


The videogame magazine

March 1999
Issue 4 £2.70

Amaze



NUDE, BLONDE LARA
Admit it. You're intrigued. Page 15

 **MARIO'S BACK**
And he's having a party
on Nintendo 64

CENSORED!
The videogames they
wouldn't let you see.
(We've got pictures)

**"BEST PLAYSTATION
GAME EVER"**
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 **BE A VIDEOGAME FOOTBALL
LEGEND THIS SATURDAY**

GOAL!
Premiership
stars pick the
footy games
you must play

KEEGAN
"Videogames
are becoming
scarily like the
real thing"

**SCORE
LIKE OWEN!**
We show you how
to beat your mates

**CHEAT LIKE
MARADONA!**
...and how to be
a complete git

WILLY CUPP



WITH JUST VIVA FOOTBALL AND A PLAYSTATION HE CAN CHANGE FOOTBALL HISTORY.

WILLY MAKES AN AMAZING DISCOVERY.

CRUIKEY! WHAT AN INTERESTING YET HIGHLY AFFORDABLE NEW TITLE.



SUDDENLY WILLY IS TRANSPORTED TO 1986. IT'S ENGLAND VS ARGENTINA.

LUMMIE, THEY CERTAINLY LOOK LIKE THE BUNCH OF CHEATS EVERYONE SAYS THEY ARE.



I SEE NOTHING. PLAY ON.



THEN...

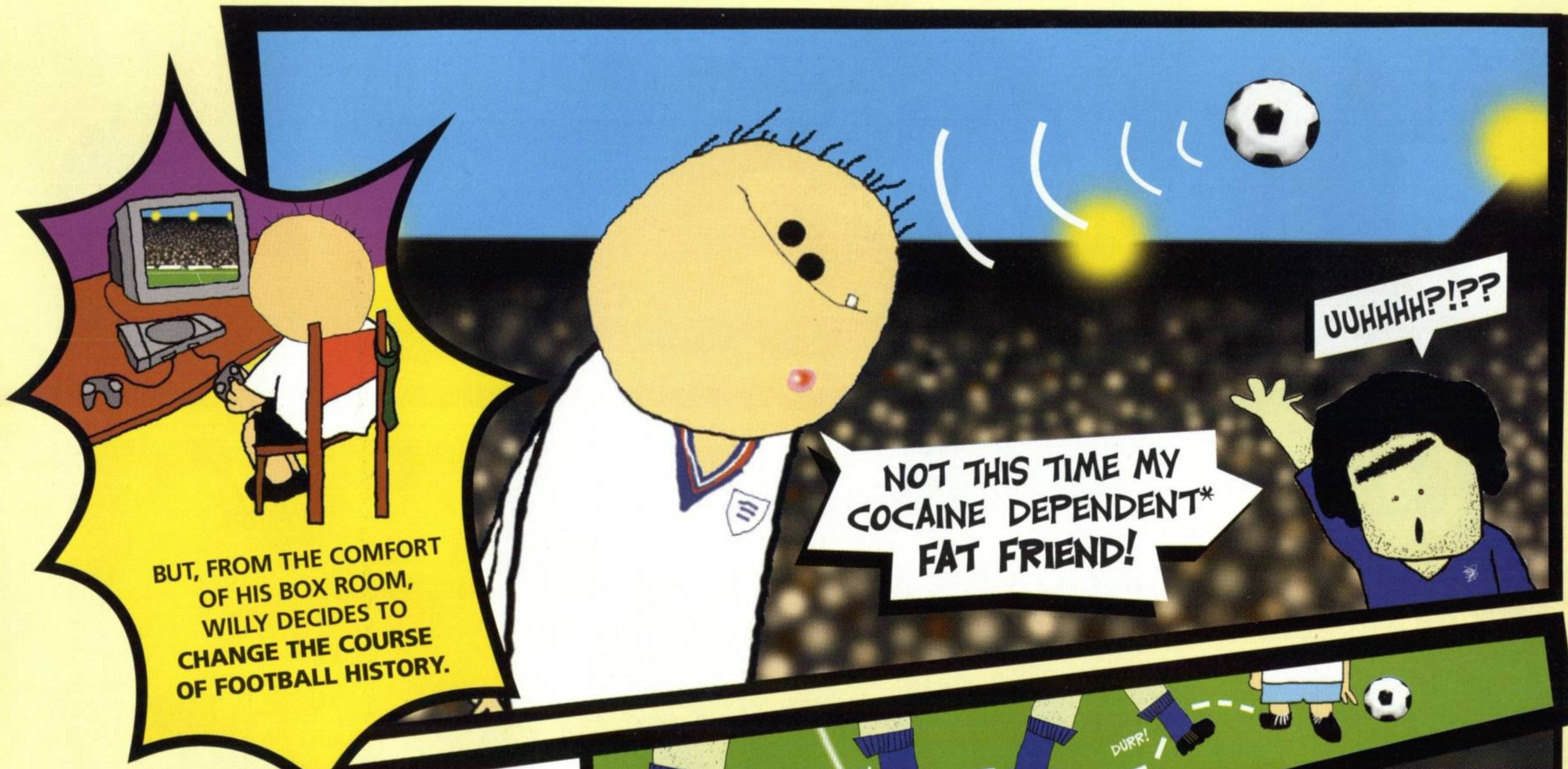
I SEE NOTHING. PLAY ON.

THEY'VE GOT THE SKILL ALRIGHT BUT SEEM TO PREFER PLAYING DIRTY.



I CANNOT REACH THE BALL I MUST CHEAT!

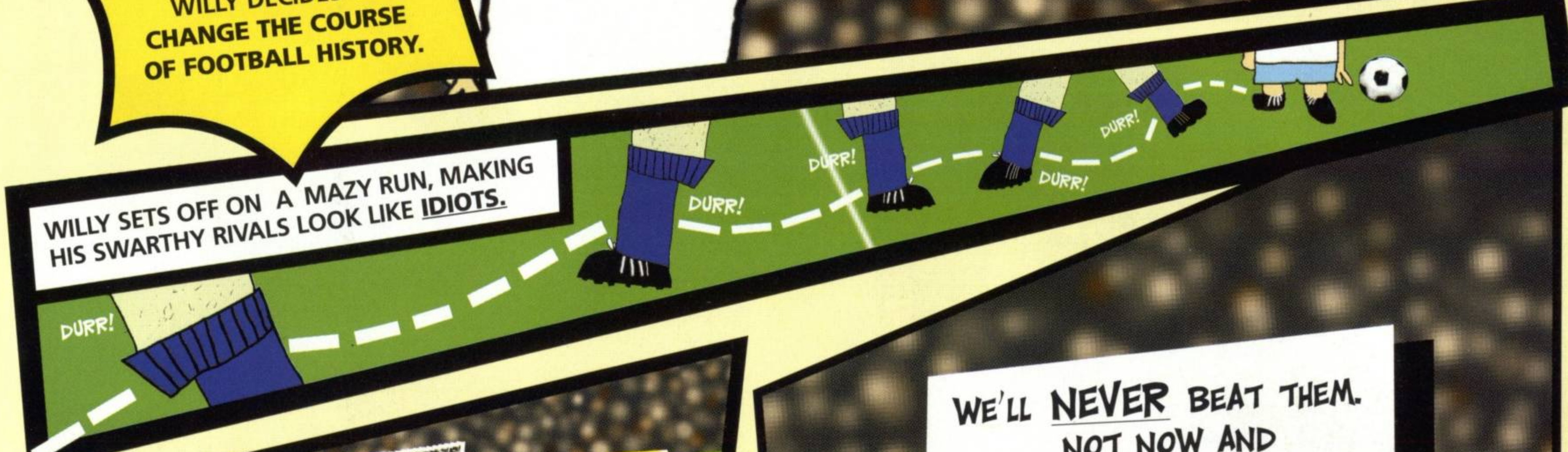




BUT, FROM THE COMFORT OF HIS BOX ROOM, WILLY DECIDES TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF FOOTBALL HISTORY.

NOT THIS TIME MY COCAINE DEPENDENT* FAT FRIEND!

UUHHHH?!??



WILLY SETS OFF ON A MAZY RUN, MAKING HIS SWARTHY RIVALS LOOK LIKE IDIOTS.

DURR!

DURR!

DURR!

DURR!

DURR!



YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT'S MAGNIFICENT!

THAT'S FANTASTIC!

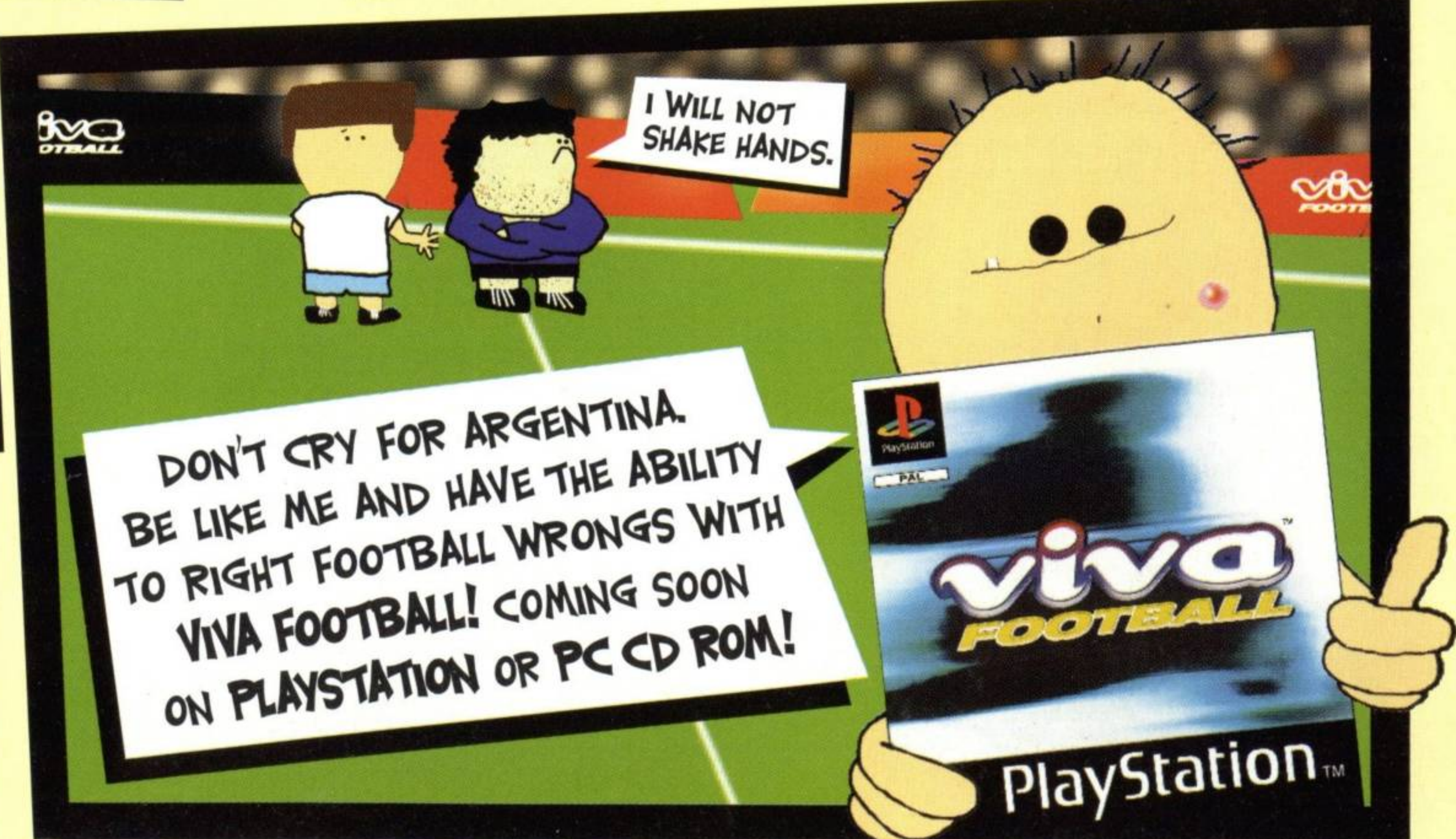


WE'LL NEVER BEAT THEM. NOT NOW AND DEFINITELY NOT IN 1998.



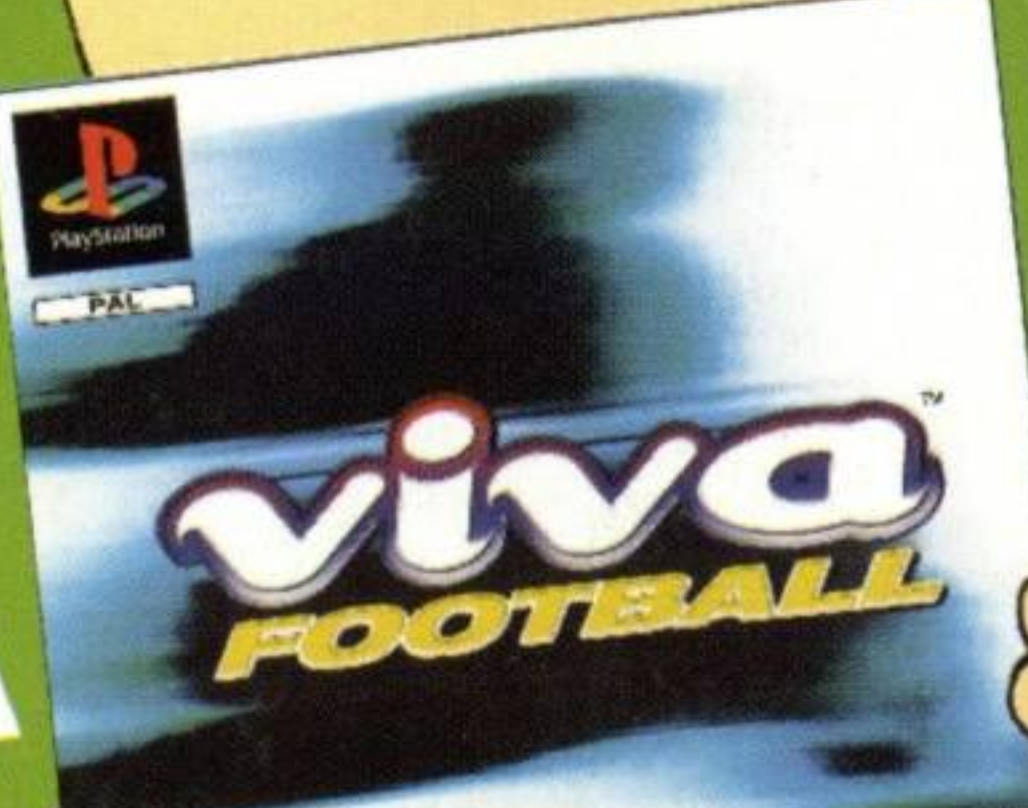
ENGLAND 2 ARGENTINA 1

BAH! WERE IT NOT FOR THE INNOVATIVE GAMEPLAY OF WILLY CUPP AND VIVA FOOTBALL OUR OILY TACTICS WOULD SURELY HAVE WONNED US THE GAME.



I WILL NOT SHAKE HANDS.

DON'T CRY FOR ARGENTINA. BE LIKE ME AND HAVE THE ABILITY TO RIGHT FOOTBALL WRONGS WITH VIVA FOOTBALL! COMING SOON ON PLAYSTATION OR PC CD ROM!



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* ALLEGEDLY

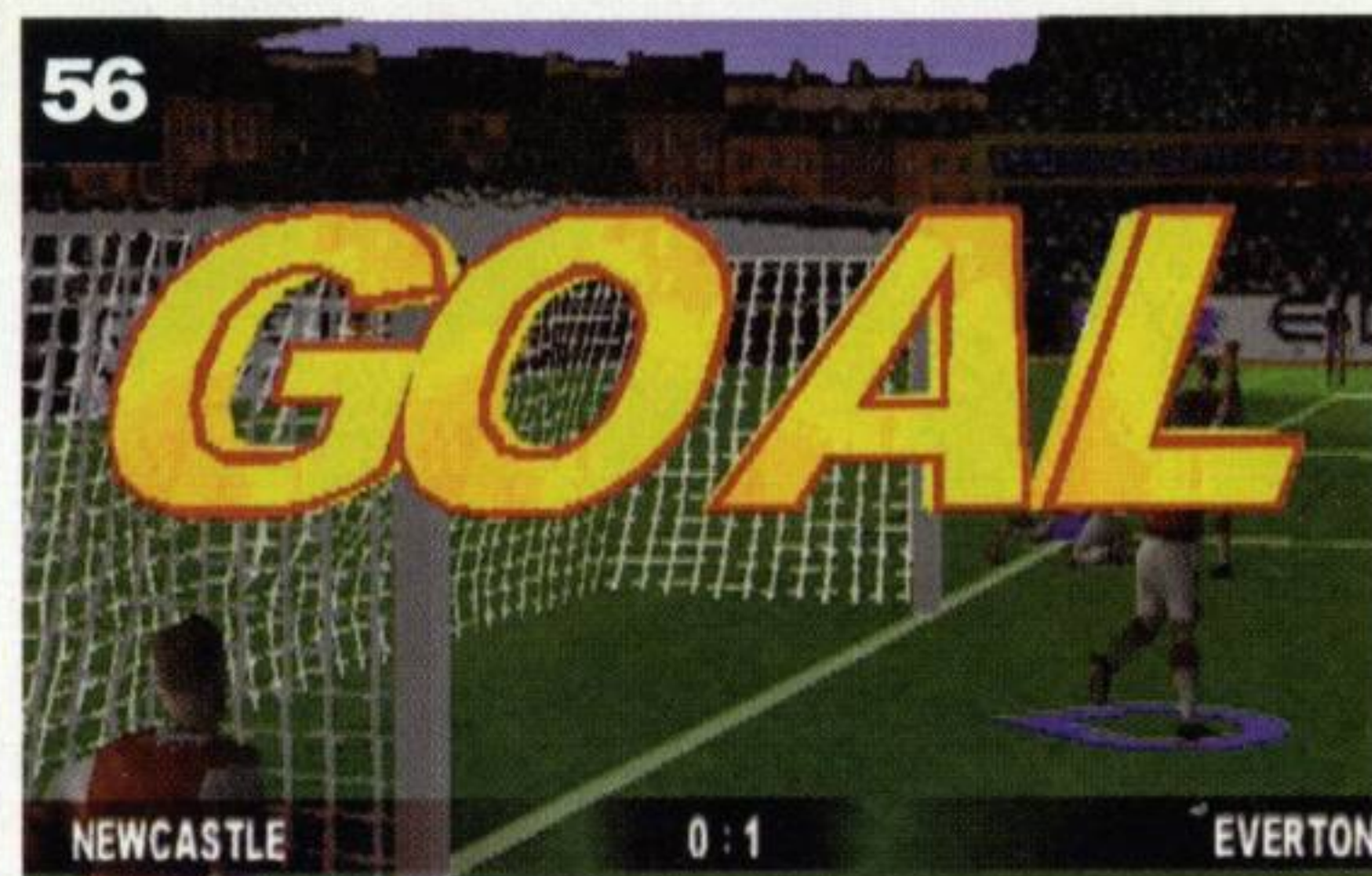
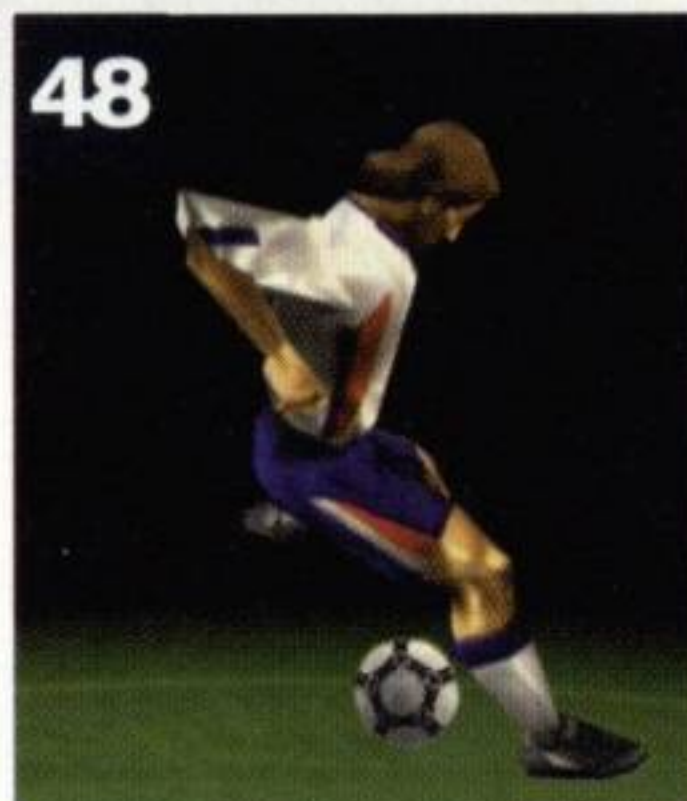
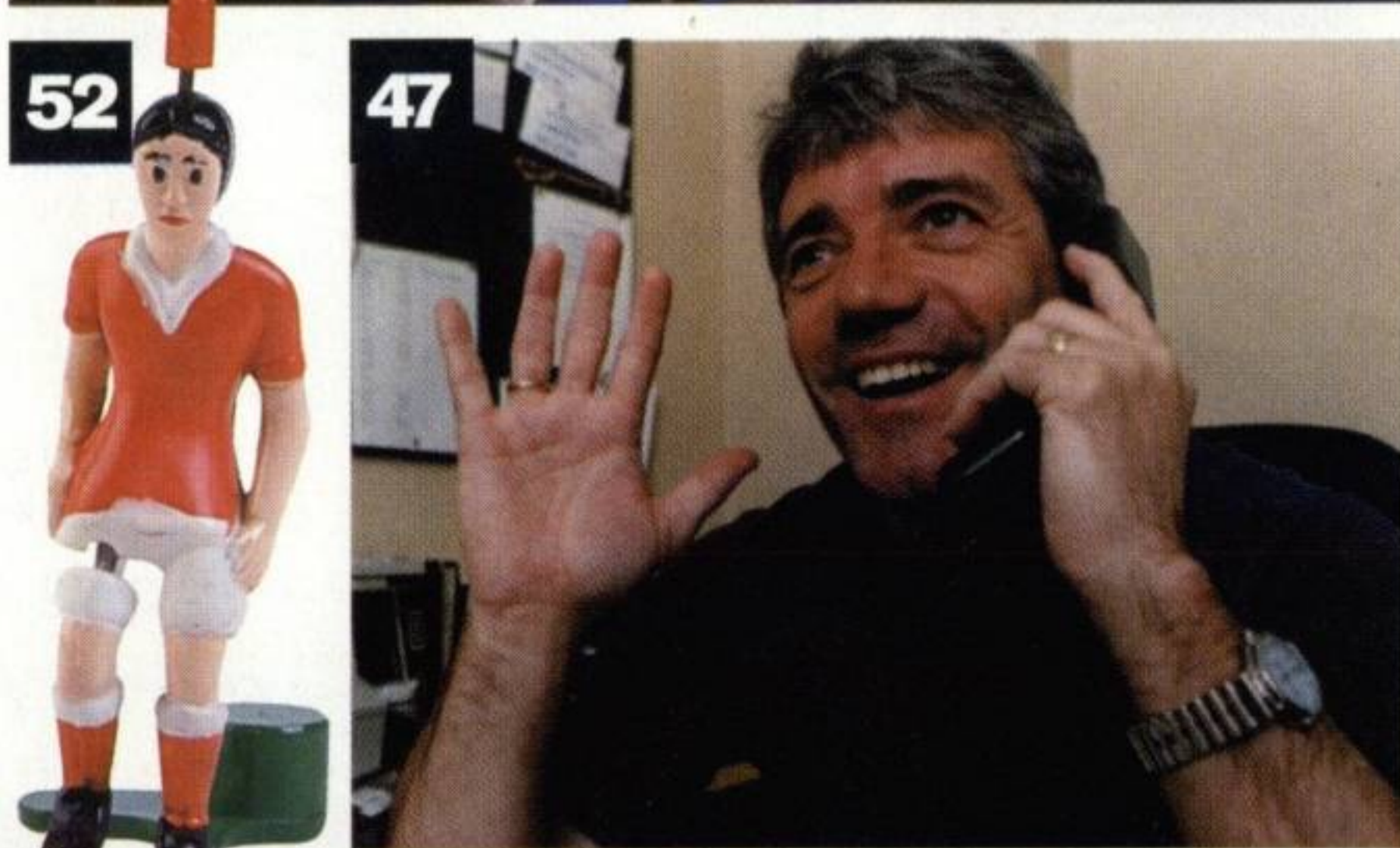


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This year's new crop of games.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALLSPORT, ROB SCOTT

THE TOP 50 MOST BIZARRE GAMING MOMENTS

When it comes to making games, there are rules. Princesses must be rescued, baddies killed with guns and combatants raised on the streets of either Detroit or Chicago. But some developers don't seem to realise this - particularly those that come from a certain game-obsessed Oriental nation.

74 Hang on. What was all *that* about? Revealed: when games get strange.

120 Sim City 3000 New York's all very well, but you could do better.



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We've got the story *and* the pictures.

1999



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The videogame magazine

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Cover Beckham & Owen (Allsport)

■ Mario's back and having a party on page 134.

A Review

The Ultimate Game Buyer's Guide

108 New PlayStation Games

New releases: *Metal Gear Solid, Premier Manager '99, Viva Football, X Games Pro Boarders, Rally Cross 2, Street Fighter Zero 3, Wild Arms, The Granstream Saga, Global Domination, Eliminator.*

"Platinum" budget games: *Mickey's Wild Adventure, 4 PlayStation Multipack.*

Import game: *Ehrgeiz.*

138 Other Systems

Coin-op: *House of the Dead II.*
Game Boy Color: *Zelda: Link's Awakening DX, 720°, Bugs and Lola Bunny, Hollywood Pinball, The Smurfs' Nightmare.*
Mac: *Future Cop: LAPD.*

140 Game Accessories

Okay, let's get some custom accessories and see what this baby can really do.

144 Entertainment Extra

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144 Books
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116 New PC Games

New releases: *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri, Sim City 3000, Viper Racing, Delta Force, Sanitarium, Speed Busters, Myth II, Falcon 4.0, Fighter Squadron, Ultimate Soccer Manager, Mad Trax, Beavis & Butthead: Bung-hole in One, Deo Gratias.*

Budget games: *3D Ultra Pinball 3, Apache Longbow, Baldies, Blizzard Pack, Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko, Phantasmagoria II: A Puzzle of Flesh, Rayman, Star Wars: Supremacy, Terminal Velocity, This Means War, Wing Commander, Prophecy Classic, X-wing Vs TIE Fighter.*

128 New N64 Games

New releases: *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron, Micro Machines 64 Turbo.*
Import game: *Mario Party.*

136 New Dreamcast Games

Import games: *Incoming, Tetris 4D, Seventh Cross*



■ Metal Gear Solid. It's great. And on page 108.

46 Zelda 64
Have you played it yet?
You should buy an N64 just for this.

Every issue | It's a monster.

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All the videogame news that's fit to print.

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Okay, so *Messiah's* Laya is a whore. But a nice whore.

36 Nolan Bushnell

It's all his fault! He started the videogame industry when he invented *Pong* and Atari.

88 Kick ass

Stuck on a game? Want to embarrass your mates? We show you how. Oh yes.

100 Games Night

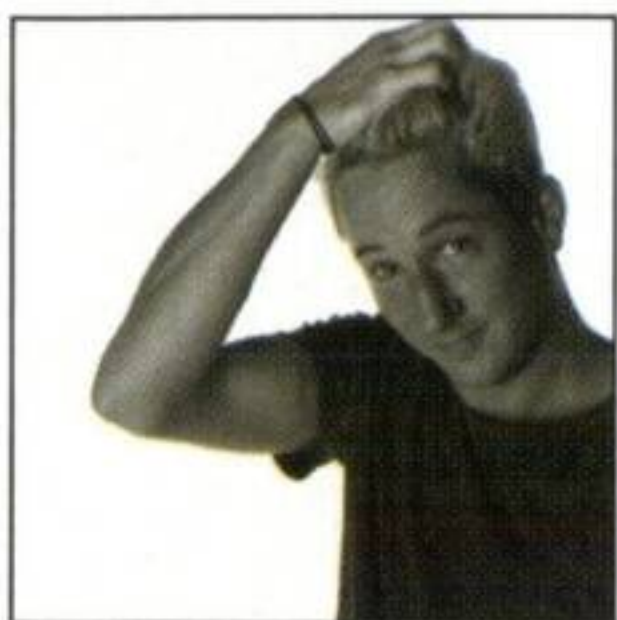
Vindaloo on the sofa. Broken plates. Bruises. Puddles of spilled lager. It can only mean you've had your mates round to play fighting games.

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EDITORIAL

Football crazy



With
Neil West,
Editor

Sorry Scotland. Sorry Wales. Sorry Northern Ireland. And sorry everyone else we may have offended by screaming "Play for England!" on the front cover this month. You don't have to play for England if you don't want to. You can play for whatever team you want. And that's the beauty of videogames, right? You can goof around doing all sorts of things that, ordinarily, you don't get the chance to do in real life.

For me, an 18-year old Michael Owen sticking it to the Argies in the World Cup was final proof that I'd never play for England. I'm an old man of 29, but until last summer I'd always kidded myself – in some dim corner of my brain – that, if I worked hard enough and got *really* fit, I could still make it happen. Owen knackered all that.

Cheers.

But I can still play for England in front of my TV. What's more, I can do it with three of my best mates, a can of lager within easy reach and as many kebabs as I like. And it's a thoroughly good laugh.

Of course, no form of entertainment should ever take the place of real life experience. But videogames let us do things and go places that no one person could achieve in a lifetime of adventure. Unlike TV or movies, games let us be a participant, not just a powerless observer. They offer us a starring role, not a front row seat. The best thing about playing a videogame is that there's no predetermined outcome. Your future is in your hands.

Anyway, enough rambling. I've got to go. Shaquille O'Neal's feeling a bit queasy so I'm starting center for the LA Lakers tonight. Tip-off's in just five minutes.

See ya...

Neil West
Editor

Rants & Raves

Some people write to the BBC. Some write to pen pals in exotic countries. Some people write to Arcade to share with the world their thoughts on videogames.

Every month we delve into the murky recesses of Neil's desk, and retrieve all the letters he's thrown away in disgust, lost, spilt tea on or put "somewhere for safekeeping because we can use that". Then we drag him away from *Half-Life*, give him some clean pants, sit him down and make him answer them. About half an hour later we sit behind him with a big stick and we make him answer them again. Politely this time.

Sure, he moans, but that's only the flickering images of alien hordes swimming in his brain. And this month he's had to justify *South Park*, Shigeru Miyamoto and yet more half-naked women.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Wars games

Last month you wrote a worrying story, regarding the use of EA simulators to map the US/UK use of force in the Gulf region ("Game Over For Iraq", *Arcade* 2). This just got too close to the bone and scared me shitless.

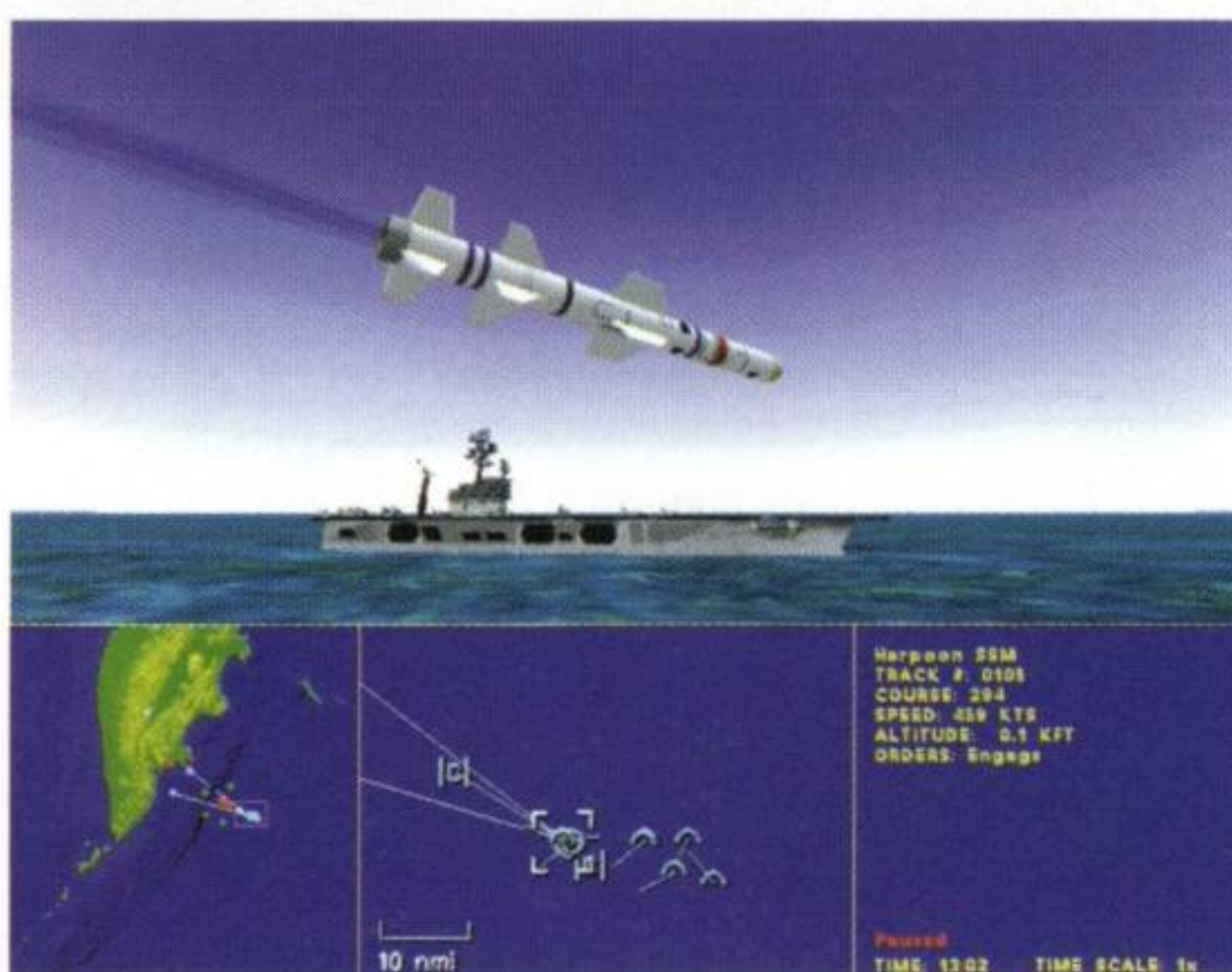
So EA is making games that can be used to accurately simulate real wars (its Janes' licenses, among others)? This isn't a new idea, indeed for years the world of flight sims has been so realistic that they're being employed to help train pilots. And sure, it's great that gaming is now becoming this realistic. But the idea of mapping real conflicts, where real lives are being lost and the wider issues of human rights and democracy are forgotten in the scramble to gain publicity in a late night American TV show is horrifying.

What happened in the Gulf isn't a game (though the increasing automation of battle processes means that the two scenarios are drifting closer together) and it isn't over yet. So sure, map an historical conflict, but think twice before you create something as flippant as a game about the Middle East crisis. What would be next? *Yemen Hostage Crisis*? *Battle for Kosovo*?

Keep up the mag – it lasts almost the whole month in my bathroom.
Matt Garner, Coventry

Any violent content in any videogame has the potential to quickly become, at best, offensive and, at worst, morally dubious, when the line between art and real life is blurred. We don't think twice about laughing when we frag our best friend with a rocket launcher in *Quake*. But the day after a real-life lunatic took to the streets of London with a real-life bazooka killing innocent civilians, the game would lose a lot of its frivolous appeal.

It's an interesting area for discussion. We'll be looking at the whole violence in games debate in a later issue.



EA: recreated war scenarios using its videogames.

Write to us at Arcade

Write here, write now. Let us know what you think about *Arcade*. Or let the world at large know what you think about videogames. Or how about some nice cake recipes? Send your letters to:

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Bath BA1 2BW

E-mail us at: arcade.mag@futurenet.co.uk

The best letter each month wins an exclusive *Arcade* T-shirt. What have you been up to this month Lisa? "I've been stroking puppies." That's just great.



SHOGO昇岡

Mobile Armor Division



M.A.D. NIGHT IN!

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91%

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PC GAMER, CHRISTMAS 1998



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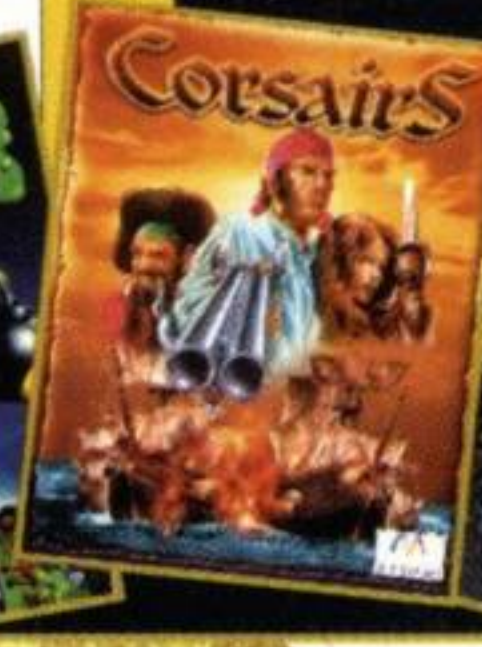
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This issue dedicated to **Paul Mellerick**

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On the side

King's Quest games are not "geeky", that is merely your opinion. Otherwise, keep up the good work.

Leanne Coote, via e-mail

Look, everyone! A geek!

Your FIFA 99 review in Arcade 2 was way off. "Ridiculously easy"? My arse. It seems to me you only played the game on amateur level. I consider myself a footie game connoisseur and have played all the top titles. The professional and world-class levels on FIFA 99 are challenging. With the greatest respect, play the games a little more, eh lads?

Ed F, Sheffield

With slightly less respect, come on Ed. Playing FIFA is like a home fixture against Hull City. It's fun knocking in goals, but hardly the Clash-of-the-Titans struggle a "footie game connoisseur" would relish.

I like your writers. But where's Stuart Campbell, James Leach and Jonathan Nash? They're my all-time favourites.

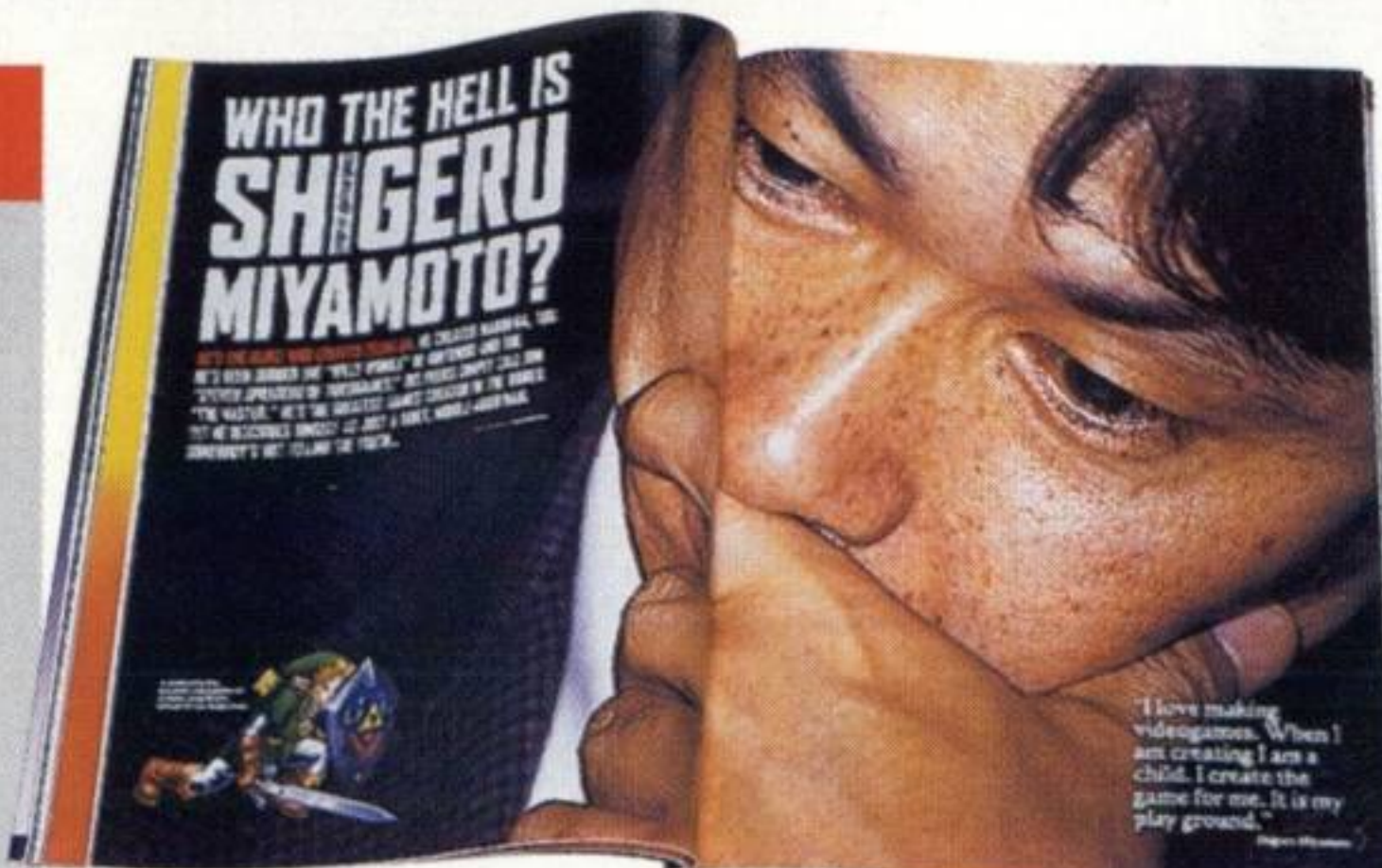
Nathan and Daniel White, Luton

Funny you should mention these people. We're happy to say that all three of them will be adding their work to Arcade in coming months.

Please could you tell me what the hell the Mega Drive game Another World was all about? One second it had a man in his office, the next he was in a world with giant slugs and square-headed aliens with laser guns.

Stephen Leigh, London

Tsk. Videogames, eh? We've got no idea mate, they're bloody mad - all of 'em.



Shigeru Miyamoto

The "Who the hell is Shigeru Miyamoto?" article in Arcade 3 [Shigeru Miyamoto is the creator of Zelda and Mario] made superb reading and I hope it's a format which you include in future issues of the mag. I'm sure I'm not the only reader who would like to "get to know" the faces and personalities behind the world's greatest videogames.

Richard McLoughlin, via e-mail

Back room boys

Well done, Arcade - your articles about games designer Shigeru Miyamoto and videogame musician Tommy Tallarico (Arcade 3) managed to confirm all my worst fears about the direction that videogaming is taking. The movie and pop worlds are already obsessed with a handful of "personalities" who are the subject of sickening adulation, while hundreds of lesser-known - but arguably more talented - teams and individuals work without a drop of appreciation.

Now videogames appear to be following their lead.

So what if 104 games have "benefited" from Mr Tallarico's music? I certainly haven't heard anyone extolling the virtues of his songs, and yet plenty of my friends hum game tunes by composers who don't have the luxury of a major Arcade interview. As for Mr Miyamoto, while there's no denying his talent, presumably there are whole slews of programmers working on his games who never get their name in print.

As Tommy so ably demonstrates, dressing yourself up in tin foil and pouring a gallon of oil on to your hair doesn't mean you're overloaded with talent - in fact, it seems more like a way of covering up a lack of it. I dread to think of a future where my girlfriend is sticking up posters of the videogame equivalent of Leonardo DiCaprio - all fame, attitude and looks, without any of his ability. Although Mr Tallarico himself has a very long way to go before he attains any of those qualities.

Han Solo, via e-mail

Lost the plot

So, you lot are fans of Shigs, eh? While I appreciate that he is the master of pick-up-and-play videogames he has no skill in plot development or characterisation. It's about time you praised the writers who penned Final Fantasy VII or The Curse of Monkey Island. It will be these people who bring videogaming the widespread recognition it deserves, not a man who thinks saving princesses is as far as a plot need go.

Tom Camfield, Beeston

Wrong, wrong, wrong. The world is already full of great story tellers. From movie directors to novelists, lyricists and painters,

the art of storytelling, or "linear narrative", is as old as human kind. Videogames, or "interactive entertainment", is a whole new art form. It's about doing not seeing or listening. It's about interactivity. It's about giving players the chance to explore whole new worlds as a participant not an observer. It's got very little to do with stories.

And, right now, Shigeru Miyamoto is the master of this brave new art.

South Park

Isn't it very disappointing to see that some videogame publishers still half-heartedly develop useless games and then buy a big-name license knowing that the name will sell the game? A recent game that springs to mind is South Park for Nintendo 64.

South Park is a massive name at the moment but, as your review in Arcade 2 says, it's a big disappointment as a game.

Of course, using the same tactics to sell a magazine is completely different. Or is it? Hmm, now what was it that was plastered all over the cover of that second issue of Arcade? I can't remember...

Arcade is a great magazine. It's just a shame that morals don't come before marketing and sales.

Michael Sung, via e-mail

Woah there! Occasionally, when a game is delayed, a magazine has to send its cover to be printed before a finished version of the game's been seen. This is what happened with South Park. Hoping it would be a hit, we arranged with Acclaim to put it on the cover.

When the game finally turned up it stank like a gift-wrapped turd. The cynical route would have been to praise it anyway. But we didn't.

Penny spent

In Arcade 2 I read your feature and review on Half-Life for the PC. I hadn't heard of the game, but I noticed how good you said it was - "The most important

game since Quake" - and your score of five stars. Anyway, I decided to take a chance and spend all of my cash on Half-Life because of the praise you gave it. It has to be said you were absolutely...

Correct! Half-Life is an excellent game, worth every penny I paid for it and every star you awarded it, and yet I was totally unaware of it. Thanks very much.

Chris Lloyd, via e-mail

Just doing our job. Usually the great games get the attention they deserve, but occasionally a quiet classic is bumped from the spotlight by loud, big-name "blockbusters" with large marketing budgets. Zelda 64's no shrinking violet, but people may mistake it for a "kids" game. Hopefully, our article - "National Elf" (sorry), on page 64 - will convince these people that underneath the cartoony graphics lies a game every bit as rewarding, challenging and tough as the most "adult" of titles.

Memory doomed

I'd like to rename your last page please. "Tricking the Traps - NOT VERY WELL remembered by Neil West" would have been a more appropriate title. Fancy



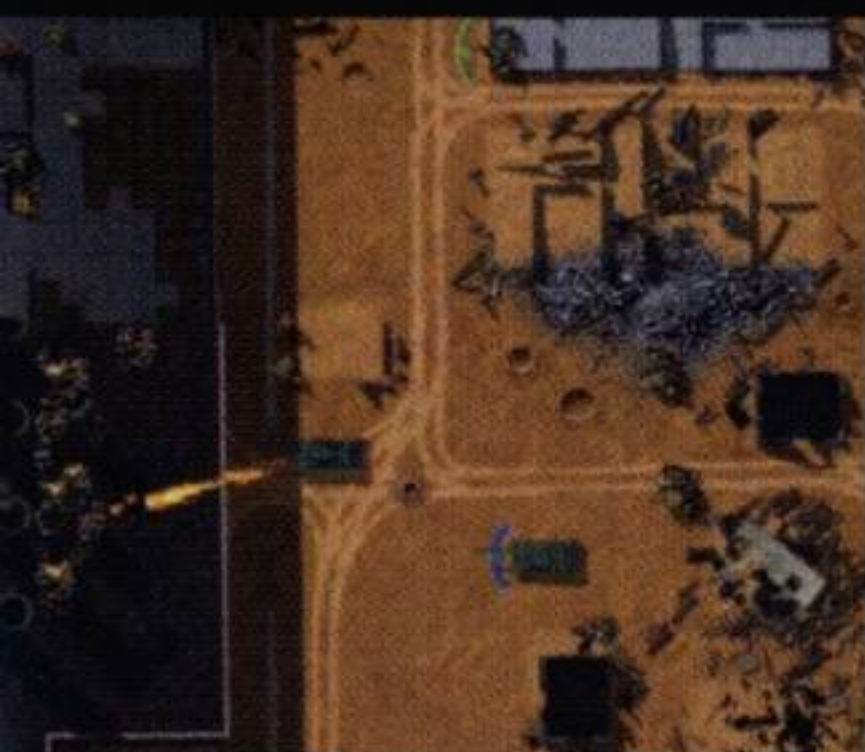
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1943
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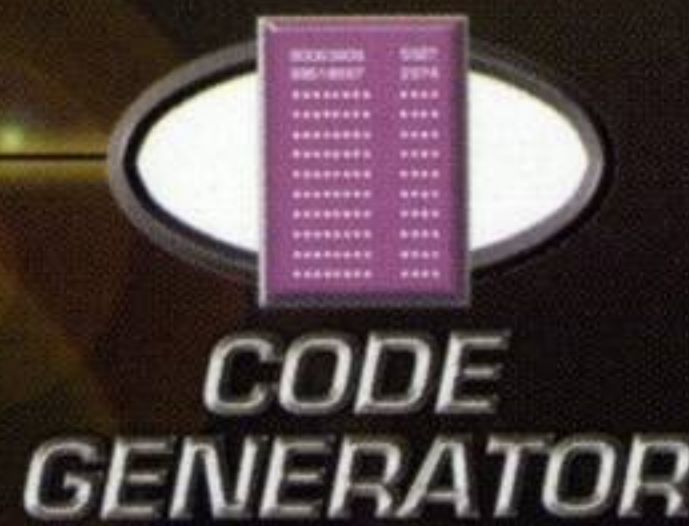
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GAME ON

The world of videogames: we take you round the globe in four pages

■ id Software's John Carmack introduced *Quake III* on a Macintosh, adding weight to the claims of Apple's Steve Jobs (below) that the Mac will be "the ultimate games machine".

SHOW NEWS

id shows off Quake III: Arena

The most exciting PC game of 1999 | On a Mac?


By Travis

■ So, where would you expect id Software to give *Quake III: Arena*, the biggest PC game of 1999, its first public demo? A special event on id's home turf in Texas? Perhaps a large on-line party? Either of those would be our first guess, so we were amazed the other week when John Carmack, id's programming genius, ambled into January's San Francisco Macworld Expo to not only show off Q3A for the first time, but also to show it off on a Mac.

"I'm here today because Apple has finally gotten their act together," Carmack said, adding that the Macintosh has evolved into "an absolutely perfect gaming platform." id's big secret, let out at Macworld, is that *Quake 3: Arena* will be released simultaneously on PC and Mac (as

well as Linux, for real propeller-heads) later this spring, and that all the versions will be identical and compatible.

Ooh, and it's looking great. Carmack took the audience through a handful of features, including mirrors, volumetric fog, smooth 24-bit textures and curves to add an extra, organic dimension to many levels. There was no combat on show, and no sign of the AI opponents that you'll face in the single-player game. Remember, Q3A's focus is on deathmatch, and if you don't have a Net connection you'll have to play against computer-controlled "bots", still being worked on at id's Texas headquarters.

If the rest of the game matches up to Q3A's looks, its tentatively slated May release can't come quickly enough. Time to look at your PC and see if it can take the strain; you'll need a P200 MMX with 32 Mb and a 3D card, at the very least. Or a brand-new G3 Mac. 

"I'm here today because Apple has finally gotten their act together."



■ 24-bit textures and some gorgeous curves add a disturbing, organic-looking dimension to the forthcoming *Quake III: Arena*.

HOT NEW GAMES

PaRappa returns

Are you ready to rap? | You gotta believe!

