series in the works, a line of action figures, a comic book, trading cards, a rumored motion picture in development, and the aforementioned videogame sequel, *Earthworm Jim* is turning into a very popular franchise. By the time this game is ready to hit shelves, the momentum should have already begun to make Jim a major household name. This industry is heavily reliant on "pre-sold" character licenses to make successful games, which is why the first Earthworm Jim was such a surprise hit. But this time around, Jim should have the mass-market recognition to sell even stronger than the original. **VGA**

# Waterworld

**By VGA Staff Reporter**





**Title:**       Waterworld
**Platform:**   SNES, GEN, SAT, JAG
**Genre:**      Side-Scroller
**Size:**       N/A
**Publisher:**  Ocean
**Developer:**  Ocean
**Available:**  3rd Quarter

The highly anticipated, outrageously expensive Sci-fi epic, *Waterworld*, will be hitting theaters nationwide this month, and who better to do the inevitable videogame conversion than Ocean of America (coincidence?). The game will be released on a multitude of platforms this year and will carry with it the marketing strength of a multi-million dollar ad campaign. In the film, the melting of the polar ice-caps have caused a severe rise in the world's sea-levels, drowning out all of the Earth's continents and resulting in one massive body of water. What is left of mankind must say goodbye to land and attempt to survive in the brutal open-water. The story centers around The Mariner (played by Kevin Costner), as he goes on a perilous voyage, attempting to find a mythical piece of land believed by some to still exist. Players act as the Mariner, and must traverse the many levels of side-scrolling game play, interspersed with 3D battle sequences aboard the mighty Trimaran. This task would be surprisingly simple, were it not for the constant onslaught of the evil band of pillagers, the Smokers, led by Dennis Hopper's character, Deacon. The side-scrolling levels appear standard yet reliable, and the Trimaran sailing portions boast advanced 3D graphics features like light sourcing, and texture mapping. The game play seems to be in place for a hit title, but as is the case with most movie-to-game translations, it will rely heavily on the success or failure of the film.

Ocean will be designing several console versions of the game, while Interplay has acquired the rights to release their own version on other platforms. **VGA**

PREVIEW
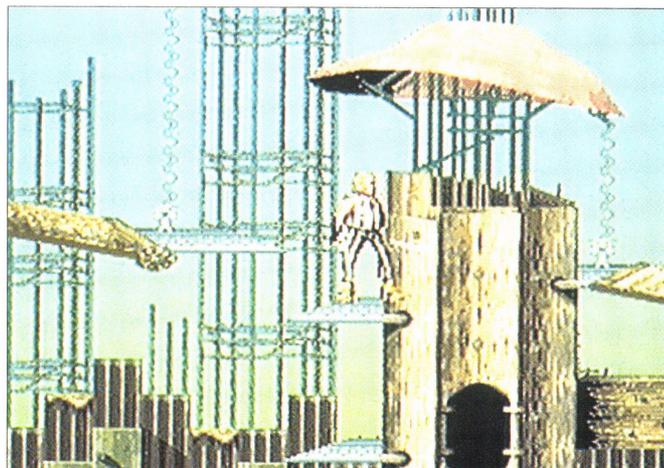
# Panic in the Park

**By VGA Staff Reporter**





| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Panic in the Park | **Publisher:** | WarnerActive |
| **Platform:** | PC CD | **Developer:** | WEA Visual Ent. |
| **Genre:** | Quest/Puzzle | **Available:** | August |
| **Size:** | 3 CDs | | |

The latest entry into the *7th Guest/Myst* puzzle-adventure genre, *Panic in the Park*, is an extravagant new "interactive movie" from the makers of the game *Blown Away*. It positions the player as the potential saviour of an amusement park. The young inheritess of the park is on the verge of losing her claim in court, and asks you to turn the tides by exploring the grounds in search of evidence. In order to find this evidence, the player is going to need to solve a slew of increasingly difficult puzzles. High production values mark the FMV clips, and slick 3D renderings provide all of the in-game movement. The amount of money put into this product, virtually guarantees that it will have a strong presence in its category. **VGA**