By Neil West

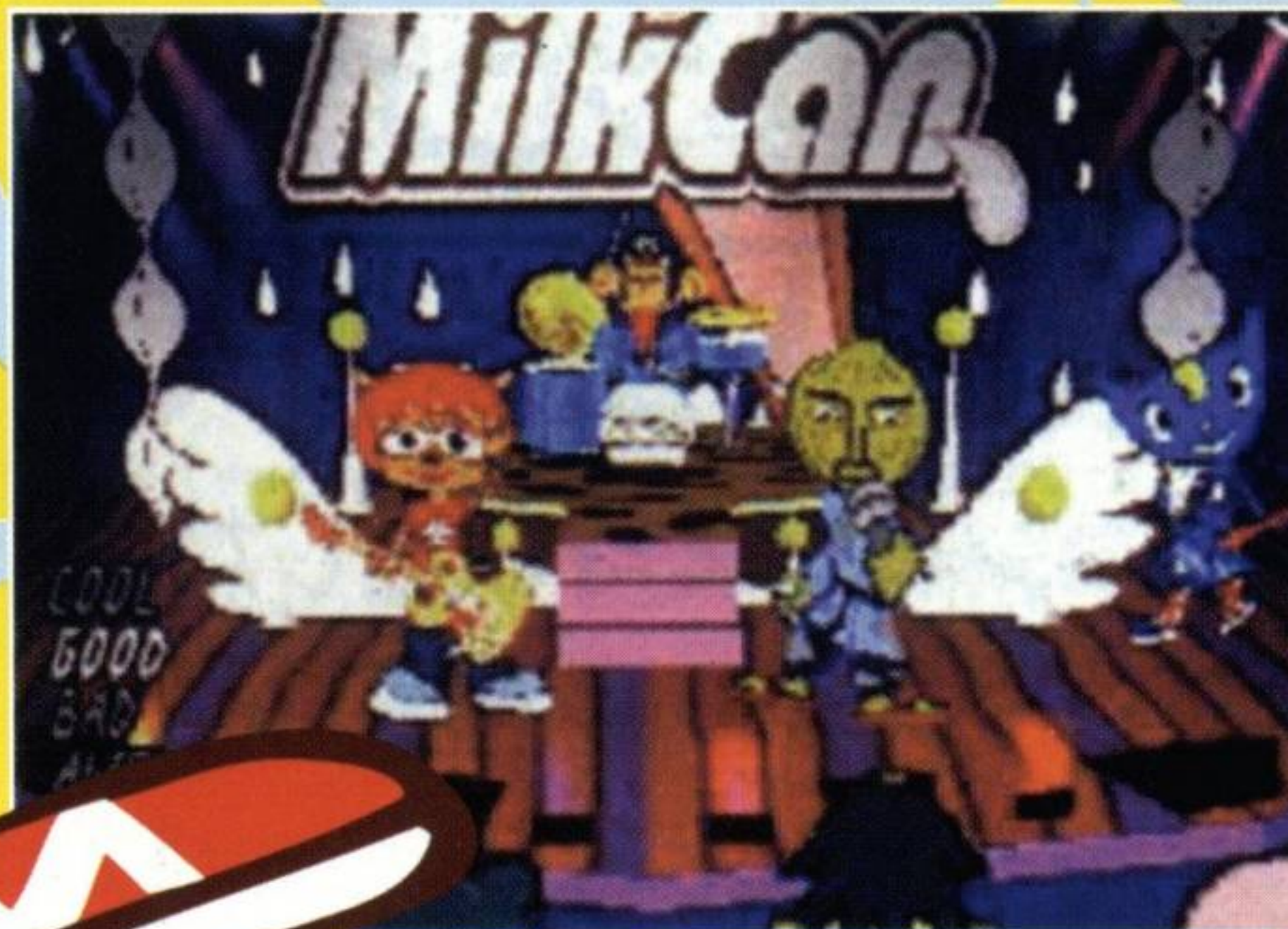
PlayStation's *PaRappa the Rapper* is still one of the best kept secrets in videogames. It stars a rapping dog and it's hilarious. If you've never played it, don't bother thinking about it, bypass your brain and simply buy a copy now. If you have played it, you'll be chuckled to hear that the sequel is nearing completion.

Tentatively titled *Unjammer Lami* (we don't know why) it stars Lami, a guitar-playing sheep. She's in a band called Milk Can, along with Mah the mouse and Katy the cat.

As far as we can make out, PaRappa's fallen hook, line and sinker for her. What happened to Sunny Funny sunflower, PaRappa's love interest from the first game, is anyone's guess. Perhaps she wilted. Or PaRappa did something awful to (or on) her. He is a dog, after all...

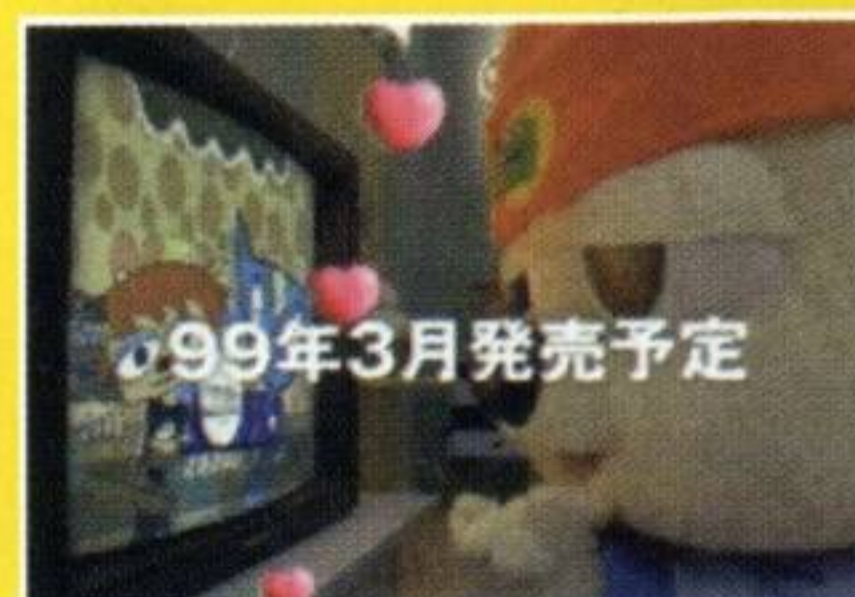
Anyway, featuring a human airline pilot, a fire-fighting dalmatian and a chainsaw-wielding beaver as song leaders, *Unjammer Lami* will also see the return of kung fu instructor – and candidate for greatest videogame character of all time – Chop Chop Master Onion in the role of Lami's guitar tutor.

The press-the-buttons-in-time-to-make-the-dog-rap gameplay remains from the first game, with the addition of a two-player trade-off. This promises to be great. Expect a UK release this summer. **A**



■ Lami and Chop Chop Master Onion "keeping it real" for the kids.

AS SEEN ON TV Japanese TV adverts for *Unjammer Lami* show PaRappa falling in love.



■ PaRappa's having a lie-in, watching a bit of morning TV, perhaps nibbling on a Bonio, when his attention is caught by an advert for a new band. He falls instantly in love with Lami, seemingly ignoring the fact that two of his mates (Mah and Katy) are playing with her, and pants. A lot.

The world of video games: we take you round the globe in four pages



■ Out of the blue: but will Sony let it be sold in the UK?

EMULATOR

Station to station

Do Not Underestimate the Power Macintosh | Those clever Yanks...

Apple Mac users in the US can now play PlayStation games without owning a console thanks to *Virtual Game Station*, an ingenious piece of software from US firm Connectix. A UK version is complete, but its release is on hold while legal wrangles with Sony are ironed out. To prevent grey importing of US copies, the first *Virtual Game*

Station release runs only US PlayStation discs, while the Mac must have the US Mac operating system. So even if you've got mates in the States, don't buy a copy yet.

Virtual Game Station imitates the technology inside PlayStation, enabling you to run most PlayStation titles on any Mac that boasts a G3 processor (Apple's

Power Macintosh G3 or the £915 iMac, for example). Placed on trial sale for \$49 at a San Francisco's Macworld show, VGS met with such a response that Connectix averaged a sale every 30 seconds.

VGS runs hundreds of PlayStation titles, says Connectix, including exclusives like *Gran Turismo* and *Metal Gear Solid*. It can even create virtual memory cards on the Mac's hard drive for saving games. The only ingredient missing is a Mac imitation for the PlayStation's analogue controller.

Even more impressive is the fact that Connectix pulled VGS off without Sony's co-operation; this isn't a Sony-endorsed product, and the PlayStation maker has yet to issue an official statement. The smart money is on a hurried licensing deal between the two parties to keep Sony happy, resulting in a UK release sometime later in the year. **A**

Play PlayStation games on any G3-based Mac

NEW GAME

Nas gives it some lip

Face it, you just want to hit him.

As Codemasters puts the finishing touches to *Prince Naseem Boxing*, for PlayStation and PC, Nazzar himself has got stuck in.

"What I'm interested in is providing creative input for the game," he says. "I always wanted to have a boxing game of myself, and when I play it, I want to feel 'that's me'. It's great to see a computer game of yourself, doing what you do best."

In real life, Nazzar is undefeated, but what about in the videogame? Is he prepared to see his on-screen persona go down? "I do think that, in the game, if Prince goes on to the canvas he deserves to always get up. Winning is not everything, winning is the only thing."

The game will be released later in the spring of '99, when thousands of gamers will be able to enjoy smacking seven shades of shite out of the gobby Yorkshireman.



■ A Codemasters employee gallantly lets Naz win.

DANCING FOOL

You can't stop the dance

Dance Dance Revolution is coming to PlayStation.

The fun of prancing around your living room will get a shot in the arm this spring when *Dance Dance Revolution* is released on PlayStation. Konami is working on a special pressure-sensitive floor-pad accessory to bring all the fun of the arcade coin-op back home. The object of the

game is to match the steps displayed on the game screen by stepping on the foot pads. It sounds easy, but as the music speeds up and the steps become trickier, you'll soon be wishing for an extra leg.



INCOMING

Half a dozen great new games coming your way soon.

3 months



Resident Evil 2
■ PC ■ Capcom
Boasting a new "Extreme Battle Mode" (that will enable you to play as Chris Redfield from the start) and Voodoo2 support, this PlayStation-to-PC update should be bloody fun. Arf.



Rally Championship '99
■ PC ■ Europress
Featuring 36 real-life tracks based on OS maps and even more cars – shown in closer detail – than Colin McRae Rally, this is the PC rally game to look forward to.

6 months



Dragon Quest 7
■ PlayStation ■ Enix
Before *Final Fantasy VII*, Enix's *Dragon Quest* games were Japan's most beloved RPGs. After two years of secret development, a big-budget PlayStation version is nearing completion.

9 months



Donkey Kong 64
■ N64 ■ Nintendo/Rare
In typical Nintendo fashion, details are sparse. That said, Rare promises "Expansive 3D polygonal worlds, gorgeous lighting effects and plenty of the wit and creativity that players love."



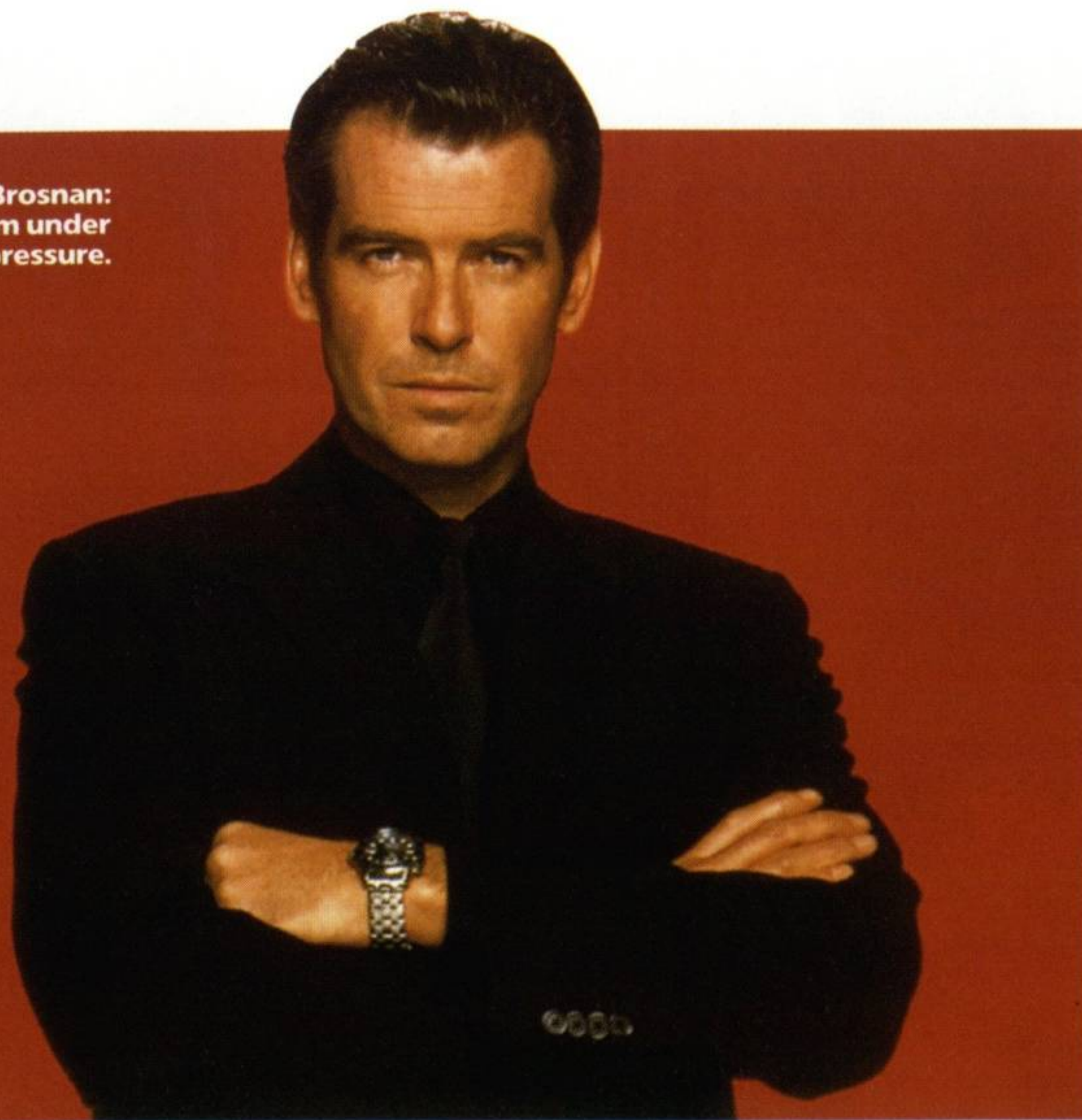
Final Fantasy VIII
■ PlayStation ■ Square
Before last year's *FFVII*, most PSX gamers would have ignored RPGs, but no more. And Square's much-anticipated VIII looks set to spread the appeal of swords and sorcery even further.

1 year



South Park 2
■ Nintendo 64 ■ Acclaim
Acclaim's US boss has announced that a second N64 *South Park* game will be released in the 2000. This is good – the developers will have more than a lunch hour to bosh it out this time.

■ Pierce Brosnan: keeping calm under the licensing pressure.



LICENSE TO THRILL

Give us more

New Bond movie announced | Publishers scramble

By Neil West

MGM formally announced that the 19th James Bond movie will star Pierce Brosnan and be entitled *The World is Not Enough*. Following the news, game publishers the world over scrambled to

grab the exclusive rights to produce the videogame, with Nintendo and PSX developer Black Ops leading the charge.

Nintendo would love Rare, the creator of *GoldenEye 007*, to create another Bond classic for N64. Black Ops, producer of *Tomorrow Never Dies* on PlayStation, were quick to hint that only because it primarily

makes PSX games doesn't mean it couldn't knock out an N64 game for Nintendo too.

At the time of going to press the issue has yet to be resolved. Perhaps ill-feeling between Danjaq, the group responsible for all James Bond licenses, and Sony could decide the matter. The two have been having a little tiff over other licensing rights. We're on the edge of our seats.

NEW GAME

Life after Sonic...

Sequel to *Nights on the way for Dreamcast*.



As delays plague Sega's roll-out of Dreamcast games in Japan, good news has been scarce. One bright spot was the announcement that *Nights 2* has been scheduled for release. Saturn owners yabber on about the original *Nights*. Created by Yuji Naka and Sonic's hot-shot Sonic Team, it was as near as Saturn got to an original classic. You could feel the Sonic influence and the only trouble was, so few people bought a Saturn that no-one got to play it.

This time Sega hopes for a bigger audience. *Nights 2* will be ready for Dreamcast's UK debut later in '99.



Sam Richards' World of Games



Tiger's secret

■ There were plenty of red faces at Electronics Arts this month when it was revealed that 100,000 copies of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* for PlayStation were released in the US with a stowaway.

The disc contains a digitised copy of *South Park's* "The Spirit of Christmas" – a mini-episode created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone prior to the show becoming a major TV series. The film features a no-holds-barred fight between Santa Claus and Jesus, and although undetectable on PlayStation it's easily accessed with a PC.

100,000 copies of the game are being recalled because EA fears the *South Park* episode may contain language and content that is "objectionable to consumers".

PSX 1.5?

■ Amid speculation that PlayStation 2 (likely to be called PlayStation 2000) won't arrive until the next millenium, rumours have sneaked out of Sony HQ regarding a stop-gap. Sony's problem is that while PlayStation continues to sell by the bucketload around the world, people who bought a PlayStation three years ago are starting to get bored. These hardcore gamers are looking to upgrade, and yet Sony can't release PlayStation 2 yet because to do so would shorten the life of its existing machine. What to do? It certainly doesn't want to lose its hardcore audience to Sega.

Arcade has learned that Sony has a new machine, PlayStation 1.5, waiting in the wings – essentially a souped-up PlayStation. With a faster CPU, double the memory size, a faster CD-ROM drive and four controller ports, it will play existing titles and also enable some new releases – designed with both the PlayStation 1 and PlayStation 1.5 in mind – to boast higher-resolution graphics and faster screen rates.

Sega tried this with the 32X add-on for the Mega Drive. It was a complete disaster. Whether or not Sony feels it has the clout to carry it off remains to be seen.

MADE YOU LOOK

Naked Lara

Tomb Raider III will never be quite the same again.

It had to happen sooner or later. The boffins at Fire International (01302 325 225), manufacturers of the X-plorer cheat cart for PlayStation (£29.99), have come up with a code for *Tomb Raider III* that enables lonely people to play with a Lara stripped of her clothes and with blonde hair. Buy an X-plorer then type in the code.



77C43C64 3534
57D14AD6 9537
34FF33FF 1B29
57420642 1BFD
34FB3454 C45D
E3549254 27F6
34EF3440 BF69
E35A925A 33FB
34E3344C C275
E34F924F 3F06
34D73478 CD5E
70F7A547 DD5D
A700A734 2455
B9F4B9F4 1B55
34BB34AE 8455
34FF70E0 9B5D
448B440E 2B55
34FFD9EF 8F55
34F5A5C9 26E5
59945994 1B55
34FF347A 8D55
34FF55FF 1DC0
34FF346E 7F54
58FE6CFE 2479
547F547F 1F57

B98EB98E 1B55
40FF40FF 2C57
B98EB98E 1B55
BCDABCD8 3C7E
38FE59FE 1FC0
34FE347C 7C55
34FFC5FF 1DBA
34FF65FF 1B57
34FA34DA 3BDB
34F05EC0 C055
34FAC5FA 1EBB
5CDA94DA BC7A
34F964F9 223C
643D643D 2156
54395409 5B5B
34FB38DA 8655
70FEACFF 1B5E
4CEBEC46 1C55
70F51DED D871
4CEF6442 1C65
E1F5E1BD 405A
80FFC8FF 247A
35DBE2C3 2B5E
7CDAC8DA 2255
34F634BE 405B

4CEF4C42 246E
34383400 2D55
6CBD6CBD 225A
441F441F 1B55
4CEF4842 2C54
541868E7 1B35
34FF33FF 1B54
56AD6C52 E595
34FF44FF 1BC9
D9EFD9EF 1B55
34FF3470 C359
C3565256 2300
34F3347C BC65
C35B525B 2FFA
34E73468 C171
C3585258 3B05
34DB3454 C7D
C34DC64D 2335
34D334F0 D871
3300062E B745
2DFEE629 0F56
0C0FE9F6 1C45
EDFEE679 0B56
120FE836 1C45
2DFE2622 0B56

0E0BE7B2 1C45
2DFEE680 0B56
B103863A 1C51
6DFFA62A 0F56
BD0F0F36 1C51
6DFFA62A 0B56
3300BA00 2745
35FE3501 1A55
745EBB59 1CF6
3BFE42BE BE56
7B5C7A5B 1C54
4B00847E 1756
B30BB332 1C55
77C43C64 3534
5703A70C 735B
33033320 D855
E3401F40 2570
A4FF9CC8 965E
379F379F 1B55
34FB34D8 D855
C340C340 1B55
34FF34FF 1B55

Now, are you sure that was worth it?

SHRINK RAP

Where there's cyber life

Our psychologist wonders about next-generation videogames.



■ A decade ago, few people could have predicted the types of videogame that would be available by the end of the millennium. And there's no sign of a slow-down in the evolution of games, particularly as the worlds of artificial intelligence, cyberpets and videogame design overlap to entice today's twentysomethings.

Games such as *Creatures 2* raise interesting questions about the future of cyberpet technology. The Tamagotchi may have come and gone, but cyberpets are a new breed of toy which are more psychologically interesting than many of their predecessors. Unlike most toys, which you eventually tire of, cyberpets require their owners to be the slaves rather than the masters. Furthermore, they play on the psychology of attachment, so it is perhaps unsurprising

that emotions unleashed by separation from them may be severe (as has been reported among young children).

Thanks to a UK mathematician, in the near future we could all be playing videogames which are even more life-like than cyberpets. These new games will obey the laws of physics and feature characters with developing "personalities" created by "psychology engines". This looks like the next big evolutionary step in videogame design and may produce games that are more psychologically satisfying than the current generation.

The science behind such an advance comes down to the creation of complex mathematical algorithms which are able to simulate physical laws in computer-generated worlds. So what does all this mean? Well, if you are playing a first-person platformer,

all objects would have realistic properties. For example, if you drop a particular object as you are running along, the dropped object will bounce in a particular way, depending upon the type of floor surface, what it's made of, and the angle that the object dropped and made impact at. The company that created these sims has already produced systems which obey laws of aerodynamics and gravity, and is currently working on a system that will mimic water, as well as the beginning of a virtual human. (You may be wondering how *Tomb Raider* sequels might look with such technology!) The next few years look like being an exciting time for gamers, and even more interesting from a psychological standpoint.

■ Dr Mark Griffiths lectures at Nottingham Trent University.



■ ILLUSTRATION: MATT KENYON

NEWS ANALYSIS

PlayStation Piracy: will the ever-increasing army of bootleggers sink the ship?

"Pssst! Want some cheap PlayStation games? All the latest stuff is a fiver each. I've just got in Spyros the Dragon and that Mental Queer Solid... Yeah? Sorted, nice one."

By Jason Brookes

Well, you would, wouldn't you? Why pay more when you can pay less, as supermarkets have a bloody annoying habit of stressing. But new figures are saying that piracy (aka videogame bootlegging), once the domain of the dodgy-looking bloke in the dodgy-looking boozer, is now a fairly overground activity. No longer is picking up knocked-off copies of games a question of being "in the know" – these days piracy is everywhere. And it's eating into the UK games market faster than ever before.

Now, you probably don't consider yourself the kind of unscrupulous individual that jumps at the chance of lining the pockets of a law-dodging scumbag. And the fresher-faced of you out there might genuinely have no idea of where to get hold of knocked-off games. But estimates suggest that for every videogame that's legitimately sold in

the UK's high street stores, there are between five and twenty copies off-loaded for as little as a £3-5 a pop. So that means some of you most definitely do jump at the chance – despite the questionable morality and the obvious illegality of it all.

The single biggest factor in the increase in home-grown piracy is the dramatic fall in the price of CD writers in recent years – kit that allows you to copy from an original CD to a cheap (try around a quid each) recordable 'gold disk'. This, coupled with the ease of getting a PlayStation fitted with a chip that cons the console into running copied discs (facilitating

the playing of imported games is the legal loophole), means that dodgy DIY software empires have sprung up in neighbourhoods all over the country.

But aside from the thousands of bedroom copying operations nationwide, a more serious criminal fraternity is muscling in on the knocked-off games market, too. PlayStation piracy has become such a big deal over the past year that bootlegging gangs are now entrenched in the kind of territorial battles more synonymous with the drugs market. Also, bulk copying of PlayStation software in the Far East now sees huge shipments of

silver discs coming over that don't even require either a fitted chip or any fiddly disc swap techniques to get them running. Some even boast packaging indistinguishable from that of the originals.

Not unsurprisingly, ELSPA, the European Leisure Software Publishers Association – a mouthpiece for the UK games industry – is cracking down. With the help of the police and trading standards officers, its crime unit has been taking greater steps in its fight against what it – and the law – treats as nothing less than theft. Prosecutions are more numerous, sentences have become more severe, and once



■ The tools of a modern pirate: An ELSPA official shows off a haul of confiscated gear.



again the battle against piracy has become a rallying cry.

This is good news. *Arcade* sympathises with all those who are tempted to buy pirate games, but ultimately believes that – if left unchecked – pirates could destroy the videogames scene. They do damage in two ways: First, they are stealing. And there's no defending this; but secondly – and perhaps more importantly – they devalue videogames. Once you've paid just £5 for something, you'll never go back to paying £40 – even if that's what it's worth.

So what's ELSPA doing about it? In the absence of large scale funding from the games industry, its achievements so far in breaking piracy rings and seizing hauls of counterfeit software are small potatoes when compared to the sheer scale of activity. ELSPA secretary general Roger Bennett is defiant, however. "We do not underestimate the problem and cannot be expected to catch all the thieves now" he concedes, "but we are catching up with them fast. It would be a sad day were thieving, deception and fraud to become an accepted part of the videogame industry as a whole." Indeed, however, ELSPA's crusade to tackle software crime head on tends to disregard what is perhaps the most crucial element in the whole piracy debate: software pricing.

The familiar arguments go like this: "Games are far too expensive. Why does a music CD only cost £10-16 when games on CD cost

"We cannot catch all of the thieves now, but we are catching up with them – and fast."

three times that? I'll happily pay a tenner for a game but not 40 quid." The retort from games publishers has long been that the average title's development costs are now so expensive (several million quid isn't unusual) that bringing prices down is out of the question. Many even stress that lost sales through piracy keeps games as highly priced as they are. But increasingly such rhetoric is becoming hard to swallow – especially with PlayStation turning such a profit for Sony so conspicuously – and it is the public's perception of what software is worth (something not helped by vast quantities of sub-standard games clogging up the shelves) that determines the rifeness of piracy.

Where opinion is really divided is in the estimation of just how much damage copying is doing to the games industry. ELSPA estimates the European games industry lost £300 million last year, but this figure rests on a dangerous assumption that a pirated game means a "lost" legitimate sale. A large proportion of pirated titles are simply bought because they're cheap – at full price they wouldn't be considered.

Similarly, PlayStation are now often bought solely because of the availability of cheap copied games – in this case piracy is actually fueling hardware sales.

What many really believe keeps prices artificially high is the industry's inherent fear of profit margins being eroded if prices were to plummet to the levels of true mass market acceptability. Effectively, high prices are a cash cow that few want to stop milking – if anything for fear of having less sports cars in the company car park. The reality is that if software prices were lowered the extra sales could offset cuts in profit margins.

It's unfair to lay the blame solely at the game industry's own door, however. Despite record sales figures, few game publishers are turning a profit. Ultimately, videogame bootleggers and those who keep them in business are adding to the problem. They are at best parasites, and at worst thieves. **A**

■ *Perhaps it's best not add to the problem, eh? Anyone with information concerning pirated software should call ELSPA's crime unit hotline on 0990 133405.*

YO HO HO

Confessions of a pirate

Willy sells pirated PlayStation games near Manchester.



■ "I mainly sell by word of mouth to mates and work colleagues – no strangers because of the risks of getting shopped. It's a way for people to get hold of games that they simply can't afford to buy at full price. Do I feel bad doing what I'm doing? Not really. I have got a conscience but it's a small operation and I'm not making much money from it."

"I get the CDs from a mate who has his own copying set-up in his house. He's got three CD burners attached to PCs that knock out about 60 games a week. His contacts through the Internet have just managed to crack the protection in *Medieval* – a game that was supposed to be pirate-proof. There aren't any instructions with the games I sell so some people rent the official version and photocopy the leaflet.

"The way I see it is that I'm selling games that usually wouldn't be bought anyway. Everyone I sell to is either totally cheesed off with buying overpriced crap, or isn't into gaming enough to justify paying full price."

"A lot of games are just churned out these days and I think people are getting wise to all the sequels. Take the *FIFA* games, *Tomb Raider* and *Crash Bandicoot*, for example. People don't want to pay for the same game two or even three times, and so by releasing titles that simply aren't worth the money the game makers aren't helping."

"Also, in this area [a small northern town near Manchester] there's a real heroin problem with a lot of kids round here. I sell to some families who are grateful that cheap PlayStation games have

become something of a substitute for ten pound bags of smack... It might sound crazy but it's true.

"Do I feel that I'm spoiling gaming in any way? The only thing I will say against what I'm doing is that many of my customers are finding that cheap copies devalue their enjoyment. When you're only paying a fiver for a game, it's easy to get complacent, and in my experience most people buy more games when they're this cheap and then never get round to playing anything properly. In that way copies do ruin your enjoyment of games. I remember when I first got my PlayStation and I bought *Tomb Raider* and played it for ages. I've had a copy of *TR3* for ages and I've probably played it for half an hour. The problem is that you're far too interested in what's coming next to appreciate what you have in your hands."

"Recently, I lost a customer who abandoned the PlayStation and a truckload of copied games for this very reason – he traded it all in for an N64 and a load of cartridge games. Of course, he can't get cheap games like he used to, but he's happy playing games again."

■ *Willy has yet to see the error in his ways.*

"My Beautiful Arcade"

Goofying around in arcades is a great laugh. But who will you find doing the same thing? Arcade investigates

PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDE EDGINGTON



THIS MONTH

Dave and Buster's, Bristol

Slot check

- Place: **Dave and Buster's**
- Where: **Merlin Road, Cribbs Causeway, Bristol BS10 7SQ (Also: Otium Park, Highlands Rd, Solihull, W Midlands, B90 4NY)**
- Size: **45,000 sq feet over one floor**
- Entertainment: **restaurant, two bars, ten billiard tables, golf sim, 100 coin-ops and simulators**
- How much?: **free entry, games around £1 a go, activated with chargeable Power Cards**
- Telephone: **0117 950 0515 (Bristol), 0121 705 0511 (West Midlands)**
- Opening hours: **Mon-Thurs, noon-1am; Fri-Sat, noon-2am; Sun noon-7.30pm. Open all year except Christmas day**

It's huge, out-of-town, cosily warm and brimming with all sorts of people whose eyes look like they've just opened a chest-full of treasure. Everybody's screaming and laughing and possibly not sober enough to work out how much money they've spent. Recently franchised from the States and costing £15 million to build at Bristol's new out-of-town shopping paradise Cribbs Causeway, Dave and Buster's could be that little treat you need after a hard day's work. At least, that was our excuse.



“Lemmings are back, aren’t they? They’re cute. We’re cute too, don’t you think?”

**Layla &
Corrie**
19 & 19, Gloucester



Right, okay, hello then!

[Smiling.] “Hello.”

What are you playing?

“Gunblade. I don’t usually like games where you just have to shoot everyone, but this one’s good fun.”

Are you into videogames, then?

“Hmm, well not many really interest us... Except *Lemmings*. I love *Lemmings*.”

But that’s ancient! Did you used to play it on an Amiga or something?

[Girls break down, giggling.]

Er, girls? [More laughing.]

Righty ho. We’ll be off then.

[Laughing ceases, briefly.] “No, no, don’t go. *Lemmings* is back out now, isn’t it?”

Yes, on the PlayStation. “They’re cute. We’re cute too, aren’t we?”

[Cough]. Er...

“You’ve gone a bit quiet.”

Er... “Don’t you want to ask us any more questions?”

No, reckon we’ve got everything, thanks.

“See you later, then. Bye.”



**“My Beautiful
Arcade”** Dave and
Buster’s, Bristol


**Marcus &
Sara** 23 & 21

Pint of lager and a tomato juice, please. “Okay.”
Can you put some Tabasco sauce in it? “Okay. Is that enough? I’m never sure how much you’re supposed to put in.”
Nor am I. Er, that’ll do. Quite odd, having a bar in the middle of an arcade. “Is it?”
It’s nice, though. Have you got any nuts? “Sorry, no.”
Right. Bye then. “Cheers.” 



**Marion,
Chen, Vic &
Natalie**
18 to 21, Bristol



Hello everybody. What are you lot doing here? “Well, we’re all students and we thought we’d...”
Hang on. This pen’s running out. Has anyone got one we could borrow? “Here.”
So, you were saying? “Yes. Well, we thought we’d just pop in for a laugh and...”
[Slightly drunkenly to girl with dreadlocks.] Your hair’s nice.
Can we touch it? “No.”
Go on. “Alright then.”
Blimey. Er... Thanks then.
“Is that it?”
Yes. Sorry. Have a nice evening.
“See ya.” 



"You should see this game on a Saturday night with all the girls in short skirts riding up and down!"



Andy
31, 23 stone, Bristol



Yikes. "Hello."
Horse Racing, is it, Sir? "You should see this game on a Saturday night with all the girls in short skirts riding up and down!"
Um, phwoor, eh? "I've got a PlayStation, y'know."
Have you? "I finished *Resident Evil 1* and *2* in five days. I'm waiting for *Resident Evil 3* to come out."
Bit easy for you, were they? "I had a cheat book for the second."
Why do you think people come to Dave and Buster's, then? "To enjoy themselves. There's a high level of curiosity. It's a playground for adults. Of course, there are plenty of young ladies here, too. [Gestures with forearm.]"
Watch out for the ones playing *Gunblade*, though. "Okay. Cheers, then."
What a nice man.

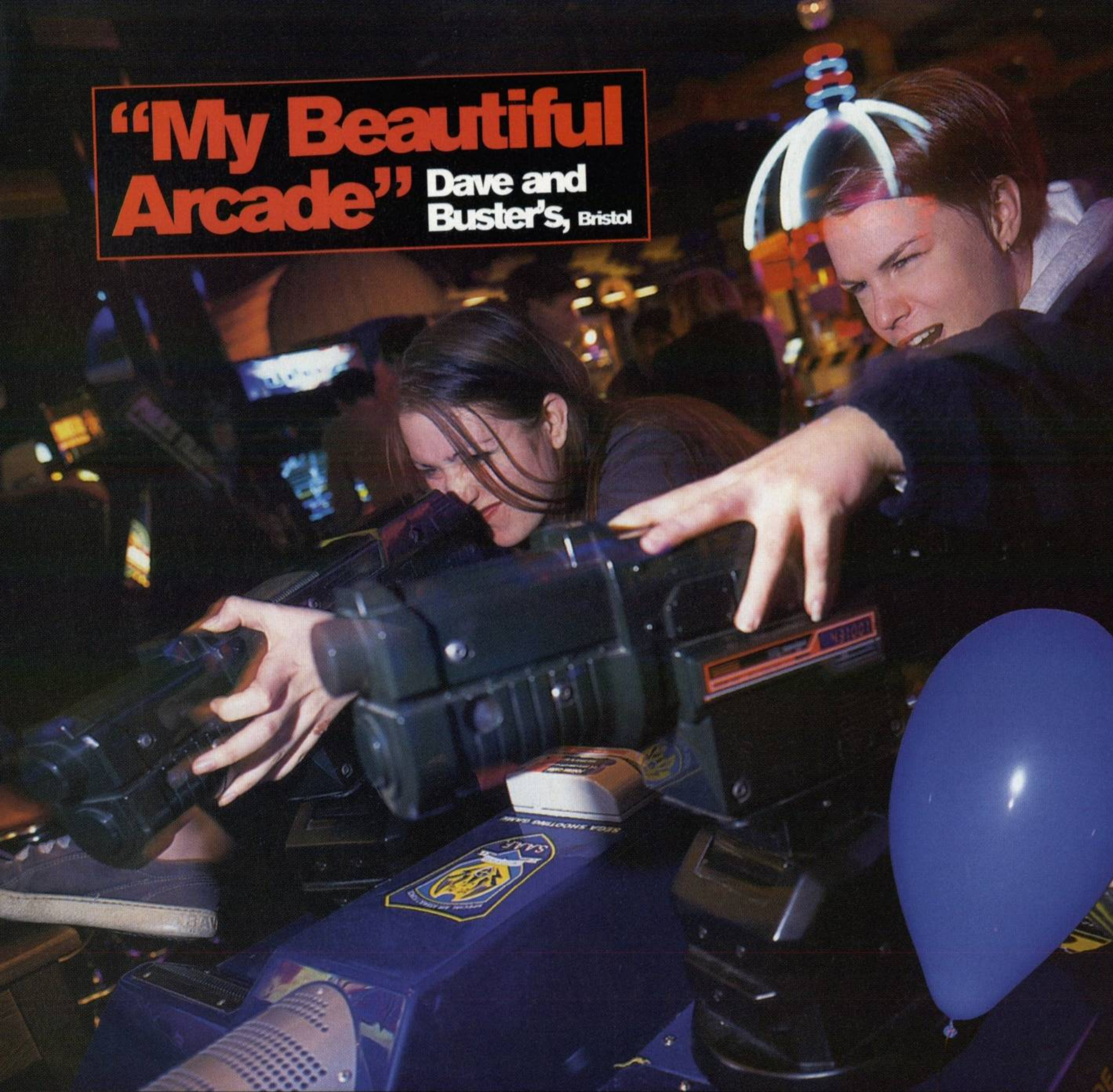


"My Beautiful Arcade" Dave and Buster's, Bristol

Daizy & Carlve 18 & 20, Bristol



Hello, ladies. "Hi."
What do you reckon of it here? "It's quite a family place. It's a bit expensive, though."
Are you into videogames? "I like that new Nintendo driving one."
F-1 World Grand Prix? "I can't remember. I'm a bit drunk."
Tch! "Have you played *Alien Trilogy*? My ex-boyfriend had it. The weapons were great. He had *Worms*, too."
How embarrassing. Aren't videogames for boys, though? "Not really. If you're into that sort of thing, gender doesn't come into it."
Suppose. "Is my hair okay for these photos?"
Yes, you'll look lovely. Bye. A



Russell 5, Bristol



Hello, sonny. [No comment.]
Do you want a go on the football game? [Remains silent.]
Go on. Bet you can't score a goal. [Looks for his mum.]
Come on. [No movement.]
Do you want us to hold your balloon? "No!" [Kicks ball.]
Great goal! Does your sister want a go? [She runs away.]
Er, okay. Right, thanks then, Russell. See you later.
[Runs into mother's arms.] A



"I didn't quite understand the rules, but after 30 seconds my arms were hurting anyway."



Michael & Gill

53 & 39, Ireland/Cheshire

Um, hello. What did you reckon of *Rapid River*, then? "I didn't quite understand the rules, but after 30 seconds my arms were hurting anyway."

If you ask us, Michael was flagging a bit towards the end. "Well, it's 53 against 39. No contest – survival of the fittest."

Have you been here before? "No."

There aren't many places like it, where you can eat, drink and

play games. "Exactly."

Um, have you got a PlayStation or anything, then? "I've got an old thing. I'm a bit too embarrassed to mention it."

Come on. Don't be shy. "It's a Sega Saturn."

Blimey. Are you any good at it? "Well, I'm quite good at *Firestorm*, but I can't change the weapons. It's still good fun."

Right then, we'll leave you two lovebirds to it. "Bye."



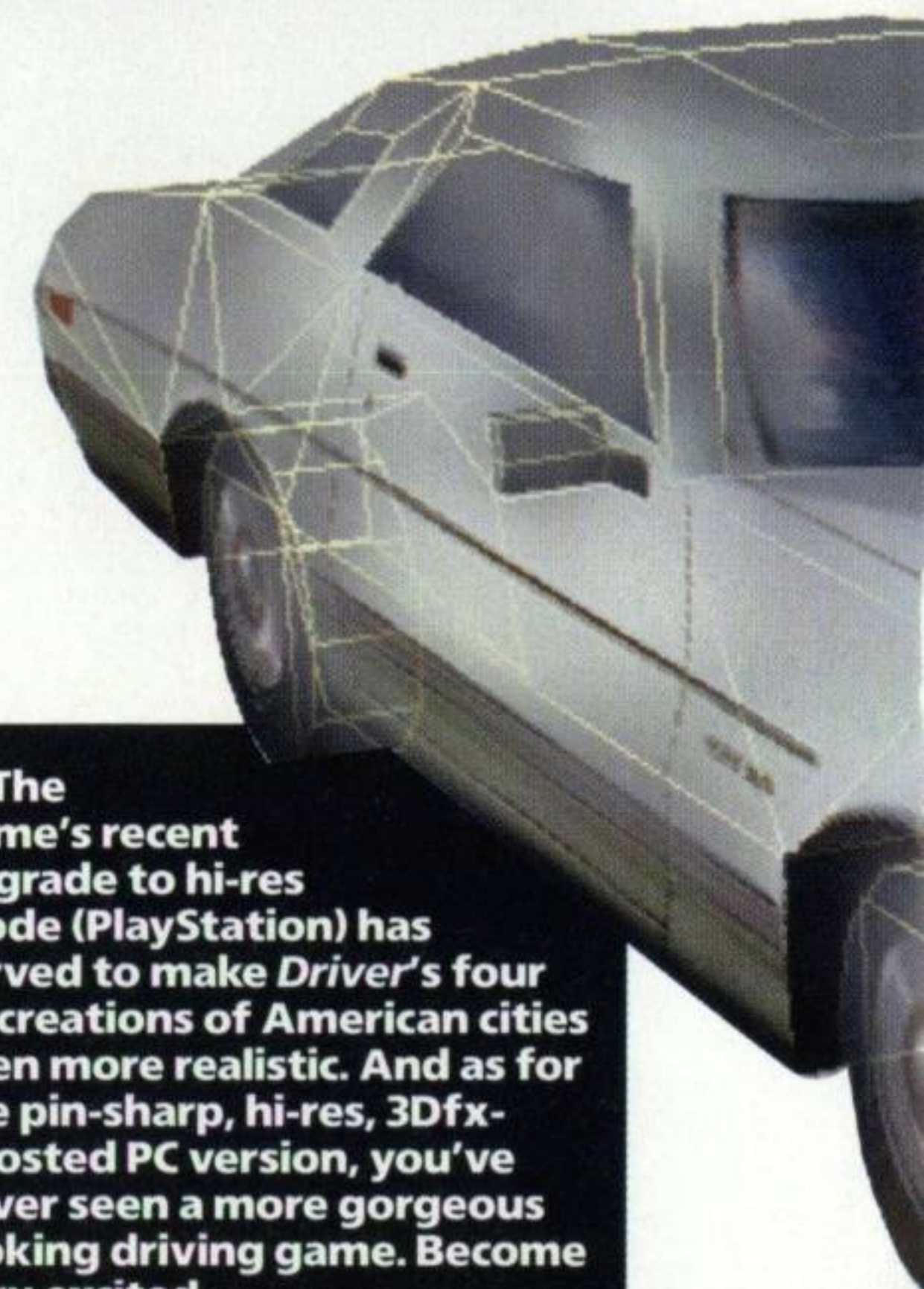
Your beautiful arcade...

■ Where do you play coin-ops? Is it a friendly, funny place you might take your Gran for a solid afternoon's *Beast Master*? Or is it full of smelly kids smoking fags? *Arcade* wants to know.

Write to us at **My Beautiful Arcade, Arcade, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW**
Fax us on: 01225 732375
E-mail us at: arcade.mag@futurenet.co.uk

COMING SOON

A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ The game's recent upgrade to hi-res mode (PlayStation) has served to make *Driver's* four re-creations of American cities even more realistic. And as for the pin-sharp, hi-res, 3Dfx-boosted PC version, you've never seen a more gorgeous looking driving game. Become very excited.

PLAYSTATION PC

DRIVER

This fender-bending car chase carpcalypse is firing on all of its many cylinders.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Bomb around cities doing bad deeds and writing off motors with a swarm of cops in tow.

When is a driving game not a driving game? When it's a door. Sorry. No. When it's *Driver* from Reflections, the one-time creator of *Destruction Derby 1 and 2* and *Monster Trucks*. (But let's forget about *Monster Trucks*).

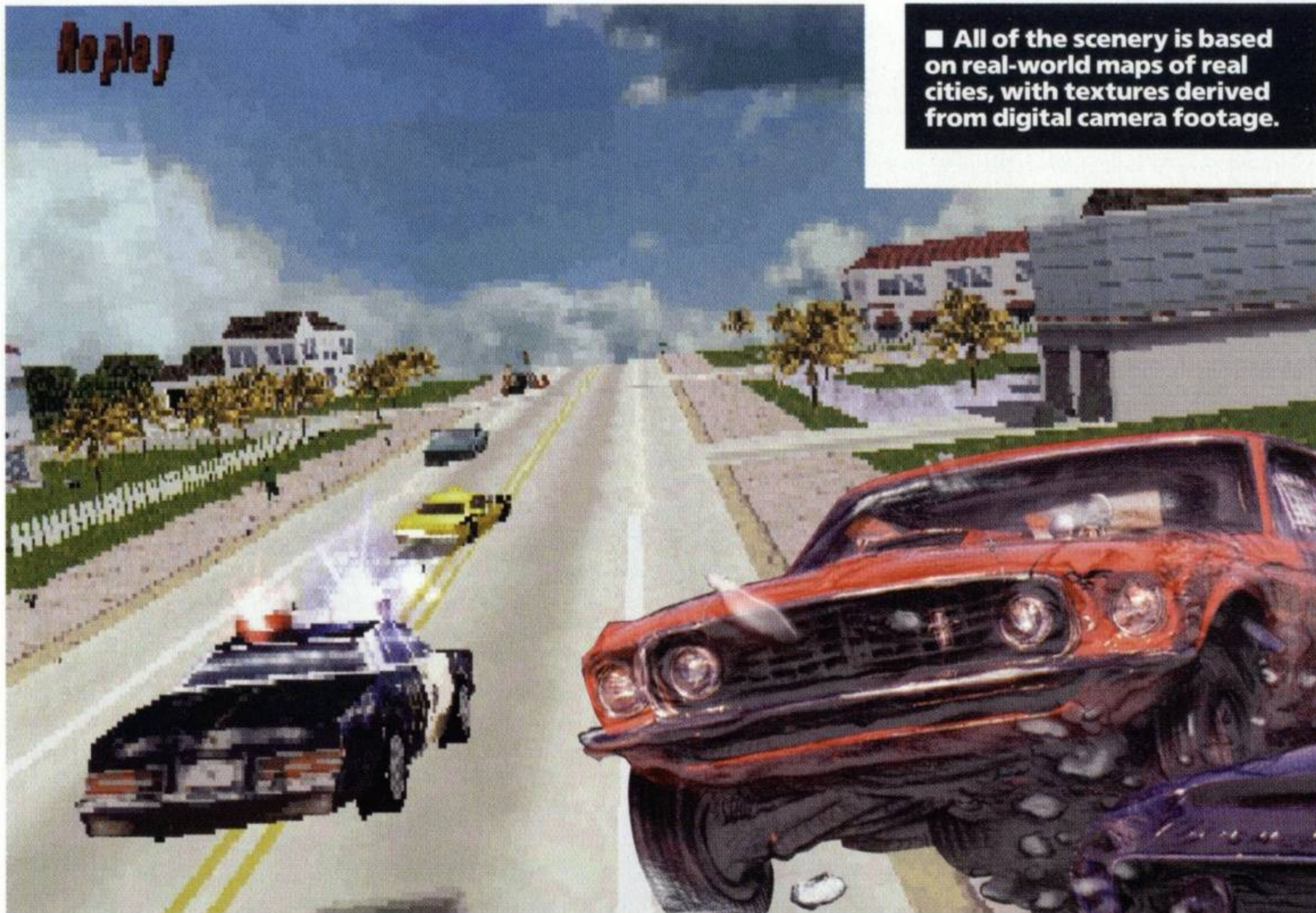
As previously reported, *Driver* is shaping up to be a bit of a belter, borrowing the crash physics, D-pad push-perfect car handling and smoking "hoods" of the *DD* games, but setting the whole shebang ("bang" being the operative word) in real world, real city settings.

Further atmosphere is induced via the crusty nature of the motors. It's '70s muscle car heaven here; Ford Mustangs, Chevys and 72 Ford Coupe Sevilles rule the streets, as the game aims to re-create the gritty action of *Bullitt*, *Gone In 60 Seconds*, and the preposterous police car wastage of *The Blues Brothers*. Yes, the automobile rules around these parts, and what luscious parts they are, for nestling within the game are four vast chunks of roadery from the States:

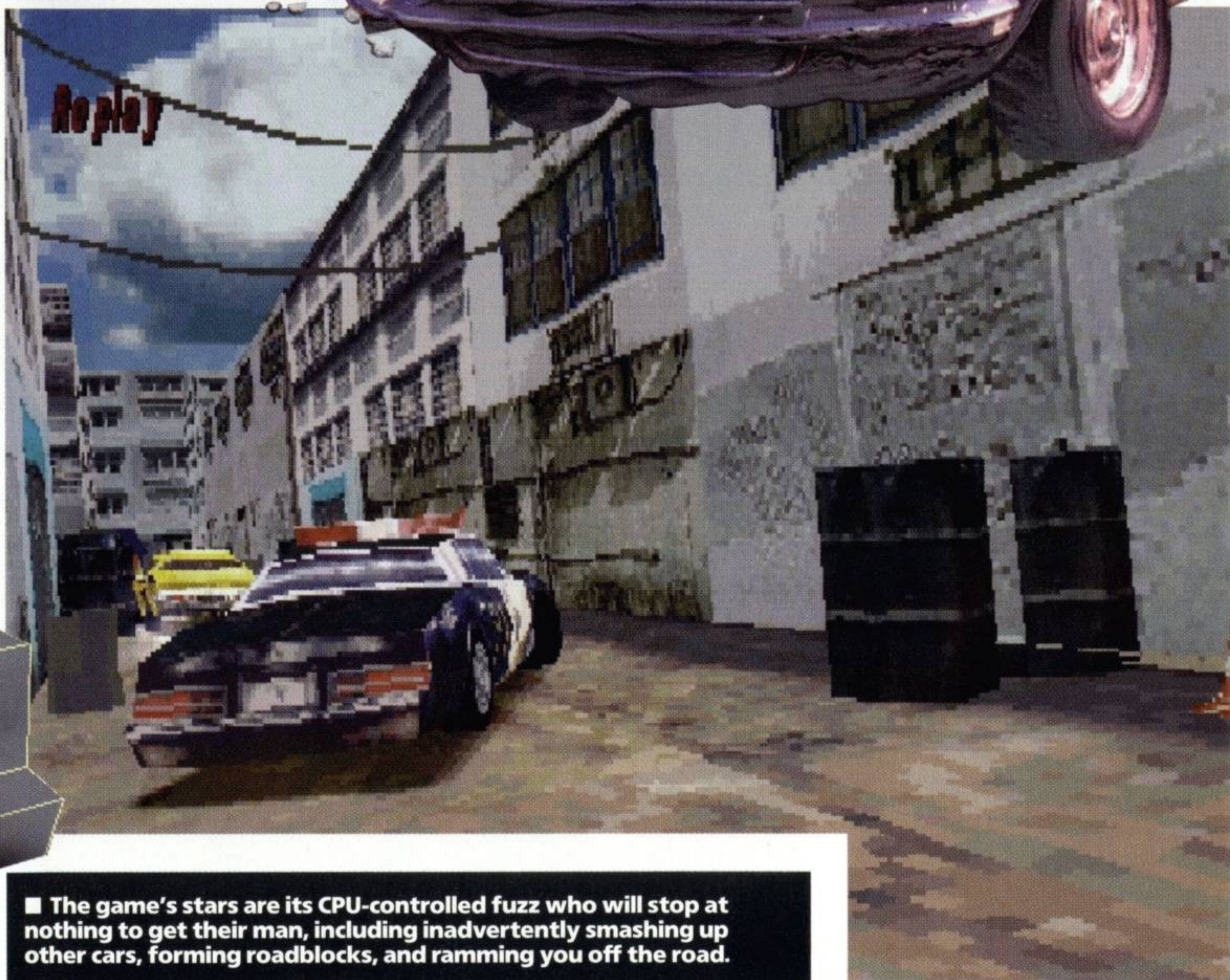
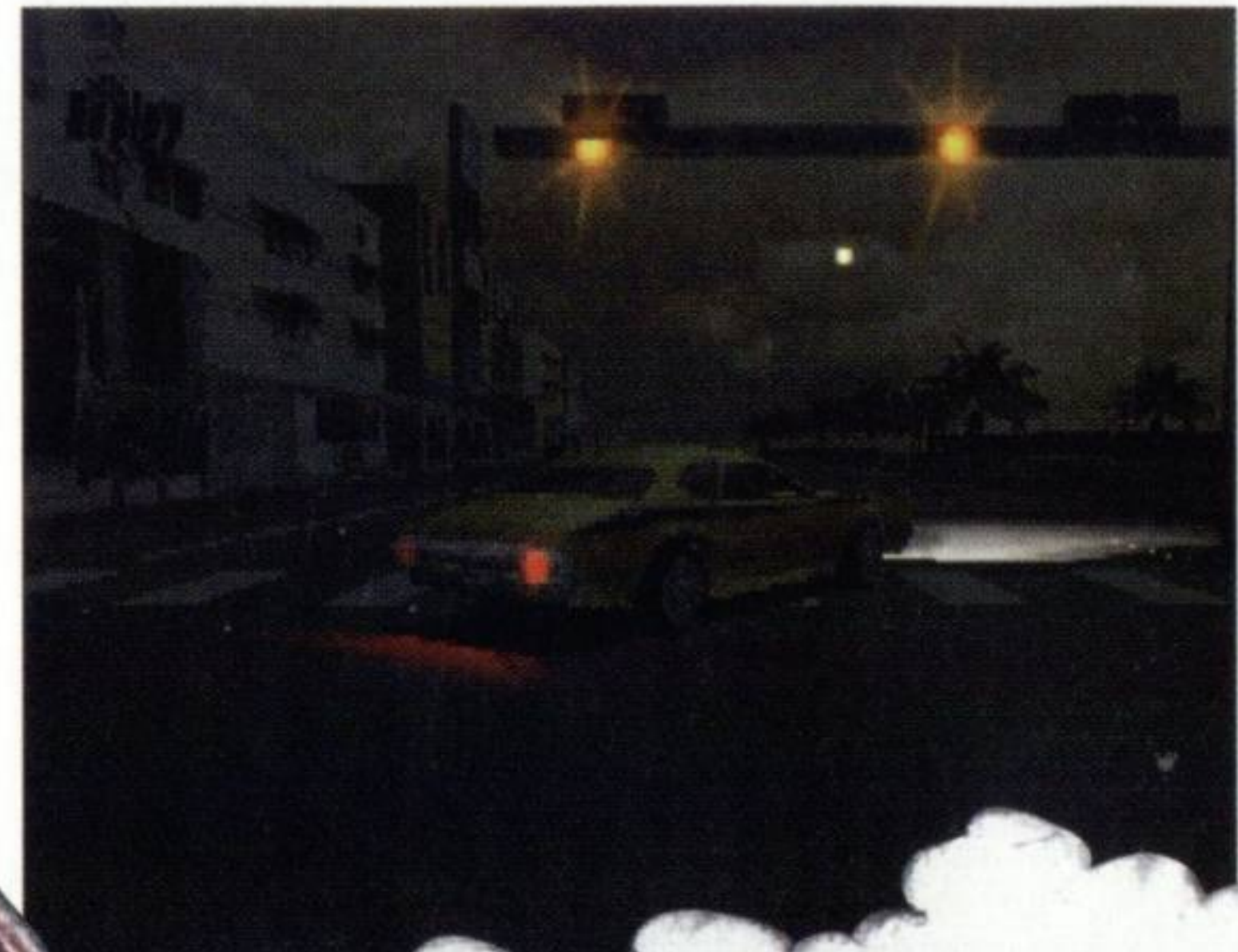
Miami, San Francisco, LA and New Yoik, providing limitless pedestrian-bothering comedy opportunities.

Each of the cities is populated with hundreds of other cars and pedestrians who go about their business in a grossly lifelike fashion. Traffic lights turn red, cars stop, pedestrians cross on the crossings, the lights go green again and all is well. That is until your character, undercover cop Tanner, is thrown into the mix.

He's a man very much in the *Dirty Harry* mould, so while his methods may be unconventional, he gets the job done. Indeed, in the game he is so deep-cover that he's actually doing jobs for Mafioso-types all the while, working ever closer to getting his string-backed hands on Mr Big. So despite being a good guy and, ultimately acting on the right side of



■ All of the scenery is based on real-world maps of real cities, with textures derived from digital camera footage.



■ The game's stars are its CPU-controlled fuzz who will stop at nothing to get their man, including inadvertently smashing up other cars, forming roadblocks, and ramming you off the road.



the law, he's frequently to be seen writing off motors, destroying cops' rides like Burt Reynolds' *Bandit* and scaring pedestrians witless with his preference for pavement over tarmac.

You have a total of 44 different missions to enjoy, each relying on outlandish driving and illegal activity. You pick up these missions in Tanner's seedy motel room via his answering machine, which serves up a selection of jobs via the talents of suitably voiced actors. Once you accept, your motor is laid on and, while no actual car nicking is possible, no secret is made of the fact that the contents of the game's garage is distinctly tepid.

One mission that we've already sneaked a look at involves you driving your car through every one of a non-protection-paying restaurateur's eateries. Another involves the chasing

THE AUTOMOBILE RULES AROUND THESE PARTS AND WHAT LUSCIOUS, REALISTIC PARTS THEY ARE

FACT FILE

DRIVER
FORMAT: PLAYSTATION, PC
PUBLISHER: GT INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
PLAYERS: 1
RELEASE DATE: 26 MARCH

(and smashing) of a rival gang leader's car. Yet another involves getting a car from one side of the city to the other, without scratching or denting it. Easy? Not with a tight time limit that forces you to drive like a crazy fool.

Most of the heavyweight work in the game's development has involved transposing real-life cities into PC and PlayStation form. Hundreds of hours have been spent daubing polygonal representations of buildings with digital imagery lifted from the genuine

article. While licence has been taken where necessary, Reflections' art staff has been under strict instruction to keep the game as real as possible. It is claimed that residents of NY and Miami were able to navigate between the famous landmarks present.

Similarly realistic are the cars' physics. After garnering a garage-load of experience from *DD* and the truly 3D end-over-end tumbles of *DD2*, Reflection's has produced what it claims to be its most realistic physics model yet. And this has been fine tuned to reproduce the rocking and rolling of '70s heavy metal, with its ridiculously squishy suspension. Each wheel moves independently of the body, causing the car to pop and rock as rubber hits curb, or pitch forwards and backwards at hard acceleration and braking. And the mean streets of

San Francisco are an ideal place to test this action out, with cars literally flying through the air, hitting the ground, then bouncing back up again while their drivers struggle for control. And wait till you see the in-car view. The screen rolls as you pitch the car around corners, prompting you to comically lean over in a vain effort to keep your scrapheap upright.

The icing on this car cake is that once your mission is complete you can dabble with the game's remarkable replay option. Everything for budding film directors is here. You can position cameras wherever you like and edit snippets of action from your missions to create your own stunning chase sequences, saving your efforts to hard disk or memory card. And, like those replay movies, *Driver* is certainly one to watch.



COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ With his lack of jaw and tattered wings, vampire lead Raziel is an unlikely hero and future pin-up in gothic bedrooms. It helps that he's starring in one of the PlayStation's finest looking games to date.



■ Enemies crawl out of the ground to harass you. Kill them and you can suck their souls. Nice.



PLAYSTATION

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

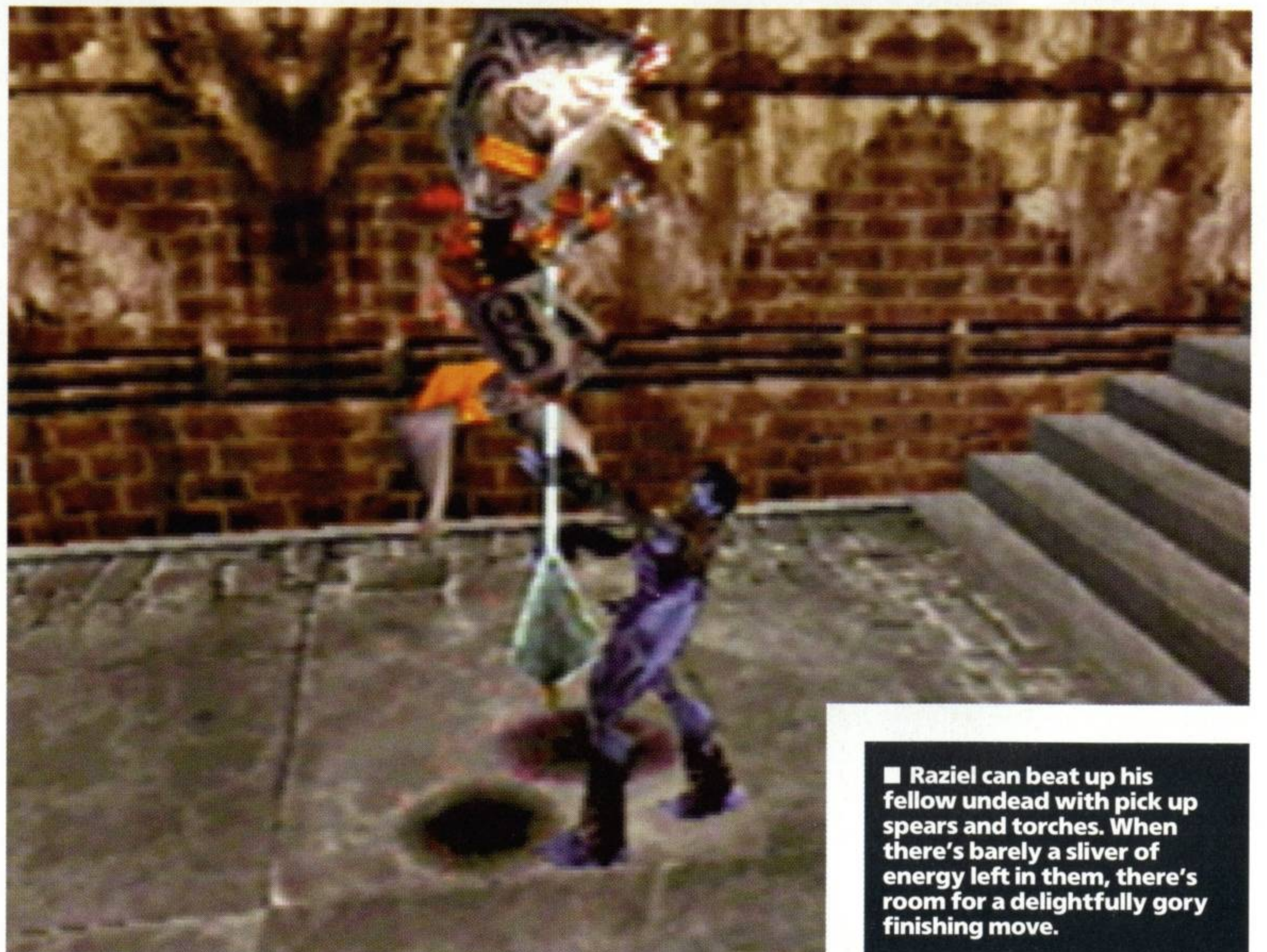
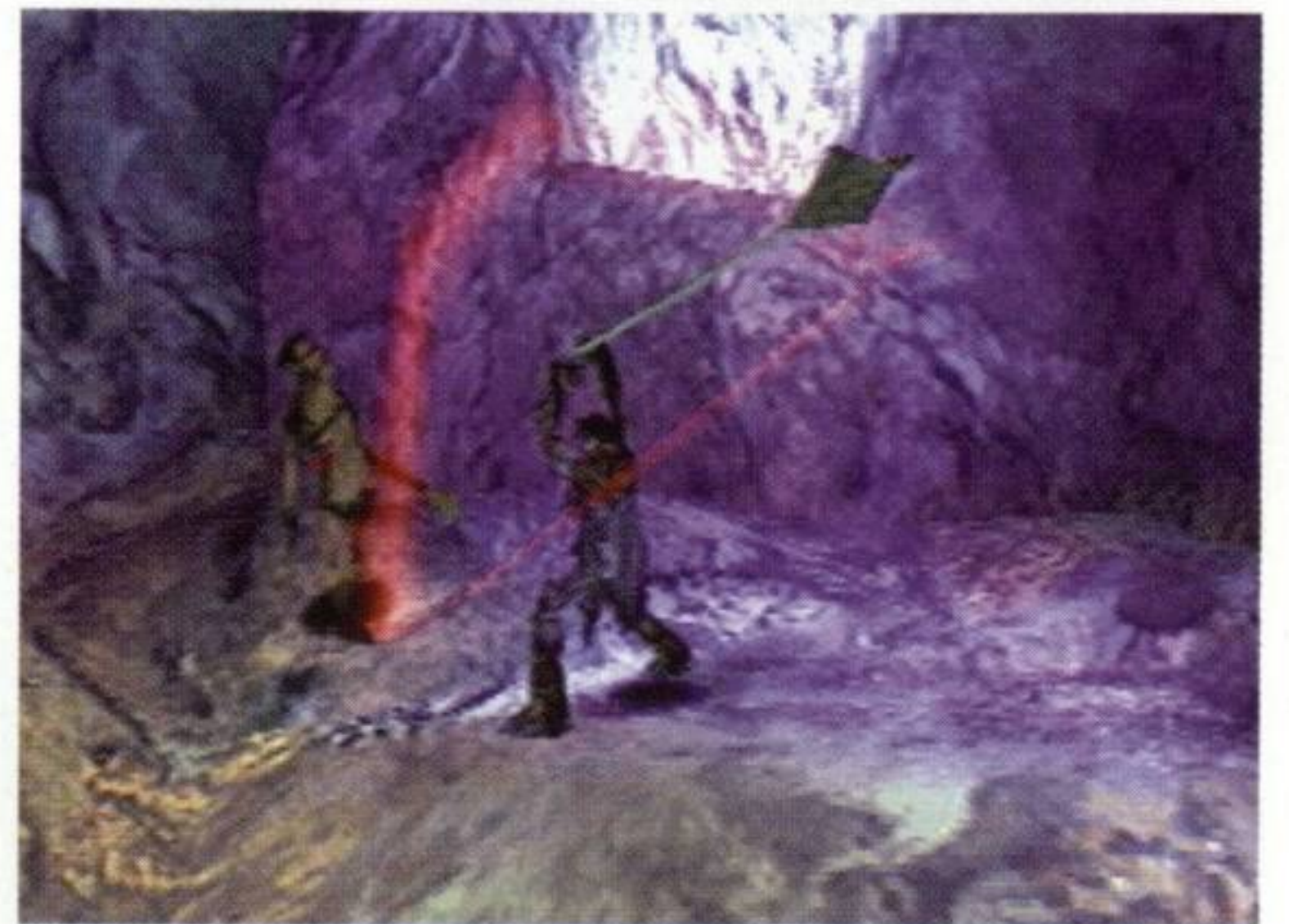
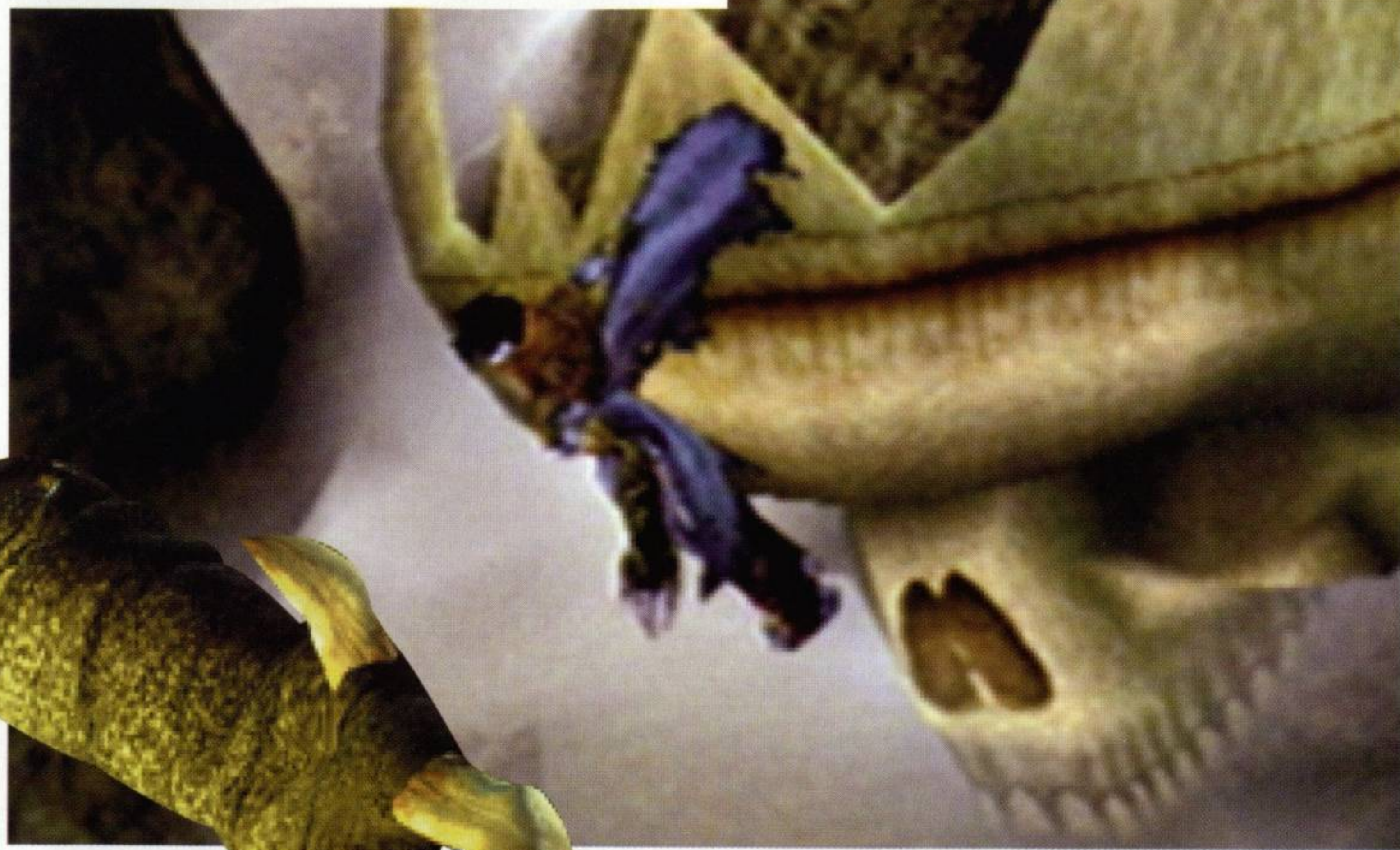
Enter a world of soul-devouring vampires courtesy of Gex coders, Crystal Dynamics. And no, making the sign of the cross with your fingers doesn't work.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Vampire-infested third-person adventure which balances RPG elements, exploration and fighting in a superbly dark quest for souls.

It's the sequel that no-one demanded. The original *Legacy of Kain* was a top-down, vampiric RPG that came out a few years ago and failed to leave puncture wounds on anyone's adrenal gland. Despite the novelty of having a vampire as hero, weedy graphics made it not-very-menacing-at-all. But as more proof that videogames ignore Hollywood's Sequels-Are-Rubbish commandment, *Soul Reaver* actually sees silicon straining technical prowess put at the disposal of some genuinely innovative ideas. The result? It could be one of PlayStation's surprise hits over the coming year. At least, it will get your blood flowing.

Set 1,000 years after the original game, the most obvious reference point for *Soul Reaver* is third-person action adventures such as *Tomb Raider*. But a quick glance at vampire star Raziel's CV should confirm that we're in

■ *Soul Reaver's* levels are twisted triumphs of gothic architecture. They're easily explored with Raziel's climbing and swimming skills, although you have to earn them in battle first.



■ Raziel can beat up his fellow undead with pick up spears and torches. When there's barely a sliver of energy left in them, there's room for a delightfully gory finishing move.

KAIN'S MELTED RAZIEL'S JAW OFF. RAZIEL'S AS ANGRY AS HELL

altogether darker territory. A former minion of the Great Devil Kain, he now seeks revenge on his one-time master. Not only has Kain banished him to a bottomless void that's a veritable Centre Parcs for hostile vampires, but he's also melted Raziel's jaw off, making him wear a mummy's-boy scarf over what used to be his mouth.

No wonder he's looking to reave some souls. Kill an enemy and Raziel pulls down his cowl to suck up the resulting soul and increase his energy levels. You can also impale adversaries on spears (locking on *Zelda*-style helps you aim), throw them off ledges and,

FACT FILE

**LEGACY OF KAIN
SOUL REAVER**
 ■ **FORMAT:** PLAYSTATION
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
 ■ **PUBLISHER:** EIDOS
 ■ **PLAYERS:** 1
 ■ **ON SALE IN UK:** MARCH

thanks to some tattered wings, glide about the stunning gothic architecture that makes up the game's levels. By sucking the soul out of any of Kain's five lieutenants, you gain its special skill – such as the ability to climb, swim or pass through locked gates. This RPG-style progression means Raziel can revisit previously explored areas and reach platforms and tunnels formerly closed off to him.

While we're used to seeing game characters barely able to saunter across the screen without morphing into a different form, *Soul Reaver* is unique in transforming the scenery that surrounds you. The game pivots between two planes: the Material, where you can pick up objects and fight off Kain's minions; and the Spectral, where time is frozen and the enemies are even nastier. Find the

Plane-Shift spell and you can move between the two at the touch of a button, the environment impressively distorting before your eyes. Because time stands still in the Spectral plane, you can push blocks off ledges and see them suspended in mid-air before leaping on them to reach new areas. It's reputedly possible to throw a spear in the Material plane, morph to the Spectral realm, run around in front of it and catch it. That's just showing off, of course, but switching between the planes is necessary to solve some of *Soul Reaver's* intricate puzzles, which extend far past a bit of switch flicking.

Appropriately enough for a game awash with evil forces and a marrow-freezing atmosphere, there's definitely some kind of programming sorcery going on in *Soul Reaver*. As well as a stream loading feature (no Please

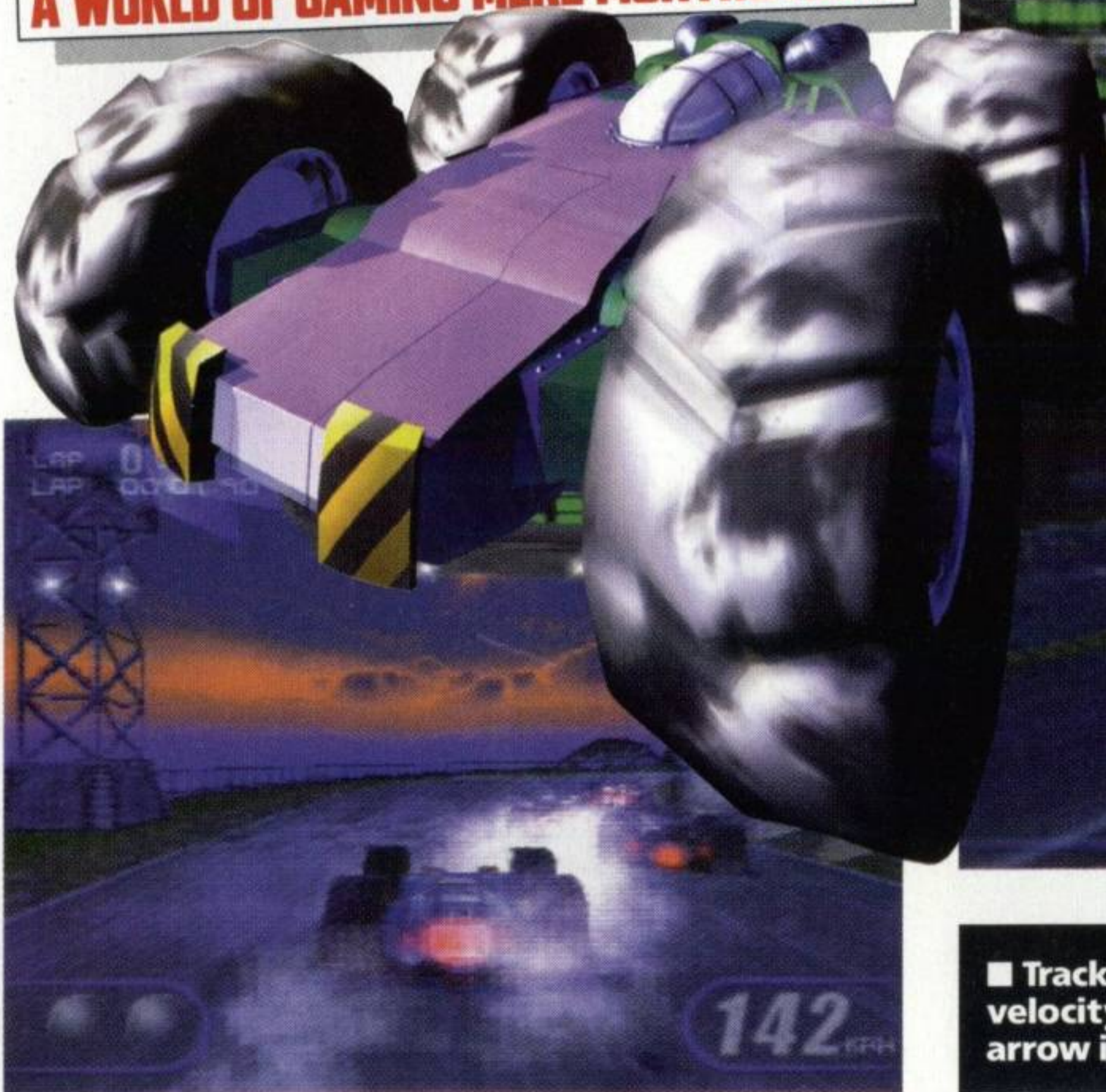
Wait screens here), the animation of the main character, lighting effects and gasp-worthy scale of the levels puts Ms Croft's latest outing to shame. It's approaching *Metal Gear Solid* or *Ridge Racer R4* levels, as a game that pushes the PlayStation to new heights

And it doesn't just look smooth, as Raziel is surprisingly easy to control. There's no wearisome side-stepping into position or lining yourself up for jumps that some of us are beginning to tire of in *Tomb Raider*. Go to push or pull a block and the pointy-toothed hero sticks his claws in and heaves it around without the same ponderous huffing and puffing as the girl Croft.

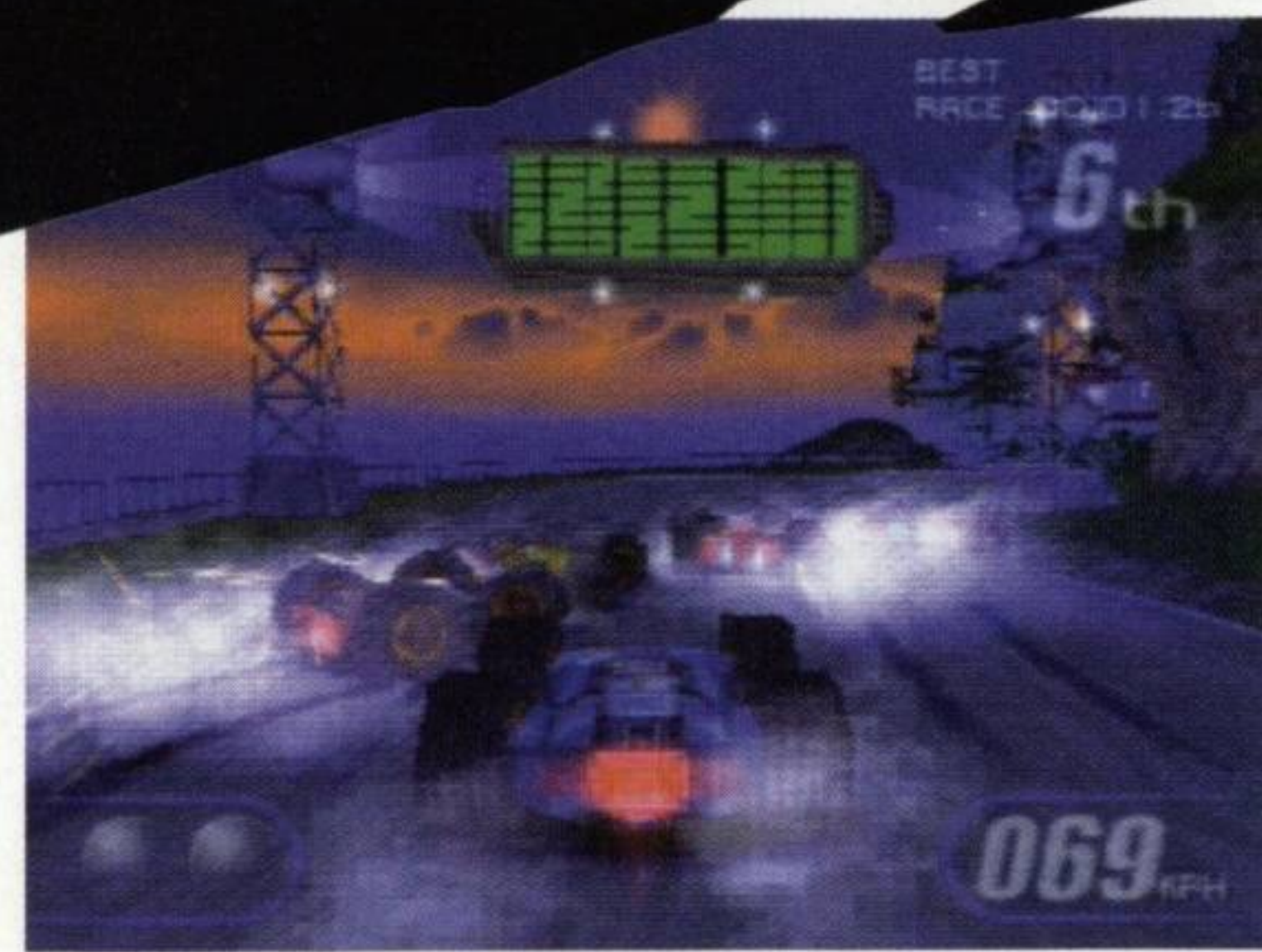
Going on what we've played so far, *Soul Reaver* looks like being one of the PlayStation's best hopes for filling the post-*Metal Gear Solid* void.



COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ Tracks are designed to extract maximum velocity out of the vehicles. Hitting a speed up arrow is stomach churning.



PLAYSTATION PC

ROLLCAGE

Psygnosis' new future racer makes *WipEout* look slow.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Stupidly fast future racer, featuring flippable cars and a liberal application of fun.

Having brought the world *F1*, *Destruction Derby*, *WipEout* and their sequels, Psygnosis deserves an award from the Institute of Driving Ridiculously Fast and Smashing Into Things. This shock report just in; their latest speed-loving racer,

Rollcage, looks like blowing the bloody doors off all of them.

Rollcage couldn't be more different to *WipEout's* trance-inducing slice of next-millennium cool. They might seem similar, sharing a far future setting, emphasis on hemming along at hair ruffling speeds and big-name soundtracks. But *Rollcage* is actually

more fun to spend time with: there's none of the difficult, barrier-scraping handling of *WipEout* and its 2097 sequel. *Rollcage's* indestructible vehicles have huge tyres that mean you can smack straight into walls, only to flip over and race the other way up. And, despite the knockabout nature of races run on such bouncy wheels, *Rollcage* is easily the fastest thing on PlayStation this side of *Ridge Racer R4*.

The weapons work well, ironing out the differences in the field to make for brilliantly fraught races. As well as a bog-standard missile-up-the-exhaust-pipe you can target trackside buildings, making them topple in front of opponents. There's an electrical grabber that throws cars behind you, a pick-up that sends bolts of lightning out to scramble other drivers' steering and a three-warhead projectile, ideal

for clearing the road. But best of all, and a steal from *Mario Kart 64's* blue shell, is a homing missile that targets the race leader. Half the fun is veering off the road while you're in front, so that the driver behind you experiences a very short-lived first place.

Head-to-head, *Rollcage* could well offer the finest PlayStation two-player battle to date. Its three tracks have been designed specifically for the split-screen mode, joining 11 one-player courses, and the frame rate's nippy enough to make the one-on-one battles a serious distraction from the one-player game. Full review next issue.

FACT FILE

ROLLCAGE
FORMAT: PLAYSTATION, PC
DEVELOPER: ATTENTION TO DETAIL
PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS
PLAYERS: 1-2
ON SALE: APRIL

PC CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

Time to get your sheepskin back from the cleaners.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** *Bewilderingly comprehensive, hugely respected footy management for real fans of the beautiful game.*

Even if you're not (whisper it gently for fear of terrible reprisals) into football, there's still something mightily impressive about the *Championship Manager* series of games.

They've never made much attempt to look pretty, eschewing such niceties as match highlight sequences to make room for a staggering amount of pure football data, the like of which even John Motson would be hard pressed to fully comprehend without a neural implant.

Champ Manager 3 builds on the

and dealing in the international transfers market (there's even an option to trade in Euros). The game's quite happy to run the rest of the whole wide world of football around your struggling third-division charges.

If you can think of a player who has ever reached higher than Sunday league level, then you'll almost certainly find them included in *Champ Manager 3*, and they can all be made to do the business for you on the park, with training options that see their skills develop over the course of a season. Different coaches can concentrate on specific areas and you can tinker with tactics on an individual as well as team level, simulating hollers from the bench to make a run, or mark somebody with a few clicks and drags in the Tactics Editor.

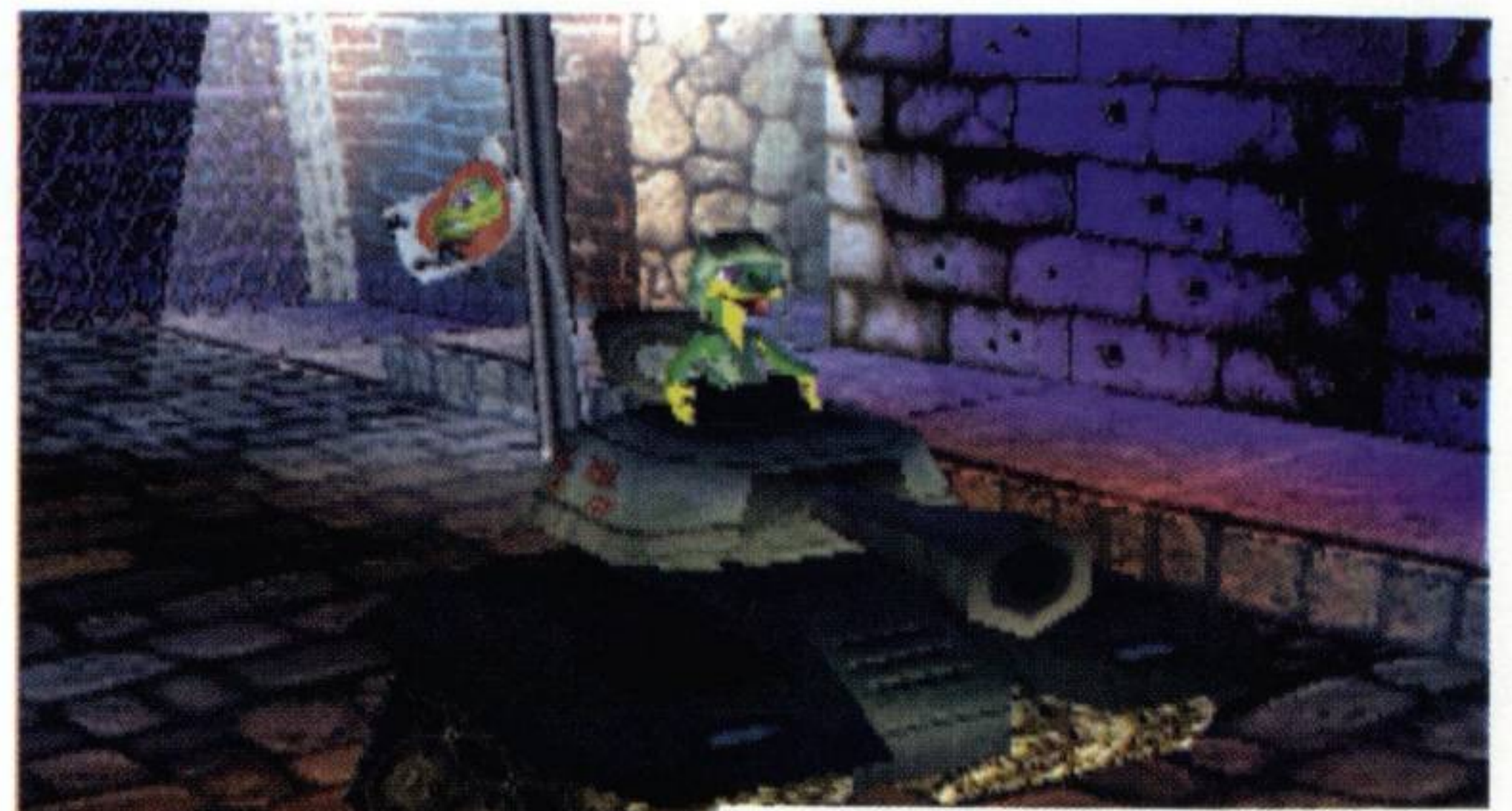
You can only feel for the person who had to type in the huge amount of data, although an improved interface means you can filter out as much or as little information as you want – you won't have to sit through the Fiji second division results unless you *really* want to. This information limitation is a good thing, and something that you'll appreciate when the season gets into full swing and you start to feel the stress of living up to the fan's expectations. A couple of seasons with *Champ Manager 3*, and you too will adopt the smacked-arse expression of Arsène Wenger. Expect a full review in next month's issue of *Arcade*.

YOU CAN FILTER OUT AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE INFO AS YOU WANT

FACT FILE

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3
FORMAT: PC
DEVELOPER: SPORTS INTERACTIVE
PUBLISHER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS: 1 (NETWORK OPTIONS TO BE CONFIRMED)
ON SALE: MARCH

series' hardcore reputation, wisely cramming in more of the option-packed realism that has always made this the serious fan's choice of footy sim. You can now manage your way right across the footballing world, hanging your sheepskin up in a bewildering array of international teams and leagues, sending scouts out to, say, Brazil to search for players,



■ The suave gecko gets to drive tanks in one of Gex's many bonus bits.



PLAYSTATION GEX: DEEP COVER GECKO

Gex returns to wrestle back his Best of Breed crown from bandicoot occupation.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** *3D animal platforming with star voiceover from Red Dwarf Cat, Danny John Jules.*

You'd expect it of beat-'em-ups or first-person shooters, but for a style of game so firmly rooted in cute, the world of the platformer can be a surprisingly competitive place. Gex, a wise-cracking gecko, had the coin-collecting world at his scaly feet this time last year. At least as far as the PlayStation was concerned, he was *The Don*. And *Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko* was the finest 3D platform action available on Sony's console.

Scales and fur have been flying since then, though. Both *Spyro the Dragon* and *Crash 3* have shown the long-tongued one to be out of shape, and so here's Crystal Dynamic's riposte. *Deep Cover Gecko* is another film parody-packed platformer, and it's ready to claim back Gex's crown with some technically excellent levels, a wealth of sub-games and, addressing the last game's worst failing, a new and improved in-game camera.

The reptilian secret agent is on a mission to rescue Agent Xtra from arch-baddie Rez and this time around two new celebs have been drafted in to provide voiceovers. Replacing the

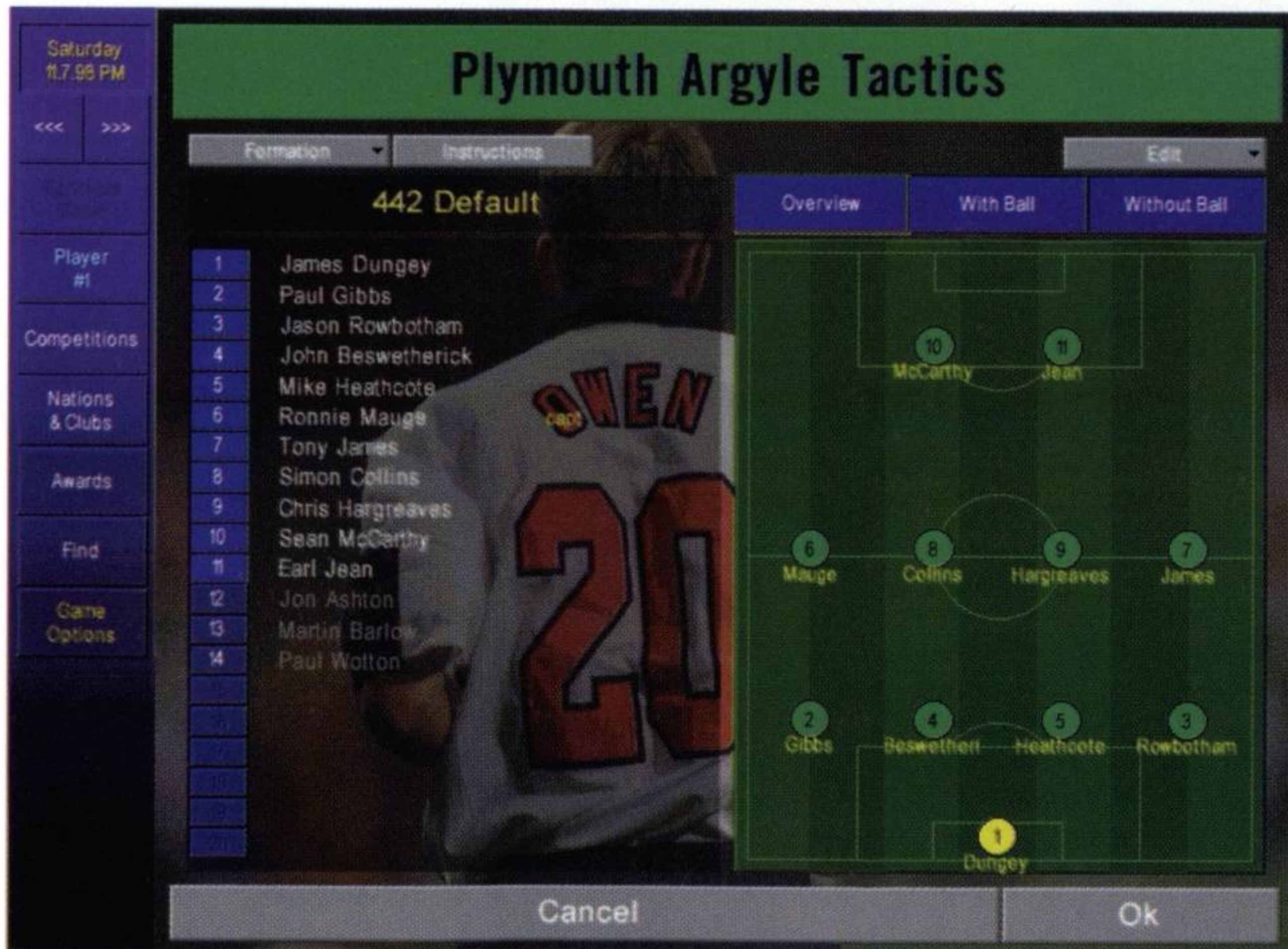
venerable Lesley Phillips as Gex is Danny John Jules (Cat from the BBC's *Red Dwarf*), who'll be recording over 1,000 wisecracks for the cocky lizard, while the beautiful Xtra will be played by *Baywatch*'s Merliece Andrada.

Deep Cover Gecko's levels take in a dizzying, Tarantino-pleasing amount of film and pop culture references. Gex gets to jump and tail-spin his way through Westerns, a Fairy Tale World (complete with break dancing Humpty Dumpty), Pirates of the Caribbean, *Jaws* and, good taste be damned, a paen to the brutality of war called *Saving Private Gex*. Sub-games and bonuses abound, and you'll have to scuba dive, snowboard, drive tanks and ride camels, ensuring plenty of variety to the age-old jump-and-collect gameplay.

Add in two secret playable characters and the sort of 3D graphics engine that Crystal Dynamics is putting to far more evil ends in the stunning *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, and Gex could well end up at the top of the PlayStation platform heap once again. To some, the "Lizard King" will always be Jim Morrison. But a young gecko from California has plans to steal the crown for himself.

FACT FILE

GEX: DEEP COVER GECKO
FORMAT: PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
PUBLISHER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS: 1
ON SALE: SPRING

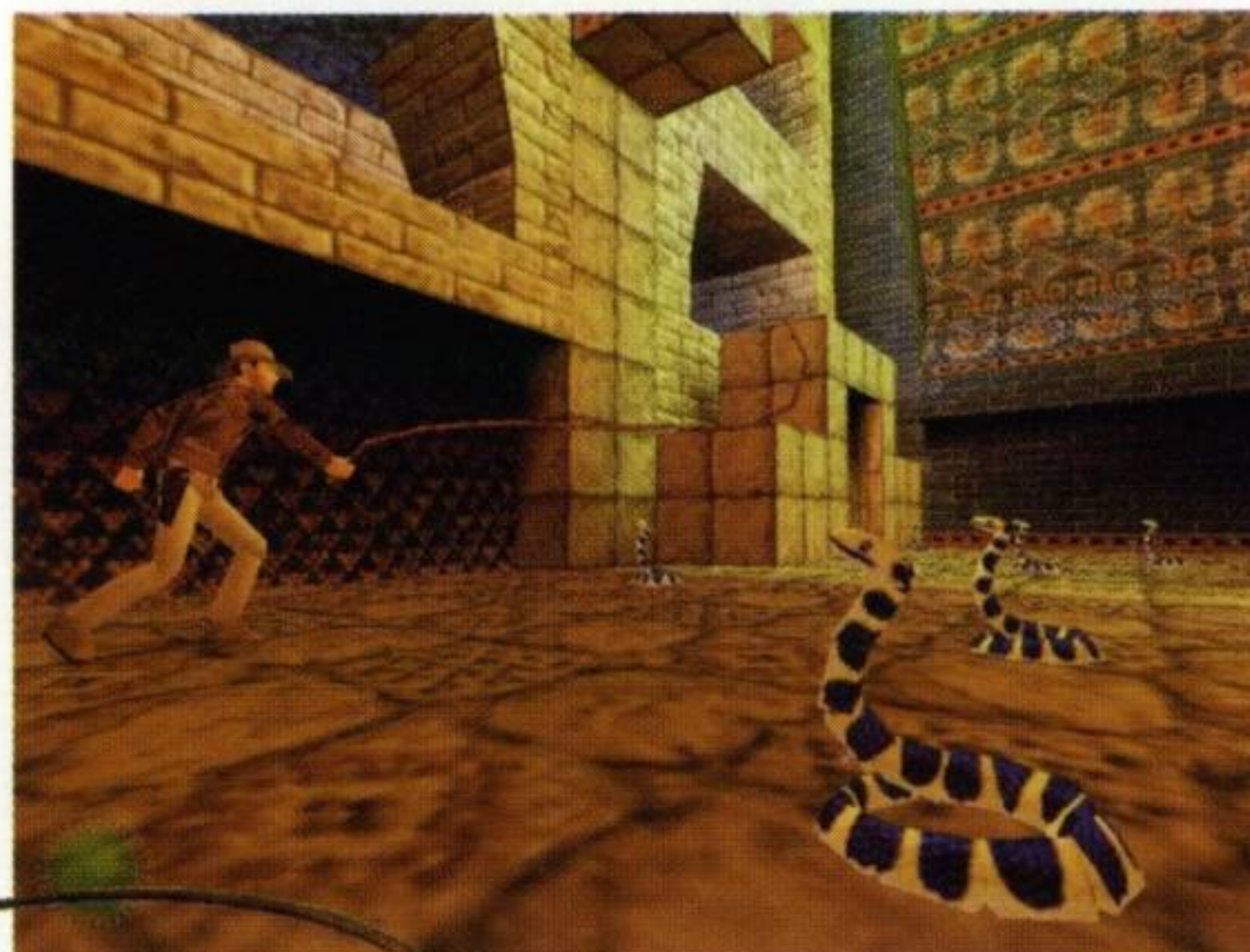
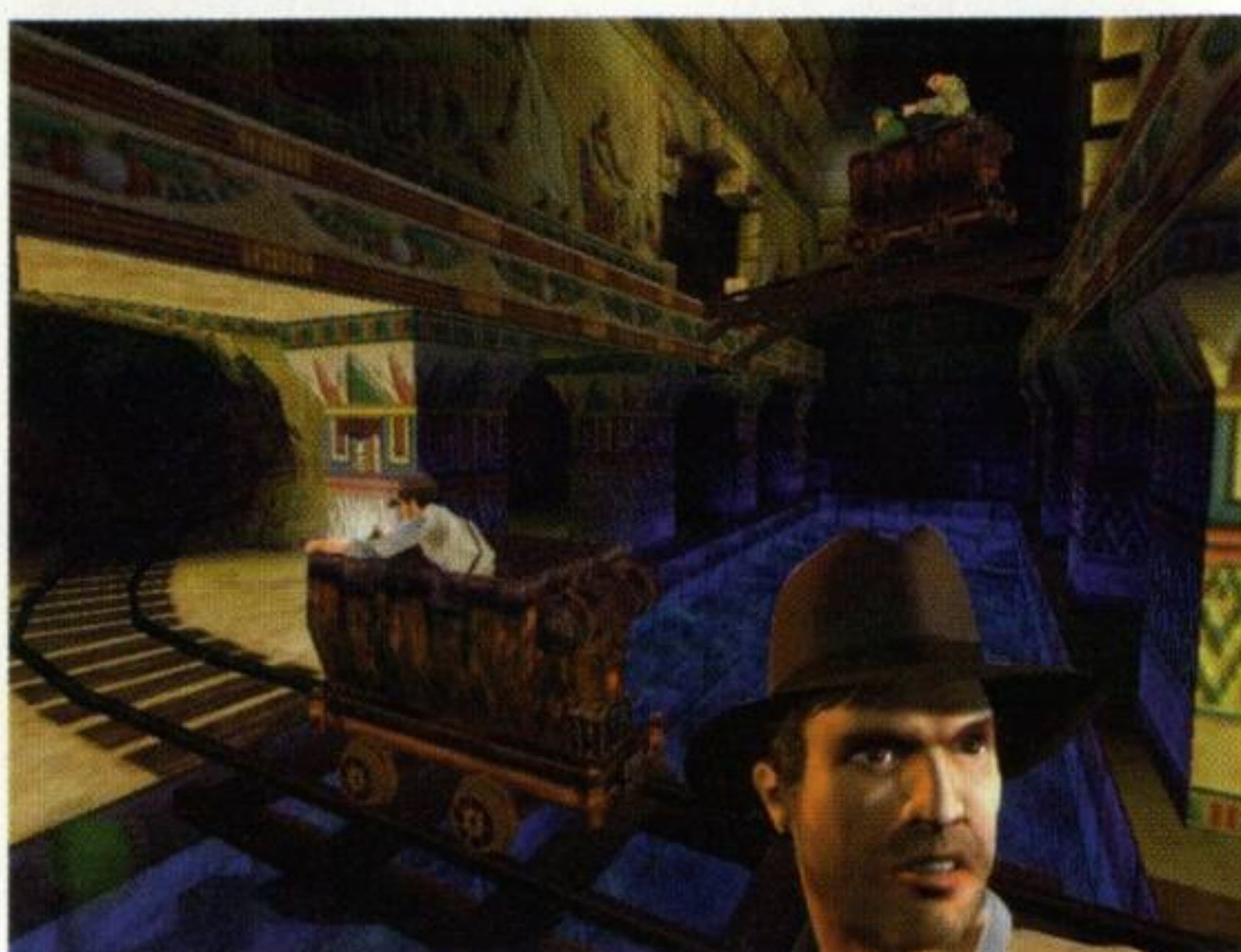


■ Moving graphics? Pah. *Champ Manager* is far more interested in statistics.