# Arc the Lad

**By VGA Staff Reporter**





| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Arc the Lad | **Publisher:** | G-Craft |
| **Platform:** | PlayStation | **Developer:** | Sony Comp. Ent. |
| **Genre:** | RPG | **Available:** | 4th Quarter |
| **Size:** | CD | | |

G-Craft is the 32-Bit subsidy of Squaresoft, and *Arc the Lad* is the first creation from the relatively new 3rd party manufacturer. RPGs are one of the most popular genre's in Japan, and are becoming increasingly more popular in the United States. Arc the Lad has been hyped for months in its Japanese PSX form, and import consumers have been waiting patiently for it.

Squaresoft makes some of the best RPG's in the world, and hopefully G-Craft will continue that trend. *Arc the Lad* takes a great story and puts richly detailed graphics and sound combination in along with it. G-Craft will hopefully take Square's reputation and carry it to the 32-Bit platforms. Sony Computer Entertainment will be releasing this one for their PlayStation and it is quickly becoming the platform of choice, add to it a great role-playing game and Sony has a true winner. **VGA**

VIDEO GAME ADVISOR

# Grand Slam Baseball

**By VGA Staff Reporter**





| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Grand Slam Baseball | **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Platform:** | Saturn | **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Genre:** | Baseball | **Available:** | August |
| **Size:** | CD | | |

*Grand Slam Baseball* will be Sega's first 32-Bit baseball game for the Saturn, coming late this summer. Known as *Greatest Nine* in Japan, *Grand Slam* promises great graphics and incredible game play. It will allow players the chance to play a full season while tracking statistics, as well as a slew of other great options. Sega has developed a track record for great sport titles and *Grand Slam* will, no doubt, continue this trend. This title should be for the Saturn, what *World Series Baseball* was for the Genesis. And perhaps even more so, given the fact that it will at first be the only game to fill this popular genre. **VGA**

# Astral

**By VGA Staff Reporter**





| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title:** | Astal | **Publisher:** | Sega |
| **Platform:** | Saturn | **Developer:** | Sega |
| **Genre:** | Side-scroller | **Available:** | September |
| **Size:** | CD | | |

It is apparent that Sega has no intention of letting their Saturn fall to the level of "vaporware" in public perception. As a result, they are pushing and will continue to push their in-house developers to supply the Saturn with a steady stream of titles, one of which is the side-scroller, *Astal*. With brilliant character animation and elegant backgrounds that appear to be lifted directly from some expensive piece of Renaissance artwork, *Astal* is a graphical achievement. Beyond that however, the game seems confined to the the typical trappings of the average side-scroller. The title character must work his way through several beautifully drawn levels with the help of his flying sidekick. *Astal* should fair relatively well in the declining side-scroller market, especially with the strong demand for more Saturn titles, but shows little technical superiority that would launch it above normal expectations. **VGA**

VIDEO GAME ADVISOR

# Batman Forever

**By VGA Staff Reporter**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Batman Forever |
| **Platform:** | SNES, GEN, 32X, SAT, PC CD |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller/Fighting |
| **Size:** | N/A (Cartridge), CD |
| **Publisher:** | Acclaim |
| **Developer:** | Acclaim |
| **Available:** | September |

The quintessential summer movie blockbuster is now being readied for a wide-band videogame release. Scheduled for an early September release, *Batman Forever* will utilize digital images of costumed actors and detailed backgrounds to recreate the look and feel of the movie. Players can take on both the Riddler and Two-Face in Gotham City, the Bat Cave, Arkham Asylum, the Riddler's lair and more, using a vast asortment of weapons and the help of 'boy-wonder' Robin. This is a very hot property that will probably become one of the top-selling movie-to-game titles in years.