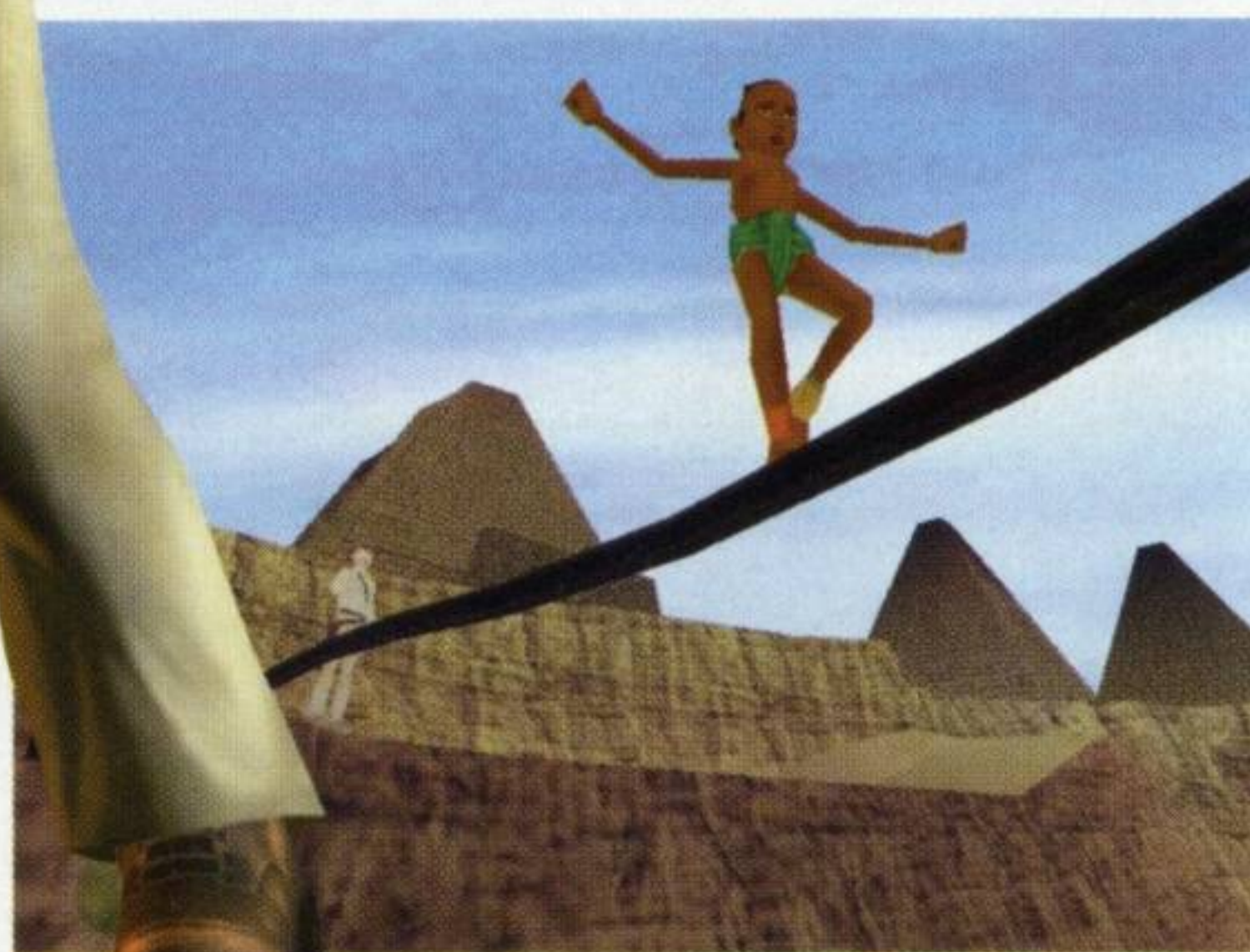
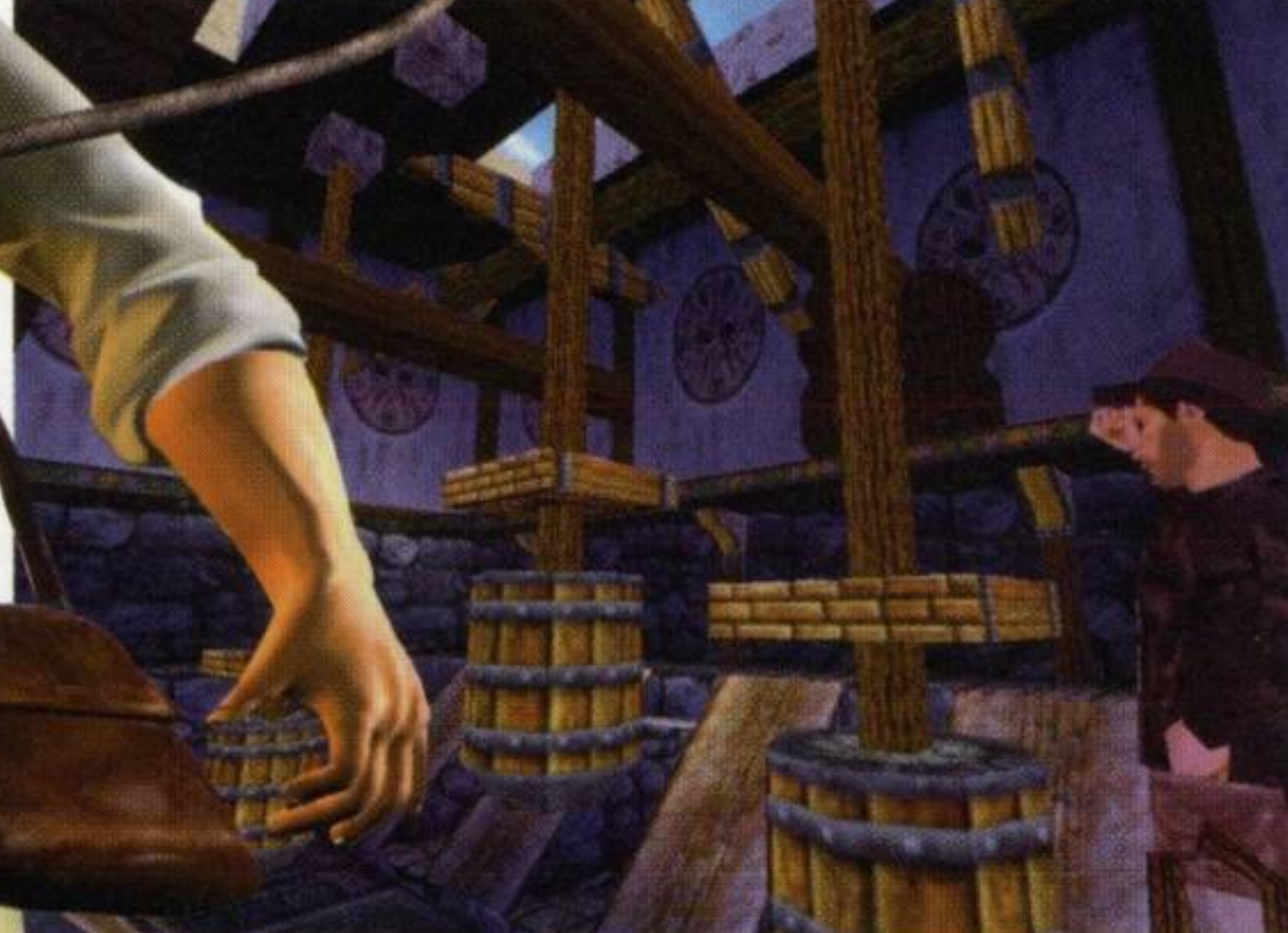
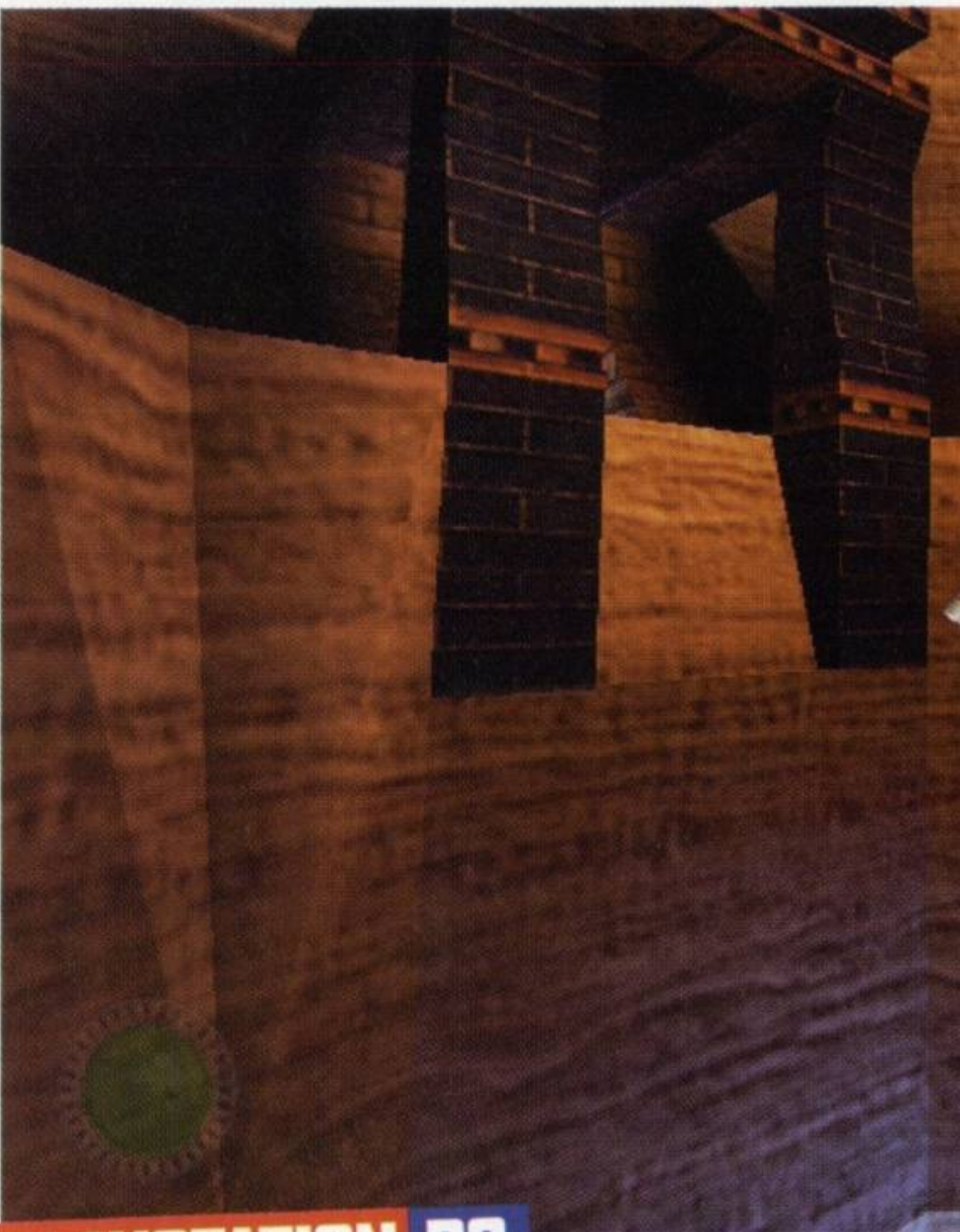
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ A fantastic-looking adventure with Dr Jones is coming your way soon. Eat your heart out, Lara.



■ Lucasarts is one of the world's top – and we mean top – game developers. If anyone can do justice to the *Indiana Jones* universe, it's them.



PLAYSTATION PC

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

George Lucas remembers his *other* movies, bringing Dr Jones back to the small screen.

■ In a nutshell
Indiana Jones meets Tomb Raider in a temple-scaling, whip-cracking, 3D adventure.

Tsk. Indiana Jane, indeed. After the indignity of seeing Lara Croft swipe his best moves (running from boulders must have ranked in particular), and being humiliated in song by Euro popsters Aqua, the original *Tomb Raider* makes a long-awaited return to videogames with this sumptuous adventure. Since making its first public appearance a year ago *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine* has come along beautifully. Set in 1947, the usual archaeology-hindering Nazi enemy has vanished, only to be replaced by a Cold War

Russian menace. The Socialists are scouring the Tower of Babel for an ancient device – the Infernal Machine – that will enable them to rule the world. Indy, now apparently in the pay of the CIA, has to find the five parts of the machine scattered in locations as diverse as mountainous Kazakstan, Aztec temples and Utah. Indy can run, crawl, leap, swim and swing about, and is fully poseable with an array of weapons. Most obvious is his trusty whip, which you can use to swing across ravines and over traps and crack against enemies.

There's also pistols, grenades, an assault rifle and a bazooka. Plus, in addition to man-made harm-causing equipment, you'll be granted an as yet undisclosed magical power for each part of the machine you find. As you'd expect, adventure elements will be very much to the fore. Huge interior locations – said to be roughly twice as big as Lucas' *Jedi Knight* and taking in temples, tombs and dungeons – need thorough exploring, often by the light of a Zippo. The puzzles should show Lucas' trademarked *Monkey Island* trickiness

but, as with *Tomb Raider*, cerebral dexterity will be rewarded by exhilarating set pieces, including white water rafting and off-road Jeep chases. Of course, you can't help but think that a certain large-breasted adventurer got there first. But what Indy lacks in buttock-chaffing hot pants, he more than makes up for with a long videogame pedigree. This *and* new *Star Wars* games all in the one year could be too much for Lucas devotees to take.

FACT FILE
INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE
FORMAT: PC, PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
PLAYERS: 1
ON SALE: SPRING

JET FORCE GEMINI

Cute characters with nasty guns. Rare's glorious looking shoot-'em-up inches towards completion.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Rare's first game since Banjo-Kazooie is a cutesy canine shoot-'em-up in lavish 3D.

The red telephone started flashing. Warning sirens were cranked into life. An impromptu conga started. It's testament to Rare's stellar position in the gaming firmament that the arrival of a smattering of new Jet Force Gemini shots is very probably the most exciting thing to happen to N64 owners since 1998's release of Zelda 64.

Jet Force Gemini is the first release for what promises to be a glittering year for the British-based best mates of Nintendo. It's perhaps a little more difficult to get a handle on than GoldenEye follow-up Perfect Dark, but that's only because it's 3D shoot-'em-up that almost cruelly mixes cutesy characters (with blue hair and everything) with great big weapons

(including grenades, blade guns, flamethrowers and twin rocket launchers). Huge explosions and the scattering of pixels are the only possible outcomes.

As well as the stunning new shots, a few fresh details have sneaked out. Accompanying the two differently skilled twins Juno and Vela and their pet dog Lupus – all playable characters in the game – is Floyd, a droid that can be used co-operatively by a second player, and that keeps track of hits chalked up by each character.

You'll barely be able to run around shooting things without tripping over bonus games. There will be puzzle levels, hidden characters, jet-pack levels and the promising-sounding flying robot missions. The multi-player game's likely to be the best thing since four-player GoldenEye too, with plenty of opportunity to test out all the weaponry on offer.

The great thing is that Jet Force Gemini is not very far from release, with all signs pointing to a finished cart rolling out of Rare's Twycross compound in a few short months. We'll be employing Metal Gear Solid-style espionage to find out more in the meantime.

FACT FILE

JET FORCE GEMINI
 ■ **FORMAT:** NINTENDO 64
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** RARE
 ■ **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
 ■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
 ■ **ON SALE:** SPRING

MULTI-PLAYER GAMING IS LIKELY TO BE THE BEST SINCE GOLDENEYE



■ Jet Force Gemini promises a great deal and could be yours in a matter of months. This is your chance to smile sweetly at some cutesy characters, pull the trigger and blow their brains out. It's what gaming was invented for.



PLAYSTATION

RETRO FORCE

Take a laser-fuelled trip back to when a high score was something to cherish.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** A 2D, scrolling shoot-'em-up. It's been a long while since we had to write that sentence.

It's a question that's baffled gaming's greatest minds – what the hell happened to the scrolling shoot-'em-up? Not less than five years ago, shop shelves were thick with 16-bit titles featuring upgradable ships, screens bursting with explosions and a constant spew of what we're contractually obliged to call Hot Laser Death. And then... nothing. Re-mastered versions of classics like R-Type only served to remind you of the laser bolt-shaped hole at the heart of gaming.

With Retro Force then, Psygnosis is making a concerted effort to appeal to those longing for a time before texture mapped NURBS. It's a 2D vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up, and is very proud of the fact too. There's a definite nod to the genre's Japanese roots, with players able to choose from four pilots that look like they made the last audition for '70s animé space opera Battle of the Planets (you know, "Transmute!"): Paris Tetsuo, Hawtin Raydar, Pi (a three-foot tall

blue cat) and, (God Bless Sir Clive), Sinclair the robot.

Each character gets a different ship armed with six permanent weapons, divided between bombs and blasters. Power-ups (and where would shoot-'em-ups be without 'em?) number 20, and include homing missiles, force fields and a plasma ball generator. You'll be expending all this fire-power over 15 levels, sectioned off into four different worlds, with UFO/Mecha-Spider/Huge Great Flying Robot bosses waiting at the end.

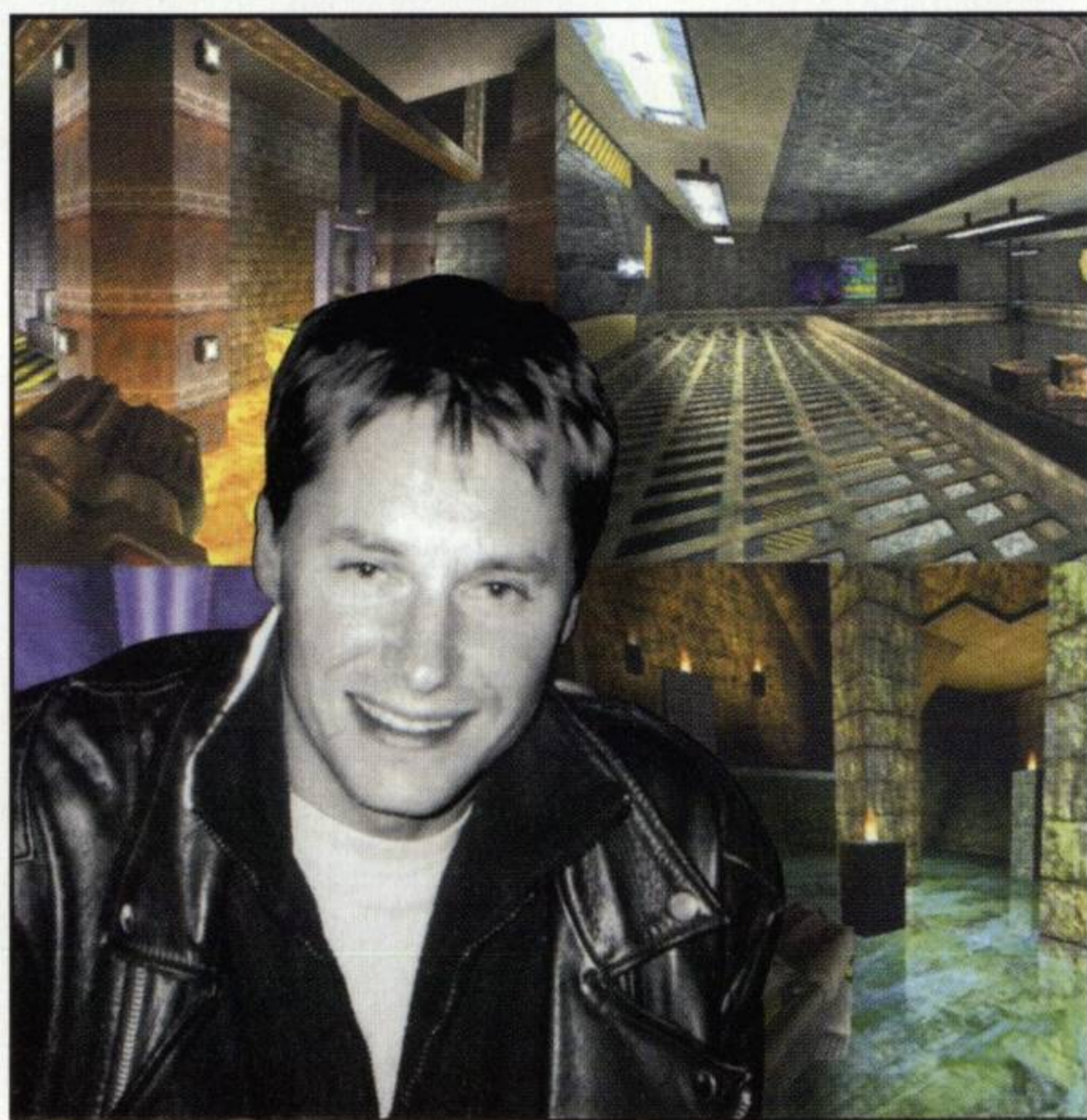
It's not bad looking either, with Psygnosis going for rich 3D landscapes acting as a backdrop to the blasting, and the whole thing lit up by real-time lighting effects. Rather unambitiously, it's still a resolutely 2D game, though, with none of the 3D sections pioneered by the likes of Square's Einhander. But the idea here is resolutely old skool, right down to the co-operative two-player game and relay battle that enables two couples to take it turns to chalk up high scores. Ah, high scores. Remember them with us when you read the full review next issue.

FACT FILE

RETRO FORCE
 ■ **FORMAT:** PLAYSTATION
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** PSYGNOSIS
 ■ **PUBLISHER:** PSYGNOSIS
 ■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
 ■ **ON SALE:** APRIL

Games Insider

Four men for whom games aren't just a hobby, they're a way of life. If you want to hear the real deal about videogames, read on...



THIS IS HARDCORE

Julian Rignall

Zelda: a game for kids or the greatest adventure ever created?

I got some time off recently and finally managed to put some serious play hours into *Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*. And I'm very, very glad I did, because it's simply the best game I've played in years. It truly is a milestone, a breakthrough game that is to videogaming what JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* was to fantasy literature. I'm sure many of you are now sitting back in your chair, stroking your chin and exclaiming "Oh yeah, I reckon. Isn't that exactly what he said about *Unreal* a couple of months ago?" Well yes, so let me explain why I feel this way.

From start to finish, *Zelda* is beautifully choreographed. It's designed to instill a variety of emotions and feelings, and – despite its complexity and demands for many different skills – getting into it is a joy. This is all thanks to an initial environment that encourages you to learn how to play the game by presenting you with relevant and entertaining tasks. End result: *Zelda* grants you an instant feeling of achievement, and therefore you quickly get into the action. Any designer worth his or her salt should sit down and play the opening hour of the game time after time – *Zelda*'s designer

Shigeru Miyamoto really writes the book on how to introduce game mechanics to a first-time player.

But that's only the beginning. Subsequent hours spent playing *Zelda* instill increasing awe, as the storyline is eked out brilliantly. Over time, you slowly begin to

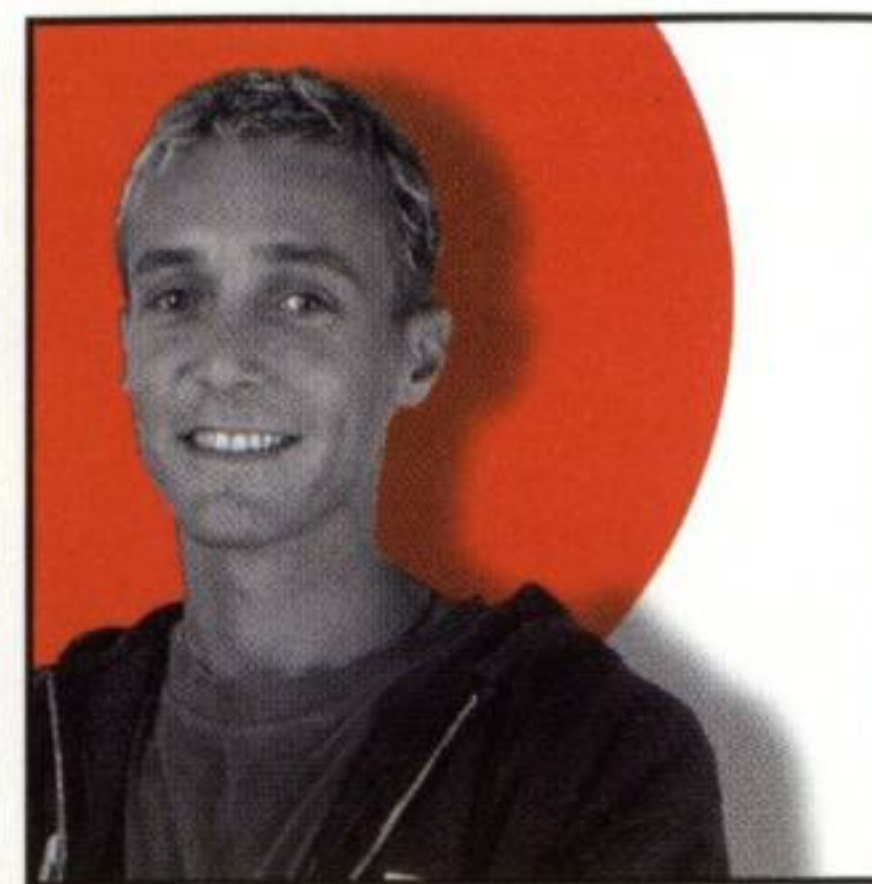
understand the sheer scope and magnitude of the quest you've undertaken, and a combination of revelations and clues help reveal who your character actually is, and the nature of his destiny.

Zelda's gameplay balances puzzles and action beautifully. It's been a long, long time since a game made me think about it when I wasn't playing it, but *Zelda* does, and how! I'd get stuck and wouldn't be able to go any further, so I'd save the game and switch off. But I'd still be thinking about the problem and the following day (usually during some boring management meeting) I'd suddenly figure out the solution, and would be dying to get home so I could see if it worked. But the best thing of all about the puzzles is that they're always incredibly logical – the sort that make you yell "Doh!" when you figure them out, because they always seem so obvious after the event.

And all the while in *Zelda*, you're given the chance to explore a series of fantastic environments that feel truly alive. Your character is challenged by all sorts of odd denizens who help make the whole game experience far more compelling and realistic. And the result of all this labour? An awe-inspiring game that provides weeks of some of the most enjoyable videogaming yet offered. And yes, it does look like a kid's game. But *The Hobbit* is a kid's book, and that doesn't stop me from going back and re-reading it every few years.

So why am I telling you all this? Well, first to alert any cynical players out there who might miss out. If you're serious about gaming, *Zelda* is an absolute must. But second to make my now-traditional request of PC game designers. Play *Zelda* and learn. Please, I'm begging you. Use what you discover to combine the quality graphics and gameplay seen in something like *Unreal* with logical puzzles. Wrap this gaming bone and sinew in a deep, edgy, adult-oriented sci-fi story. If done right, I'm sure the end result of these labours will be a breakthrough videogame title that does for PC entertainment what Gibson's *Neuromancer* did for sci-fi. **A**

Julian is editor-in-chief of the Imagine Games Network (<http://www.ign.com/>).



TURNING JAPANESE

Jason Brookes

Christmas is a colourful month for our man in Japan.

Have a guess which hardware sold the most in Japan last Christmas. Sega's spanking new Dreamcast, perhaps? Or what about the trusty old N64 – the machine that now plays host to the Holy Grail of videogaming, *Zelda*? Who could dismiss the world-conquering PlayStation? And let's not ignore the new Sansui WonderBake – a state of the art, joypad-controlled, er... oven, that's been selling like the proverbial hot cakes it purports to deliver. (Okay, so maybe we should ignore that one, actually.)

The answer, surprise, surprise, is none of the above. The company that thrashed its closest rival by more than 2:1 in the Yuletide box-shifting stakes was Nintendo – equipped with its Game Boy Color. Originally released in its full monochrome glory a decade ago, the handheld that's sold 70 million worldwide, had notched up a further 702,037 sales in its swanky new form by 20 December. Alright, it might be underpowered, and its games sure are a mixed bag, but the Japanese will buy anything that's available in a suite of colours (while us Brits are stuck with the plain old purple version for some time to come).


The fortunes of Nintendo's grown-up console were also revived pre-Christmas – and mostly by truth in the old adage "software sells hardware". At the beginning of November the N64 was selling a pitiful 4,000 units a week in Japan. This all changed when *Zelda* hit the shelves a week or so later, and the number shot up to a healthier 35,000 a week. By early December, N64s were selling at a rate of over 100,000 a week as Miyamoto's million-selling games were joined in the console's line-up by the latest Pocket Monsters hit, *Pikachu Genki De Chu*. This voice recognition oddity comes bundled with a headset and microphone, although anyone who fancies the idea of shouting commands at a small yellow creature will do best to learn spoken Japanese first. UK

PC game designers. Play Zelda and learn, I'm begging you.

imports are unlikely to be too forthcoming as a result.

New hardware arrival Dreamcast naturally benefited from the pent-up demand of Sega loyalists who bought 203,085 units in the three weeks following its 27 Nov '98 launch. However, despite a good start, confidence in Sega's new console's has been dogged by the perennial problem of games failing to reach their scheduled completion date – or worse, games that are rushed out on to the shelves after their development times are cut short.

Take *Sonic Adventure*; an impressive game, for sure, but one that desperately needed a few more months development to iron out some nasty glitches. Unfortunately this development need wasn't as great as Sega's need to get it on to the shelves pre-Christmas. Similar fears surround the less-than-arcade-perfect conversion of *Sega Rally 2*, due out in Japan any day now. In addition to this, questions have been asked about the limited capacity of Sega's own Dreamcast Internet hardware, and its ability to cope when threatened by a desperate Japanese population, all demanding multi-player races.

Of course, Sony's stake in the Japanese games business saw it easily dominate in the Christmas revenue stakes. Some 331,238 PlayStations were snapped up over this period, joined by almost five million software titles. One in particular, Namco's *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4*, shifted 500,000 copies within days, making it Japan's fourth best-selling PlayStation title of all time. Only the delay of Sony's PocketStation plug-in until late January '99 (accompanied by apologies on the walls of game stores) dampened the spirit of PlayStation Christmas shoppers. However, even this was revived by the cheery gesture of a cute little PlayStation candle handed out to Sofmap PlayStation customers. Who says Sony doesn't care at Christmas? 

■ **Previously Editor of Edge magazine, Jason is now a freelance videogames writer for magazines in Japan and the United States.**



BACKSCREEN

Neil Jackson

Stuck on the outside, looking in at the fun?

In the last issue of Backscreen, we looked at some of the things that professional designers have to cover, if a game design isn't to die at its very first presentation. But several *Arcade* readers have asked me about newcomers who are looking for a chance to break in to the business. **What advice would I give to a shoe-shop salesman with a great game idea?**

Perhaps one "cold-called" idea in 50 that a publisher receives is realistic, and worthy of a returned call. Many bear a stunning resemblance to the scratchings of an incarcerated lunatic. Most of the truly viable options delivered to publishers come from professional development teams, with whom the publisher already has contact.


Plenty of wannabe designers make the mistake of sending their *magnum opus* to only one or two big-name publishers. This is a little like sending your revolutionary idea for a water-driven engine to an oil-company. The chances of an unknown bod's idea being taken seriously – or even being properly evaluated at all – are pretty slim. These companies already have their own tried and tested methods and contacts, and in their eyes, an idea from a lone novice simply isn't worth the risk. If you're "green", forget the big boys, at least as your main target.

For your game to stand a better chance, you could try one of the smaller publishers, in the hope that they're more hungry and open-minded, as well as being less bureaucratic. If they're small, they may still be looking for their big break, too, and may not have forgotten that everyone starts at the bottom, and opportunity sometimes comes in the unlikeliest of packages. But even then, publishers big or small usually only consider complete packages, and that means a design on its own isn't enough – there needs to be a team of people to turn the design into a reality. Even the soundest of videogame designs will probably be turned down – albeit with heaps of well-meant praise and

encouragement – if it there's no one on hand to actually make it.

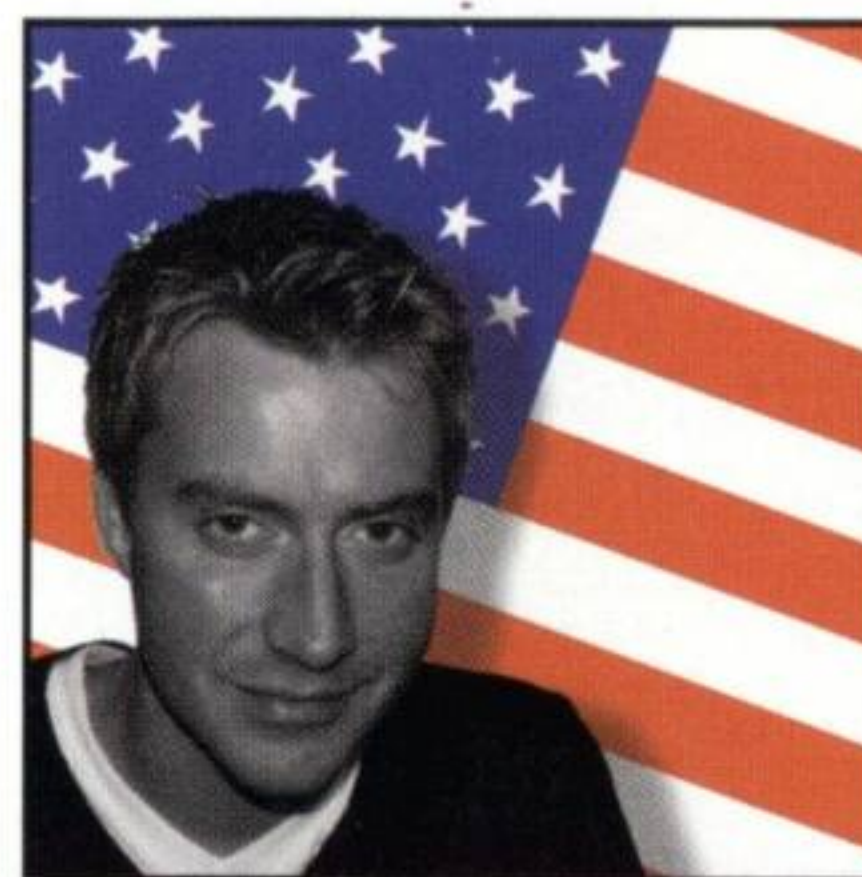
So where does that leave us? The only other places left that will take on new blood are the development teams themselves. These guys, despite the big-name publisher logos on the boxes of their games, are the real powerhouses that the industry relies on. The ideas for games nearly always originate at their level, and permeate up to the publishers, so this is the level most designers are hired at.

Getting yourself in touch with a smaller development team's programming director or internal project leader is a good start. Even if that team doesn't have any openings, many small developers will often log and remember the name of a good candidate far more meaningfully than a big publisher, because when they need new staff, they usually need them in a hurry. Such teams may also be more prepared to pass on contacts for other developers, or tell you which other teams might be looking for new staff.

Finally, before you contact any development team, do your homework. Prepare your concept thoroughly, and be really hard on yourself. Chuck out anything that's wishy-washy, or difficult to explain in a short paragraph. Use illustrations – even if you have to ask a mate to draw things up for you (but never attempt to pass their work off as your own). And remember to check out the development team's history, too. If you can't remember the name of their first great game, why should they bother to even hear yours? Be prepared to take rejection repeatedly, and not be deterred, but at the same time be ready to respond; to develop, evolve and improve your ideas each time you get a knock-back. Remember, it's a fast-moving industry, and ideas are like milk, not wine – the longer they're left untouched, the more they stink. Make sure you keep yours fresh. 

■ **Neil toils at Binary Asylum, where he's bringing Star Trek: New Worlds to life.**

If there's something you want to know about game development, drop Neil a line at backscreen@techno.demon.co.uk.



AMERICAN EXPRESS

Simon Cox

Searching for some Stateside subtlety in advertising.

Excuse me this month. I'm going to go off on one. It's been building up for a while now and it's going to have to come out. **So here goes...**

As Sting would empathise. It is hard being an Englishman in New York or, indeed, in any other part of the States. The American view of us Brits is endearing, yet deeply misguided. We have an unhealthy obsession with tea and crumpets. An amusing Royal Family. Tabloid newspapers. You'll note every time England is portrayed in an American film how quaint it appears – from the greasy café in National Lampoon's *European Vacation* to the countryside wedding of *Three Men and A Little Lady*. Even, the aristocratic, drunken parents in the London-based episode of *Friends* (the one where Ross marries Emily) were genteel types.

Perhaps it's the relatively small size of the UK in comparison to the hulking great land mass that is the United States that makes us Brits so easy for Americans to stereotype. It's bizarre to think that if you live in the UK you can – at a push – get in a car and drive to anywhere else in the country within a day. Yet it's further from New York on the East Coast to Seattle on the West than it is from Heathrow to New York. It's not unusual to find Americans who have never even travelled beyond the State where they were born.


So although from afar the USA might just seem like an extended, somewhat whacky, version of our beloved Blighty, it's only once you've lived here that the nuances and idiosyncrasies of American culture start to shine through. It's the day-to-day things that you find slipping into your life that sound the weirdest – especially when you try and put them on paper. Having to reply "You're welcome," to every "Thank you". Choosing whether you want your egg "sunny-side up" or "over easy" for every breakfast. Receiving three-times more food than you can possibly eat every time you order a meal.

Visit any major American city (bar San Francisco) and the speed

and aggression with which everyone seems to operate is enough to belittle even the most work-conscious Brit. Why is everyone in such a hurry? What are they all up to? Is my life really that empty that I can amble along at a comfortable speed, reflecting on whatever springs to mind, when all these people can't find enough hours in the day?

Americans seem to like their lives in small, easy to swallow, fact-filled bite sized chunks, so they can always feel busy without having to think too far ahead. And this reflects in their advertising – especially that of videogames. In the UK we get a bizarre "Do Not Underestimate The Power Of PlayStation" TV campaign that doesn't even show any games. Or two Beavis and Butt-head-style gaming nerds ploughing their way through the latest N64 releases. A stupid spaceman dancing to Blur's "Song 2", which is somehow supposed to make you want a Pentium chip inside your PC.

But games advertising in the States is much more in-your-face. Perhaps it's the quantity of commercials that pop up, on average, five times during a half-hour show. There's less time for artistic and creative expression, and so products have to be advertised for exactly what they are. Hence a 30-second clip of NFL Blitz appears, a bloke shouts "NFL Blitz, on the PlayStation! Now!" and that's it. "*Metal Gear Solid*," says a man, "out now!" And you know it is, because you've just seen 30 seconds of cut-scenes beforehand. You just don't get much more direct.

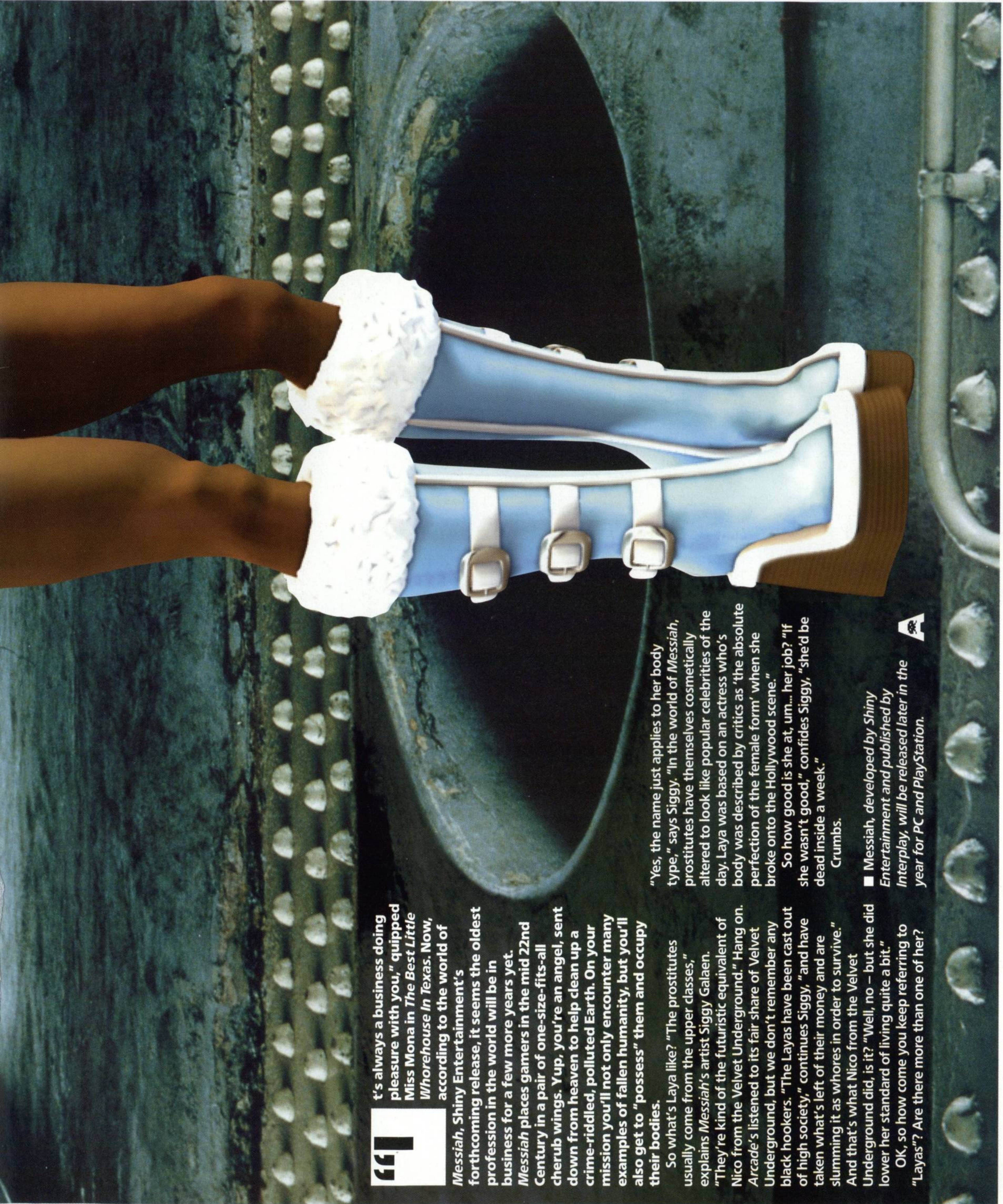
And it works. And yet weirder still, there is no single image behind videogaming in the States, no geeky undertone to bypass, no cool overtone to mimic. Videogames are just there to play if you want, or to ignore if you chose – a product for the picking. Want one? Get the one that looks the best on TV. 

■ **When he's not enjoying the sun, Simon is Executive Editor of America's Next Generation magazine.**



Laid bare

Okay, so Laya's a whore. But don't let that put you off. Life's tough in the 22nd Century, and it seems that sometimes a girl's got to do what a girl's got to do—



It's always a business doing pleasure with you," quipped Miss Mona in *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*. Now, according to the world of

Messiah, Shiny Entertainment's forthcoming release, it seems the oldest profession in the world will be in business for a few more years yet. *Messiah* places gamers in the mid 22nd Century in a pair of one-size-fits-all cherub wings. Yup, you're an angel, sent down from heaven to help clean up a crime-riddled, polluted Earth. On your mission you'll not only encounter many examples of fallen humanity, but you'll also get to "possess" them and occupy their bodies.

So what's Laya like? "The prostitutes usually come from the upper classes," explains *Messiah*'s artist Siggie Galaen. "They're kind of the futuristic equivalent of Nico from the Velvet Underground." Hang on. Arcade's listened to its fair share of Velvet Underground, but we don't remember any black hookers. "The Layas have been cast out of high society," continues Siggie, "and have taken what's left of their money and are slumming it as whores in order to survive." And that's what Nico from the Velvet Underground did, is it? "Well, no — but she did lower her standard of living quite a bit."

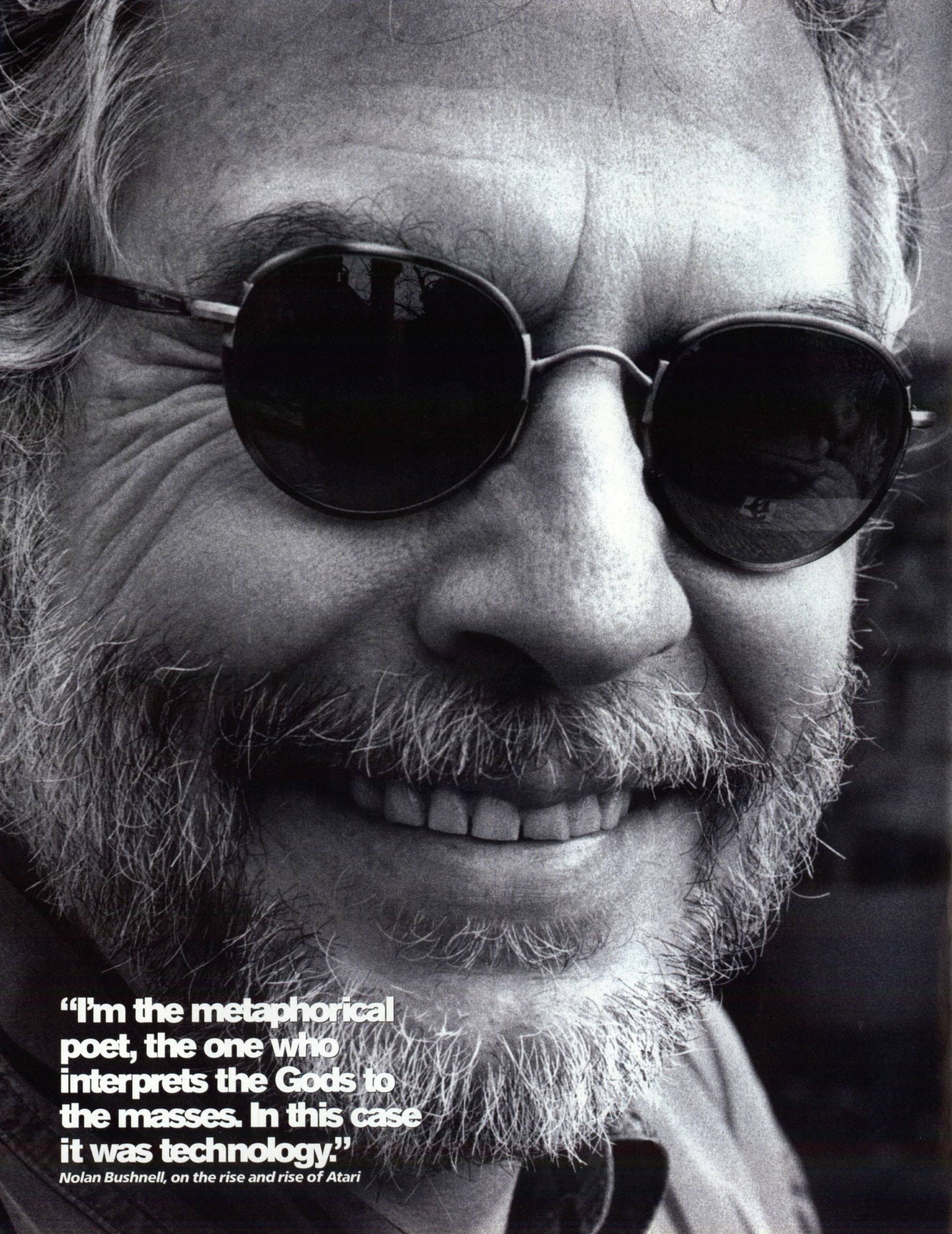
OK, so how come you keep referring to "Layas"? Are there more than one of her?

"Yes, the name just applies to her body type," says Siggie. "In the world of *Messiah*, prostitutes have themselves cosmetically altered to look like popular celebrities of the day. Laya was based on an actress who's body was described by critics as 'the absolute perfection of the female form' when she broke onto the Hollywood scene."

So how good is she at, um... her job? "If she wasn't good," confides Siggie, "she'd be dead inside a week." Crumbs.

■ *Messiah*, developed by Shiny Entertainment and published by Interplay, will be released later in the year for PC and PlayStation.





“I’m the metaphorical poet, the one who interprets the Gods to the masses. In this case it was technology.”

Nolan Bushnell, on the rise and rise of Atari

Interview by | Neil West

Nolan Bushnell

It's all his fault! He founded Atari, the world's first videogame company, in 1972 and launched Pong upon an unsuspecting world. The rest is history.

In California in the early 1970s Nolan Bushnell founded Atari with a bunch of "long haired techn hippies". It was a very relaxed operation. But *Pong*, Atari's first smash-hit coin-op videogame, soon heated things up considerably. In the space of just six years, Bushnell went from scraping together cash from family and friends, to sitting on top of a \$6 billion videogames business and a personal fortune. He'd invented an entire new industry.

Atari self-destructed in the early 1980s, and finally died in 1996. Now Japan is both the commercial and spiritual home of the videogame. But Nolan still lives in California, and still plays videogames. Arcade paid him a visit to say "Thanks", because if it wasn't for Nolan, you wouldn't be reading this magazine today...

When introduced as the man who invented videogames, how does that make you feel?

I've always felt that this wasn't necessarily true. I've really stood on a lot of people's shoulders. I played a very large number of computer games when I was in college in the computer labs.

What I did with *Pong* and Atari was popularise videogames. I was the guy who saw this stuff in the computer labs and said, "Gee, normal people would like this kind of stuff, too". So I'm the metaphorical poet, the one who interprets the Gods to the masses. In this case it was technology.

Are you surprised that videogames have grown so big?

At the time, I had no idea. If you told me that videogames would grow to be bigger than all the Hollywood movies combined – which they have – you would seriously have stretched my limits of credibility.

The home videogame market has grown, but arcades are on the skids. Why do you think this is?

Coin-op games have been relegated to a

driving game and a ninja punch/kicking game. You don't find anything else out there. That's the real problem.

Do you still play videogames?

Yes, a lot. As I get older I find that I like games that offer a whole new world to explore. And I particularly look out for games that have a mathematical balance to them – *Tetris* I still find very satisfying.

What have we learned about what people enjoy while playing games?

Certainly nowadays we know many more things about what makes a game tick. But the problem is, when it comes to leisure, we human beings are a fickle sort. And as soon as you think you have people figured out, you lose them.

What do you think videogames have done for the world?

Games have always had to keep one step ahead of the standard computer business. If you look at the very first games we did, there were no actual computers at all. *Pong* and *Tank* were "solid state" machines – there was no software, no code as such. It was five years before the first real computers turned up, and I think that what the games business did is pioneer the methodologies of the computer industry.

Since then, games have led the way in developing software to handle graphics and sound simultaneously. This is hard stuff. And what the games people have done has paved the way for a lot of the conference call and picture compression technologies we have today.

Do you think videogame technology has the potential to contribute more?

Absolutely, look at education.

Let's assume that one percent of school teachers are absolutely fantastic. That means that only one percent of students are able to take advantage of those excellent teachers. Teaching is the only environment in which that is true. Everybody gets to benefit from the top one percent of the people in sports and in entertainment, but most kids go through school with no contact with the great teachers.

Technology is the only thing that can change that. Put those great teachers on a cartridge, pop it on a games system, and kids everywhere will have access to them. Programs can react to a way a child learns. If a child shows himself to be

A brief history of Atari

1972: Nolan Bushnell founds Atari. Among his first employees are Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak (who would go on to found Apple and invent the Macintosh computer). Early games were *Pong*, *Computer War*, *Tank*, *Break Out* and *Sprint*.
1976: Atari launches the VCS2600, one of the world's first home consoles. It practically took over the world. Bushnell sells Atari to media conglomerate Time Warner for more than \$20 million.

1978: amid troubles concerning a lack of software for the Atari 800, Bushnell quits after falling out with Time Warner's head honchos.
1981: the Atari VCS console reaches sales of over 20 million. The first "golden era" of games had arrived.

1983: a complacent Atari released a load of high-priced, delayed and crap games. *Pac-Man* and *ET* were two of the worst. The videogame market practically disappeared overnight. Atari lost \$536 million.
1986: the ST, Atari's first home computer, wins back much of Atari's lost ground.

1991: Nintendo's Super NES and Sega's Mega Drive herald the return of the console. Just as Atari's getting to grips with this whole "home computer" thing.
1993: Atari unveils Jaguar, its "64-bit" challenger to 3D0, PlayStation and Saturn. It was a disaster.
1996: Game over.

an object-oriented, visual learner, the system can detect that and continue to teach him in that way.

You've described your Atari co-founders as "people who wanted to make games not bombs". You wore Black Sabbath T-shirts to Atari board meetings. Visitors to Atari HQ reported marijuana smoke in the air. Nowadays videogame companies are a lot more serious...

Right, but at the same time I'd bet you a lot of money that there's a bunch of kids in some garage working on something that will be significantly more successful than anything that is currently out there.

Are today's games any more fun to play than Pong?

Yes and no. Of course, games have advanced immeasurably. But a lot of today's developers are distracted by cosmetics. When we made *Pong* we had to focus on the essence of the game. We couldn't bother too much about fancy graphics or clever sound effects, all we could do was make it fun to play.

Do you think Pong was more attractive to "typical" people?

Pong had an interesting characteristic. Since it was two players for a quarter, and there wasn't a one-player version, in many instances it was a social lubricant. It was very common for a girl with a quarter in her hand to pull a guy off of his bar stool and say, "I'd like to play *Pong* but I don't have anyone to play with..."

So you would play, you'd be sitting shoulder to shoulder, you could talk and laugh, you could have fun challenging each other. That sort of thing.

And because the controls were just a dial, you always had one hand free. To hold your beer. Or something.

Right! Then as you got better acquainted one person could play left handed and put a spare arm around the other person. In fact, I've met a lot of people over the years who've come up to me and said, "I met my wife playing *Pong*". And I feel good about that. That's a nice thing to have achieved.



PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDE EDGINGTON

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DOSAGE: adults and children - 1 issue to be taken with liquid, weekly.

WARNING:
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FOOTBALL SPECIAL!



Compiled by | Sam Richards

PLAY FOR ENGLAND!*

PHOTOGRAPHY: DARREN FERRIERA, ALLSPORT

VIDEOGAME FOOTBALL IS GREAT.
GOLDEN GOALS, WORLD CUP FINALS, LEAGUE GLORY,
OUTRAGEDOUS PENALTIES, BOYHOOD DREAMS.
WITH YOUR MATES BY YOUR SIDE. IN YOUR HOUSE. SAT ON A
SOFA. WITHIN EASY REACH OF THE FRIDGE.
OH YES, VIDEOGAME FOOTBALL IS GREAT.
AND WE SALUTE IT.

*Or Scotland. Or Brazil. Or Liverpool. Or Carlisle. Or Dagenham and Redbridge. Or Wales. The beauty is, it's up to you.



Kick off

We've given it 110%
over the full 24 pages


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Which footy game is best?
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TITLE CONTENDERS

WHICH FOOTY GAMES ARE GUNNING FOR CHAMPIONSHIP GLORY AND WHICH ARE CAUGHT IN A RELEGATION DOGFIGHT? WE SORT THE ASTON VILLAS FROM THE ACCRINGTON STANLEYS.

Each game is rated in three categories ■ Skill (how does it feel?) ■ Style (how does it look?) ■ Stamina (will it tire quickly or last you a lifetime?)

Actua Soccer 3 PlayStation PC
 Publisher: Gremlin Developer: Gremlin
 Price: £39.99

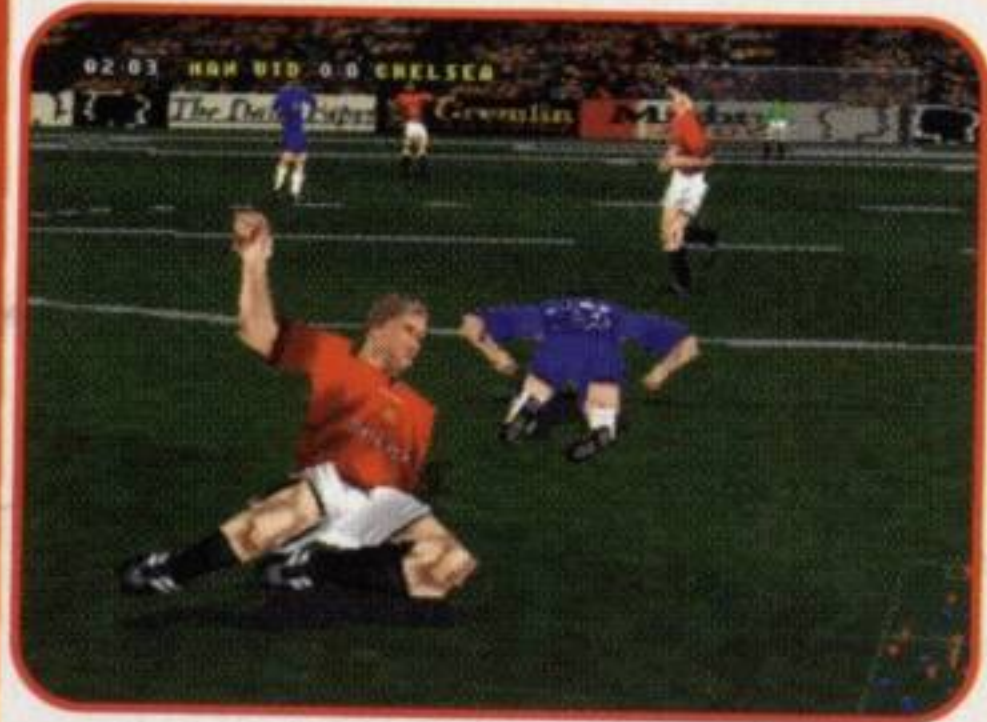


Favoured by a small and unusual niche of football gamers, *Actua Soccer* has the big league attitude but without the big league skills to match. The stats are meticulously compiled, with an impressive range of options, but when it steps onto the hallowed turf, *Actua Soccer 3's* controls feel a little random. The gameplay is generally fluid, and goalscoring is the most spectacular in the business, but ultimately you'll always find yourself wishing your players could pass and dribble a little more solidly.

Skill ■■■■ Style ■■■■
 Stamina ■■■■

Final score ★★★★★

Actua Soccer 2 PlayStation
 Publisher: Gremlin Developer: Gremlin
 Price: £19.99




If you're a fan of the *Actua* series this is a fine Platinum buy, but for if you prefer your motion-captured players to exert a little more control over the pig's bladder they're knocking around, you would be best to search elsewhere.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
 Stamina ■■■■

Final score ★★★

Actua Soccer PC
 Publisher: Gremlin Developer: Gremlin
 Price: £9.99




The original and the worst. Bafflingly, still available. This one deserves the red card.

Skill ■ Style ■
 Stamina ■

Final score ★★

Adidas Power Soccer '98 PlayStation
 Developer: Psygnosis Publisher: Psygnosis
 Price: £19.99



Only footy game completists should be alerted to this Platinum release – an unbearable, lumbering game of graphically poor kick 'n' rush awaits the unsuspecting purchaser.

Skill ■ Style ■
 Stamina ■■

Final score ★★

FIFA 99 PlayStation PC
 Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports
 Price: £39.99




A class product with Des, Motty, Lineker and Lawrenson gracing the commentary. It looks fantastic, plays very smoothly and though it relies on simple game mechanics, there are a good few tricks to master too. However, despite *FIFA 99's* advantages and the huge number of real teams on offer, it's still too easy. The slide tackle is effective and rarely penalised, while passing the ball across the penalty box will almost always result in a goal. The best game around for FA cup-style thrills, but tiresome over a whole season.

Skill ■■■■ Style ■■■■
 Stamina ■■■■

Final score ★★★★★

World cup '98 PlayStation
 Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports
 Price: £19.99



As *Road To The World Cup* hasn't yet made the step down and *FIFA 97* has been abandoned – presumably because it's chod – this is all the *FIFA* action you can currently buy for 20 nicker. Flawed and primitive, but still an enjoyable kickabout.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
 Stamina ■■

Final score ★★

ISS '98 Nintendo 64
 Publisher: Konami Developer: Konami
 Price: £39.99



The best footy for the N64 by far. This was worked on by a different Konami development team to the PlayStation version, offering a much more arcadey perspective. *ISS '98* boasts high-speed action and chunky players. A novel feature is the inclusion of unfinished game scenarios. You're thrown in the deep-end ten minutes from the end of a crucial match (based on past footballing scenarios) and must attempt to pull off a famous victory. The whole game is instant, but enduring, just how we like it served.

Skill ■■■■ Style ■■■
 Stamina ■■■■

Final score ★★★★★

ISS Pro PlayStation
 Publisher: Konami Developer: Konami
 Price: £19.99



The king of PlayStation footy, before the crown was handed to its direct descendant, *ISS Pro* is the best budget game available. It's slower and graphically duller than the '98 version, but its deficiencies tend to be more endearing rather than frustrating. Check the hilarious, hyperbolic, stuttering commentary for an example. All this said, *ISS Pro* remains a game of guile and cunning.

Skill ■■■■ Style ■■■
 Stamina ■■■■

Final score ★★★★★

Kick Off World PlayStation

Publisher: Anco Developer: Anco
Price: £19.99




The once mighty *Kick Off* series breathes its last. If you do find this lousy game – which combines playing and management in the style of Jan Molby – clogging up shelf space somewhere, leave it be.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★

Libero Grande PlayStation

Publisher: Sony Developer: Namco
Price: £39.99



You control just one player for an entire match and trail behind him in the manner of a third-person adventure. It's a commendably original concept, but one that sadly fails. Whichever side you pick, you're surrounded by a team of out-of-form Ravenellis – reluctant to give you the ball, but failing to do anything useful with it themselves. A mite frustrating.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★

Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99 PlayStation PC

Publisher: EIDOS Developer: Silicon Dreams
Price: £39.99



WLS '99 doesn't look so hot (particularly on the PSX, where Owen himself can't be pleased about his portrayal as Mr Potato Head's less attractive cousin), but it plays a blinder. Forget the tactics, *WLS '99* does all its talking on the pitch, with a staggering variety of moves. The chest traps, diving headers, shimmies and backheels are all realistic, while scoring is not easy, but immensely satisfying. Easily the most cerebral footy game around and well worth a flutter.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★★★★

Sensible Soccer European Club Edition PlayStation PC

Publisher: GT Interactive Developer: Sensible/Krisalis
Price: £39.99



Another old favourite struggling to hold its own among younger and fitter opposition. The players seem dwarfed by their surroundings and are unable to pass anywhere, apart from directly in front of them. The controls are sluggish and the whole game is a dismal simulation, unless you're a connoisseur of park football. Even if you're a *Sensi* fan, stick with the memories.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★

SuperMatch Soccer PlayStation PC

Publisher: Acclaim Developer: Cranberry Source
Price: £29.99/£19.99



An innovative approach, but a woefully poor result. Different passing weights make it nigh-on impossible to string a move together and I attempts at strategy are doomed. Looks messy and performs poorly.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★

Three Lions PlayStation PC

Publisher: Take 2 Developer: Z-Axis
Price: £19.99




Much hyped before release, *Three Lions* turned out to be disappointingly slow, a fact balanced somewhat by its strategic depth. It takes ages to master but, once accomplished, it can be a satisfying experience. One for American football fans who still find real soccer too exciting.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★★

Viva Football PlayStation PC

Publisher: Virgin Developer: Crimson
Price: £39.99




Viva Football is like the 16-year-old YTS kid making his debut. Will he come on and score a hat-trick, or will be farmed off to Scunthorpe on loan? The truth is somewhere in between. *Viva's* control method is too unwieldy, producing some headless-chicken matches in the manner of *Actua*. The range of options at dead ball situations is immense, however. The game concentrates on World Cup years and you can pit teams from different time periods against each other. It's lovingly researched, but *Viva* is more likely to engender a cult following than a major fanbase.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★★

World Cup '98 Nintendo 64

Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports
Price: £40



Big licence, big names, but it's all too simplified. There's a strangely claustrophobic feel – almost as though you're playing five-a-side instead of the full monty. We hope that the forthcoming *FIFA 99* for N64 will be as fully-realised as its PSX cousin, finally giving the *ISS* hegemony some competition.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★★

World Cup '98 PlayStation PC

Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports
Price: £19.99/£9.99



Made largely irrelevant by *FIFA 99*, but as it's World Cup rather than league-based, it remains the only game in which you can suitably rectify the England versus Argentina result. Still classy, and still worth 90 minutes of anyone's time.

Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★★

Holding the trophy aloft

But the winner of Arcade's premier league is...

ISS Pro '98

International Superstar Soccer Pro '98 is a quite phenomenal game. We've probably already bored you stupid going on about it, but the truth is that today, a good six months after it originally appeared in the office, there are still games journalists delaying their homeward journeys so they can have "Just one more go" on *ISS Pro '98*. Not *Metal Gear Solid*, not *Ridge Racer 4*, and not *FIFA 99*, but this odd football game from Japan with no fancy endorsements, some limited game options and enough bizarre team formations to have Andy Gray overturning his tactics table in exasperation. So *ISS Pro '98* is not totally realistic, but balances the realism/fun axis perfectly. It's the only game where formation and tactics make an easily perceived difference to gameplay. The pitch is perfectly proportioned and your players always seem to have the right amount of space. You can't dribble to victory, but nor can you win every tackle. Your skills will continue to develop months after you first picked up the game. Like a crossfield pass from Beckham to Giggs, *ISS Pro '98* is beautifully weighted and, once into its stride, it moves with impressive flair and speed. It's not perfect – the commentary is limited, for a start, and there are still some odd quirks to the gameplay – but that's why we're looking forward to *ISS Pro '99*. Until that time, this is the best game of football you'll play without troubling your heart-rate. Unless, of course, it goes to penalties.

ISS Pro '98 PlayStation

Publisher: Konami Developer: Konami
Price: £39.99



Skill ■■■ Style ■■■
Stamina ■■■

Final score ★★★★★

FOOTBALL SPECIAL!

Walkersteel

TOMMY BALLS SHOES

Bowker

JOHNSON

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB SCOTT



THE BIG MATCH

SO WHAT DO THE PREMIERSHIP PROS THINK ABOUT FOOTY GAMES? ARCADE MEETS UP WITH TWO OF BLACKBURN ROVERS' RISING STARS, DAMIEN JOHNSON AND DAVID DUNN, TO PUT FOUR OF THE LEADING PLAYSTATION GAMES THROUGH THEIR PACES.

■ Blackburn Rovers pros Damien Johnson (left) and David Dunn take a break from training for a game of *ISS Pro* on the Ewood Park JumboTron™.



Watching Damien and David wrestle with their joypads over a tense game of *ISS Pro '98*, it's hard to believe that these two are pro players in the FA Carling Premiership. You might think that the excitement of turning out against teams like Liverpool, Chelsea and Aston Villa every week would diminish the power of videogame football, but you'd be wrong – today's games are so advanced that even men who are in a position to make their dreams of a winning goal at Old Trafford a reality are still in love with the fantasy.

Damien Johnson is relishing his run in the Blackburn first team having completed a loan spell at

■ David and Damien. Just seconds before friendly rivalry turns into a deadly serious game of FIFA 99.



Nottingham Forest last season. He's revelling in his role on the right-wing, has recently scored his first goal and is pushing for a spot in the Northern Ireland International team. David Dunn is an England Under-21 International and has also emerged as a first-team player this season. Today, he's recovering from a bruising battle with Leeds in which ten-man Blackburn battled heroically to hold a 1-0 lead.

So it's a safe bet that the lads know their football, but do they know their games?

Damien: "I've got a Nintendo 64 at home."

David: "And I've got a PlayStation and a PC."

Damien: "But *Arcade's* a multiformat games magazine, right? So we don't have to argue about which is best."

Right. So how long have you both been playing videogames?

David: "Probably ever since I could walk. I used to be well into the Amiga and I remember having a Super Nintendo."

Damien: "Yeah, I had a Mega Drive and a Master System, back in the days when the console cartridges were as big as books. I'm interested to see if the new Sega machine, the Dreamcast, is any good."

So who do you usually play videogame football with? Who's your main rival?

David: "I play with my little cousin. He's only six years old, but he's already much better than he should be with the PlayStation. I learn all my tricks off him."

Damien: "I live with Lewis Dayton who plays for Bolton Wanderers, so we usually have a

few games together."

Apart from the football games we're about to try out, what other games have you been getting into recently?

David: "*Knockout Kings* is dead good, and I can find myself getting well into *Championship Manager* on the PC."

Damien: "I like *Turok*. I'm trying to finish it before the second one comes out."

Too late. It was out just before Christmas.

Damien: "Oh well. Let's play some football..."

The lads have already been rifling through our pile of footy games, and they already know exactly what they're looking for.

David: "Here we go. *International Superstar Soccer*, this game is a killer. It's definitely the best around."

Damien: "I've got the N64 version and I've also played the previous *ISS* game on PlayStation. It's really good, but the commentary is pretty mental."

David shoots through the Options menu, selecting Brazil, while trying to persuade Damien to play Australia. The man Johnson is no mug, however, and plumps for Italy.

David sets the pace with swift passing, getting the ball to Rioneld (aka Ronaldo) whenever possible. Damien soon responds with some mazy dribbles, but David fails to make possession count by firing a quick succession of shots wide of the goal and straight at the 'keeper.

Damien wins a series of corners late in the game, but the Italian strikers keep getting tackled. Extra time is inevitable, and eventually David finds his shooting boots, sidefooting low past the 'keeper for a first and putting the match beyond doubt with a cheeky lob. Damien lays the joypad quietly on the table in a gesture of surrender. A result for the team *ISS Pro '98*?

David: "Definitely, and not just because I won. I'd beat Damien at anything, you see."

Damien: "It's probably the best football game around, and it's an improvement on the last version. There are little things you notice, like the way the 'keeper controls a back pass, then kicks it away. That's very realistic."

David: "I reckon you could really get addicted to this game."

Damien: "Eh, you have to watch out though. You know when David James was dropping all those clangers last season? He was blaming it on playing too many videogames!"

Next up is a new favourite, *Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99*. David claims to have played this before, but first impressions suggest otherwise. Both players spend ages trying to learn the boy Owen's special moves and shimmies, and when Damien successfully

These two Blackburn pros know their football, but do they know their videogames?

implements the Cruyff turn, it's as if he's scored a goal. That's the closest we get to action however, as the smooth passing game eludes both teams.

Damien: "That was alright, but I think it would take you a while to get into it."

David: "The graphics are terrible. But it's quite a laugh."

And now for something that's just a little bit different. Namco's *Libero Grande* only enables to you take control of one player on a team. You view the game from over your man's shoulder and must play your part in building teamplay. It's a novelty, but the Blackburn boys aren't too keen on waiting for the ball to come to them.

David selects Brazil (again), Damien inexplicably prefers the USA, and both go charging after the ball. The first half is chaos, Damien wanders in circles as both players try to get to grips with the controls. They're both confused as to which way they should be shooting, and there are strong rumblings of discontent about the camera angle. They finally find some cohesion in the final moments as Damien shoves his teammates out of the way before forcing a good save. Immediately, David takes it up the other end and scores an impressive winner, with a diagonal run off the defender before he receives the ball and tucks it in the corner.

David: "Football brain, you see? I knew when to make that run."

Damien: "I don't know if I liked that game or not. Maybe it's because I was the USA, but it's really hard to control the ball."

David: "Your teammates are rubbish. You're waiting for them to pass you the ball, but they just give it away. The only way I won was by being greedy."

Damien: "It's just too difficult to see what's going on with that funny camera angle."

Finally, there's just time for a quick blast of EA's top-selling *FIFA 99*. Although both players are familiar with the *FIFA* series, neither has played the latest incarnation and both seem impressed by the presentation and graphics. Although it's a little early for designs on the gaffer's job, they both choose Blackburn and battle through a 2-2 draw. Neither of them are in *FIFA 99*'s virtual squads just yet, but how would they feel about tiny pixellated version of themselves running about on screen?

Damien: "I suppose it would be nice, but you just don't think about it really."

David: "It would be weird to play yourself; that would mess with your head a bit."

Damien: "Actually, I was playing *Championship Manager* and I got this message come up saying 'Damien Johnson has been released by his club!'"

What about *FIFA 99* then?

Damien: "Well *FIFA*'s *FIFA* isn't it? It's pretty much the same as their last game. The players all look good, but I don't think that's what you want at the end of it. You just want a game that's fun to play."

The footballers have spoken, and the conclusion? Realism's all very well but, as their selfish tactics in *Libero Grande* proved, you don't play a football videogame as you would a real match. Start to confuse the two, and you'll end up with a poor videogame and the concentration levels of David James. Just to make sure, though, the boys load up *ISS Pro* for just one more game...

FOOTBALL SPECIAL!



Big Match highlights

So which PlayStation footy game gets the vote of the pros?



"It's okay. The player graphics are good but underneath it's the same old *FIFA* game."

Damien Johnson on *FIFA 99*

"Your teammates are rubbish. The only way you can win is by being greedy."

Damien Johnson on *Libero Grande*

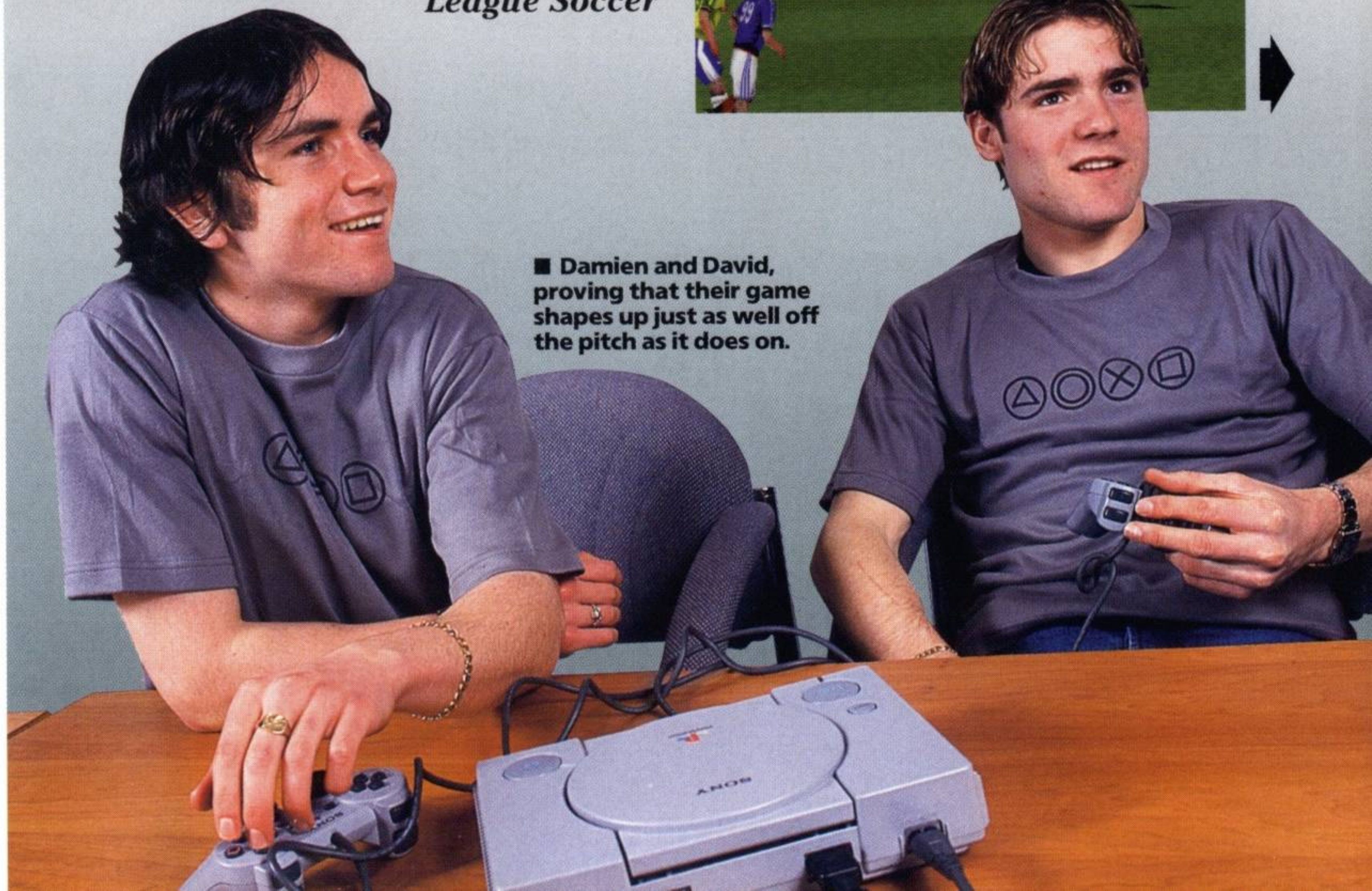


"The best footy game around. It's so realistic you could easily get addicted."

David Dunn on *ISS Pro '98*

"The graphics are terrible but it's quite a laugh."

David Dunn on *Michael Owen's World League Soccer*




■ Damien and David, proving that their game shapes up just as well off the pitch as it does on.

MANAGER'S SPECIALS

PERSONALLY KNOCKING IN A HAT TRICK IS ALL VERY WELL, BUT FOR SOME PEOPLE NOTHING BEATS STARING HELPLESSLY FROM FROM THE DUG-OUT AS YOUR STAR STRIKER MISSES AN OPEN GOAL.

Each management game is rated in three categories ■ Savvy (how smart is it?) ■ Sheepskin (how does it look? Rated from small to X-large) ■ Staying Power (can it last the distance or will it go all "Shilts"?)

Championship Manager 1997/'98 Season PC
 Publisher: EIDOS Developer: Sports Interactive Price: £20




The final version of *Champ Manager 2*, which many fans still tout as the best management sim. Attention to detail was the key to the game's success, with a worldwide player database and realistic transfer system. The game concentrates on coaching and squad development rather than finance, and remains popular despite matches being presented only in text/audio mode. It's an accurate footballing sim and one that rewards well-judged decision making and team tactics.

Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin Small
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★★☆☆

Football World Manager PC
 Publisher: Ubisoft Developer: Caffeine Studios Price: £25



"Big" Ron Atkinson lends his backing to what is a "big" game with over 1,200 clubs to choose from. All the basics are well covered and some nice extra touches are included – learning how to deal with the "unruly player in nightclub" fracas tests your man-management skills to the limit. A good choice of options are available for your team's tactics and playing style, but the match highlights could be more helpful when you need to decide what's working and what needs changing in your grand plan.

Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin Large
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★★☆☆

FA Premier League Football Manager 99 PC
 Publisher: EA Sports Developer: EA Sports Price: £35



Excellent graphics if you've got the relevant hardware (P200, Voodoo2) and an FA licence that helps provide realistic club details. There's plenty to do between matches, and playability is aided by an e-mail system that directs you to areas that need attention. While the matchday AI could be improved, you do feel your coaching decisions are having an effect on the game, and a commentary by John Motson adds to the enjoyment early on, though it becomes erratic after half a season or so.

Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin X-Large
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★★☆☆

Premier Manager '99 PlayStation PC
 Publisher: Gremlin Developer: Actua Sports Price: £34.99



The PC version goes from strength-to-strength, while *Premier Manager's* PlayStation cousin operates from a much more user-friendly interface, which should appeal to management virgins. See page 112 for a full review.

Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin Large
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★★☆☆

Player Manager Season '98/'99 PC
 Publisher: Anco Developer: Anco Price: £30



Player Manager concentrates on the coaching side and encourages you to get to know what your players are capable of by giving them a multitude of ratings and a hidden personality, for example, "Prone to get nervous in big games". This holds your interest and leads to much experimenting with team selection and formations. However, disappointment arrives on match day as, although the 3D representation is good to look at, your team never even tries to produce your chosen tactics or style of play.

Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin Medium
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★☆☆☆

Premier Manager '98 PlayStation PC
 Publisher: Gremlin Developer: Actua Sports Price: £20



Premier Manager's good balance of options encourages you to get fully involved in running your club. The graphics depict realistic team strips and make the 3D matches very watchable (despite the eccentric Barry Davies commentary). Mastering basic strategies can produce a highly successful first season, encouraging you to keep playing when it gets tough in the higher divisions. However, the PlayStation version operates a little erratically as it tries to cram all the PC features into the PSX's smaller memory.

Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin Large
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★★☆☆

The trophy winner

Ultimate Soccer Manager '98/'99

King of the dug-out is...

■ The update of last year's *USM '98* is the real challenger to the *Championship Manager* series. The financial aspects of the game are extensive, and the superb interface that enables you to do anything – from floating on the Stock Exchange to setting up another burger bar. The coaching is also top-rate. You can set up your own moves and free kicks, as well as all the usual formations and style-of-play options. Best of all, the match representation enables you to clearly see the effect your decisions have on the performance of your team.

Ultimate Soccer Manager '98/'99 PC
 Publisher: Sierra Developer: Impressions UK Price: £30



Savvy ■■■■ Sheepskin Large
 Staying power ■■■■■

Final score ★★☆☆

Interview by **Ben Lyttleton**



KEVIN KEEGAN

ADMIT IT – WE ALL WORE BRUT WHEN KEVIN KEEGAN TOLD US TO. NOW THE FULHAM BOSS HAS GONE ALL 1990S AND IS HELPING GREMLIN PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO *PREMIER MANAGER '99*.

A couple of seasons ago, Liverpool's goalkeeper David James blamed a series of costly goulmouth fumbles on a lack of focus caused by playing too many videogames. "I remember what David said," smiles Fulham's current Chief Operations Officer Kevin Keegan, "and I think that computer games could have an effect if you get sucked into them." Not that Keegan is likely to be afflicted with the same lack of concentration.

"I'm getting more and more into these computer games now," he continues, "because they make you realise how big football is. There's a lot of things happening in football at the moment which are included as elements of *Premier Manager '99*. Yes, results lead everything, but you've still got to get all of the other things right – coaching, fitness, rehab and scouting. This game is so realistic it's frightening."

The game's certainly a winner (see page 112 for the full review), but then Keegan's been getting a lot of things right this season. Not least with Fulham at Craven Cottage, aided by the money of chairman Mohamed Al Fayed. He has propelled his team into Division Two's top spot, and twice gained the Premiership scalp of Southampton along the way. So, if anyone is qualified to comment on management sims, it's the man who took Newcastle from one game away from the old Division Three to, arguably, one game away from the Premiership title: losing to a single Eric Cantona goal against the run of play at Old Trafford cost the Geordies dear.

This particular moment still haunts Newcastle fans as an example of how one second of bad luck can undo months of hard work. How does Keegan feel about luck being a part of computer games?

"People say you make your own luck," he reasons, "but there are times when you just get a gut feeling to change something. Whether you're playing a game or the real thing, you've got to have the courage to make changes, even if there's no good reason."

That's a premier manager for you. One answer Keegan doesn't have, however, is to the eternal question of how to cope with the pressure. "As things build up you don't know how you're going to react," he says. "Some

■ Does he still smell of Brut? He looked at us funny when we tried to get a good sniff.

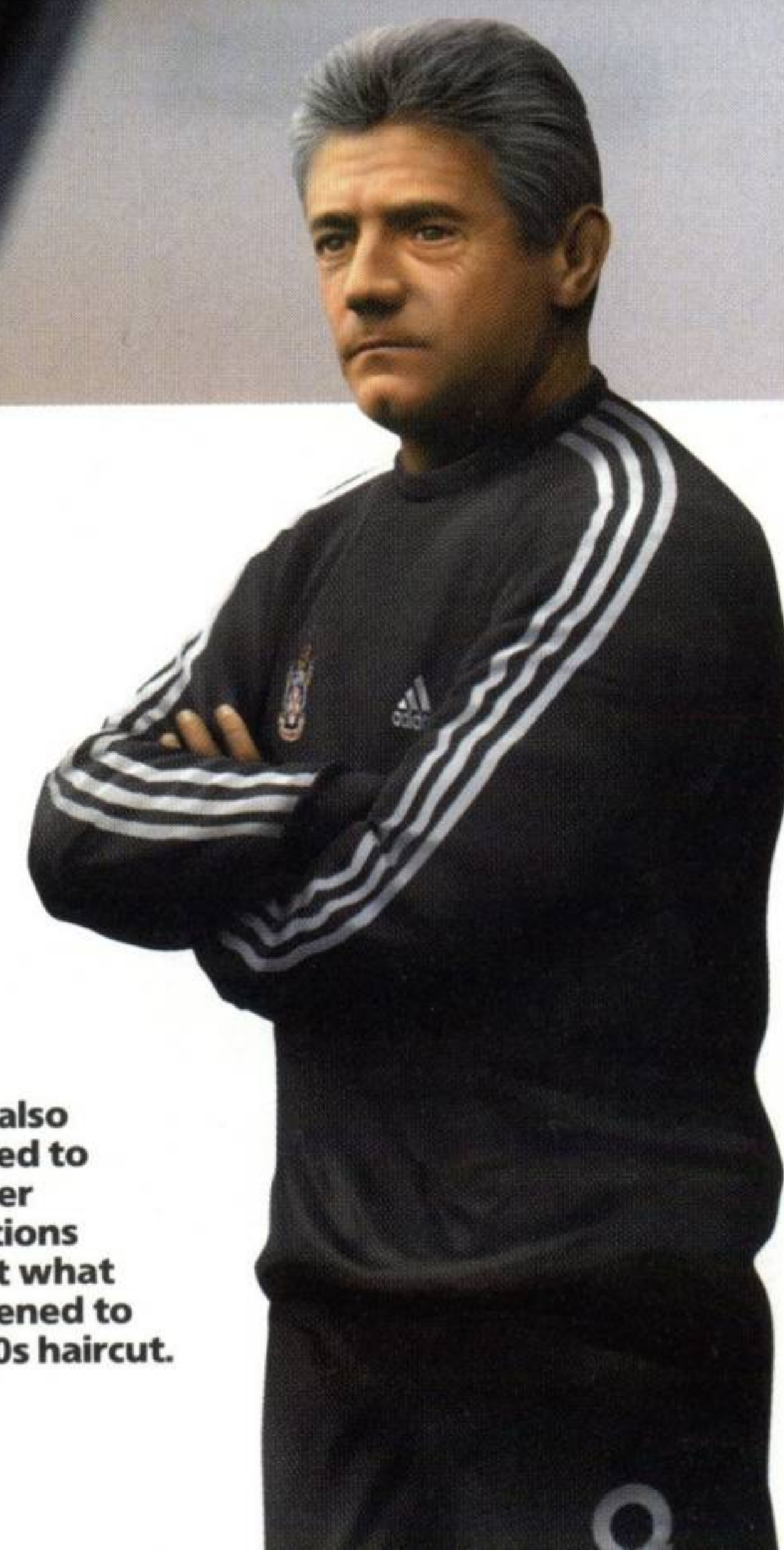


"I'm getting much more into games now, and this one is so realistic it's frightening."

days you can handle any problem thrown at you, and other days you can't see your way through it. Pressure is a strange thing, and peoples' perception that the bigger the club the bigger the pressure just isn't true."

And what about the pressure players may feel in *Premier Manager '99*? "In the game you've got to do all the things that you do in real life," he says. "The only difference is if you get it wrong, you won't have to read about it in the next day's papers." **A**

■ He also refused to answer questions about what happened to his '70s haircut.



THE MAKING OF

Story by | Mike Goldsmith

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

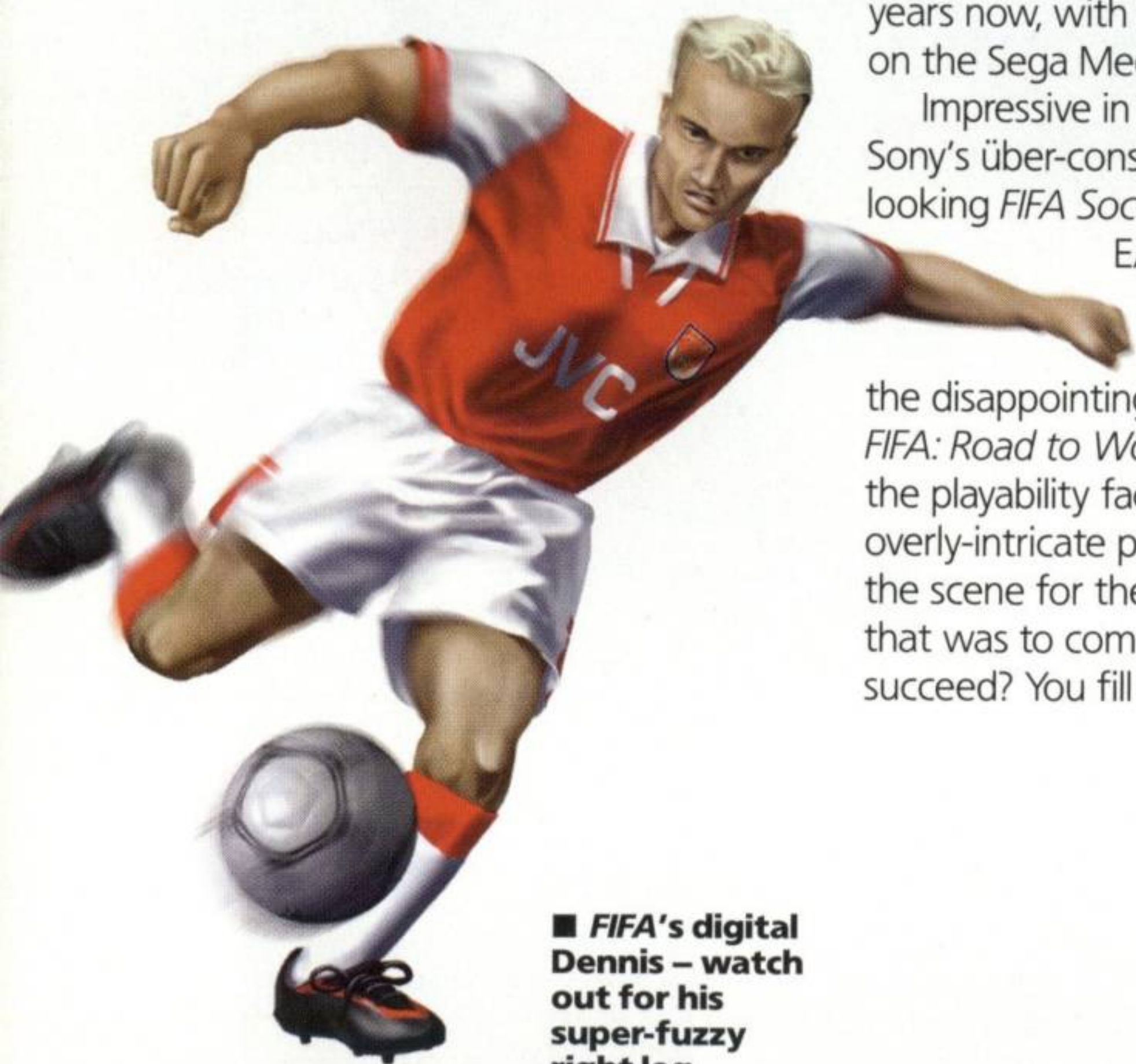
FIFA 99 IS THE MOST POPULAR FOOTY GAME ON THE PLANET. ARCADE TRAVELS TO EA SPORTS' HQ IN CANADA TO MAKE A TEN STEP GUIDE TO MAKING THE MANCHESTER UNITED OF VIDEOGAMES.



There are few givens in this videogaming world. We can, however, think of three. One, "Old Skool" games are never as good as you remember them. Two, Lara Croft will never die. Three, and most concrete of all, FIFA will always be Number One in the Christmas charts. It may not be the critic's choice (here at Arcade we generally prefer *ISS Pro*) but there's no denying FIFA's status as the most popular footy game in the world.

EA Sports is justifiably proud of this achievement, and opened the doors of its Vancouver, Canada headquarters to let Arcade have a nose around. We wanted to know how it goes about making these Earth-conquering games. We wanted to distill all of EA Sports' experience, talent and videogame know-how into some kind of easy-to-digest "How to make the world's most popular football game" type of story.

What we left with was the following ten step guide. We're not saying it'll help you make a game to rival FIFA, but it'll help you understand a little more how FIFA came to be the way FIFA is...



■ FIFA's digital Dennis – watch out for his super-fuzzy right leg.

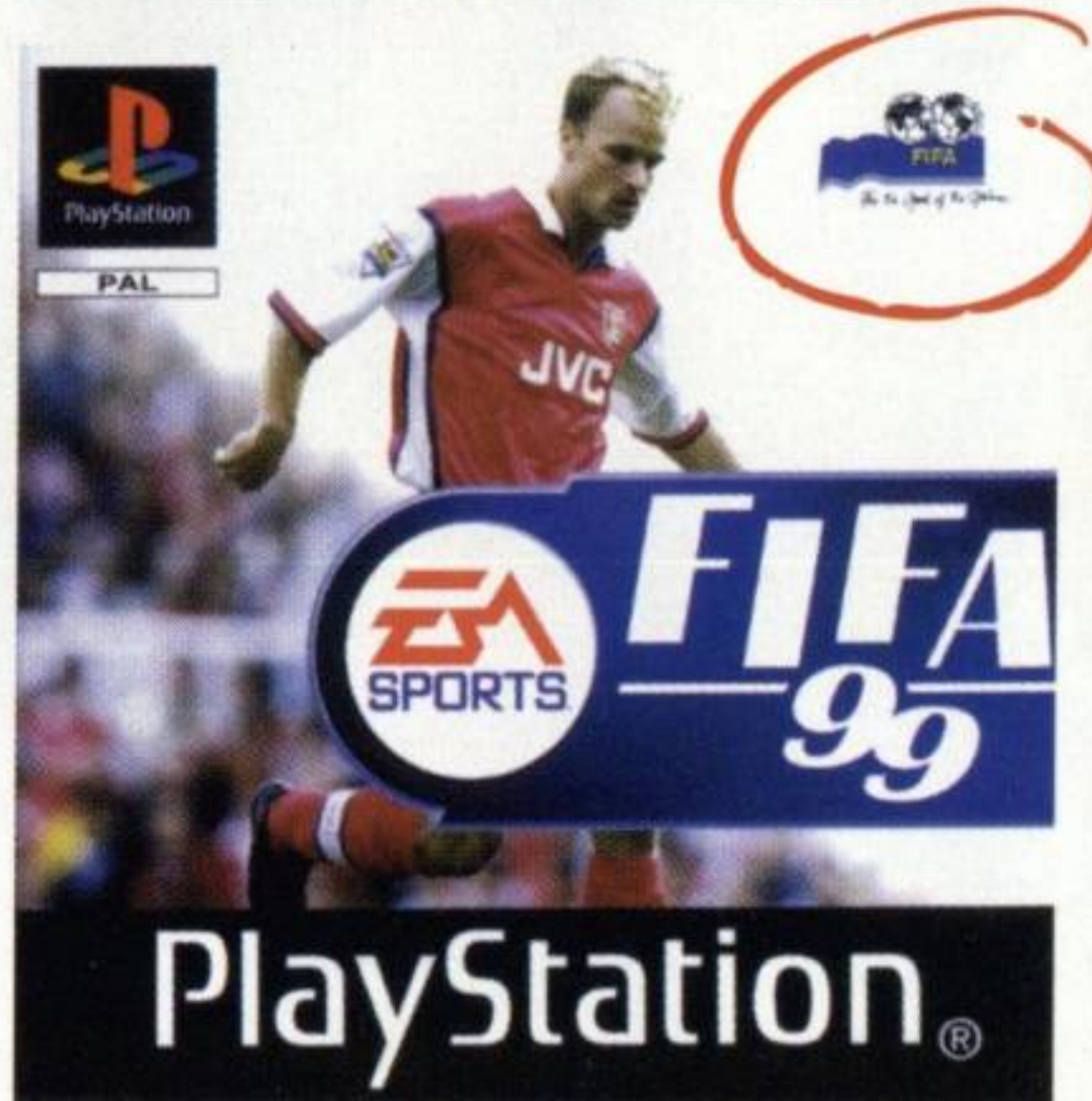
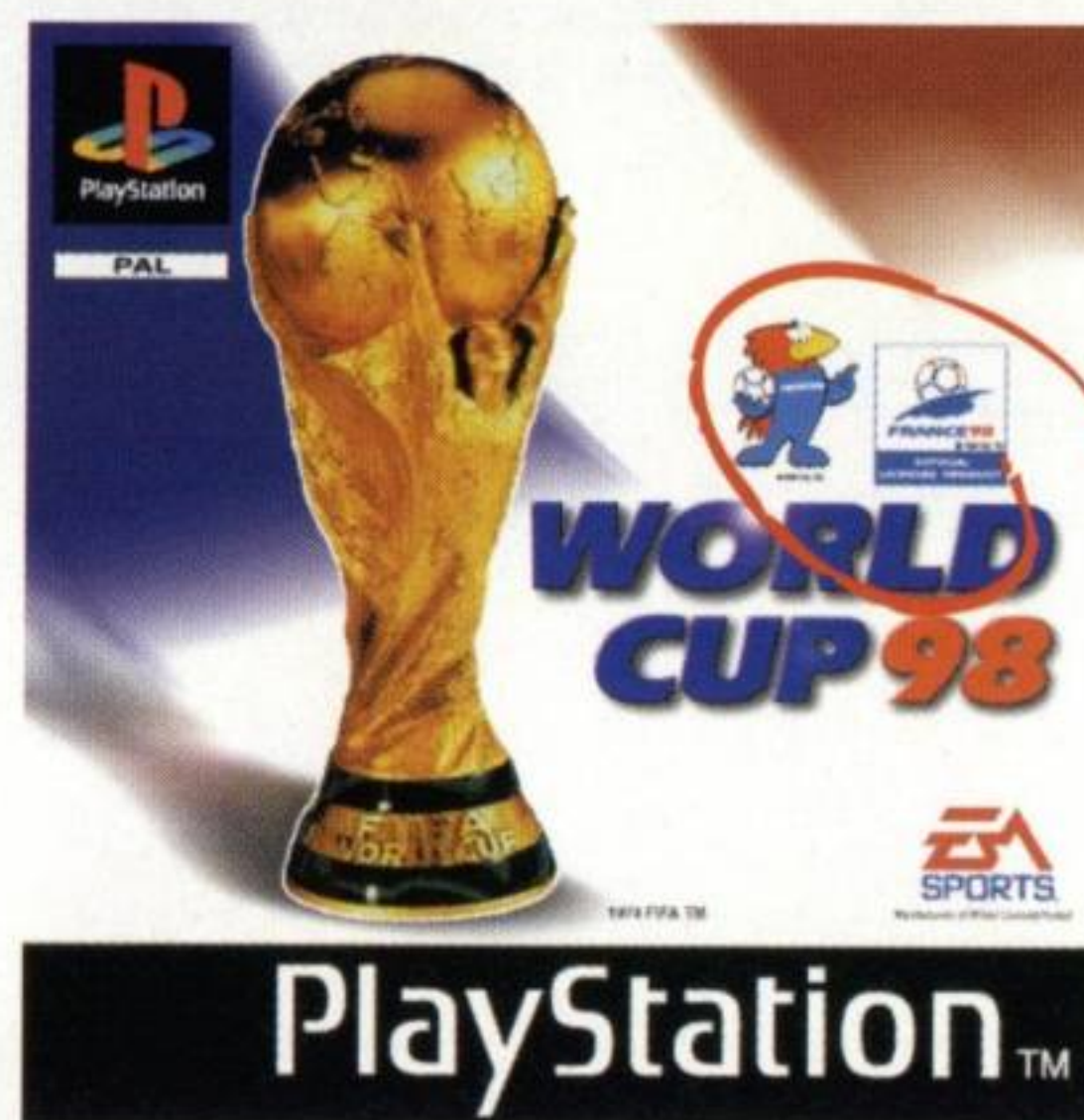


■ The FIFA series has evolved from its Mega Drive debut in '93 (top) to its inaugural PlayStation game in '96.

Step 1: Know your history

■ While EA Sports has scaled new heights with 1998's twin attack of *World Cup 98* and *FIFA 99*, life wasn't always so sweet for the Vancouver-based developer. EA Sports has been making football games for over five years now, with early *FIFAs* appearing on the Sega Mega Drive.

Impressive in the early days of Sony's über-console, the now clumpy-looking *FIFA Soccer 96* was the first EA soccer title to hit the PlayStation, swiftly followed by the disappointing *FIFA 97*. Thankfully, *FIFA: Road to World Cup 98* upped the playability factor missing from its overly-intricate predecessor and set the scene for the global domination that was to come. If at first you don't succeed? You fill in the opposition.

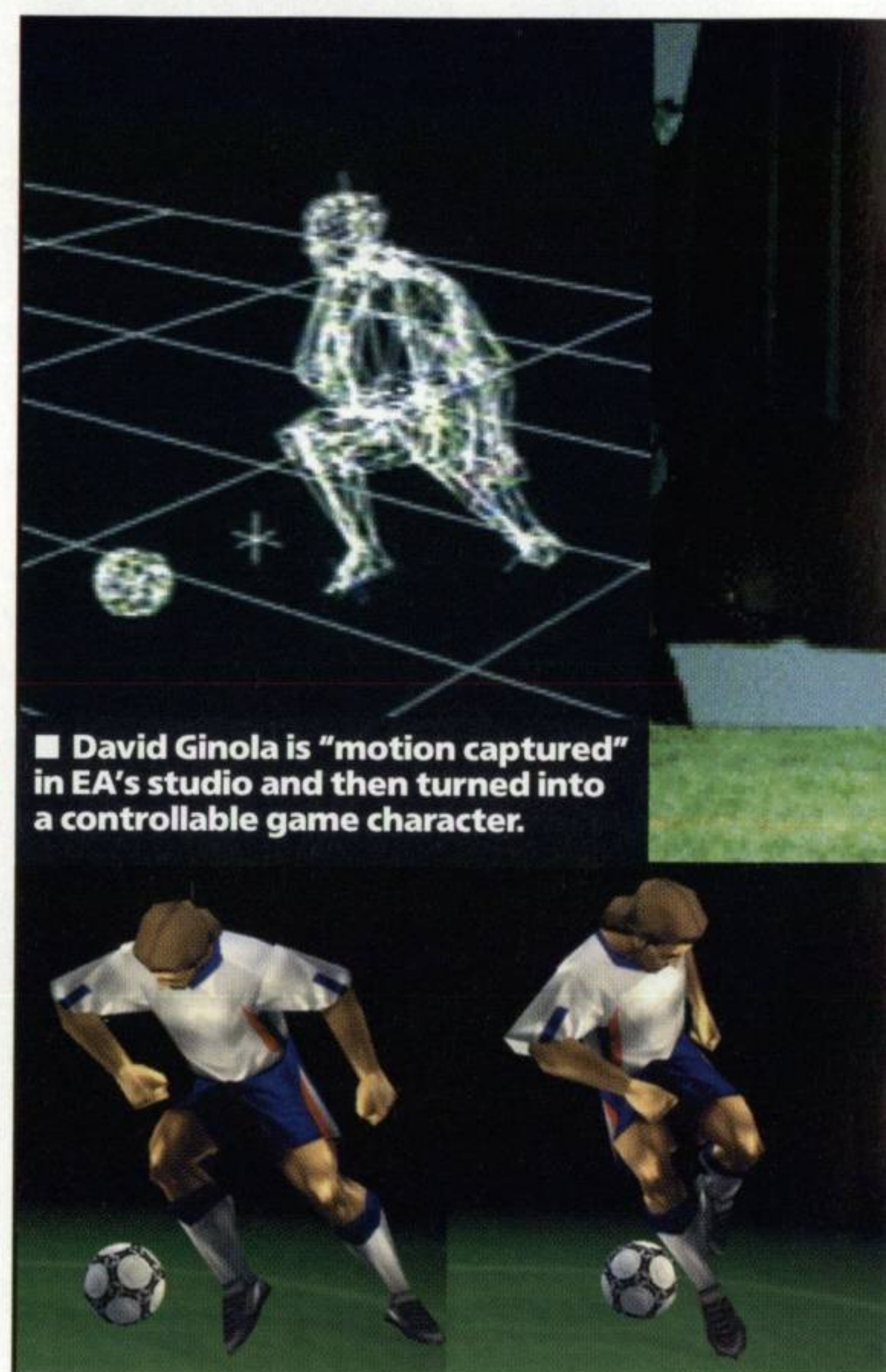


■ Official endorsements from leagues and events add authenticity.

Step 2: Make that deal

■ The subject of much carping from license-less rival publishers, there's no doubt that expensive FIFA branding hasn't hurt sales – who needs *ISS Pro*'s naff pseudonyms when you can pit David Beckham against Ronaldo and recognise their faces? The FIFA license means that EA has access to player names, team strips, accurate football stadiums, World Cup imagery (Footix, France 98's fowl mascot, was all over *World Cup 98*), and just about everything else on the pitch.

It's no surprise then that EA Sports recently signed a four-year licensing deal with the Carling Premiership – expect the company's first football management sim soon. Now if FIFA knocked Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* off its football sim podium, what chance does the Sheffield publisher's license-less *Premier Manager* stand against an official *Carling Premiership Manager*? Gulp.



■ David Ginola is "motion captured" in EA's studio and then turned into a controllable game character.

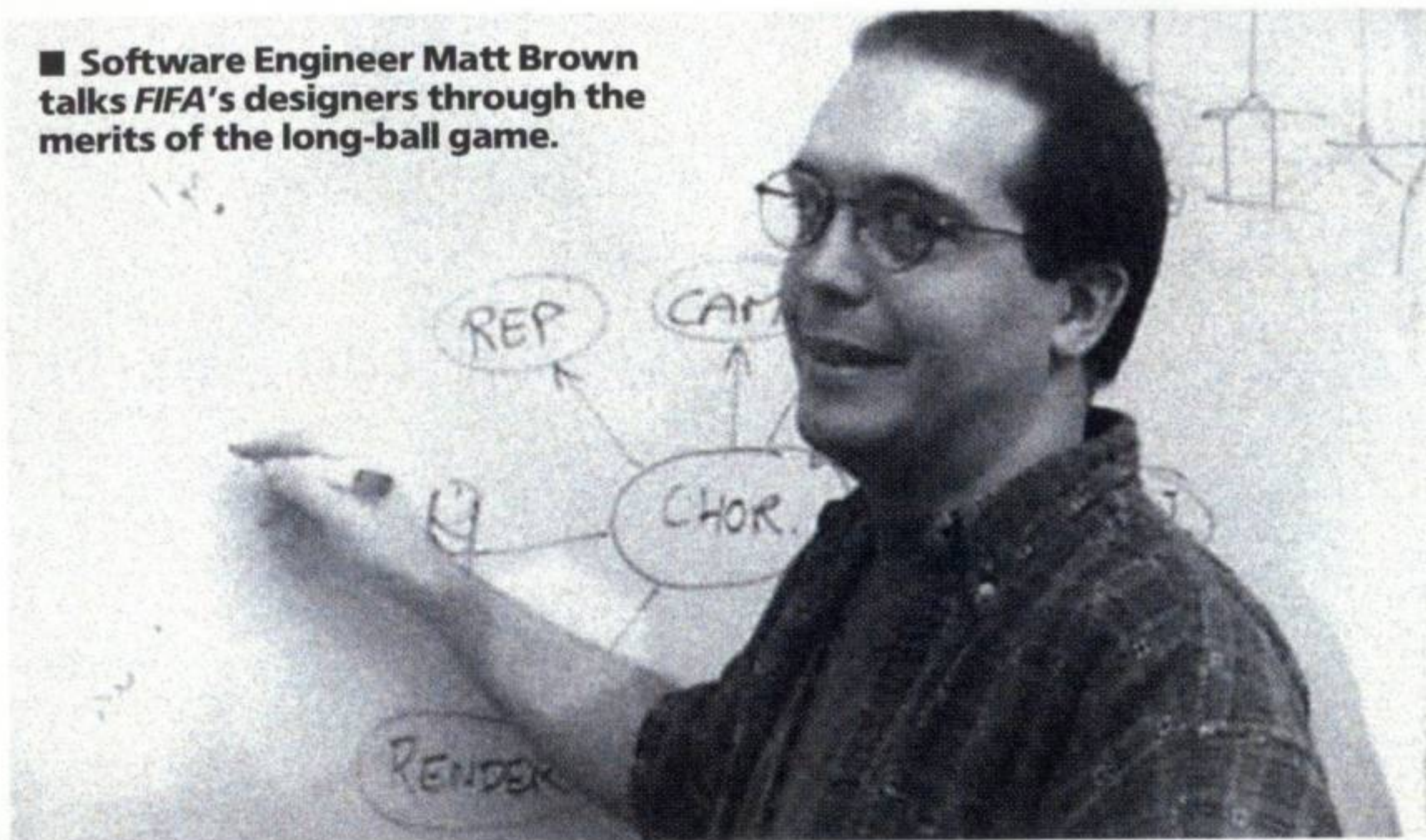
Step 3: Keep it real

■ While corporate licenses and big name tie-ins will attract the casual gamer, they won't keep the more discerning videogame footy fan coming back for more.

What really counts is how well the game plays, and how much it feels like a real game of football while at the same time offering an enjoyable videogame thrill. The game must be realistic (player movement, ball physics, game speed and so on) yet remain fun to play. It's a tightrope FIFA's Software Engineer, Matt Brown had to walk.

"Because FIFA is based on something real, we constantly came up against the problem that what's the most realistic isn't always the most fun," he says. "So what we did was start with reality – we'd make a feature of the game as realistic as could be, then we'd play with it. If it's fun, we're done. If not, we would

■ Software Engineer Matt Brown talks FIFA's designers through the merits of the long-ball game.



Custom Cup Creator which enables you to create your own cup competitions. You can customise the teams, how long the season is, how many groups you have and lots more."

It's a nice touch which builds on FIFA 99's new league-oriented agenda (see Step 8), but as regular FIFA watchers can attest, a game's quality isn't based on solely on what it does, but rather the way that it does it. And, in the past, FIFA titles have been criticised for their sluggish frame rate. It made for a niggling game, with winning shots not so much flowing as stuttering on their way goalwards.

EA Sports knows all about it. "This time we've improved the frame rate dramatically," says Matt Brown. "One of the regular complaints of the past was that FIFA was far slower than it should have been. This time, our frame rate is up to 25 frames per second for the UK versions."