The rule of thumb with the success of movie-to-game titles is usually that its sales will be a direct reflection of the film's impact among the prime game-playing demographic. If this proves to be true, the game should blow the doors off of all competition on its 16-Bit incarnations, and make a similar although slightly refined mark on the Saturn and PC markets. *Batman Forever* pulled in the biggest opening-weekend gross of all time this June, and a large portion of those tickets are guaranteed to have been bought by videogame-playing consumers. This game is a guaranteed hot renter, and is likely to be able to persuade many bat-enthusiasts to shell out the cash to buy it on the basis of its title alone. With all of the pre-release advertising, and consumer magazine editorial devoted to Acclaim's new motion capture studio, this title should do better than the recently released, *Batman: The Animated series* games. **VGA**

# Mortal Kombat 3

**By VGA Staff Reporter**

VIDEO GAME ADVISOR

**Title:** Mortal Kombat 3
**Platform:** PlayStation
**Genre:** Arcade Fighting
**Size:** CD
**Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment
**Developer:** Midway
**Available:** October

*Mortal Kombat 3* is probably the most popular game in the arcade's today, thereby continuing the most successful arcade series in history.  Since the debut of the original *Mortal Kombat* in 1992 it has created an immensely loyal following. It is the aforementioned audience that makes it such a lucrative business to bring them home to the platforms.

Midway has continued the trend with their newest installment in the series - *Mortal Kombat 3*. They have made another top quality arcade game worthy of its label. The most noticeable difference between this one and the previous two are the number of new characters. Midway has added 7 'all new' characters to this one, and completely new backgrounds. MK3 also has new and improved graphics and sound to go along with its great plot. The great Shao Kahn has crossed through from the Outworld, and conquered the Earth. As a result, the  Mortal Kombatants of sequels past, must once again attempt to ascend the ranks of all other fighters in order to square of against Shao himself, saving the world and its inhabitants.

Sony and Midway have combined efforts in order to create a perfect arcade translation. The version that we played at the Electronic Entertainment Expo was sixty percent complete and was perfect, minus some of the moves and fatalities. Sony has grabbed the exclusive rights to this one and will have it out on their brand spankin' new platform a month early. What remains to be seen is if Midway will market the product as efficiently as Acclaim has done in the past. Regardless, Mortal freaks everywhere will go crazy for this one. **VGA**

# Super Mario World 2

**By VGA Staff Reporter**



**Editorial**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Super Mario World 2 |
| **Platform:** | Super NES |
| **Genre:** | Side-Scroller |
| **Size:** | N/A |
| **Publisher:** | Nintendo |
| **Developer:** | Nintendo |
| **Available:** | 4th Quarter |

*The selling power of this game may actually be enough to dwarve even Mario's longtime nemesis Donkey Kong in his sequel.*

It's been 4 long years since the last full-fledged Mario side-scroller was released and to put it lightly, things have changed. In fact, an entire generation of videogames has come and gone since the last time Mario starred in his own Super Nintendo game. But it's time now for a character who has sold over 100 million cartridges, and whose cultural status rates close to that of Mickey Mouse and Superman to leap out of his mothball-infested grave and back onto the SNES this Christmas in Yoshi's Island: Super Mario World 2. Nintendo managed to keep this earth-shaking title pretty much under wraps through the E3, but VGA was able to get the exclusive.

The game looks fantastic! This time out, Mario appears to be pretty much glued to Yoshi's back, utilizing his freakishly long tongue, polka-dotted egg-laying capability and various other mutant traits. The bosses are enormous, using just about every visual effect of which the Super NES is capable, from transparencys to Mode 7 rotation as well as Nintendo's heavily touted SuperFX2 chip. The game play appears equal, at the very least, to its predecessors which says a lot.