With millions of pounds riding on the continued success of the FIFA series, you can bet that EA will keep Matt and his lab team tinkering away.

Unrivalled in its field. Despite those who press the claims of EA's latest cut, *ISS Pro '98* is a far better game. Believe it, and moreover, buy it. The best. **9** OUT OF 10

■ You can't please all of the people...

Step 5: Keep an eye on your rivals

■ It's one thing to be number one in the charts, it's quite another to be critically acclaimed as "the best". For all the money involved in the making of videogames these days, the FIFA guys are doing it as much for their own enjoyment and pride as anything else – and don't for a minute think that they don't play *ISS Pro* as much as, if not more than, you do.

This year, Konami upped the ante with *ISS Pro '98*'s combination of hard defending, smooth passing and realistic player movement. The resulting critical plaudits did not go unnoticed over in Vancouver.

"I think we and the Konami team have been tipping our hats to each other," confirms FIFA Head Producer, Marc Aubanel. "We've been moving towards the *ISS* model – not in design, but in responsiveness. In return, they seem to be moving towards us by moving the camera back and being more strategic." In the end, it's a case of knowing your enemy.

Step 4: Don't get complacent

■ Despite continued commercial success, the FIFA team claims that it's always looking for new features to add to and improve the game.

"This year, we've got two new game modes," reveals FIFA's Graphic Artist, Joe McDonald. "There's Season Mode which incorporates 12 leagues and three domestic cups, plus a

The FIFA team plays Konami's *ISS Pro* as much as you do



tweak and massage it until it was."

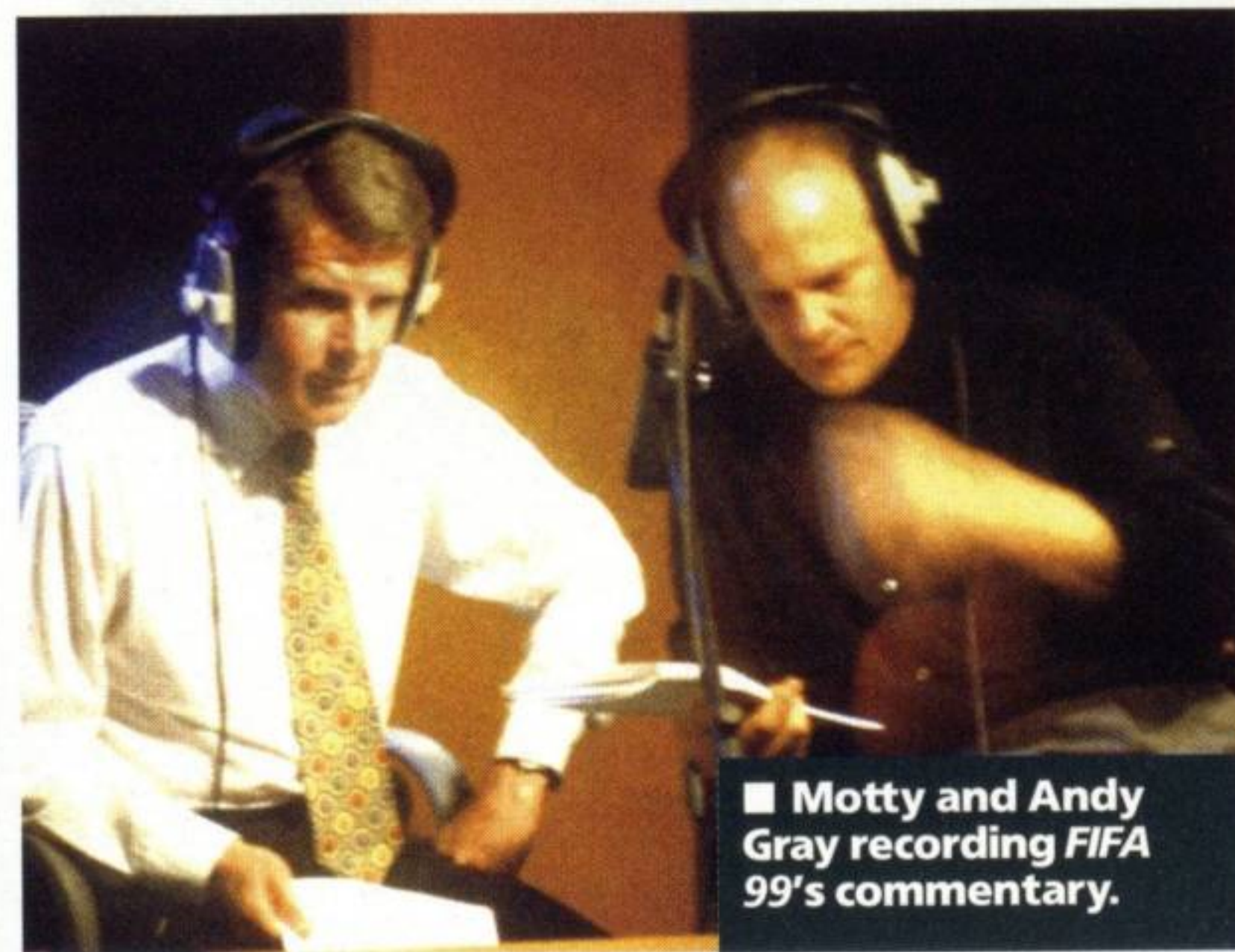
For this kind of low-level tinkering the FIFA team developed a stripped-down version of the game, offering easy reach to the nuts and bolts that make it tick. "We strip away all of the pretty graphics," says Matt, "but keep a lot of the physics and maths up there on the screen. We can drag players and balls around the pitch to set up situations. I can fire the ball 200 times in any direction, any arc, any speed, so I can see if the goalie reacts correctly. We can edit tactical formations in real-time and then instantly see how it alters the game."

And it's this kind of painstaking, time-consuming tweaking and adjusting that makes the finished game so much fun to play. Matt is especially proud of FIFA 99's enhancements to the computer AI. "Now, if you're running down the wing, there'll be someone running with you or ahead of you," he grins.



John Motson

He's a legend in his own sheepskin coat, and the voice of FIFA 99.



■ Motty and Andy Gray recording FIFA 99's commentary.

Why did you decide to get involved with EA for the FIFA games?

They first approached me, about five or six years ago. The first FIFA game was a bit of an experiment – I went into a room and recorded a list of names as well as few phrases which I made up on the spot. It was very basic.

Presumably the game was impressive enough to persuade you to continue...

Yes, but it was more a case of EA asking me back. As the FIFA team is based in Canada, they weren't familiar with my commentary on English television, so I was the

one on trial. I'm glad to be able to continue to work with them.

How do you think the FIFA games have improved over the years?

Every time I come to work on a game, EA has taken it a step closer to the reality of actually watching a football match. If you compare FIFA 99 with the earlier games, there used to be long gaps in the commentary, whereas now it's almost continuous. From what I can see, the graphics of FIFA 99 are also a lot brighter and clearer than before. I'm not the expert, but FIFA 99 seems to be very realistic.

What do you think of the games themselves?

To be honest, I don't have time to play computer games. My best barometer is my 12-year-old son who plays FIFA 99 endlessly, so I understand it's pretty good. Kids always stop me to say how much they enjoyed the game, as if I created it! Then their parents say how they've been driven up the wall by hearing my commentary over and over again.

Do you write any of your own commentary script?

Most of my time is spent recording player and team names. A lot of the phrases are recorded spontaneously but a few are scripted beforehand. The guy in charge of FIFA 99 from the English end has come and sat next to me with a notebook while I've been commentating on live games for *Match Of The Day* in order to listen to what I say and take down a few key phrases.

As the commentaries become smoother and more realistic, do you ever see a time when computers will be doing your job?

I'm not the best person to ask as far as technology is concerned, but I don't see how that's

possible. How could an automated system react to a live match when it doesn't know what's going to happen next? If that kind of technology is ever created then it's not just me who will be out of a job.

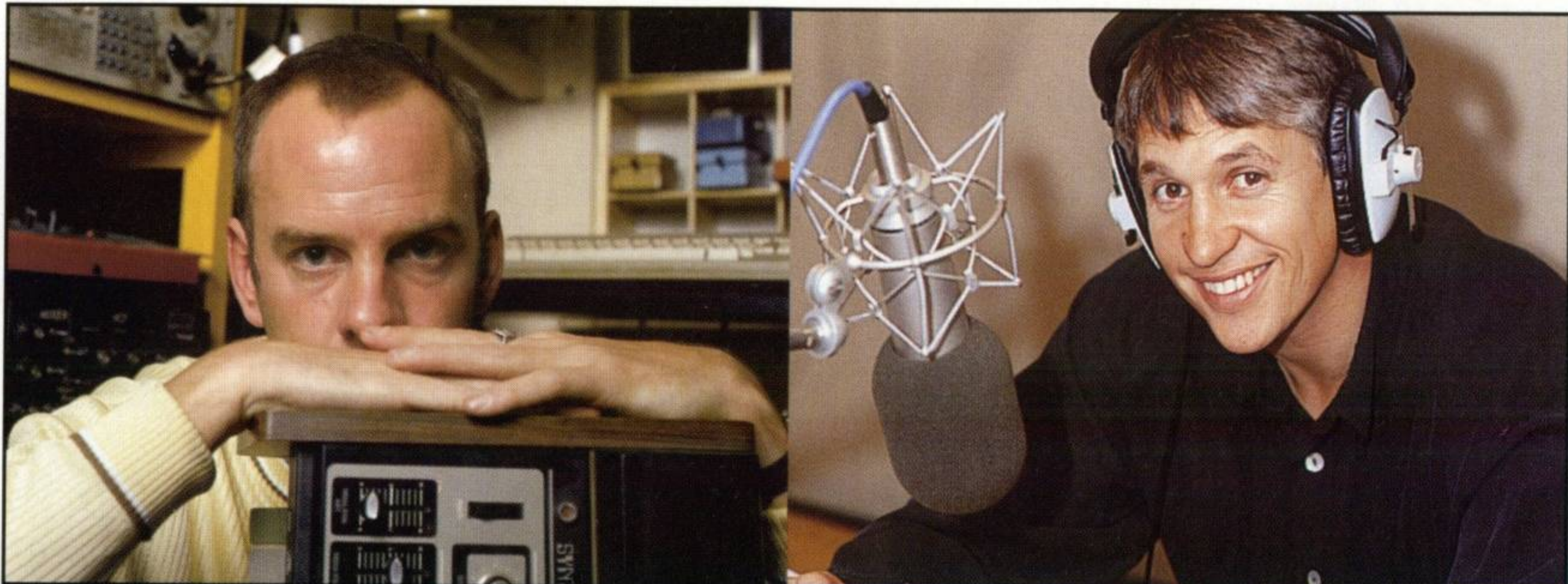
What have you enjoyed about this season's Premiership campaign?

The fact that there's been three or four teams tussling for the leadership, rather than one club dominating, has made it a much more exciting season. The emergence of both Aston Villa and Chelsea as title contenders has been good for the game. They're not going to go away, so the ideal finale to the season would be a blanket finish between the top four.

How do you feel about being seen as a cult figure by a section of the football-watching population?

I don't think about it. I've got to do as good a job as possible with my commentary and I can't afford to take my eye off the ball. If afterwards people want to turn me into a cult figure and talk about my sheepskin coat or whatever, that's fine, but I don't cultivate it myself.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES CIMPSTY



■ Skank with the Slim (top left) or check out the vocal talents of Lineker and Waddle. Sadly, Blur arrived too late for the FIFA 99 party.

Step 6: Sing when you're winning!

■ Whether the game's *Road Rash* or the forthcoming *Big Air*, EA has a long history of using music as an intrinsic part of its presentation. *World Cup 98* boasted both "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba and Blur shouting their way through "Song 2" — something that nearly happened again for *FIFA 99*.

"The rumour was that Blur were going to do a special track for us," reveals EA's Taylor Moore. "They were in the studio when we approached them and they seemed pretty stoked. Their music is such an unusual mix, it's perfect. We tried really hard to get

them for *FIFA 99* but legal negotiations are tough. It takes a long time. We have got Fatboy Slim's 'Rockefeller Skank' and the Chemical Brothers, though."

The in-game commentary is also constantly updated and improved.

"We've totally rewritten our audio libraries," reveals audio specialist, Rob Bailey. "We have Gary Lineker, Des Lynam, Mark Lawrenson, a returning Chris Waddle, plus the one and only Motty. We have an all-new script for them of about 65,000 words, written over two-and-a-half months."

EA Sports' aim is to have a snippet of commentary in place for every conceivable game situation.

"As we get more advanced, the things that you hear are more

pointed and intelligent," says Bailey. "If there's a disagreement between the player and the ref, Motty will comment on it."

While Bailey is happy with the audio improvements made, plans are already afoot for *FIFA 2000*.

"I'm looking at facial animation and lip-synching for *FIFA 2000*," he reveals. "I really want to get to the point where every single event in the game is matched by really analytical commentary — then you'll hear intelligence really coming out of the game. For example, if a goal was replayed, the commentator could say 'He got the pass from so and so, took it down the wing and then — bang! — popped it in the net.' That would be really cool."



■ FIFA 99 focuses more on club play.

Step 8: Concentrate on the league

■ One of the biggest developments for *FIFA 99* is the withdrawal from the international arena. While *World Cup 98* understandably made the most out of its costly license, *FIFA 99* shows EA's appreciation of the country-specific league systems around the world that nurtured the Owens and Zidanes who shone last summer.

"We started developing the look and feel for *FIFA 99* in late 1997 while finishing *World Cup 98*," reveals *FIFA* Graphic Artist, Jackie Ritchie, who is responsible for the redesign. "We wanted to get away from this glossy, colourful, international event and concentrate on the leagues. We wanted it to be closer to the grittier feel of weekly club play."

Of course, changing the look of *FIFA* was only a small factor in the redesign. Leagues means teams — and millions of them. How did EA decide what leagues to include? Ritchie's fellow Graphic Artist Joe McDonald reveals all.

"We listened to feedback from the Internet, internal sources and the press to see what we needed to do," confides McDonald. "This year, we've added the two most-requested leagues — Portugal and Belgium — plus, for the first time, cups based on the actual European Cups. It goes to make 12 leagues and 250 teams. This includes 42 international as well, but the focus is strongly on club play."

Bizarrely, it was EA's inclusion of an "imaginary" inter-country league that scooped all of last year's tabloid speculation about a breakaway European Super League.

"There's been a lot of speculation, but with all these secret meetings, nobody really knows what's going to happen," continues McDonald. "A little over a year ago, we foresaw this and came up with our own European Super League. We've taken 20 of the top teams across Europe and put them together into one structure. This includes Arsenal and Real Madrid, plus the likes of Dynamo Kiev and Rosenburg. We think we've scooped the headlines. It may not be what the ultimate Super League line-up is going to be but we think it's close."

Your move, Mr Murdoch.

Step 7: Statto!

■ No football sim is complete without a decent set of statistics, enabling you to make accurate managerial decisions and the game to represent each player as realistically as possible.

It's surprising, then, that instead of signing up official ratings and statistics, EA has chosen to put its faith in the hands of one man, *FIFA* stats expert Robert Kail.

"I talk to soccer managers, use tactical books and all the football

644 Rothmans Football Yearbook 1998

EAST STIRLINGSHIRE

Year Formed: 1885 **Ground & Address:** Pitts Park, Pitts St., Falkirk FK2 1AT, Telfer, Clonsay **Capacity:** 1888 **Manager:** Bob Storer **Chairman:** William C. White **Secretary:** Margaret Thomson **Club Website:** http://www.royalshires.com **Manager since 1975:** I. Ling, D. McLaughlan, W. P. Lindsay, A. Ferguson, W. L. Ramsbottom **Founded:** 1885 **Former Names:** Pitts Park Football Club, Pitts Park Football Club, Pitts Park Football Club, Pitts Park Football Club, Pitts Park Football Club, Pitts Park Football Club

Rank	Club	Pts	Goals For	Goals Against	Diff
1	Aberdeen	15	21	10	11
2	Heart of Midlothian	13	14	10	4
3	Dundee United	13	24	24	0
4	Falkirk	13	15	12	3
5	Greenock Morton	12	12	10	2
6	East Stirling	12	9	10	-1
7	Partick Thistle	12	14	14	0
8	Aberdeen	12	22	11	11
9	Partick Thistle	12	22	11	11
10	East Stirling	12	11	10	1
11	Dundee United	12	14	12	2
12	Falkirk	12	15	12	3
13	Greenock Morton	12	12	10	2
14	East Stirling	12	9	10	-1
15	Partick Thistle	12	14	14	0
16	Dundee United	12	14	14	0
17	Aberdeen	12	22	11	11
18	Partick Thistle	12	14	14	0
19	East Stirling	12	9	10	-1
20	Falkirk	12	15	12	3
21	Greenock Morton	12	12	10	2

■ The view inside a *FIFA* designer's head, earlier on this week.

media, plus most of the people on the development team play soccer," reveals the Canadian Statto, who confesses that the addition of two new leagues, three European cups and a Super League has meant "a helluva lot of work".

"Players are scored out of 15 for their individual attributes," he reveals, "we rate speed, aggressiveness, ball control, shot power, and so on, making a total of 90 and right now Ronaldo scores the highest with

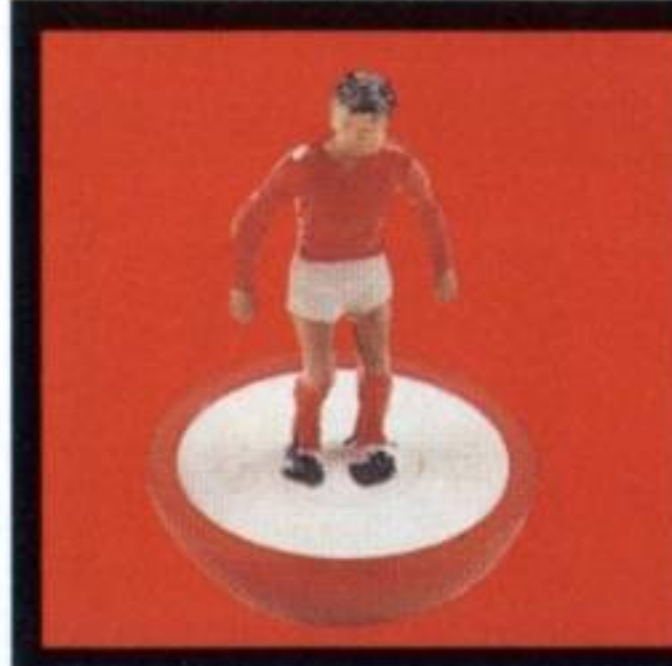
89." And how up to date are the stats? "We calculate it right before the game goes out," he proudly claims. "I keep up with transfers right up until the line."

But despite all this number-crunching, Kail acknowledges that not every nuance of footy can be boiled down to a mathematical formula...

"One new feature in *FIFA 99* which we absolutely love is that of the 'local rival,'" Kail effuses with a grin. "When Liverpool plays Everton. Everton sucks, Liverpool doesn't, but when they play each other Everton often wins. The game now knows about these rivalries, and will offer new snippets of speech and add a little intensity to the tackles."



Interview by **Sam Richards**



AWAY GAME

PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN SCOBIE



Step 9: Keep control, keep it sharp

■ While all footy games are faster and boast more "realistic" control than the games of a few years ago, neither of these features are any use if your player won't react quickly enough, finding himself "trapped" in the middle of a motion-captured move when you really want him to stop and sprint in the other direction. *FIFA* suffered from this particular gripe as much as any other game. So how did *FIFA 99* try and improve matters?

"It comes down to the responsiveness between button press and on-screen movement," concludes *FIFA* Producer, Marc Aubanel. "And we speeded that up. Players now accelerate faster, get off the mark much quicker and turn a lot faster. As for interruptible motion, in a lot of other football games, if you start a move, you can't stop it. But in *FIFA 99*, anything remotely reversible, you can interrupt. If you're tackling or turning, you can stop." The result? "In all *FIFA 99* is a little sharper, a little tighter."

■ It may look great, but how responsive are the players?

Step 10: Prepare for next season

■ So, what's next? A game based on the Euro 2000 championships? Real voice capture from actual players? Or maybe EA will hang on and coincide its latest *FIFA* extravaganza with the much-awaited launch of PlayStation 2. Few facts have emerged, apart from the recent confirmation that *FIFA 2000* is definitely happening, EA has that precious *FIFA* license signed and sealed, and the game will have been freshly tweaked into an even more impressive form.

One thing's for sure, the rush to make The Perfect Football Game is on. Could EA ever make the perfect *FIFA*?

"I like to think we can," believes Matt Brown. "On a player-to-player base, we're close. Our biggest challenge now is to continue adjusting until the game 'feels' perfect – to make it more real, more realistic and more fun. We're not quite there, but we took our biggest jump yet with *FIFA 99*."



■ Euro 2000 – one more licensing opportunity not to be missed?



LEICESTER CITY'S FRANK SINCLAIR PLAYS SO MUCH VIDEOGAME FOOTY HE'S INSTALLED A PLAYSTATION IN THE BACK OF HIS JAG.

When did you decide to have the PlayStation fitted in your car?

About three months ago. I still live in London, but since I transferred to Leicester, I've been commuting up and down the M1 every day. I got myself a full-time driver and I thought I'd find something to make the journey go quicker. I got a DVD player too, for films and CDs. It really does make the time go faster.

How much did it all cost?

About £7,000, and that includes cutting the screens out of the back of the headrests and installing the infra-red headphones. It took the guy about two weeks to finish the job.

What's your favourite game of the moment?

I like *Knockout Kings*. I'm a big fan of boxing and I used to box myself when I was a kid, so it takes me back. For some reason, I'm into all the violent games, the boxing, *WWF Warzone*, *Tekken 3*... they help relieve a bit of tension.

What do you think of current footy games?

I've got *World Cup 98* and I've just played *FIFA 99* for the first time, but I don't play them that much. I find them quite difficult – when I play against my mates I always get beaten!

What do you think when you see yourself portrayed in a game?

It's great when you see yourself on screen. But I've just been playing with Leicester on

FIFA 99 and my stats aren't very good! I don't know what they're trying to tell me...

Who do you play videogames with?

I play a bit with mates at home, but I love a battle when I'm travelling around. Sometimes Quinny, my driver, will pull in at the services for half an hour, he'll jump in the back and we'll have a game.

Do you play with your team-mates?

I'm still in touch with a few of my old Chelsea team-mates who live in London. Jody Morris, Michael Duberry and Andy Myers have all got PlayStations at home, so we all like to get together for a game. I was playing Jody the other night and he gave me a good hiding on *Warzone*. Whenever we play away, someone brings the PlayStation along. There's not much you can do on the Friday night before the match, so we just rig the PlayStation up and have a big competition, put a £50 bet on. It helps take your mind off the match.

You scored your first goal for Leicester against Birmingham in the FA cup. Did you have an on-pitch celebration planned?

No, I don't score enough for that. I'm not like Wrighty who's probably on the training ground every day working through new routines. Anyway, by the time I've got all the way up the other end of the pitch to score, I'm too tired to celebrate!

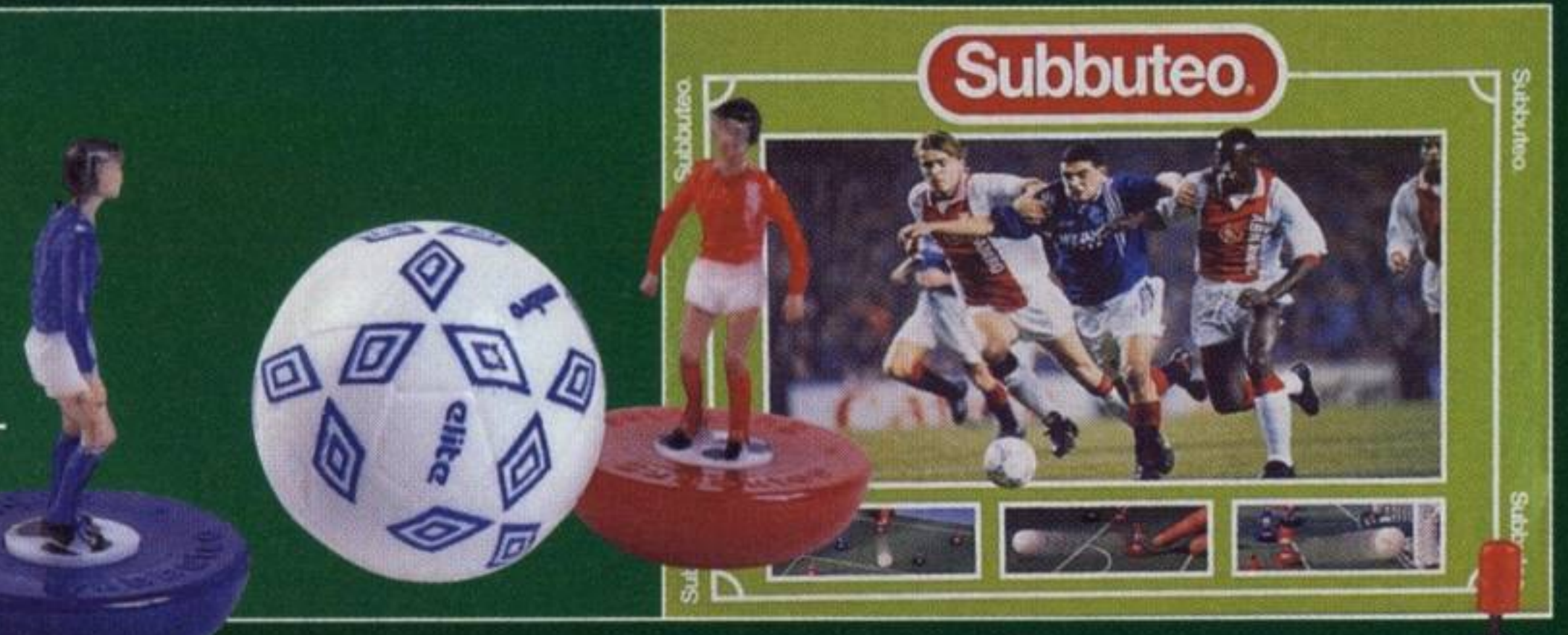
AT THE END OF THE DAY

THERE'S A CORNER OF THE WORLD POPULATED BY FRECKLY KIDS IN NON-TEAM-SPECIFIC UMBRO FOOTBALL SHIRTS, WHO PUNCH THE AIR WHEN THEY SCORE A GOAL. IT'S LIKE VIDEOGAMES NEVER EXISTED...



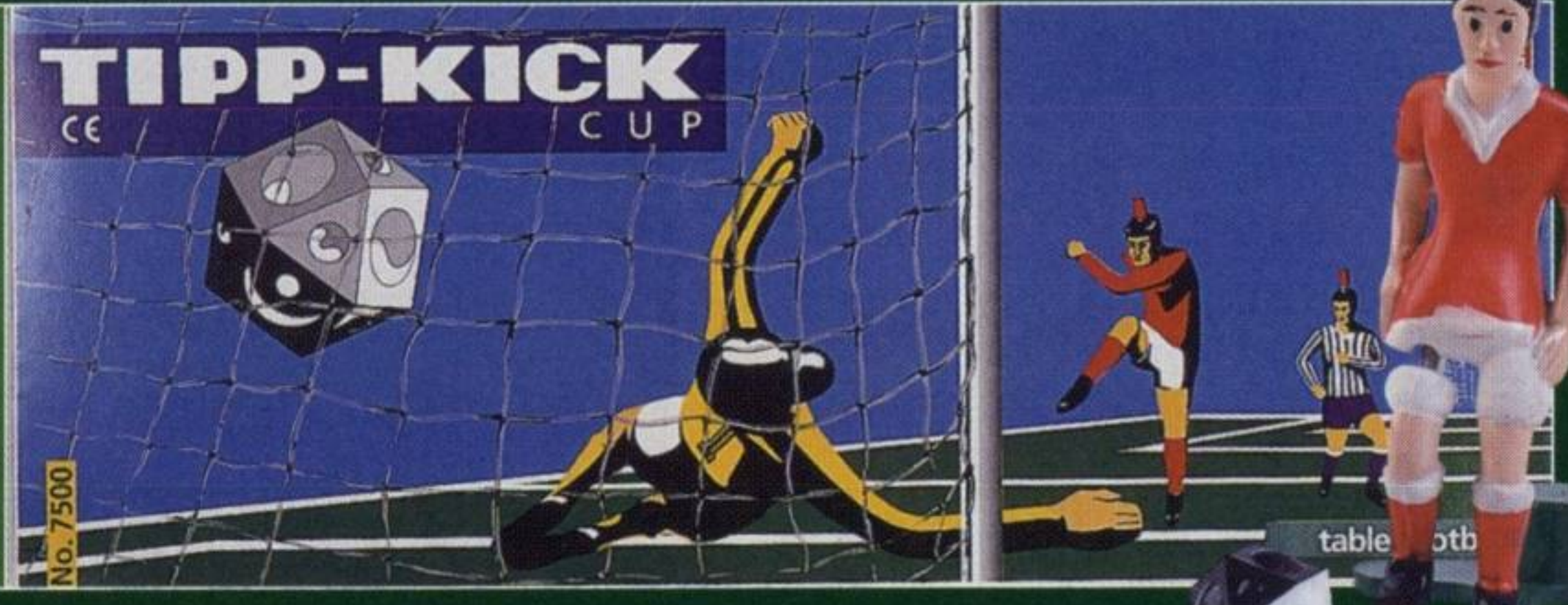
Subbuteo
 ■ Hasbro ■ £19.99

■ Self-styled "greatest game of all" *Subbuteo* ignores Sky Sports and the Bosman ruling to present a game unaffected by commercialism. Yet beneath this innocence lies a crafty nostalgia-inducing ploy which protects the flick-to-kick hegemony. The sound of plastic on plastic? Match abandoned due to an argument over a crease in the carpet.



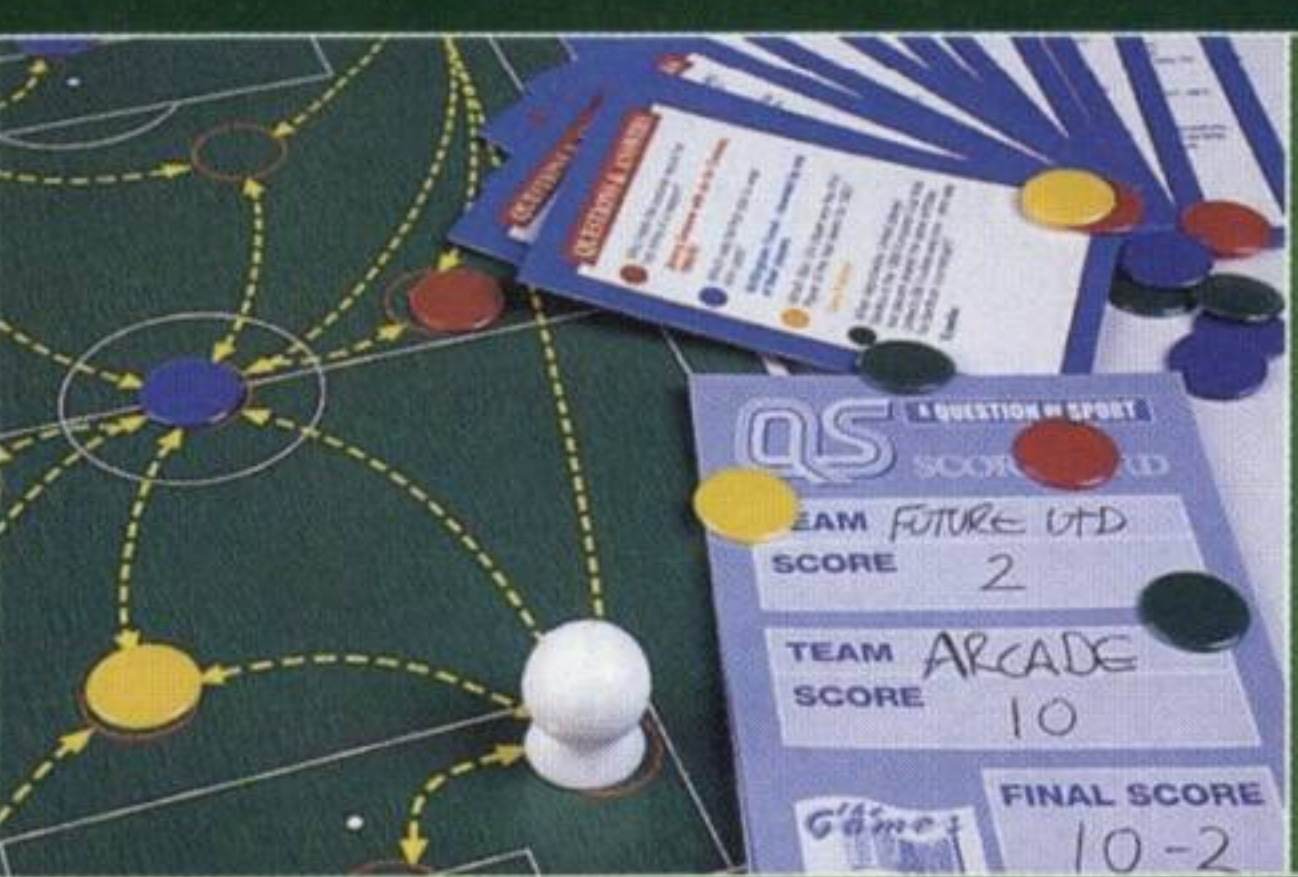
Tipp-Kick
 ■ Mieg Sport Games ■ £29.95

■ German table-top contender rears players with crimson nodules on heads for speedy knee-jerk reactions. Severely one-footed skills affect the control, producing a game more akin to Ryman's League than noted Bundesliga ultra-efficiency. Perfect likeness for Andreas Moller, though.



Fireside Football
 ■ Gibson Games ■ £9.99

■ Terrific turf tussles reduced to leisurely slippers-'n'-smoking pace. Put yourself in Alex Ferguson's sizeable training coat and assemble a squad of football stereotypes and bad puns (Tom Bowler? Willie Missit? Oh, our aching sides). Put a quick finish to the season with an hour of dice mercy.



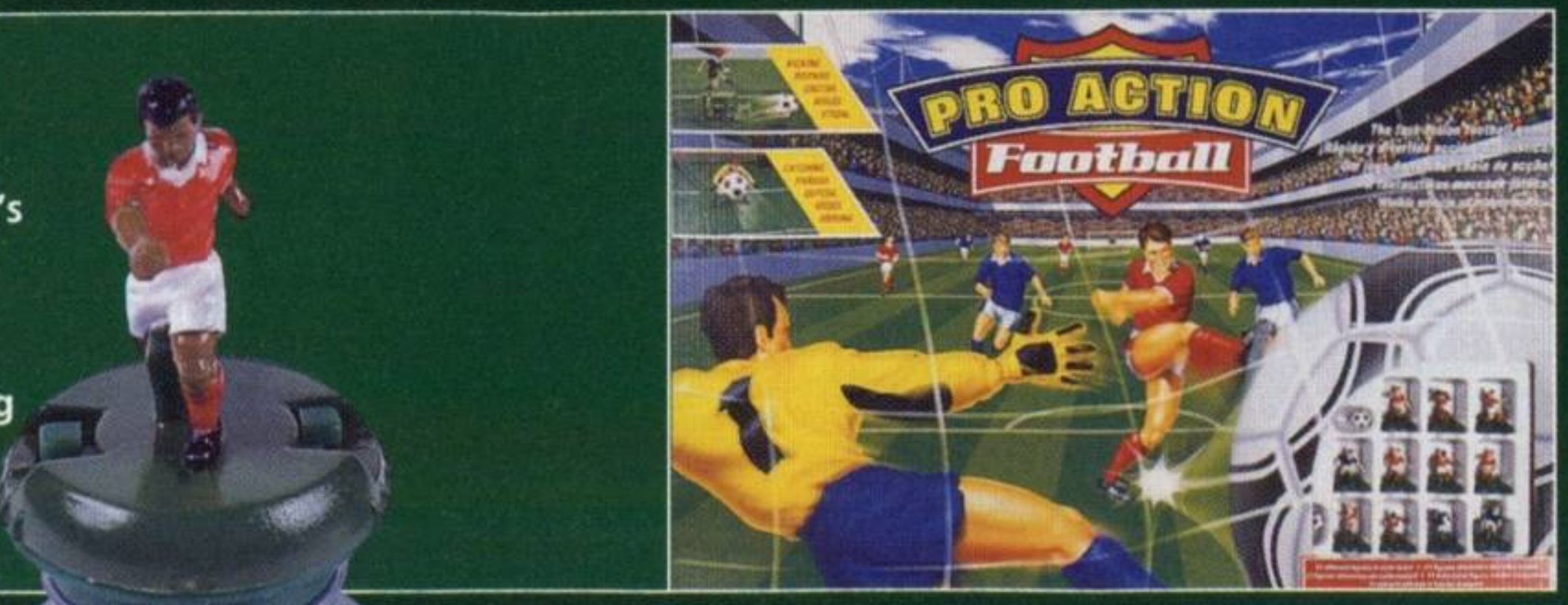
A Question Of Sport (Soccer Edition)
 ■ The Games Team ■ £10.99

■ Parrott and McCoist (or Bill and Emlyn before them) shove counters around a cardboard pitch as a reward for knowledge of Scottish Division Two grounds. Sterling Albion? Annfield, surely? The mystery personality? It's Ian Rush in a balacava.



Pro Action Football
 ■ MB Games ■ £19.99

■ He dribbles it past defenders like the ball's glued to his foot! That's the beauty of magnets. A tap on the head and he plays a length-of-the-field pass like Hoddle in his prime. Tactics fall victim to a pure ping-pong passing battle, sending unwitting kids into a tartrazine-fuelled frenzy. A bit mental, this one.



EXTRA TIME

THERE'S NO SCORE AFTER 90 MINUTES, SO LET'S JUST PRAY FOR A GOLDEN GOAL...

A pitch in time

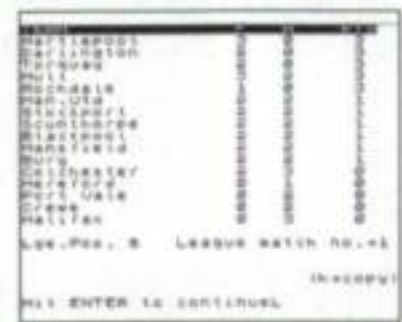
It's hard to believe in the days of FIFA '99 and ISS Pro '98, that we once played with slow-moving black and white stick men, representing teams called Soccer Utd. Let Arcade guide you through the history of videogame football.



1972
Pong is invented. Alright, it's more like tennis than football, but stick a goal at each end and you're there.



1980
Mattel bundles copies of the game titled **Soccer** with its pioneering Intellivision console. By including an angled pitch, Soccer accidentally invents 3D.



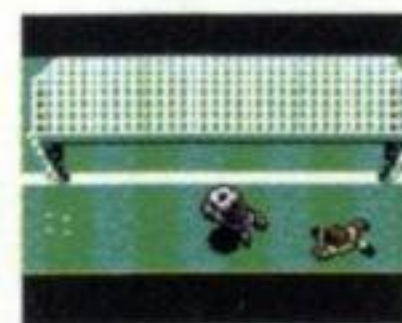
1981
Football Manager appears on the ZX81. Minimalistic, tiny stick men play out game highlights. Progressive incarnations throughout the '80s were, in fact, exactly the same.



1983
Match Day is released. It's the first footy game that's actually "fun to play" despite an irritating bug that means the computer always notches up three goals against you during half-time.



1987
Footballer Of The Year from Gremlin enables you to control the destiny of one player. It's a mix of management and penalty-taking, and it's hugely addictive. **Match Day II** (pictured) provides more Day-Glo pitch antics.



1988
MicroProse Soccer (pictured) for the C64 revolutionises the genre by introducing a top-down view and action replays. **Gary Lineker's Superstar Soccer** is the first big-name football game licence.



1989
Kick Off is unveiled by Anco for the ST and Amiga and soon becomes a gaming phenomenon. The speed, range of options and convincing player animation make it the first football game with any real depth of gameplay. Many sequels follow.



1991
The **Championship Manager** series surfaces on the Amiga and its comprehensive (or worryingly anal) database sets the standard for armchair management games in the '90s.



1992
Jon Hare invents **Sensible Soccer** and the goalposts are moved again. A new "forced perspective" enables better control of the tiny sprites and, despite its apparent simplicity, the gameplay options are immense.



1994
EA snatches the coveted FIFA licence with **FIFA International Soccer** (pictured) for PC, Mega Drive and Amiga. The PC version of **FIFA** is the first to include match commentary. **Striker** for the SNES is revered for its arcade-style action.



1995
International Superstar Soccer Deluxe (pictured) debuts on the SNES to much acclaim. This series eventually grows into the all-conquering footy game we know and love today. **Actua Soccer** is also created.



1997
A host of crap footy games trouble the PlayStation, which emerges as the console of choice. An entire generation of football fans are turned on to videogames, but they plump wholesale for the rather disappointing **FIFA '97**.



1998
ISS Pro, **Actua Soccer 2**, **Three Lions** and **World Cup '98** (pictured) are the games. Motion capture is *de rigeur*, and punters demand tactical options, lightning gameplay and the ability to play with teams from all ten Mongolian leagues.

He shoots! He scores! He looks like a tit!

With real players advising on current footy sims and motion capture playing a bigger role, why do some on-screen soccer stars celebrate by almost falling to bits?



1) Libero Grande
Scoring in Namco's innovative simulation is tricky, but your on-screen player limits his celebrations to a slight jog and an understated arm wave. Miserable sod.



2) Viva Football
The "aeroplane running out of fuel" run is a common celebration, but **Viva** is the only game to follow it up with the player apparently dropping dead.



3) ISS Pro '98
Brazil obviously has reason to celebrate here with the team's 12th successive goal against the Faroe Islands, but is hopping sideways like a crab necessary?



4) Michael Owen's WLS '99
Fantastic combination of Nobby Stiles' 1966 coronary-like leaps into the air, lop-sided trots, and a crowd made of pieces of shredded paper.



5) Actua Soccer 3
The final shot of the player in a seemingly empty stadium, lounging on the grass like Lara Croft and pouting at his fans is one of the sport's lighter moments.

The all-time Videogames XI

The world of videogames team of footballing all-stars are ready for the kick-off.



■ A fashionable variant of Venables' favoured diamond formation, giving Mario the space to dictate the play.



1. Goalie: Bowser. Even the bravest striker fears a goalkeeper who can set someone's buttocks on fire. And he's as big as a house.



2. Right-Back: Fox McCloud. Fox's sense of fair play is only tempered by his tendency for sticking his head in bins and getting run over.



3. Left-Back: Pacman. Perfect for gobbling up those balls. His tabloid friendly pill-popping antics, however, might prove detrimental to morale.



4. Sweeper: Space Invader. His instinctive left-to-right motion (albeit with loud throbbing noise) makes him ideal for cleaning up at the back.



5. Centre-Back: Blanka. Although an easy-target for opposition chants, Blanka can put a stop to any attacking play with a swift punch to the face.



6. Midfield: Zig zag shape from Tetris. Twisting and turning, our East European signing actually gets faster as the game goes on, reducing anyone who faces him to a mental wreck.



7. Playmaker: Mario. Despite silky skills, the mustachioed maestro's fiery Mediterranean temperament (often attributed to the goalie continually trying to nick his girlfriend) makes him a liability.



8. Left Winger: Sonic. Can run the length of the pitch in half a second. His only downside is he's Japanese and hence crap at footy.



9. Striker: Godzilla. The team's reptilian target man is 50 storeys high, so you can't see him losing too many aerial duels. Or fights.



10. Striker: Crash "I'm mad me!" Bandicoot. His combination of speed, unpredictability and insane spinning makes him invincible.



11. Right Winger: Solid Snake. Snake can stealthily ghost into the box disguised as a clump of turf. And then knife the goalie.



Coach: Lara Croft. Dabs the panting men down with a wet sponge, then spurs them on by promising to show them her big tits.

Spot the ball

■ You know the drill. Here we have a screenshot of **Actua Soccer 3**. But – oh no – for some reason we don't need to explain, the ball has accidentally fallen off the page on the way to the printers. What luck! Using your skill and judgement, place a cross where you think the ball is. Those who, in the judge's opinion, get closest to the actual position of the ball will win. We have five top prizes of copies of **Premier Manager '99** for PlayStation autographed by Kevin Keegan and runners up prizes of five copies of **Actua Soccer 3** for the PC, ten copies of **FIFA '99** (five PC, five PlayStation), ten copies of **ISS Pro '98** (five PlayStation, five N64) and ten copies of **Michael Owen's World League Soccer '98** (five PC, five PlayStation).



Cut out your entry (or use a photocopy) and send it to the address below. Don't forget to tell us what system you've got, Brian.



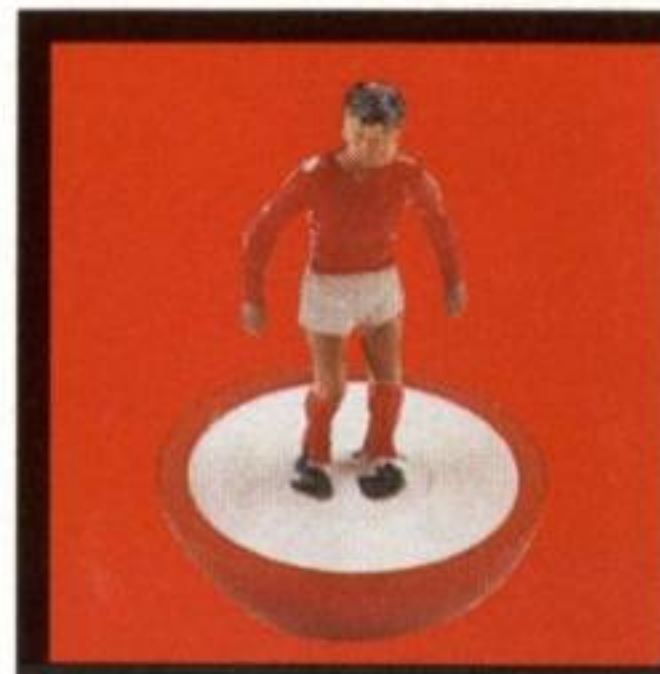
Rules of the game

1. No purchase is necessary.
2. No Future Publishing, Gremlin, EA Sports, Konami or EIDOS employees or their associates may enter.
3. The closing date is midnight on Friday, 12th March 1999.
4. The editor's decision is final.
5. There is no cash alternative to the competition prizes.

4. Absolutely no correspondence will be entered into regarding any aspect of this competition.
6. Individuals may only enter once.
7. All entries must be sent to:

Yes, I spotted the ball, it's me
Arcade
Future Publishing
29 Monmouth Street
Bath BA1 2DL

Interview by | **Mike Goldsmith**



MICHAEL OWEN

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALLSPORT

HE'S YOUNG, HE'S TALENTED, HE'S GOOD-LOOKING AND HE SCORED "THAT GOAL" AGAINST ARGENTINA WHICH UNITED A NATION IN JOY. NOW HE'S GOT HIS OWN VIDEOGAME AND, YES, WE'RE ALL JEALOUS.



■ Here's Michael getting in a bit of practice on the wing. Terrible joke. Sorry.

choice these days. Do your Liverpool teammates play much?

Yeah, a lot of the lads play. Whenever I'm going down to EIDOS they tell to me to grab as many games as possible. I think it's the same with every football team. You get quite a bit of spare time and when you can't go running or training, you've got to relax. It's a good way to wind down.

Are there any goal celebrations you wanted to get in WLS '99?

I don't really have any trademark – I just stick one hand in the air, one finger, whatever...

What about that one where you scored a scored a hat-trick and then started rubbing your hands together with a wicked grin on your face?

It was just to do with a mate at Liverpool, Jamie Carragher. He has a friend who, when he first saw me, was so excited that he started rubbing his hands together. He didn't know what to say to me. So I said I'd do that for him. Jamie scored for the England Under-21s away in Sweden and he did the same celebration. It was just a little joke between us two really.

You're sat here now signing copies of a videogame with you in it. You couldn't have imagined doing that a couple of years ago. It's all happened so quickly, but the World Cup really changed it for me. I was playing well and scoring goals for Liverpool beforehand and that's what helped me get in the England side. But it was after the World Cup onwards that things became different. Some things you did before, you can't really do now. That's the main difference in my life.

You appear to take the pressure and attention in your stride...

Well, I've always wanted to be a footballer. If you do the right things off the pitch, then you give yourself the best chance on a Saturday. You're not going to be a footballer for the whole of your life so while you're there – short period that it is – you've got to make the most of it. And that's just what I intend to do. **A**

How much actual involvement did you have in making *Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99* for EIDOS?

Obviously, I did a lot of the motion capture. It's funny to see your body running about on the game's pitch, doing a few of the moves you do. It's great to see yourself up on screen.

So, how much time have you actually spent playing the game?

Not much. People think I have special privileges and get the game before everyone else, but I'm only still just learning the moves.

Do you think it's any good?

Yeah, it's good – 'cos I'm playing, aren't I? [Laughs]

There's definitely a few Michael Owen mannerisms in there...

Actually, the first thing you notice in the game is that when you turn – not just a turn to the left, but a full 360-degrees – it's a Cruyff turn. EIDOS wanted the game to look as good as possible, so I did as many tricks as I know

for the motion capture and it's transferred it on to the game. It's very good – they certainly look like me.

Is there anything you could add that would make *WLS '99* better?

I don't think so. We worked quite hard on the motion capture – and from what I've seen, it's worked well. In a couple of years there'll be new ideas, new technology, and so hopefully we can do a better one. But I think this is a really good game and I'm pleased with the part I played.

Did you play any videogames when you were a kid?

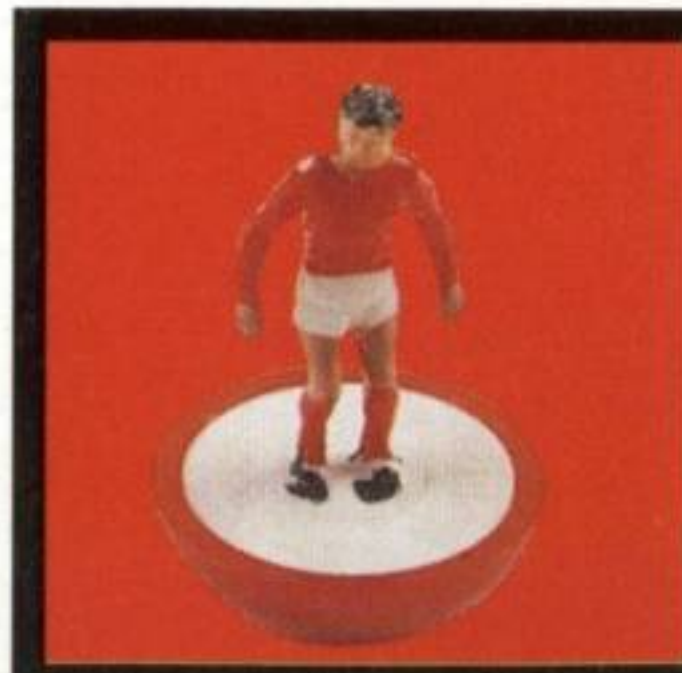
I wasn't someone that played games every single day for hours on end, but I do know how to play. I played quite a bit when I was a youngster but, nowadays, you don't get much time to yourself and when you do, you just want to relax.

It seems that a videogame system is the footballer's accessory of

“It's funny to see your body running about on the game's pitch, doing the moves you do.”

■ Boy Wonder.
He's quite good,
so we've heard.





TRAINING GROUND

AS "BIG" RON SHANKLY ONCE SAID, THERE'RE NO PRIZES FOR COMING SECOND. IF YOUR MATES ARE CONSISTENTLY THRASHING YOU, OUR EXPERT TIPS WILL SOON HAVE YOU GRINNING VICTORIOUSLY.

Written by | Chris "Elbows" James



FIFA 99 FOR THE PC



■ Taking it round the whole team.

Keep in control

■ With all ten buttons regularly employed, it's essential to have a well-designed controller as ball control on the pitch is vital. EA recommends the Gravis GamePad Pro but, for our money, Microsoft's Sidewinder is the pad of champions and the one we'll be referring to in these *FIFA* tips.

Without the super *ISS Pro* through-ball, you're going to need to dribble a fair bit using the skill moves. By far the most useful of these are the hurdle (X), the spin (skill button and C) and the sidestep (skill button and B). The best combination tends to be a couple of hurdles in the midfield (sidesteps against computer players), a few short speed-busts (jab Y), then a spin past the inevitable foot-in tackle on the edge of the box, leaving you clear to smash the ball home. Owen versus Argentina – eat your heart out.



■ Fine one-touch passing.

Pass masters

■ Think Liverpool of the mid-'80s – keep it on the deck. A succession of short, simple one-touch (B) passes will create space and stir your supporting players into taking up better positions. In contrast, high balls are only really useful against a strong or congested midfield or to rapidly switch flanks.



■ Through-balls rarely come off.

■ The through-ball (Z) is best for really tough defences or for when you've got a particularly strong striker who's got a good chance of winning the likely "hospital ball" challenge.



■ Use the block tackle at first...