The selling power of this game may actually be enough to dwarve even Mario's longtime nemesis Donkey Kong in his sequel, Diddy Kong's Quest. For a company whose Christmas '95 prospects seemed doomed by the unfortunate delay of the Ultra 64, Nintendo appears to be gearing up for a surprisingly strong 4th quarter showing. Make room on your shelves for this one! **VGA**

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JULY 1995

PREVIEW

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    ❏ Dealerscope Merchandising
    ❏ Variety

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# The Need For Speed

**By VGA Staff Reporter**
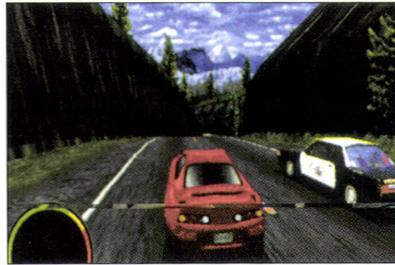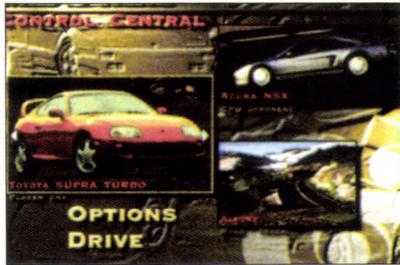




| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | The Need For Speed |
| **Platform:** | PC CD |
| **Genre:** | Racing |
| **Size:** | CD |
| **Publisher:** | EA |
| **Developer:** | EA Studio |
| **Available:** | October |

*We expect to review the final product as a definite A-title.*

One of the all time best racing simulation games is now being prepared for a conversion onto the PC. Released last year on the 3DO, The Need For Speed was and is an incredibly realistic driving simulator where the player chooses from a selection of the world's best exotic cars, in the color of their choice of course, and races them through a variety of unsuspecting commuter-filled highways. This was one of the 3DO's top-selling titles, and is certain to impress PC owners who have always embraced realistic simulators of any kind.

The enhancements over the 3DO version are apparent in almost every facet of this game, and are never anything short of staggering. The Full Motion Video is possibly the best seen on any piece of software playing on any hardware platform short of those using MPEG compression, and runs almost as well on a 486/33 as it does on a Pentium 90, thereby increasing the potential customer base. The racing itself needed no improvement, but due to its new platform it now utilizes the wide array of input devices available on PC's, and is able to run in breathtakingly crisp graphics modes (for the technically inclined, its highest setting is 1024x768). The addition of 8 person networkable play, several new circular tracks, and testosterone-gushing effects like tire-smoke and skid marks make Need For Speed PC appear to have no chance of being anything less than one of the Christmas season's top-selling PC titles. We expect to review the final product as a definite A-title. **VGA**

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## TOP TEN

*VGA's List of TOP TENS*

### Top Ten Videogame Titles
1. **Slam N' Jam** (3DO)
2. **Ogre Battle** (SNS)
3. **Gex** (3DO)
4. **Eternal Champions** (SCD)
5. **Judge Dredd** (GEN)
6. **EarthBound** (SNS)
7. **Need For Speed** (3DO)
8. **Looney Toons B-Ball** (SNS)
9. **Judge Dredd** (SNS)
10. **World Series '95** (SNS)

### Top Ten PC CD Titles
1. **Flight Unlimited**
2. **Flight Simulator 5.1**
3. **Myst**
4. **Full Throttle**
5. **D'Zone**
6. **Virtural Pool**
7. **The Ultimate Doom**
8. **Dark Forces**
9. **FX Fighter**
10. **Johnny Mnemonic**

### Top Ten Import Titles
1. **Shin Shinobi Den** (SAT)
2. **Tekken** (PSX)
3. **D's Diner** (3DO)
4. **Toh Shin Den** (PSX)
5. **Daytona USA** (SAT)
6. **Fatal Fury 3** (NCD)
7. **Greatest 9 Baseball** (SAT)
8. **Jumping Flash** (PSX)
9. **Panzer Dragoon** (SAT)
10. **Gunner's Heaven** (PSX)