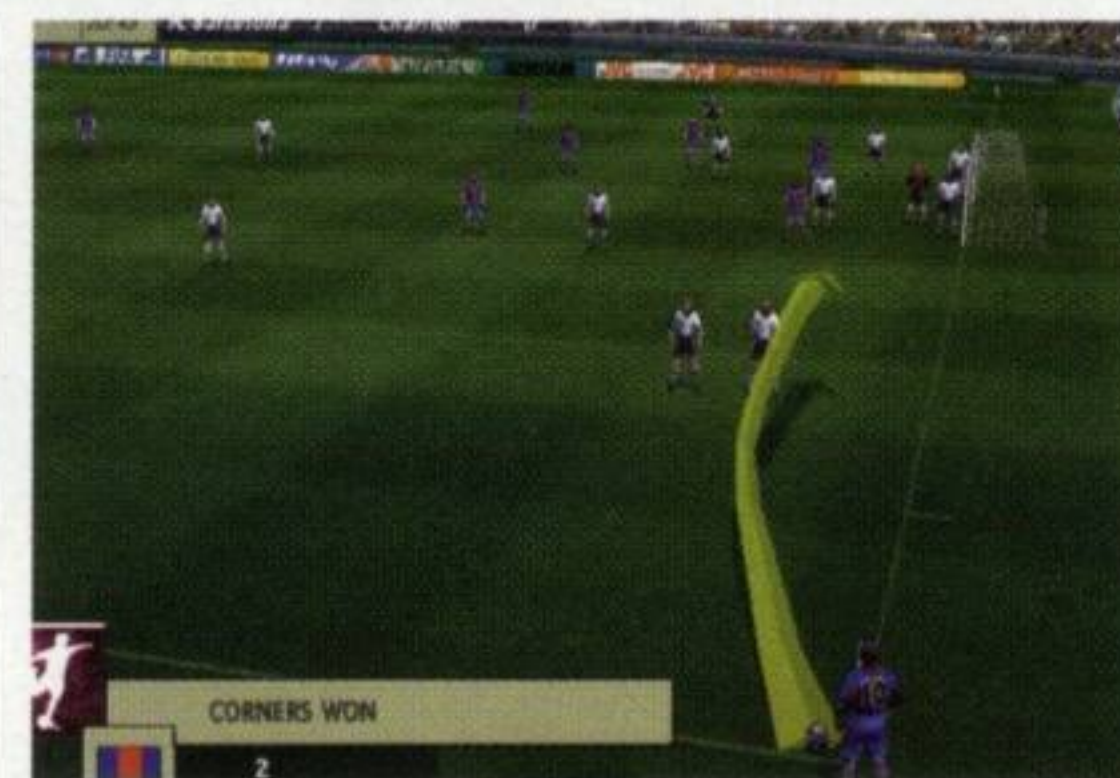


■ ...slide in if you're desperate.

Defending

■ Tackling is easy in *FIFA 99*, but all-round good defending takes more time. A few general rules apply: always deny your opponent space and always bring down players by a sliding (A) tackle if it prevents a one-on-one and if you can't rush out with your 'keeper (right skill button) to close them down. Also always use the stock foot-in (C) tackle at close quarters – if you're in a crowd of players, keep jabbing away until you've gained the ball or cleared it.

If you can't get close, or the opponent regularly hurdles your slide tackles, then try to get a little closer before you slide, or simply hit them with a potentially career-ending X-button foul.



CORNERS WON



■ Bend the ball in and jab C.

Corners and free kicks

■ The corner is a dangerous weapon and it's even worth shooting long range in order to win one (although try to change direction just before you let fly and then aim for the top corners). Most curled balls will cause confusion at the back, but by far the best tip is to bend the ball in full-pelt at family jewels-height toward the gaggle of players on the near edge of the six-yard box, then jab C like a wild thing – the 'keepers are universally Ian Walker at the near post and, provided you make contact, the worst result is another corner.

Free kicks are best used to chip the ball into the mixer, but if you have to shoot the trick is not to be over-ambitious. Aim between the 'keeper and the top corner if you're trying for a screamer, otherwise keep it low.



Top goalscoring tip

■ Slip a player clear on the flanks (try initiating a wing-back run if there's nobody there). After that it's simply a matter of sliding a (B) pass



through from the edge of the box and jabbing the C button to make the waiting striker bang it into the net first-time. Easy.



ACTUA SOCCER 3 FOR THE PC



■ Pass calmly out of defence.

Dribbling

■ It's easy to dribble past players by employing guile and judicious use of the speed burst, but it's also possible to lose the ball if you attempt too many twists and turns. Don't collect the ball in defence and charge up the field, because you'll leave your defence wide open if you lose the ball. If you're smart you'll play the short passing game out of defence and run the midfield into attack, leaving your strikers to find space.



■ Run into the attacker to win ball.

Tackling

■ Hold your line and jockey before committing yourself to the tackle. Using the speed burst and running into the attacking player is one of the surest ways of picking up the ball. You can also use the standard tackle button, though you're not guaranteed to come away with the ball.



■ Slide tackle = red card.

■ Use the slide tackle sparingly and as the last resort. If you come in from behind and take the legs, you can also expect to take an early bath.



■ Pass to a player in space.

Passing

■ The short pass is fairly accurate, although it's not inch-perfect like in FIFA. Wait until you can see a player in space before slotting the ball through and use the direction key to pick out your target. Use the modifier buttons to spread the ball out to the flanks, a tactic that's effective in drawing the opposition away. If you're in trouble in defence, or playing for time, use the long pass to get shot of the ball. Keep your finger on the button for as long as possible and let both power bars fill up before firing off the ball.



■ Tap the ball to a loiterer.

Set pieces

■ It's not easy to score from a free kick unless you're just outside the box. Use the Modifier button to go into "sniper" mode and apply after-touch to bend the ball round the wall. If you're further out, pick a player on the edge of the box, tap a short ball to him, before turning and shooting.

Try stealing a few yards on throw-ins – you'll be warned before you're in danger of yielding possession.



■ Shoot just outside the box...



■ ...or look to cross the ball.

Shooting

■ It's possible to lob or pass the ball past the keeper, but Actua's not so good up close. Instead aim to get the ball down the flanks for the cross and first-time-move. Press the long pass button about ten yards from the byline and angle the cross away from the goalkeeper. Nearly all your other goals are going to come from shots outside the box. If you've no space, remember that you can keep your finger on the shoot button while you dribble the ball – but also remember to keep your eye on the power bar.



■ Gooooaaaalll!

Top goalscoring tip

■ There is one position that you can score from almost every time. Run straight on to the penalty area on a line just outside either post and time your shot to hit maximum power just before you hit the 18-yard line. Pull Down and either Left or Right to apply the aftertouch; the only way to defend against this tactic is to put bodies in the way quickly.





ISS PRO '98 FOR THE PLAYSTATION



■ **Play to your strengths.**

Formation and tactics

■ Unlike other games, there's no ideal formation. It's more a case of finding the arrangement which will work to your own strengths. If you're good at dribbling and holding the ball, you may find that a defensive formation will frustrate your opponent. However, playing three up-front and a sweeper are usually good moves – the sweeper hangs right back, cutting out attempted through balls.

The strategy options make only subtle differences to the way your team plays. Moving the bar below the player name, by pressing Select when in Game mode, makes a much more tangible difference. Push your players into the attacking area of the field.

Dribbling and tackling

■ If you're a strong dribbler, you'll also be a strong tackler because you can anticipate when your opponent will attempt to turn past you. It's hard to give advice on dribbling skills because these only come with D-pad fluency. Try to use block tackling wherever possible (as the referee is strict), but remember it's always worth taking the risk of diving in a last gasp. Don't commit yourself on every tackle or your opponent will waltz past you.

Although the computer teams may seem difficult to dispossess at first, try sprinting (using R1) from behind the players and coming round to block tackle them from the sides.



■ **An ideal through-pass scenario.**

Vital passes

■ The through-pass is invaluable, but pick the right time to use it. When your midfielder is progressing through the other team's half, look for an attacker on the shoulder of his marker (glance at the radar if necessary). Press triangle and the ball will split the defence, giving you a one-on-one.



■ **The lofted pass and its result.**

■ An alternative is the lofted pass. Move straight ahead, and hold the circle button. The closer you are to your striker, the less power you need. If you're accurate, the defender will fluff his header and your attacker will automatically bring the ball down, leaving him one-on-one.



■ **A spot-on scoring position.**

Shooting and saving

■ Unless you are crossing into the box, the best way to score is to put yourself one-on-one with the goalkeeper. You need to be fairly central with the goal, and shoot just inside the penalty area, or as the 'keeper begins to move. Keep the power bar low, because anything above two-thirds will see the shot fly over the bar.



■ **Bring your keeper out early.**

■ Defend the one-on-one situation by pressing the triangle button and bringing your 'keeper out to narrow the angle. He will often either block the shot or panic your opponent into shooting early.



■ **The boy Owen is unstoppable.**

Star players

■ Some teams have star players who are considerably faster and more skillful than others. Try Owen for England, Ronaldo for Brazil, Bergkamp for Holland and Hernandez for Mexico (the players names are slightly altered, but it's obvious who they are and you can always insert the real names using the Player Edit facility). Using these players you can often lose defenders by tapping sprint (R1) to power past them. Obviously you should get the ball to them as often as possible.



■ **Tap the corner to a nearby man.**

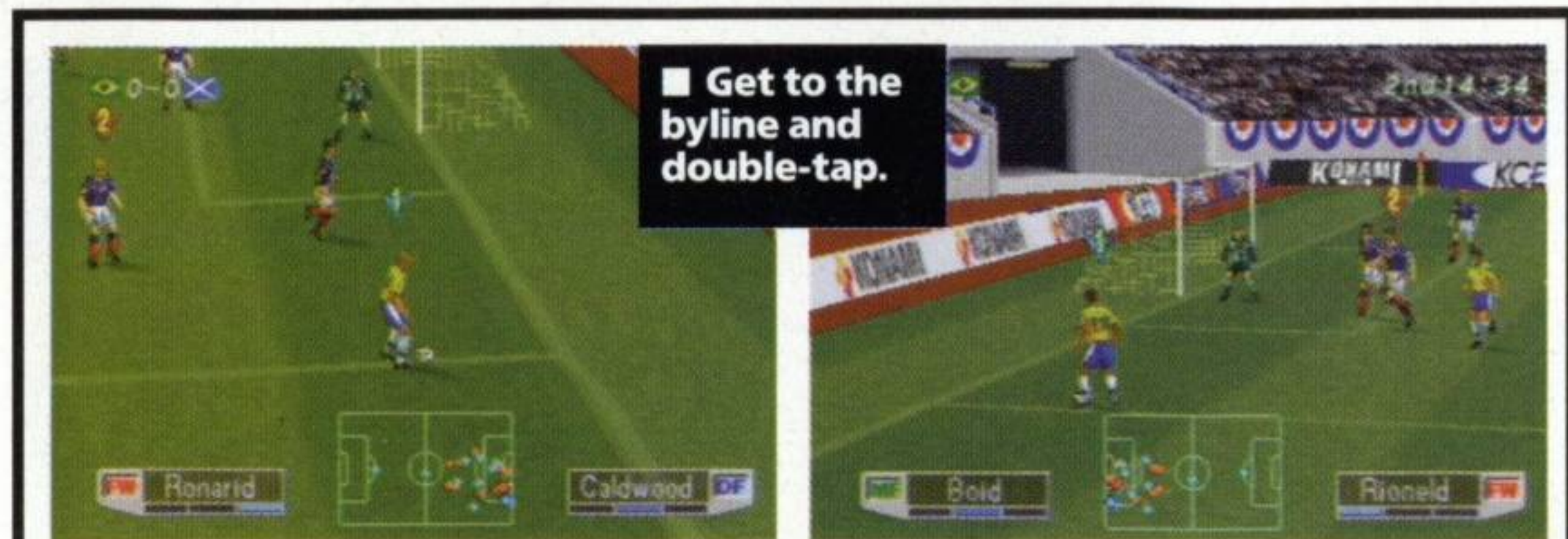
Set pieces

■ Although it's possible to score by crossing the ball from a corner (direct it towards an attacker and press the square button for three-quarters power and then square again to head goalwards), you may cause more damage by passing it to the nearest player, advancing towards the edge of the area and pressing X and circle, or double-tap, circle in order to find your central striker.



■ **Bypass the wall at free kicks.**

■ Scoring direct from free kicks is difficult – your direction and power meter need to be deadly accurate. A better option is to pass forward to the nearest player. All the players in the defensive wall will be taken out of the game and you'll have room to advance on the goal.



■ **Get to the byline and double-tap.**

Top goalscoring tip

■ If you find yourself running down the wings, try to get to the byline where it dissects the edge of the penalty area, then double tap the circle button. You will put in a low cross which defenders find

extremely difficult to deal with. Press the square button, and if you have a striker in the area he will often smash a volley or diving header past the stranded 'keeper. This move is often more effective than trying angled shots that rarely come off.

...COMES TO THE PLAYSTATION™

THE ADVENTURES OF



MONKEY HERO





FIFA 99 FOR THE PLAYSTATION



■ Use speed down the wings.

Speed

■ *FIFA 99* is probably the fastest football game ever, so you'll have to think quick to keep up. Hammering the triangle button to sprint will give you an advantage in attack and at loose balls, but don't bother sprinting to make up ground in midfield – the players tire easily and if a player gets injured, you'll be forced to substitute.



■ Pass swiftly in midfield.

Swift passing moves

■ Sometimes a pass that's going to end up off-screen will go to a team mate, but normally they don't, so don't fall into the trap of continual first-time balls or you'll bugger it up. Use quick passes to get from defence to the final third, but then hold your horses for a second and weigh up your options. It's easy to just keep tapping X with the ball between players in the hope of reaching the strikers five yards out, but this is something that rarely happens.

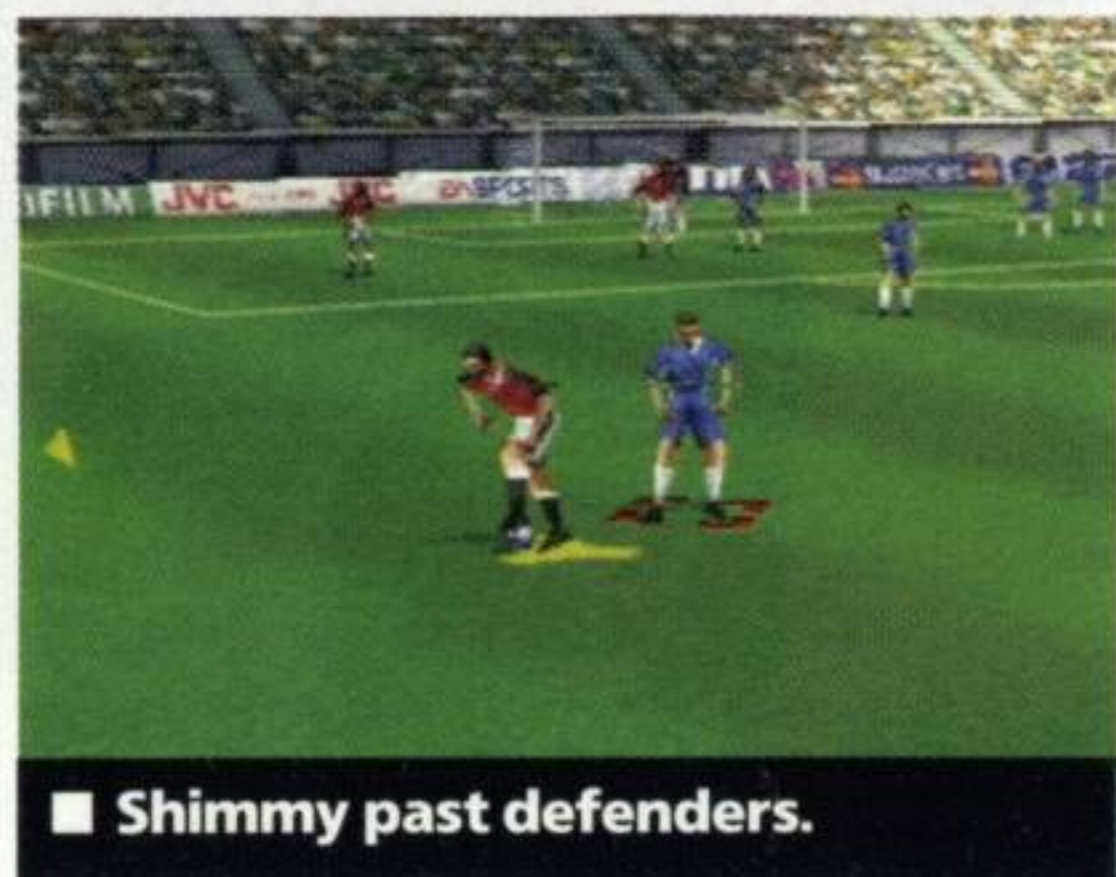


■ Cut it back from the byline.

■ Crossing – one of the main routes to goal success in the last two *FIFA* games – doesn't seem to work as effectively here, even when you bend your efforts away from the 'keeper with the D-pad. Keep it on the floor – the cut back from the goal line is a surefire winner.



■ An extravagant flick-over.



■ Shimmy past defenders.

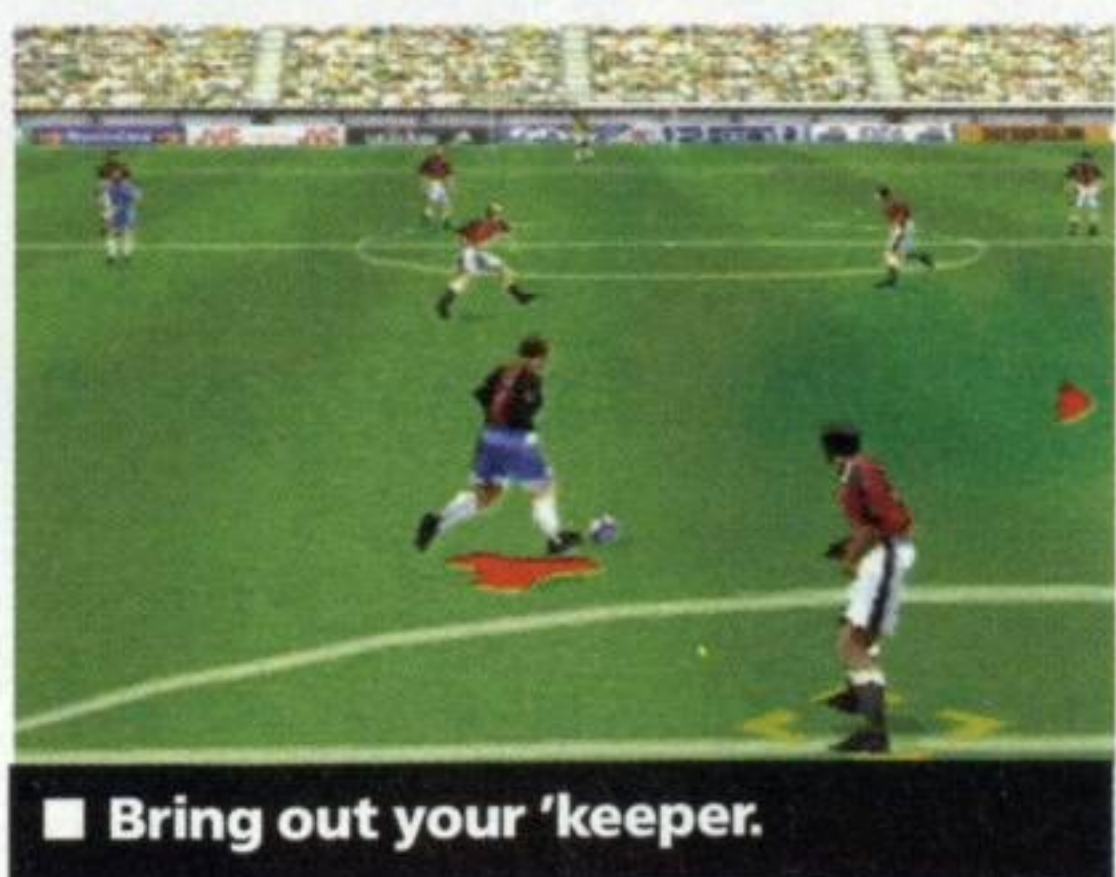
Special moves

■ These are all accessed with your shoulder buttons. Ignore the wall pass option because it's useless. Through passes with R1 aren't much help either because they're nearly always overhit.

When you're on the ball, a shimmy to the left or right (a tap of L2 or R2) works a treat. If you're trying to beat the last man, though, the flick-over is the business. Hold R2 and tap the square button. Don't use L2 and the square for a rainbow kick, because the ball never lands at your feet.

Save special moves for when your opponent least expects it, or you'll become predictable. Using L1 to hurdle an oncoming slider, however, can be done as often as you want, but don't wait for the defender to make the first move.

Don't mess with R2 when you've got the ball near goal, because you're likely to just give the ball away to a hovering striker.



■ Bring out your 'keeper.

Goalies

■ The 'keepers have a bunch of controllable moves in *FIFA 99*. You can bring them out by holding R2, which is good for picking up through-balls. Unfortunately, 'keepers don't seem able to kick away quickly, so always pick the ball up in a crowded area. Better to deal with an indirect free kick than pick the ball out of the net.



■ Be careful with the slide tackle...



■ ...or you'll be taking an early bath.

Tackling

■ The slide tackle is a great bone of contention, just as in the real world of football. Do it from directly in front of the player with the ball and it will nearly always be successful. Come in from an angle and you run the risk of a booking, or worse. Sometimes, you can execute three or four sliding tackles in a row from midfield and put yourself free on goal.

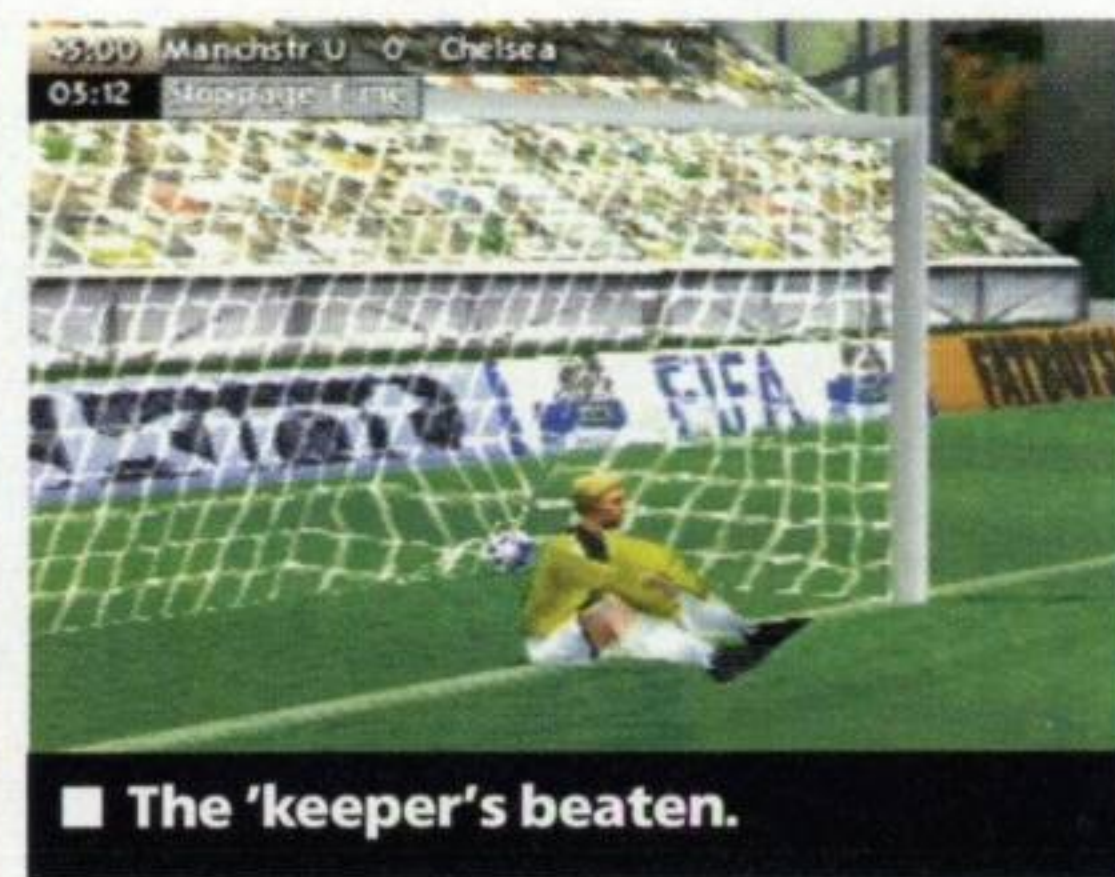
If you're not pulling off slides, try to use the circle button to nick the ball off the others. Wait until your man has run slightly past the player with the ball before stepping in. Being alongside is not usually enough and you'll be shrugged off the ball (conversely, remember this rule when on the attack and don't panic when someone catches you up). Of course, if someone does manage to get past you, you can always nail the bastard with a deliberate foul (press L1).



■ Call up the cursor for free kicks.

Free kicks

■ A good way to score a free kick from a distance is to call up the target and place it just in front of a man on his own (anywhere from 30 yards out to the box will work). Use the square button to loft it to him. Press circle almost as soon as the ball is in the air and your frontman will launch himself at the seemingly too-long cross, and beat both 'keeper and defender to the ball with a powerful header.



■ The 'keeper's beaten.

The back of the net

■ Try cutting in at an angle and then shooting back the way you came from (in the same manner as curling a cross). Unleash your shot between the 18 and six-yard lines (the optimum shooting section at all times).

You should never use the chip shot unless the 'keeper is *really* far off his line, and again, the side-foot shot doesn't seem to work when you'd want to slip it past the goalkeeper. Stick with using the circle button.



■ Pass to the near post, whip it across, bang it in.

Top goalscoring tip

■ Slip the ball into the near post then turn and play a first-time lateral pass across the face of goal. Usually, there'll be one of your men lurking at the back post like a good little Denis Law, ready to lash home without a moment's thought. It's

the nearest thing to a guaranteed goal in the game, and can be adapted easily for a corner. Call up the cursor with two taps of R1, look for a man at the near post and find a clear route to him from the corner flag. Just pass the ball in for him to turn and leather-home first-time.



MICHAEL OWEN'S WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99 FOR THE PC



■ Tension mounts at the kick off.

Warming Up

■ If you want to thrash all-comers at *WLS '99*, the first thing you're going to have to do is get yourself a decent joypad – you simply can't use the keyboard to the same effect. We swear by the Microsoft Sidewinder; it has eight buttons (more than enough for pulling off those tricky moves), its design is as ergonomically perfect as you'll get from a PC joypad, and you can link four pads together without any hassle, so you can take on groups of friends at any time.



■ Stay on your feet when tackling.

Tough tackling

■ When you lose the ball it's obviously vital to win it back as quickly as possible. You can let your opponent have as much possession as they want in their own third of the field, but as soon as they approach the halfway line, apply the pressure. Try to keep your players on their feet, but keep making tackles as your opponent passes the ball (avoid using the sliding tackle until they get really close to goal) and possession will soon be yours.



■ Pass swiftly in midfield.

Pass and move

■ The most important thing to remember when playing a game of *WLS '99* is that you have to radically change your tactics between the games when you're playing the computer and the matches where you take on a friend. The computer is often a much tougher opponent than any human, simply because it pressurises the player with the ball more quickly and effectively. When taking on a chum, you can build the play up, knocking the ball around between your defenders and midfielders before working up a goalscoring opportunity.



■ Look for the spare man.

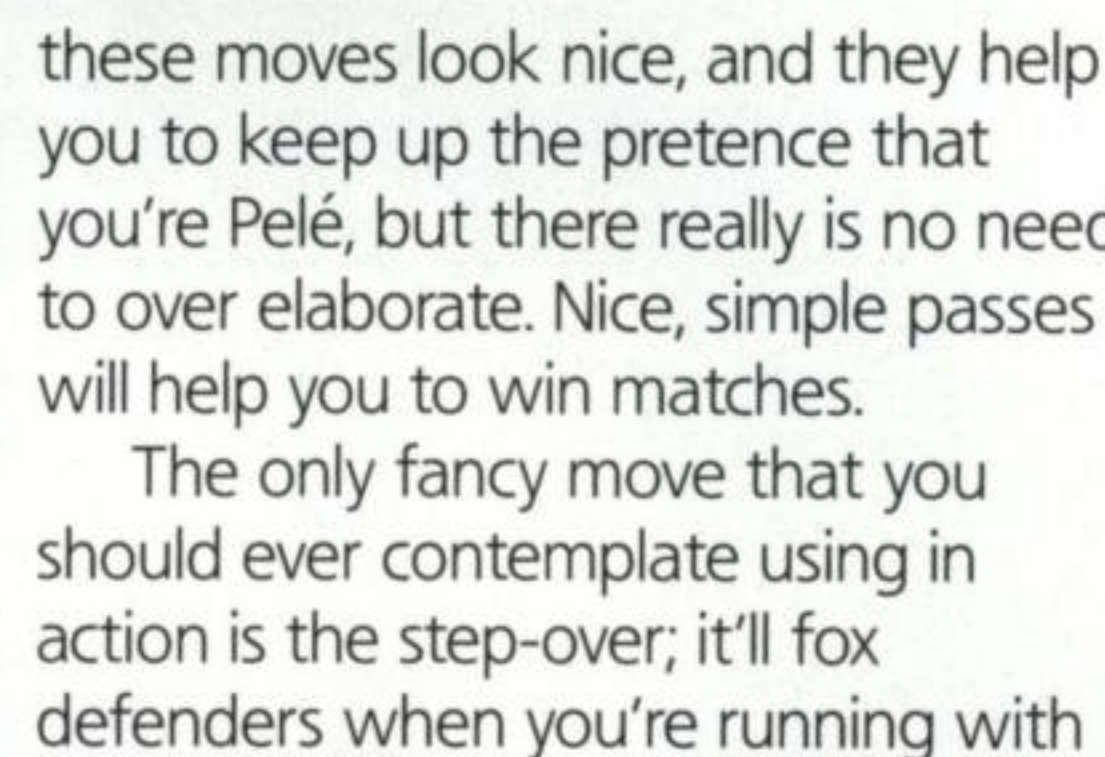


■ Long passes often come off.

■ Against the computer, your passing has to be much more swift. Long passes may not be fashionable, but they'll often find their man, so use this feature to break quickly when you're playing the computer. Short, but zippy passing is also an appropriate tactic, no matter who or what your opponent – just ensure that you don't become complacent, as one stray pass in your own half can lead to your opponent launching an attack.



■ All kind of tricks are available, but apart from the step-over, they're useless.



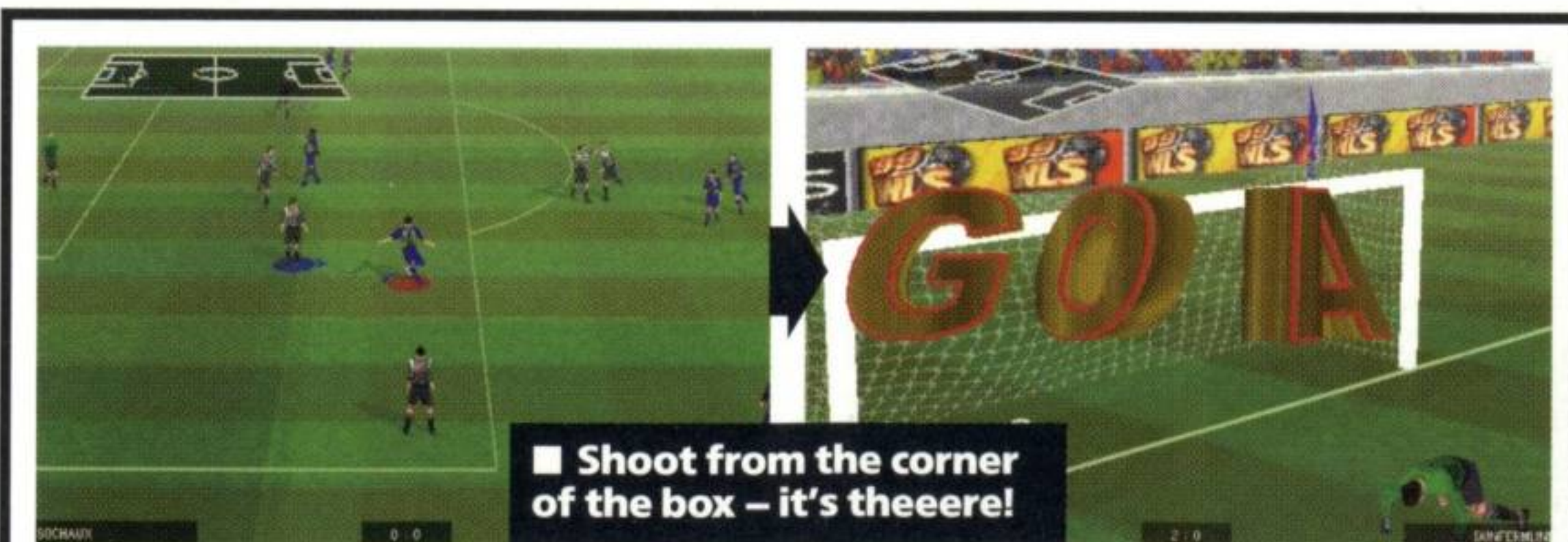
these moves look nice, and they help you to keep up the pretence that you're Pelé, but there really is no need to over elaborate. Nice, simple passes will help you to win matches.

The only fancy move that you should ever contemplate using in action is the step-over; it'll fox defenders when you're running with the ball, and virtually ensure that they don't dispossess you. It may not make for a pretty game, but – and we can't stress this enough – simple, effective moves reap the most rewards.



Ball control

■ One of the best things about *WLS '99* is the fact that you can pull off all sorts of crazy on-the-ball trickery, much of which is well worthy of the teen-wonder himself. However, you might want to steer clear of all of these moves (bar one, which we'll come to in a moment) because the control system is too complex, uninstinctive and ineffectual. Virtually all the moves will see you lose possession instantly; you'll attempt to pull off a sweet trick, only to find that your player crashes to the floor because – whatever you intended – he's attempting to pull off a diving header. You pressed the correct button, but because the ball was a millimetre from the ground, your player fell on his arse. We know that



■ Shoot from the corner of the box – it's theree!

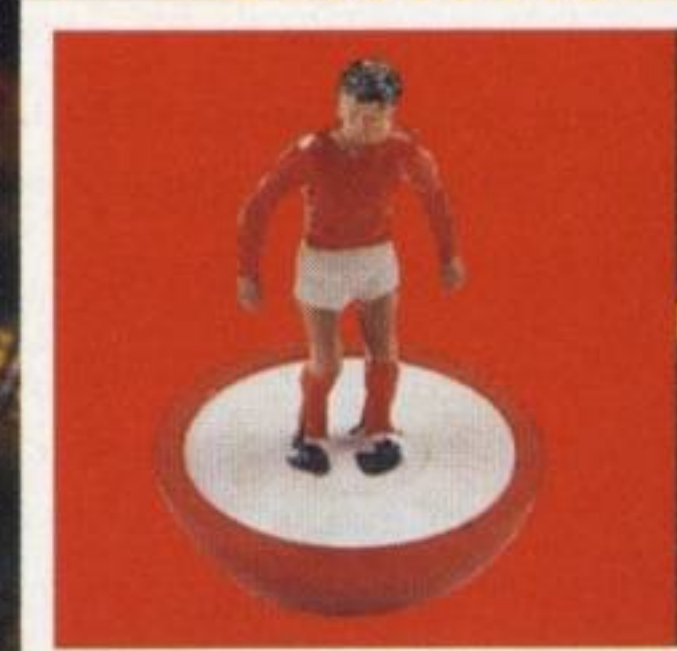
Top goalscoring tip

■ Get the ball up to the edge of the area and approach the goal from the corner of the penalty box. Shoot on sight and apply a little aftertouch to curl the ball into the far-bottom corner. Goalies in this game are

pretty unpredictable, but once you find the ideal weight of shot and aftertouch required, you should score every time. Be warned, though, the aftertouch is exceptionally sensitive, so this manoeuvre may take some practice to perfect.

■ Year 2000: I see a red shirt, a big trophy, Michael Owen as PM...

Interview by **Ben East**



CRYSTAL BALLS

WHERE'S IT ALL HEADED? WHAT WILL FOOTY GAMES OF THE FUTURE BE LIKE? WHO BETTER TO ASK THAN A MAN WHO'S WORKED ON FOOTY GAMES – FROM *STRIKER SNES* TO *MICHAEL OWEN'S WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER* – SINCE THE EARLY '90S. OVER TO SILICON DREAMS' GAVIN CHESHIRE...

PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON DODD, ALLSPORT

Ere, Le Saux! Any more of your lip and I'm coming in two-footed!" Jibes, threats and banter – essentials of modern football, but all absent from the videogame equivalent. But not for much longer, if Gavin Cheshire has his way. "Our next step is to involve facial motion capture in-game, so that players can talk to each other," he says, with more than a hint of mischief. "We could recreate what Paolo Di Canio said to referee Paul Alcock on that fateful day in Sheffield."

And this is just the beginning. Footy games are just going to keep getting better and better. So does this mean that in the year 2005 we'll be turning our noses up at *ISS Pro '98* and *Michael Owen's World League*

Soccer the way we do at the old but once-loved *Sensible Soccer* today?

Gavin agrees, but reminds us that gameplay is the most important thing, and that technological advances often don't make footy games any more fun to play. "There are plenty of new games which can't match the gameplay of products five years their senior," he points out. Fair enough. But with consoles constantly improving, surely the potential for truly lifelike games comes ever closer to being fulfilled? "Oh yes. Soon they'll offer gamers a 'real world' of sound and vision that's way in advance of today's titles."

Go on, give us some details. "We'll have ultra-real environments and player models in a couple of years," enthuses Gavin. "You'll be able to zoom in on a player and see his facial features, and watch and listen to him talk. Character likenesses in games are already technically very easy to do."

So why do we still have to put up with a fuzzy yellow blob to represent Carlos Valderrama's head? "Well, we're just at the

stage where it's really worth trying to put real player faces on the models. Unfortunately, however, it's also a huge can of worms when it comes to copyright. At the moment, not many publishers are willing to take the risk."

Unbelievably, be it on PC, PlayStation 2, Dreamcast or Nintendo's next baby, all of these new features are real possibilities. It's when Gavin gazes a further into his crystal ball that things start to get really interesting. "In ten years time you'll be able to download matchplay data from the live weekend games and re-enact moments on your computer or console, altering the outcome," he says.

And with the continued advancement of on-line and multiplayer gaming technology, it's only a matter of time until full 11-on-11 matches are possible. Imagine it, 11 mates from Liverpool and 11 mates from Manchester decide to hook up their PCs or PlayStation 2s to the Internet and settle the local derby once and for all.

And then there's force feedback. And voice recognition. And smarter AI...

That's the beauty of videogames; as technology marches ever onward, they're always getting better. And a peek at the next page offers plenty of footy game advances just months away.



"You'll be able to zoom in on a player and hear him talk."

■ Di Canio: Lost the plot.



Compiled by **Simon Kirrane**



NEXT SEASON

THE WORLD OF VIDEOGAME FOOTBALL HAS NEVER BEEN HEALTHIER, BUT THE TURF IS ALWAYS GREENER IN THE FUTURE. A WHOLE SQUAD OF NEW FOOTY GAMES ARE HEADING YOUR WAY IN 1999. TAKE A LOOK...



Player Manager '98-'99

- Format: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Infogrames**
- Developer: **Anco**
- Release date: **February**

■ After the disappointment of Gremlin's *Premier Manager '98*, the PlayStation is still crying out for a competent football management sim. The detail here includes all the British leagues down to the depths of the Vauxhall Conference, along with all the domestic and European cup competitions. Can you emulate the success of Gullit and Wenger, enabling you to experiment with a more international line up for your Scunthorpe hopefuls? And can you get your pies to sell as well as those at Rochdale? It's all to play for.



Championship Manager 3

- Format: **PC**
- Publisher: **EIDOS**
- Developer: **Sports Interactive**
- Release date: **February**

■ This management game has an enormous brief. The database of players and managers is bigger than it was in *CM2* (25,000 people). There's a new tactical system which has a mix of instructions. Plus it'll come with many of the world's top leagues (15 so far), which you can add to in time. The manager's interaction with the staff, chairman, players, media and supporters is also much increased. Even the number of players is huge: 16 can get to grips with a game on one machine or via a local network. If it gets self-aware, we're all in trouble.



FA Manager

- Format: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **EIDOS**
- Developer: **Krisalis**
- Release date: **March**

■ Another attempt to fill the PlayStation management sim niche. In *FA Manager* you must grovel to the bank manager, romance foreign signings, lie to the press, shout at the coach, and streamline your squad – so that half-way through the season you can leave them in a shower of paparazzi and get a better job. With all the (lack of) morals implicit in football management, this could prove to be hugely addictive.



Ruud Gullit's Striker

- Format: **PC/PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Rage**
- Developer: **Rage**
- Release date: **Spring**

■ Back in the 16-bit days, the only game that gave *Sensible Soccer* a run for its money was the *Striker* series. Now it's back again after a long spell on the bench. The title's charm was always down to its realistic look and feel. Rage is promising new ultra-realistic models allied to tactical training from the Dutch master himself. If it sticks to its original formula, it's in a very good position to challenge for honours this season. A Dreamcast conversion is also promised in time.



Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99

- Format: **N64**
- Publisher: **EIDOS**
- Developer: **Silicon Dreams**
- Release date: **April**

■ N64 owners are currently poorly served by footy games, but this is the healthiest challenge to *ISS Pro* so far. The graphics are arcade-quality, and the special moves which caused such a furore on the release of the PlayStation version are all in place. What's more, it's got that nippy little guy on the cover. See page 54 for more.



This Is Soccer

- Format: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Sony**
- Developer: **SCEE**
- Release date: **April**

■ Details about this UK-developed title are sketchy, although Sony's increased involvement with European football (a £10m marketing deal with the Premiership and a reported desire to sponsor Arsenal) shows that it now realises how important football is in the UK. When it comes to setting game genres alight, Sony (who rocked racing games with *Gran Turismo* and has reportedly been working on *This Is Soccer* for three years) has all the fireworks. Arcade will have more info soon.



UEFA Champions League

- Format: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **EIDOS**
- Developer: **Silicon Dreams**
- Release date: **May**

■ All the previous winners of the UEFA Cup from 1960 onwards are here, so you can be left to take charge of Manchester United's legendary 1968 campaign and see them either emerge victorious, or crash out to an obscure Scandinavian side in the first round (something for everyone, then). EIDOS is going balls-out for the football market, and with the lads behind *World League Soccer* taking the reins, *UEFA Champions League* could have a chance of snatching the title of connoisseurs' choice from *ISS Pro*. Watch this space.



Puma Street Soccer

- Format: **PC/PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Pixelstorm**
- Developer: **Pixelstorm**
- Release date: **May**

■ The dark horse in this line up has to be *Puma Street Soccer*. The rules are more relaxed than those of conventional football – you can play with just four players and have on-the-fly substitutions, all of which takes place in unconventional locations: parking lots, streets and so on. It's an approach that's paid off when taken to extremes in *NBA Jam* and *NFL Blitz*. Whether *PSS* can emulate their success remains to be seen, but with the inclusion of Deschamps, Maradona, Peruzzi, Beardsley, Stam, Asprilla, plus a bevy of other booters, even purists should be catered for here.



FIFA 2000

- Format: **PlayStation/N64**
- Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
- Developer: **EA Sports**
- Release date: **November**

■ EA's taken a lot of stick with its *FIFA* series, but that invaluable license always ensures that the games sell more than the superior *ISS Pro* (*FIFA '99* was the sixth *FIFA* title to hit number one). Details of the new model are scant, but we're hoping that the gameplay finally lives up to the presentation to give us a worthwhile challenge. With the competition getting stronger each year, EA has no room for complacency here – Des Lynam or no Des Lynam.



ISS Pro '99

- Format: **PlayStation/N64**
- Publisher: **Konami**
- Developer: **Konami**
- Release date: **Winter**

■ *ISS Pro '98* is the greatest football game money can buy. Naturally, Konami is keeping details of its new game under wraps and isn't letting on what it's going to change. Opposition AI still needs a tinker and it's a crime that you can't select Brazil versus Brazil in a two-player match. However, unless Rage's *Striker* or Sony's *This Is Soccer* have discovered a holy grail, *ISS Pro '99* already has one hand on the trophy.

NATIONAL

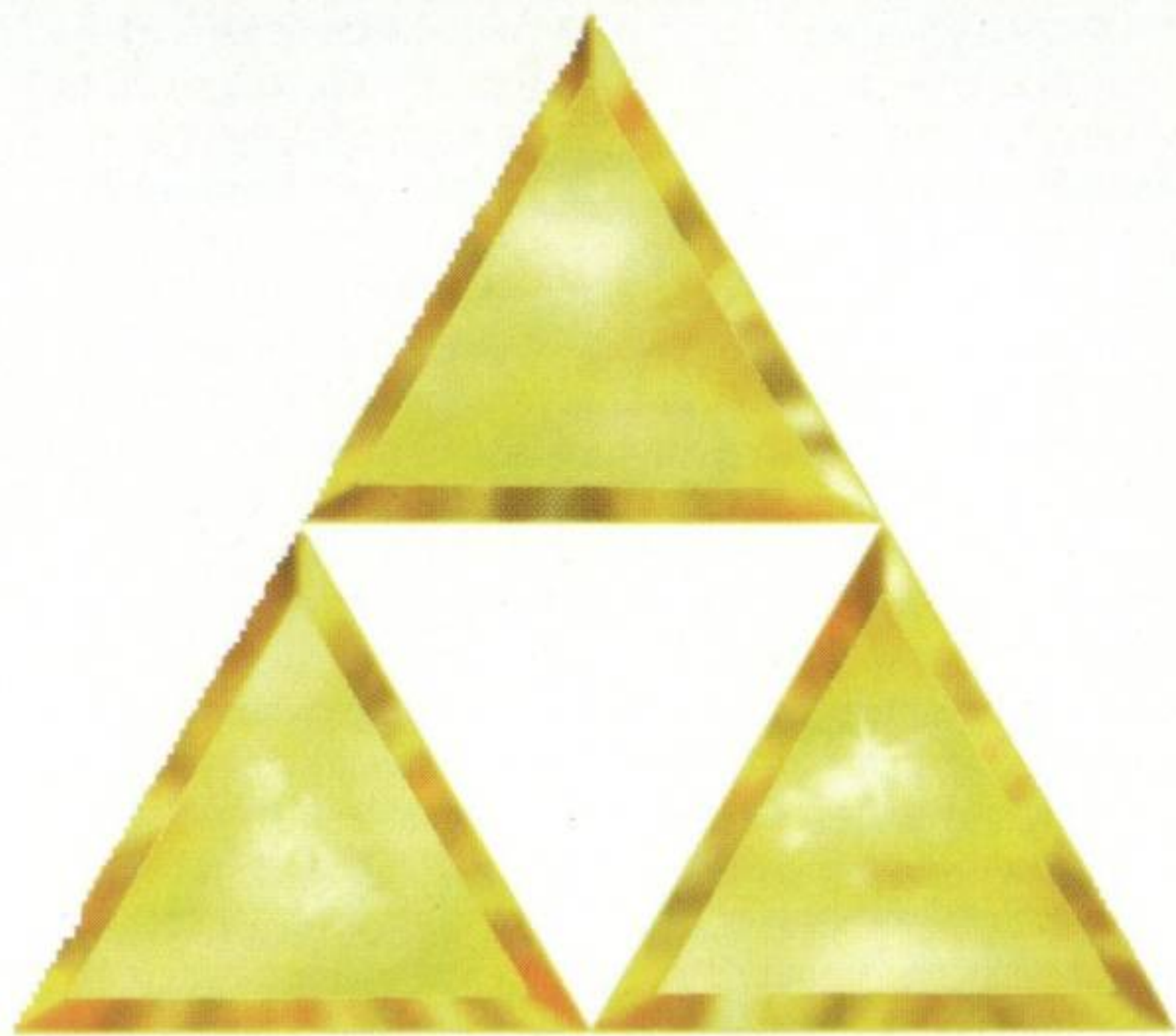
STORY BY MARK GREEN

ELF



HAVE YOU PLAYED ZELDA 64 YET?

IF NOT, YOU SHOULD. THERE'S FAR MORE TO NINTENDO'S LATEST BLOCKBUSTER THAN MEETS THE EYE...



■ In its first six weeks on sale in America, people handed over more money for *Zelda 64* than for any Hollywood movie released in the same period. Incredible, but true.

There's a bit in *Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time* with some dogs. It happens when you find yourself in Hyrule Market at night for the first time. The bustling punters who clogged the streets and stalls in the daytime have all tucked themselves up in bed for the night, and in their place are scores of cutesy puppies. Barking, yapping and bouncing around like Lassie gone mad, they're practically begging for a taste of the sharp end of your sword.

But Shigeru Miyamoto, the creator of *Zelda 64*, is one step ahead of you. He didn't spend three years toiling away without realizing exactly what people would try to do to his dogs. So, rather than Link's sword-swinging assault splitting one of the mutts in two, it prompts the little canine to start following you around. Try to run, and it'll chase after you with an excited bark. Stop for a moment, and it'll sit at your feet, wagging its tail expectantly and staring up at you with its irresistible big black eyes.

Of course, it turns out that all these doggy antics are the means to solving a puzzle. In one of the houses there's an unhappy woman who's lost her little pet Richard, and she's willing to reward you if you can pick him out from the other puppies legging it round town. So that's why Hyrule Market's dogs follow you about.

But doesn't it seem a bit odd that Miyamoto's team went to all the trouble of designing and programming a

complex 3D model of a stupid little dog, just for a small amusing puzzle? If you were the head honcho at Nintendo, wouldn't you raise a worried eyebrow at the sight of the N64 almost collapsing as it shifted 20 dogs around the screen, simply so that some fat lady could give Link an insignificant prize?

You see, the *real* reason why those dogs are there is because they're *fun*. After you've exhausted every weapon at your disposal attempting to rid yourself of a canine nuisance, and resigned yourself to having it tailing you forever, you will leave Hyrule Market and find that it's gone. At that moment, you realise that you'd got kind of attached to the little fella, and you want him back. Which is exactly what Miyamoto wanted. He wants you not just to like *Zelda*, but to *feel* and *experience* it. And he can't do this with ingenious puzzles or flashy cinematic cut-scenes, no matter how carefully staged they are. He does it by making you actively *involved*. And he does it with some mangy mongrel refusing to leave you alone.

And this is why *Zelda's* so great.

Well, it's one of the reasons. If you've played *Zelda* you'll probably be jumping up and down at this point, red in the face and shouting, "It's not the dog bit! The best bit's when you get to ride the horse!" or "It's the bit with the mad windmill guy!" Meanwhile, if you haven't played it yet you're more than likely thinking, "A digital dog? It'll take more than that to convince me this is the Best Game Ever."

Okay, so *Zelda's* greatness can't be encapsulated in a few paragraphs about man's best friend. But the game must have something special about it. Otherwise why would a games developer, working for one of Nintendo's rivals, call it, "The apex of game design in the late '90s"?

Ask a group of videogame journalists to pick the biggest overstatement ever, and they'll be arguing for days. But the phrase "*Zelda 64* was the most eagerly-awaited videogame of all time" won't get many takers – simply because it happens to be true. Everyone was waiting with bated breath.

Fans of *Quake*-style shooting games? They love the low-level control "feel" of Miyamoto's games. Hardcore role-players who've been buying obscure Japanese imports since the early '80s? They love the *Zelda* story and couldn't wait for the next chapter. Never had a game come with such broad expectations.

It also bore the additional weight of Nintendo's hopes for the Christmas season. Nintendo needed to show gamers that its black box of tricks was still in the race with PlayStation. So *Zelda* simply *had* to be good. The pressure mounted as each week ticked down towards launch. It's amazing, then, that the finished game lives up to so much of the hype.

A rapturous welcome wasn't immediate, however.

"I wasn't wowed from the word go," admits Jonty Barnes of Lionhead Studios, the development team behind long-awaited PC title *Black & White*. His words are echoed by several other developers. Even the murmurs from *Arcade's* assembled hacks when *Zelda* arrived in the office were less than ecstatic. But why?

Zelda begins with a cinematic cut-scene starring, of all things, a great big Magic Talking Tree. It doesn't sound great, does it? And as the tree witters on in toe-curlingly olde-world speak about ancient curses and young boys, you begin to remember wistfully those five crisp tenners that the game cost you. Once the tree's finished his spiel, you're "treated" to another cut-scene which Disney itself would refuse to animate for fear of being "too cute". You watch all this, by the way, from the point of view of Link's brand new fairy sidekick, Navi, as she glides over a pretty forest village populated by pointy-eared elves with big eyes. Worst of all, at one point the clumsy winged girl "accidentally" smacks into a fence and shakes her little head in confusion. Gnnnn!

And that's all just the intro. Things get worse. Start the game proper, taking control of Link in his home

"village" of Kokiri Forest, and you soon discover that you're not actually Link at all – you *look* like him, but, cheesily, everyone refers to you by your own name! (You type it in when you switch the game on.) Even the celebrated "Miyamoto control" is a let down. With no jump button your leaps are taken automatically before you fall off the edge of a block or cliff. "Revolutionary!", gush the magazines. "Bloody annoying", thinks you.

And it gets worse still. Despite the wealth of glorious 3D visuals, there's very little to actually *do*. There're



I suddenly realised that everything I needed to know was being taught to me

lots of elves to chat to, lots of fairies flying about, and a triple coat of cuteness liberally applied to every area, but your actions seem very limited. You want to help the kid clearing plants? You can't. You want to buy some stuff from the little elf shop? You haven't got any money. You want to visit the Deku Tree, which Navi keeps insisting is what you should be doing? You need to find a sword and shield before it'll let you. It's so frustrating.

But then something changes.

Gradually, it all becomes clearer. As Jonty admits, "I suddenly realised that everything I needed to know was being taught to me. I didn't need to sit down and read the manual because, without realising it, I'd been acquiring the skills I'd need to venture into the game proper." Which is exactly what Miyamoto wanted.

Zelda's Kokiri Forest is the equivalent of the castle grounds in *Super Mario 64* – a playground. No matter how lost you feel, Miyamoto is leading you ever onwards. As you jump around, try to reach high ledges, get lost



■ "Where's my dinner?"



■ *Zelda* becomes *Metal Gear Solid* as Link sneaks past castle guards [1]. The elfin one can harness the power of fire and light to solve puzzles [2-3], and power up his sword with magic [4].



■ **Zelda's sumptuous lighting effects laugh in the face of other games' pitiful efforts.**

and then find your way, you work things out. Walk through tall grass, and you find hidden money. Talk to the residents of the forest, and they show you how to lock-on to enemies and pick up stones. Then you notice the small gap in a wall, which leads to a hidden area that conceals a treasure chest, a chest that contains... yes! The sword! And with all the money you've found, there's enough to buy that shield. Hurrah!

Finally, you can shut Navi up by visiting the Deku Tree, who opens up his gaping gob and introduces you to the game's first dungeon. This is where you get your first taste of real action, with fiendish puzzles, new toys, such as the Slingshot and Deku Sticks, and combat with Parasitic Armoured Arachnids who climb onto the ceiling in an effort to squash your little elfin head. Even better, the controls and the auto-jumping have stopped being a problem altogether, and you wonder how you ever lived without them.

Suddenly, there's almost *too much* to do, and doesn't Miyamoto know it. Because from that moment, the *real* quest begins and, like the curtains finally going back at the cinema, the whole of Hyrule opens up before you. A world of markets and castles and stables and lakes and mountains, where there's more to see and do than in 20 normal videogames put together. You've gone from being frustratingly limited to having the world at your fingertips. It's a breathtaking feeling.

"You really feel like you're in this absolutely massive

As great as *Zelda's* characters are, though, they take a back seat to the epic storyline



new world," says Jo Myers, lead artist at King Of The Jungle software. "As soon as you see how big the play area is it all becomes mind-blowing. You see stuff as a haze in the distance and think 'Yeah, I'm gonna try and run all the way over there', and you actually can! That feeling of freedom is amazing."

Shoe-horned into *Zelda's* heavier-than-usual 4.5 x 3-inch cartridge is the most believable, interactive world that videogaming has ever conjured. Take the characters. On your quest to collect spiritual stones and magic medallions, you'll come across plenty of people to interact with. They could talk the hind legs off a flamingo, but that doesn't stop them being more authentic and useful



■ **Friends of Link: The foxy Princess Zelda (in child form) [1], Darunia, who's fond of dancing [2], and the wise old owl [3].**

than the people you meet in real life. Some, such as the mysterious Sheik, give you hints on where and what to do next, or teach Link warp songs to play on his flute-like Ocarina. Others, such as the chicken-keeper at Kakariko Village, give you mini-quests to amuse yourself with. Others still – like your lifelong friend Saria – serve up a full three-course menu of heart-wrenching plot-twists.

"The whole character interaction's fantastic, and typically Japanese," says Simeon Pashley, Project Manager at Krisalis Software. "The way that the small water-dwelling Zora girl would propose to you, and then tell you when you came back later that she was worried you'd abandoned her, is the kind of thing that we don't go for in British games." Probably because we'd recoil at the thought of it being twee or sickeningly cute. Yet it works a treat.

What's worked even better is the translation from the original Japanese. Once you've got the Deku Tree out of the way, and forgiven the occasional slip into, "Hey! Yo, kid!" Americanisms, the words that slip from the mouths of Hyrule's residents are commendably

The story of the Goddesses

Kill the insect inside the Great Deku Tree and he will tell you a magical tale before he snuffs it...



■ **The tale begins with a haunting shot of Ganondorf.**



■ **Then, three golden goddesses plunge Earthwards.**



■ **Farore is the pretty one of the three goddesses.**



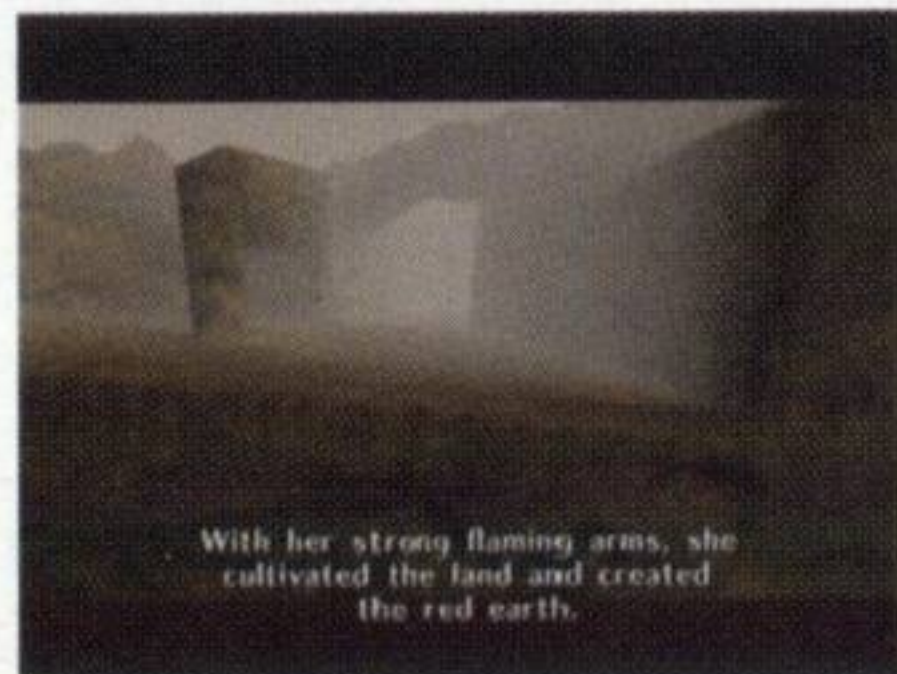
■ **Din is the brainy one, with all the A levels.**



■ **And goddess Nayru has a great personality...**



■ **The goddesses smack head-first into the ground...**



■ **...and begin to work their magic on Hyrule...**



■ **...eventually creating a green and pleasant land...**



■ **...finally combining in a blinding explosion to create...**



■ **...the Triforce, the symbol of all Hyrule's power. Chipper!**

believable and appropriate. As an unexpected bonus, they're genuinely funny, too. Try not to laugh at the bloke in Hyrule market showing off his luxuriant beard, or the fisherman at Lake Hylia scratching his armpits.

As great as *Zelda's* characters are, though, they take a back seat to the epic storyline. Despite *Back To The Future II* and *Star Trek IV* cocking up the time-travel concept, Nintendo has managed to make it believable and exciting again.

Collecting the third and last mystical stone for Princess Zelda, you head back to the castle, only to find the young girl racing away on horseback, swiftly followed by her father's sinister servant Ganondorf. That's bad enough, but then you enter the Temple of Time and immediately succumb to a seven year sleep. When you wake up, you're a teenager, and everything's gone horribly wrong. Hyrule Market has become an apocalyptic wasteland, Zelda's Castle has been replaced by the towering fortress of Ganondorf, and the watery paradise of Zora's Domain has frozen over. Most heart-rending of all, your friends in Kokiri Forest – who don't get any older – don't recognise you. "There's something familiar about you, mister," they say as they crane their necks to stare at your face.

Then, after a few hours' play, having grown familiar with adult Link, you're plunged back into the past again. Link's ten-year-old alter-ego seems smaller than ever, and it's almost embarrassing to hear his babyish screams and watch his stumpy legs wobbling about. Still, there'll be a tear welling in your eye as you see the market back to its busy, bustling self, and Zora's Domain full of happily swimming creatures once again.

It's impossible not to get completely absorbed, especially as you play an integral part in the story. "The fact that *Zelda* gets you to put your own name into the game is a master stroke," says Krisalis's Simeon Pashley. "At one point, you find that someone's named their son after you for something that you did seven years ago, and everyone's saying 'Well done' to you personally for saving their village or killing their mortal enemy. You can't help but feel a warm glow inside."

And yet, wandering around Hyrule, chatting to characters and messing about with the space-time continuum is really only a filler. Even if you spit blood every time you have to talk to another cute character who calls you by your name, you can rest easy in the knowledge that the real meat of the game is contained in its dungeons, where *Zelda* reverts to the more traditional videogame stereotype – fighting your way from room to room, solving puzzles, flicking switches and jumping on moving lifts.

Don't expect platforming-by-numbers from Mr Miyamoto, though, because he's saved the very best bits of his brain for the dungeons. The puzzles combine simplicity and fiendishness so well that you can almost feel the level designer in the room watching you, toying with your mind and giggling maniacally.

Wander into an agoraphobic, gloomy room with an enticing treasure chest just visible at the other end, and your natural reaction is to run and open it. But you hadn't noticed the small upright posts peppering the room. As you run between two of them, a wall of fire rears up and knocks you back. You try another, and the same things happens. But another pair let you through. Ingeniously, the posts form an invisible maze, with only one route possible as the fire-walls bar your way to others. The only thing more embarrassing than not seeing through the trick immediately is hearing yourself blurt out, "Ah, I see..." when you figure it out.

Jonty Barnes of Lionhead has his own favourite section. "The desert thieves bit, where you're sneaking around a fortress trying not to be seen, is fantastic. The designers could have made an entire game out of it, like *Metal Gear Solid* did, but they've decided not to go over the top. *Zelda's* full of that kind of thing – loads of great ideas that they've just chucked in and then immediately



■ The trouble with quests to save the world is that you attract all kinds of unsavoury types. The laser-eyed statue [1] and the flaming skull [2] are two of the worst, but they pale in comparison to the massive bosses [3].

thrown away after one level. The variety they've packed in by doing this is astonishing."

In one dungeon, there's a twisted tunnel. Wander along to the end of it, and you'll find yourself walking on the walls in the room at the other end. Clever. But then you realise that shooting the small eye above a door snaps the corridor straight, so that you can walk on the room's floor proper. Stop to look around the room and get your bearings, and you'll become slowly aware of an eerie hollow rushing noise... you start looking frantically for the source, and then, without warning, you're suddenly grabbed and choked to death by a dismembered hand which dropped from the ceiling. Eat your heart out *Resident Evil*.

Simeon Pashley expresses what a lot of developers are probably muttering under their breath. "We'd been working on our own platform game for a year, and we'd dreamed up all these great concepts. We were working on a PC game so, technically, the sky was the limit," he says. "But then we got *Zelda* in, played it, and all we could think was, 'Ooh, you buggers'. We were convinced that no-one else would think of our ideas, and there they all were in a little Nintendo cartridge. We were left wondering how the hell they did it."

If you really want to piss developers off, mention *Zelda's* combat system to them.



■ Ganondorf, all dressed up.



■ Someone should tell this chap that ripped jeans went out years ago.

Press Z to target on a character, then use A to jump, with Back to jump backwards and Left/Right to leap sideways. B to use the sword, A and B to jump and swipe, hold down B to... Admittedly, it doesn't sound particularly well-designed or revolutionary. And yet, in-game, it's easy and instinctive, and another potential 3D problem effortlessly solved by The Miraculous Mind of Miyamoto. "Just before I got my copy of *Zelda 64*," confesses Scott Johnston of Rage Software, "I was playing Game Boy *Zelda*, and I thought 'how on Earth are they going to implement the combat system in 3D'? It didn't seem possible, and yet the combat system they came up with is genius!"

So, *Zelda* is the game that makes other developers curse out loud and wish they had someone else's brain. But it doesn't stop them complaining about it. Some didn't like the fact that it's not always clear what to do next. For others, it was the disappointment at receiving a pitiful 200-Rupee coin for destroying all 100 Gold Skulltula spiders scattered around Hyrule. The camera angles were occasionally iffy, and so on. It seems that *Zelda* isn't perfect after all.

a giant fish, with the unlikely name of Jabu-Jabu. It can't be many people's dream to carry a child princess to safety through an animal's gullet, and Nintendo has apparently struggled to make it any more fun than it would be in real life. Princess Ruto has a habit of disappearing if you drop her in water, or behind a door, or down a hole, and retrieving her is a lengthy process of back-tracking through numerous rooms and cursing your way up a 30-foot-high vine. On top of all that, it isn't exactly clear where you're supposed to be going with the young Ruto, and the graphics – all sinuous muscle and pulsating veins – merge on-screen to create an ambiguous pink-grey mush.

There's the horse, too. For most of the game, Epona is a dream to ride. She whips over fields like a brown, four-legged sports car, and whinnies her disapproval when you thwack her arse with a big stick. But faced with a three-foot-high fence or a change in gradient, she'll often grind to a halt, rear up and neigh until she bursts. Meanwhile, you're faced with the nightmare job of backing up and turning her around, a task that makes reverse-parking an articulated lorry seem simple.

And then there's... er, there's that thing where, um... well, really that's it as far as complaints go. Trying to find things wrong with *Zelda* is like looking for spelling mistakes in the dictionary. Miyamoto and his hard-working friends have spent so much time tweaking, perfecting and polishing that you're more likely to find Les Dennis in the game than a glaring problem. The most irritating thing is getting stuck and being denied *Zelda*'s later pleasures.

But you needn't worry even then, because the all-seeing Miyamoto is there with you. That's why he packed the game full of needless sub-quests and humorous sub-games. Usually, getting stuck in a game leads to only one thing: hours wasted staring at the TV,

The most irritating thing is getting stuck and being denied *Zelda*'s later pleasures



■ Wish you were here... Feast your eyes on the view from the top of Death Mountain [1], the waters of Lake Hylia [2], and the picturesque Kakariko Village [3].



Hey, kid, what time is it?

Roll over Michael J Fox, *Link*'s got time travel sussed, even if his method of doing it smacks of King Arthur.





■ **Monsters!** A giant Skultulla spider [1], a water-hopping crab thing [2], and a horrific screeching sword-wielding lizard being [3].



with your arse glued to your seat by sweat and tears, and nothing to do except try increasingly bizarre things in case one of them strikes lucky.

With *Zelda*, you can wander away from the problem and amuse yourself with a spot of ghost collecting, or mask selling, or slingshot target practice, relieve your pent-up frustrations, and approach the problem refreshed. It's the *Zelda* equivalent of a soothing cup of tea with eight Rich Tea biscuits to dunk into it.

And even if you're not stuck, the opportunity to fulfil a marathon runner's lifelong ambition by selling him a rabbit mask is too good to pass up. Ask *Zelda* players to name their favourite sub-game and watch the friendship-shattering arguments ensue.

Inevitably, the scrap will end with everyone shaking hands and agreeing that the fishing sub-game is the jewel of *Zelda's* sub-games. It's a tiny part of the game, and yet it has been so lovingly crafted that it could almost be a commercial angling simulation by itself. The big fish that hangs around by the rocks soon becomes your personal nemesis, and you'll find yourself telling friends about "The one that got away" without a hint of irony.

So *Zelda* isn't just a case of getting from beginning to end in the quickest

There isn't a single best bit. Miyamoto had one great idea, and that was *Zelda* in 3D

time. It's about being distracted at every turn, and giving some eye drops to a mountain-dwelling creature who's almost as big as the mountain itself, when you should be knocking on the Infernal Dinosaur's door in order to give him a good kicking and save Princess Zelda. Just like in real life, where you find yourself staying in to catch the end of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* when you should have met your mates 15 minutes ago, *Zelda* is full of brilliant distractions.

And, even when you've fought your way past the final battle with the big boss, you know that you haven't seen everything. *Zelda* is both a game *and* a host of surprises. It only needs a coating of chocolate and it would be a Kinder Egg.

So, have we convinced you? If not, then we're sorry to say that it's your loss. And if you already *have* played *Zelda* but still don't think of it as the greatest slice of videogaming since *Space Invaders* first hit your local chip shop, then get yourself to a doctor and have him check your pulse. In years to come, when we're all going on computerised "Virtual Holidays", this game will be recognised as a milestone on the road that led us there.

As Rage's Scott Johnston enthused when asked about his favourite bit of *Zelda*, "There isn't just one. Miyamoto had one great idea, and that idea was *Zelda* in 3D. I think a lot of people will try and copy it. I wish them luck." They'll certainly need it.



■ Link set on fire by a laser [1], and thwocking some poor monster to an early grave [2].



■ His mother loves him.

■ To the future and back again. By plucking the Master Sword from its stone, Link lights up the Triforce symbol and warps forward seven years. If he gets bored with adolescence, he can replace the sword and return to childhood.



A Charts

Edited by **Mark Green**

And where has everyone spent all of their hard-earned cash this month?

Official All-Formats Top 40



ChartTrack



1 (1) FIFA 99 PSX/PC, EA Sports

FIFA doesn't look like loosening its grip on the number-one position just yet. With the other soccer titles nowhere to be seen, it seems you need the official FIFA stamp to get a footy sim into people's homes.

2 (2) Tomb Raider III PSX/PC, EIDOS

Lara's still giving FIFA a run for its money, and the Wimbledon babe has slowly caught up with FIFA sales over the past four weeks. Expect a reshuffle next month.

3 (-) Crash Bandicoot 3 PSX, SCEE

That mad orange marsupial still has a special place in many PlayStation owners' hearts, and this month he comes very close to beating Lara to the second-placed slot.

4 (-) Turok 2 N64/CGB, Acclaim

With phenomenal Zelda sales dropping off to almost zero after a week, it's left to Turok to salvage the N64's dignity.

5 (6) TOCA Touring Car Championship PSX/PC, Codemasters (budget)

Despite the launch of its sequel, this rally sim refuses to go quietly, thanks to its Platinum price on the PlayStation.

6 (9) Grand Theft Auto PSX/PC, Take 2 (budget)

A good month for drug smugglers and cop shooters, as this crime simulator bounces back up to bubble under the top five.

7 (12) V Rally PSX/N64/GB, Infogrames (budget)

This rallying sim finally shakes off Colin McRae and its other trackside rivals with a commendable five-place climb.

8 (-) Brian Lara Cricket PSX, Codemasters

It's not often you see a cricket simulator crash straight into the top ten, so savour this leather-on-willow moment.

9 (13) Colin McRae Rally PSX/PC, Codemasters

After threatening V-Rally's dominance for a while, Colin drops the revs, takes the key out of the ignition and goes home.

10 (11) Crash Bandicoot PSX, SCEE (budget)

As the threequel thrives, Crash's original adventures continue to dive downward.

11 (19) Rayman PSX/PC, Ubisoft (budget)

Give a game a budget price and it'll fly up the charts regardless of its quality – as Rayman demonstrates admirably.

12 (24) Mickey's Wild Adventure PSX, SCEE (budget)

Kids love Disney, and nothing's going to stop them snapping up Mickey's budget platforming adventures.

13 (33) Resident Evil PSX/PC, Virgin (budget)

A great month for budget titles as Virgin's zombie-shocker sprints into the top 20.

14 (-) Baldur's Gate PC, Interplay

This RPG has been a phenomenal success, but expect a drop out of the top 20 soon.

15 (27) Worms PSX/PC/GB, Infogrames (budget)

It's not great, but it is cheap, so this turn-based worm-splattering title shoots up 12.

16 (26) Die Hard Trilogy PSX/PC, EA (budget)

Three brilliant games in one, this action-packed Platinum title is flying up the chart.

17 (4) Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus PSX/PC, GT

Sadly, the novelty of a farting alien seems to be wearing off. He'll be back.

18 (30) Gran Turismo PSX, SCEE

The Best Driving Game Ever™ is likely to be hanging around the top 40 for years.

19 (36) Tekken 2 PSX, SCEE (budget)

Tekken 3 is technically superior, but the budget price of its prequel is still attractive.

21 (16) Tomb Raider PSX/PC, EIDOS (budget)

22 (7) TOCA 2 Touring Cars PSX, Codemasters

23 (20) World Cup 98 PSX/PC/N64, EA Sports (budget)

24 (21) WWF: Warzone PSX/N64/GB, Acclaim

25 (38) Tenchu: Stealth Assassins PSX, Activision

26 (14) Hercules PSX/PC, SCEE (budget)

27 (35) Time Crisis PSX, SCEE (budget)

28 (29) Cool Boarders 3 PSX, SCEE

29 (25) Croc PSX/PC, EA (budget)

30 (17) Half-Life PC, Sierra

31 (-) Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee PSX/PC, GT (budget)

32 (5) Tekken 3 PSX, Namco

33 (15) Tomb Raider II PSX/PC, EIDOS

34 (18) Apocalypse PSX, Activision

35 (-) Micro Machines v3 PSX/PC, Codemasters

36 (22) Premier Manager '98 PSX/PC, Gremlin

37 (28) Music PSX, Codemasters

38 (-) Theme Park PSX/PC, EA

39 (-) Command & Conquer PSX/PC, EA

40 (23) 1080° Snowboarding N64, Nintendo

CHARTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHART TRACK & ELSPA

PlayStation Top 10

- 1 (1) FIFA 99 EA Sports
- 2 (-) Crash Bandicoot 3 SCEE
- 3 (2) Tomb Raider III EIDOS
- 4 (-) Brian Lara Cricket Codemasters
- 5 (-) Gran Turismo SCEE
- 6 (3) Spyro the Dragon SCEE
- 7 (4) Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus GT
- 8 (7) TOCA 2 Codemasters
- 9 (-) Colin McRae Rally Codemasters
- 10 (-) Tenchu: Stealth Assassins Activision

Plenty of movement this month. Tomb Raider III's already falling, and Gran Turismo's back.

PC Top 10

- 1 (-) Baldur's Gate Interplay
- 2 (1) Tomb Raider III EIDOS
- 3 (2) Half-Life Sierra
- 4 (3) FIFA 99 EA Sports
- 5 (4) Combat Flight Simulator Microsoft
- 6 (-) Gangsters: Organised Crime EIDOS
- 7 (5) South Park Theme & Screensaver Telstar
- 8 (-) Monopoly: Star Wars Hasbro
- 9 (7) Colin McRae Rally Codemasters
- 10 (-) Age of Empires Microsoft

That won't be the last you see of South Park in the chart.

N64 Top 10

- 1 (-) Turok 2 Acclaim
- 2 (1) 1080° Nintendo
- 3 (-) V Rally Infogrames
- 4 (2) Banjo-Kazooie Nintendo/Rare
- 5 (3) F1 World Grand Prix Nintendo
- 6 (9) Mario Kart 64 Nintendo
- 7 (7) GoldenEye 007 Nintendo/Rare
- 8 (-) Zelda Nintendo
- 9 (6) Mission: Impossible Ocean
- 10 (-) Diddy Kong Racing Nintendo/Rare

Zelda's position is misleading – it flew out at first, but now everyone's got a copy, it's not selling many at all.

Import Zone

With Department 1 (0171 916 8440)



■ We've got a shiny new import bloke this month, Anthony from Department 1. What's movin' and a-groovin' on the import scene, Anthony? "Ridge Racer 4 on PlayStation is doing well." Er, yes, we knew that already from last month. Give us something new. "Well Brave Fencer Musashiden and Street Fighter Zero on PlayStation are selling like hot cakes, and the American version of South Park on N64 is flying out, too." Has that orange squiggle made any money for you? "Dreamcast's doing fine. Loads of people are buying Sonic Adventure, and Incoming is okay, too." And what are you looking forward to? "Sega Rally 2 should be Dreamcast's biggest seller, and we can't wait for Resident Evil on N64 and PaRappa 2 on PlayStation." Gripping stuff.

Release Schedule

Got your eye on a game that's coming soon? Here's the latest on when it will arrive.

February

5th	A Bug's Life	Sony	PSX
5th	RC Stunt Copter	Interplay	PSX
5th	A Bug's Life	Disney	PC
5th	Championship Manager 3	EIDOS	PC
5th	Delta Force	Novalogic	PC
5th	Heavy Gear 2	Activision	PC
5th	Megaman X4	Virgin	PC
5th	Monkey Island Adventure Pack	LucasArts	PC
5th	Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch	Take 2	PC
5th	Starcraft Battle Chest	Cendant	PC
5th	Street Fighter Alpha 2	Virgin	PC
5th	Gex 64	GT	N64
5th	Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA	Midway	N64
5th	Virtual Pool	Crave	N64
5th	Caesar's Palace	Nintendo	CGB
5th	Hexcite	Ubisoft	CGB
5th	Men In Black	Infogrames	CGB
5th	Pitfall	Take 2	CGB
5th	Zelda DX	Nintendo	CGB

12th	Bust-A-Move 4	Acclaim	PSX
12th	Player Manager 2	Anco	PSX
12th	WCW Thunder	THQ	PSX
12th	Global Domination	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	3D Ultra Pinball 4	Sierra	PC
12th	Gabriel Knight Anthology	Cendant	PC
12th	NBA Jam '99	Acclaim	CGB
12th	Tennis 2	Nintendo	CGB
12th	Wario Land 2	Nintendo	CGB

19th	Akuji the Heartless	EIDOS	PSX
19th	Coloured Dual Shock Pads	Sony	PSX
19th	Sportscar GT	Virgin	PSX
19th	Lion King 2	Disney	PC
19th	PGA Golf '99: Sierra Sports	Sierra	PC
19th	Return to Kronidor	Sierra	PC
19th	Starsiege	Cendant	PC
19th	Viper Racing	Sierra	PC
19th	Mario Party	Nintendo	N64
19th	Millipede	Nintendo	CGB
19th	Monopoly	Konami	PC
19th	NFL Blitz	Midway	CGB
19th	Wicked Surfing	Nintendo	CGB

26th	Metal Gear Solid	Konami	PSX
26th	Civilization: Call To Power	Activision	PC
26th	F-16 Aggressor	Virgin	PC
26th	Viva Football	Virgin	PC
26th	Quest for Camelot	Rare	CGB

TBA	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	PSX
TBA	Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine	LucasArts	PSX
TBA	Joe Blow	Telstar	PSX

TBA	Monaco Grand Prix Racing Sim	Ubisoft	PSX
TBA	No Fear Downhill		
TBA	Mountain Biking	Codemasters	PSX
TBA	Running Wild	Sony	PSX
TBA	Space Invaders	Activision	PSX
TBA	The Granstream Saga	Sony	PSX
TBA	Tribal	Sony	PSX
TBA	Viva Football	Virgin	PSX
TBA	Alien vs Predator	EA/Fox	PC
TBA	Alpha Centauri	EA	PC
TBA	Baja 1000 Racing	Brøderbund	PC
TBA	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters	PC
TBA	Command & Conquer 2	EA	PC
TBA	Diablo 2	Cendant	PC
TBA	Drakan	Psygnosis	PC
TBA	Duke Nukem 4ever	GT	PC
TBA	Dungeon Keeper 2	EA	PC
TBA	Extreme Warfare	Brøderbund	PC
TBA	Force Commander	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Lands of Lore 3	Westwood	PC
TBA	Machines	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Malkari	Interactive Magic	PC
TBA	No Fear Downhill		
TBA	Mountain Biking	Codemasters	PC
TBA	Omikron	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Prax Wars	EA	PC
TBA	Premier Manager '99	Gremlin	PC
TBA	Prince Naseem	Codemasters	PC
TBA	Reel Feel Golf	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Sim City 3000	EA	PC
TBA	South Park	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Star Trek: First Contact	MicroProse	PC
TBA	Star Wars: Force Commander	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Starship Troopers	MicroProse	PC
TBA	Superbikes World Championship	Virgin	PC
TBA	The Guardian	Cryo	PC
TBA	TOCA Touring Car 2	Codemasters	PC
TBA	Tonic Trouble	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	GT	PC
TBA	Ultima Ascension	EA	PC
TBA	Unreal Level Editor	GT	PC
TBA	Uprising 2: Lead & Destroy	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	WCW Nitro	THQ	PC
TBA	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	N64
TBA	Micro Machines 64	Codemasters	N64
TBA	Monaco Grand Prix Racing Sim	Ubisoft	N64
TBA	Tonic Trouble	Ubisoft	N64
TBA	Asterix	Infogrames	CGB

March

5th	Populous: The Beginning	EA	PSX
5th	Rollcage	Psygnosis	PSX
5th	South Park	Acclaim	N64

12th	Grand Theft Auto - London Take 2		PSX
12th	Warzone 2100	EIDOS	PSX
12th	Pro 18: World Tour Golf	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	Commandos Data Disc	EIDOS	PC
12th	Half-Life Team Fortress	Cendant	PC
12th	Resident Evil 2	Virgin	PC
12th	Starsiege Tribes	Cendant	PC
12th	Warzone 2100	EIDOS	PC
12th	Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT	N64
12th	FIFA 99	EA	N64
12th	Bugs Bunny Crazy Castles 3	Nintendo	CGB
12th	Duke Nukem	GT	CGB
12th	Shadowgate	Viacom	CGB
12th	Three Lions	Take 2	CGB

19th	Elder Scrolls: Red Guard	Bethesda	PC
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26th	Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	EIDOS	PSX
26th	Need For Speed 4	EA	PSX
26th	Tai Fu	Activision	PSX
26th	Triple Play 2000	EA	PSX
26th	Homeworld	Cendant	PC
26th	Revenant	EIDOS	PC
26th	Need For Speed 64	EA	N64
26th	Pocket Tales Conker	Rare	CGB
26th	V-Rally	Infogrames	CGB

TBA	Alien Resurrection	EA/Fox	PSX
TBA	Driver	TBA	PSX
TBA	Quake II	Activision	PSX
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	PSX
TBA	Ridge Racer R4	Namco	PSX
TBA	Unification	Telstar	PSX
TBA	Actua Golf 2 Premier Collection	Gremlin	PC
TBA	Actua Soccer 2 Premier Collection	Gremlin	PC
TBA	Age of Empires 2: Age of Kings	Microsoft	PC
TBA	Championship Manager '97/'98 Premier	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Close Combat 3	Microsoft	PC
TBA	Daikatana	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Deathtrap Dungeon Premier	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	PC
TBA	Fighting Force Premier	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Flight Unlimited 2		
TBA	Premier Collection	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Flyers	Take 2	PC
TBA	Heroes of Might & Magic III	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Interstate '82	Activision	PC
TBA	Jack Nicklaus: Golden Bear Challenge	Accolade	PC
TBA	Jimmy White 2 - Cue Ball	Infogrames	PC
TBA	Joe Blow	Telstar	PC

RELEASE SCHEDULE IN ASSOCIATION WITH HMV



Most Wanted | This month's look at the games you're looking forward to is brought to you by the letter "S"



Smash Brothers

Nintendo, N64
"The prospect of Link smacking up Mario or Yoshi punching Pikachu worried me at first, but this Nintendo-themed beat-'em-up looks lovelier by the minute. I've always dreamed of tearing Mario's moustache right off his smug little face."
Dan Nichols, March



Silent Hill

Konami, PlayStation
"I want this Resident Evil-alike to frighten the pants off my portable TV. With a search-for-your-daughter plot that's just asking for trouble and spine-tingling moments worse than a cold key down the back, this is going to be terrifying."
Chris Earnes, via e-mail



Soulbringer

Gremlin, PC
"It's a long way off, but this 3D RPG promises a great story and detailed environment that I hope could better Zelda. I want plenty of people to meet, lots of polygons to gawp at, and a guarantee that I'll get so involved I'll forget to go to the pub."
Becky Rhodes, SE London

TBA	MechWarrior 3	Microprose	PC
TBA	ODT	Psygnosis	PC
TBA	Prey	GT	PC
TBA	Prince of Persia 3D	Brøderbund	PC
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Requiem	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Slave Zero	Accolade	PC
TBA	Solar	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	MicroProse	PC
TBA	Star Wars: Archives	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Ultima Online: Second Age	Origin	PC
TBA	Quake II	Activision	N64
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	N64

April

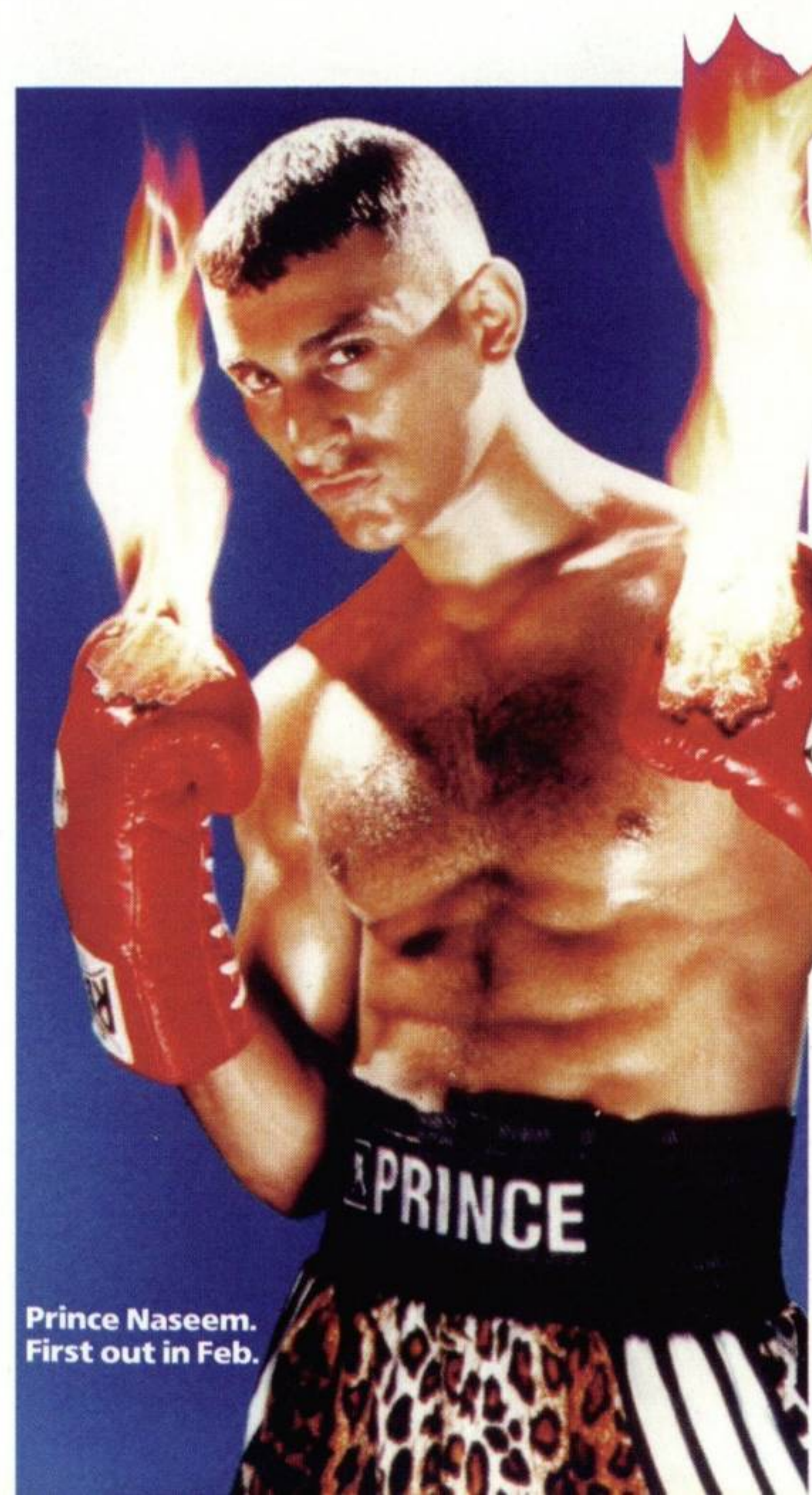
23	Gabriel Knight 3: Blood Of The Sacred	Cendant	PC
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TBA	Prince Naseem	Codemasters	PSX
TBA	X-Files The Game	Fox Interactive	PSX
TBA	X-Men	Activision	PSX
TBA	3Sixty	Cryo	PSX
TBA	3Sixty	Cryo	PC
TBA	Beneath	Activision	PC
TBA	Black & White	EA	PC
TBA	Black Moon Chronicles	Cryo	PC
TBA	D Jump	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Descent 3	Interplay	PC
TBA	Giants	Interplay	PC
TBA	Kanaan	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Legend of the Black Moon	Cryo	PC
TBA	Messiah	Interplay	PC
TBA	Outcast	Infogrames	PC
TBA	3Sixty	Cryo	N64

May

7th	Syphon Filter	Sony	PSX
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TBA	Battlezone 2	Activision	PC
TBA	Republic	Cryo	PC
TBA	Return Fire 2	Ripcord	PC
TBA	Shadowman	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Third World	Activision	PC



Prince Naseem. First out in Feb.

Q&A

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Heard a rumour? Need to know some information? Whatever your desires, Mark Green's here to help.



Q My friend says that Sony developed the CD system for Sega. Is this true or is he talking a load of crap? Also, is it me, or does Konami release a crock of shit over here and then release five-star games in Japan?

Finally, if Sega has a built-in modem in the Dreamcast, will it have to launch its own satellite? These are only a few of the things that my friends have been pestering me about.
Edward Bailey, Andover, Hants

A Oh, blimey. Sony developing Sega's CD system, eh? Well, it's not that far from the truth – Sony was one of the companies that came up with the whole CD-ROM format, so it is indirectly responsible for the Compact Disc drive that's used in every CD-based console and computer. But Sony actively helping out Sega would be like the BBC making programmes for Channel 5. It ain't ever gonna happen, my friend.

A As for Konami, well, I can see your point. Think of all the money that Konami must make by refusing to sell its most profitable Japanese games to the UK public. I'm being sarcastic, you see. You're probably confused by the fact that games released in Japan take time to get to Europe. They do arrive eventually – as *Metal Gear Solid's* imminent UK release demonstrates – so be patient. Anyway, you've gone and forgotten *International Superstar Soccer*, Konami's not-shit-at-all footy title.

A In answer to your third question, Sega has already released its own satellite, designed to pinpoint all the PlayStation and N64 owners on the planet and fry them with a special laser. Oh, am I being sarcastic again? We won't be seeing the launch of "Sputnik Sega" just yet, as the Dreamcast's modem works using phone lines. Oh, and you wrote "Saturn" instead of "Dreamcast" in your letter. You really must try harder.

Whatever Happened To...? Superstars of gaming's past tracked down

Geoff Crammond

Claim to fame: Geoff is one of those rare '80s game designers who came up with some great stuff. After producing *Aviator*, an unremarkable Spitfire simulator (which rather stretched the definition of "simulator" to its limits, by giving you the chance to shoot down aliens), he achieved immortality with *Revs*, a Formula 3 simulator for the BBC Micro that supplied realistic racing for the first time on home computers.

After a short diversion in 1986 to produce classic eerie puzzler *The Sentinel* on the Commodore 64 (which evolved from an abandoned tank simulator), Geoff concentrated on chucking out classic racer after



The Sentinel: Looking good.



classic racer. *Stunt Car Racer* on the Amiga featured a near-indestructible car clattering along roller coaster-style tracks at 200mph, and is renowned both for its two-player link-up mode and for making the player feel slightly sick. Then came too-good-to-be-true Amiga and PC title *Formula 1 Grand Prix* 1 and its sequel. And then... silence...

So where is he? Happily, still sitting in front of a monitor and tapping away at a keyboard. Most recently, he gave the nod to No Name Games, who produced *Sentinel Returns*, a rather

spiffing PC and PlayStation update of *The Sentinel* original.

As for his own creations, Geoff's working on *Grand Prix 3* for the PC, set to be published by Microprose and packing in a lot of the features that Geoff hoped to include in the prequel but didn't have time for. Expect 3D support, adverse weather conditions, and the option to play with up to 21 other F1 fans over a network.

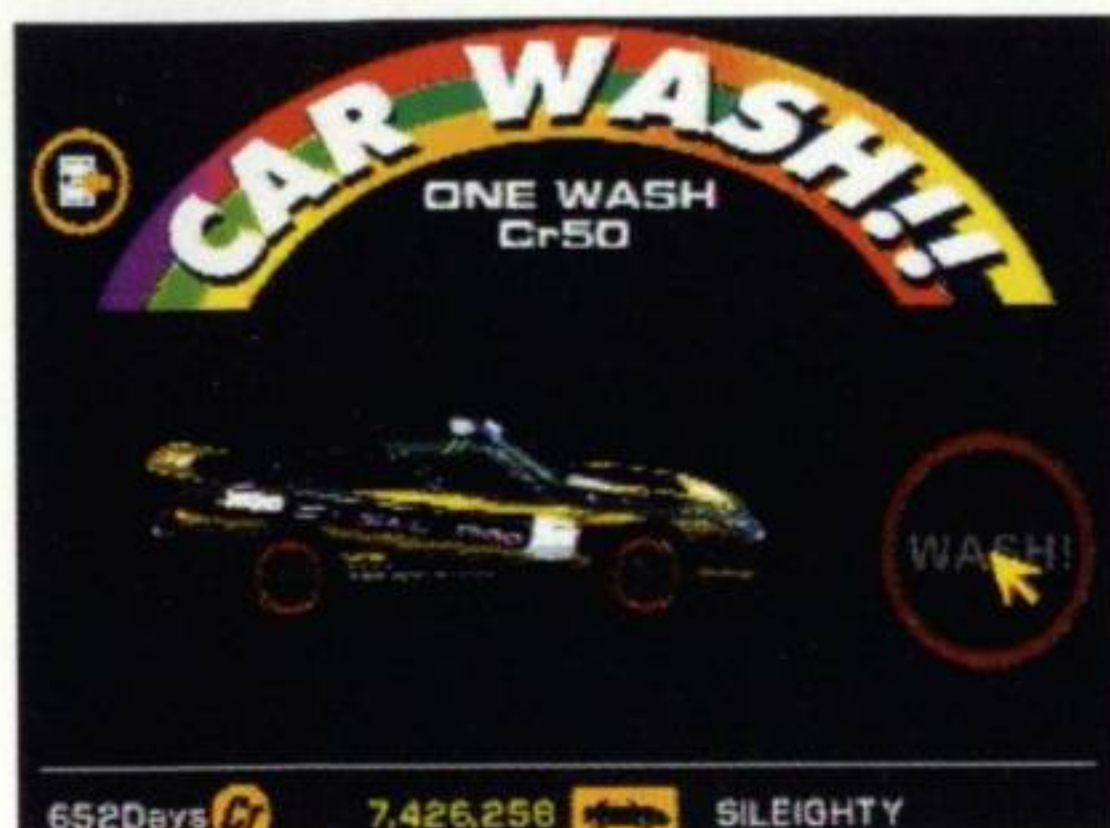
And for *Stunt Car Racer* fans, there are rumours that a sequel *could* be in the offing. Be still our beating hearts.



THE TOP 50 MOST **BIZARRE** GAMING MOMENTS

WORDS BY JONATHAN DAVIES

When it comes to making games, there are rules. Princesses must be rescued, baddies killed with guns and combatants raised on the streets of either Detroit or Chicago. But some developers don't seem to realise this – particularly those that come from a certain game-obsessed Oriental nation.



PLAYSTATION

50. Wash going on?

■ Publisher: SCEE

■ *Gran Turismo* gives you the chance to drive Aston Martins and TVRs, to perform powerslides and handbrake turns... and to wash your car at a cost of 50 credits.



PC

49. Completely potty

■ Publisher: Gremlin Interactive

■ You've got to discard everything you ever learnt about potting balls while playing on the diagonal table in *Pool Shark*. Pick up your cue and enter a strange, alternative universe where geometry teachers reign supreme.



PC

48. Wet and weird

■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive

■ Second weirdest weapon in a game? That'll be the water arrows in *Thief: The Dark Project*. Presumably you have to hope the baddies either rust away or dissolve – if they don't die laughing first.

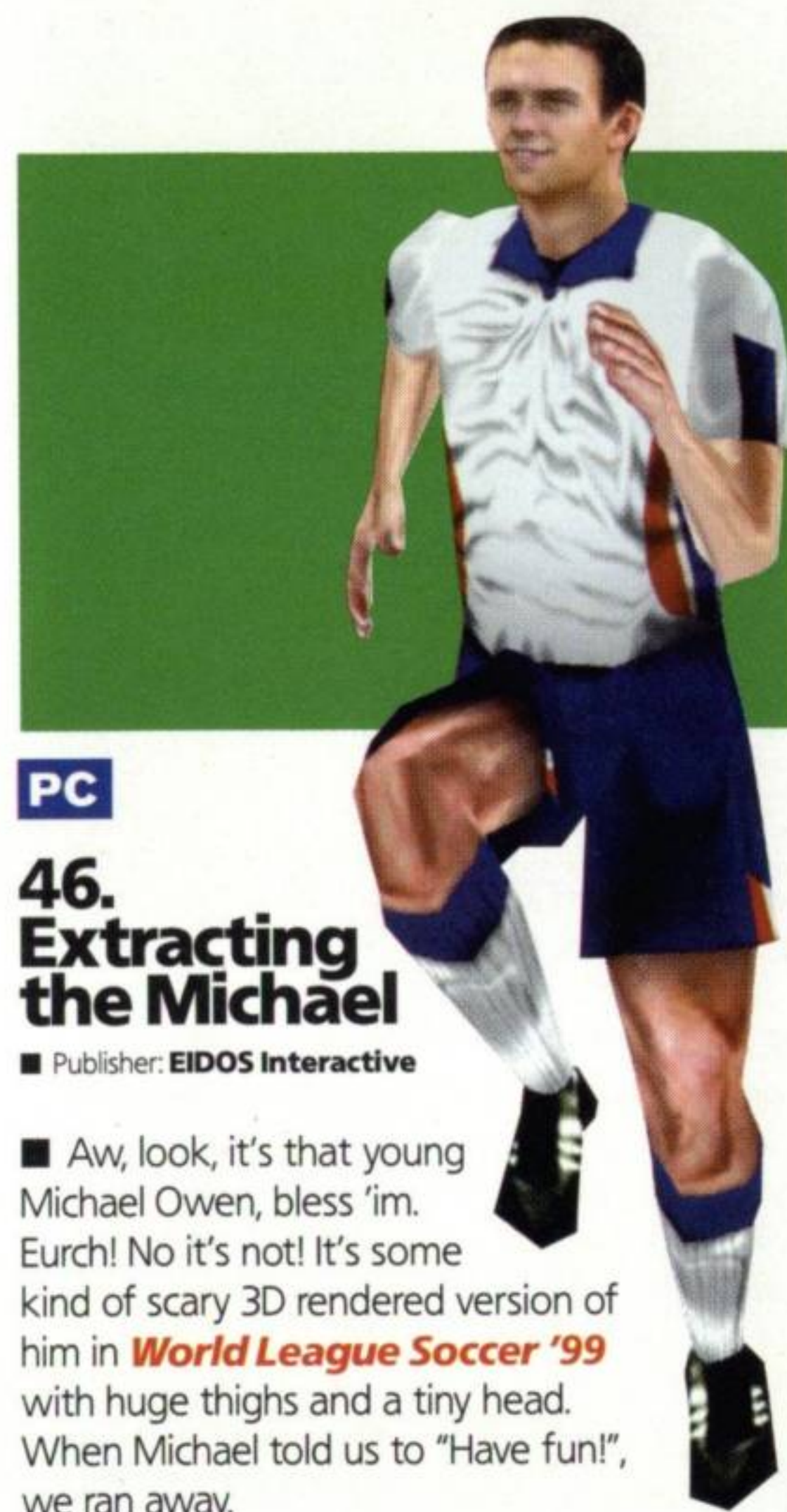


PC

47. Boing!

■ Publisher: SCI

■ Weirdest weapon in a game, then? Surely the spring attack in *Carmageddon 2*. The enormous spring launches itself with tremendous force when in close proximity to a rival car or a pedestrian. The pedestrian comes off worse. Messy.



PC

46. Extracting the Michael

■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive

■ Aw, look, it's that young Michael Owen, bless 'im. Eurch! No it's not! It's some kind of scary 3D rendered version of him in *World League Soccer '99* with huge thighs and a tiny head. When Michael told us to "Have fun!", we ran away.



PC

45. Basket case

■ Publisher: GT Interactive

■ Even the toughest nail gun-wielders need time to relax at the end of a hard day's fragging. It is, nonetheless, curious to witness those muscley marines slam-dunking in *Quake II: Basketball*



PLAYSTATION

44. Isn't it?

■ Publisher: Microids

■ They might have taken temporary leave of their games-designing skills, but at least they are honest about it. We therefore salute Microids, the developers of *Iznogoud*.



NINTENDO 64

43. 2D-stressing

■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ We don't like the cardboard spectators in *Waialae Country Golf*. No matter which direction we look at them from – even if we try to catch them by surprise – they turn and stare at us.

“Even the toughest nail gun-wielders need time to relax at the end of a hard day's fragging.”



NINTENDO 64

42. Caught napping

■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ If you leave the controls of *Super Mario 64* alone for long enough, Mario sits down. Then he lies down. And then he starts talking in his sleep: "Ahh, ravioli... spaghetti..." This isn't normal behaviour.

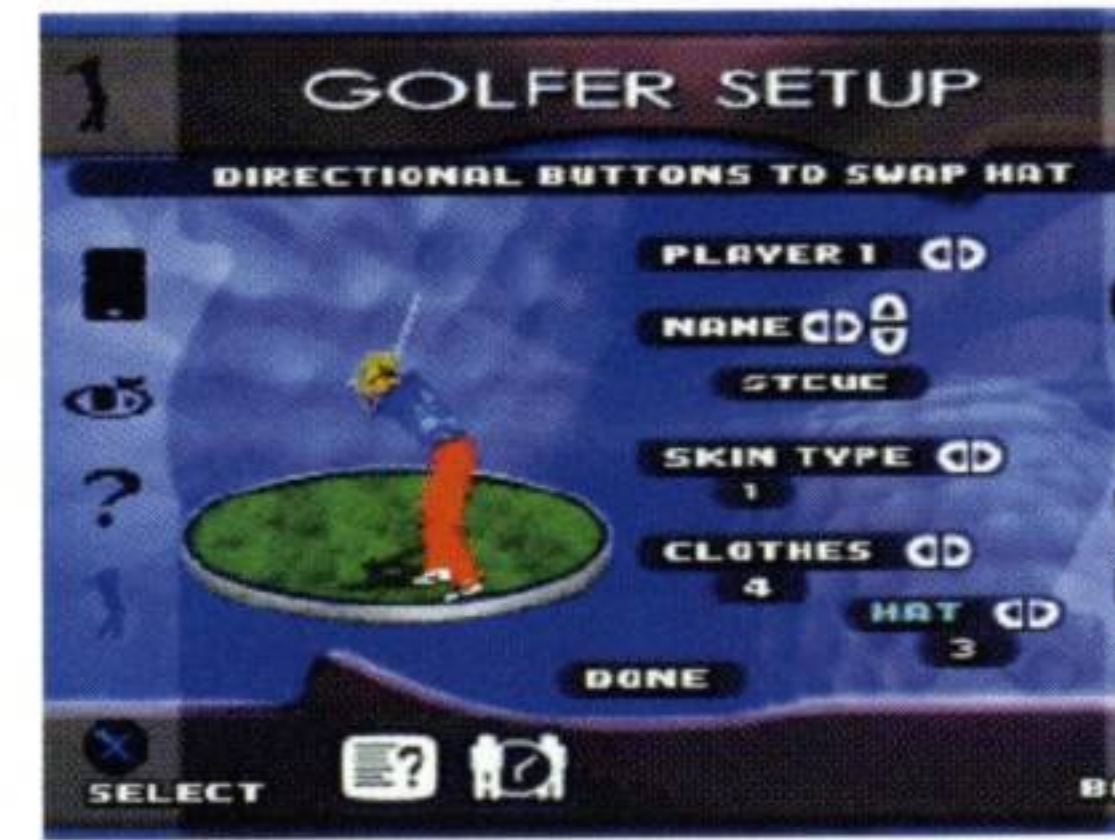


NINTENDO 64

41. Sense of proportion

■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ Run towards the picture that leads to Tiny-Huge World in *Super Mario 64* and it appears to get further away. Or is it getting bigger? Or is Mario shrinking? Aarghh!



PLAYSTATION

40. Wrong in the headwear

■ Publisher: Gremlin Interactive

■ Being able to customise your character's hat would be an unusual feature of any game, let alone *Actua Golf 2*. But this feature is made all the more curious by its use of a range of similarly hideous options.



NINTENDO 64

39. Wild at heart

■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ Peer closely at this ghost from *Super Mario 64* and you'll discover its innards are actually an entire miniature level.





PC

38. Stark staring bonkers

■ Publisher: Take 2

■ Look behind you. If you can see three men in balaclavas staring intently at you, their faces six inches from yours, you've just been spooked by *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*



PLAYSTATION

37. Panacea

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts

■ As you begin a game of *PO'ed* it's a case of out with the frying pan and into the line of fire (sorry). It might not look much, but pressing \otimes executes a pan-punishing Shrove Tuesday-style move.

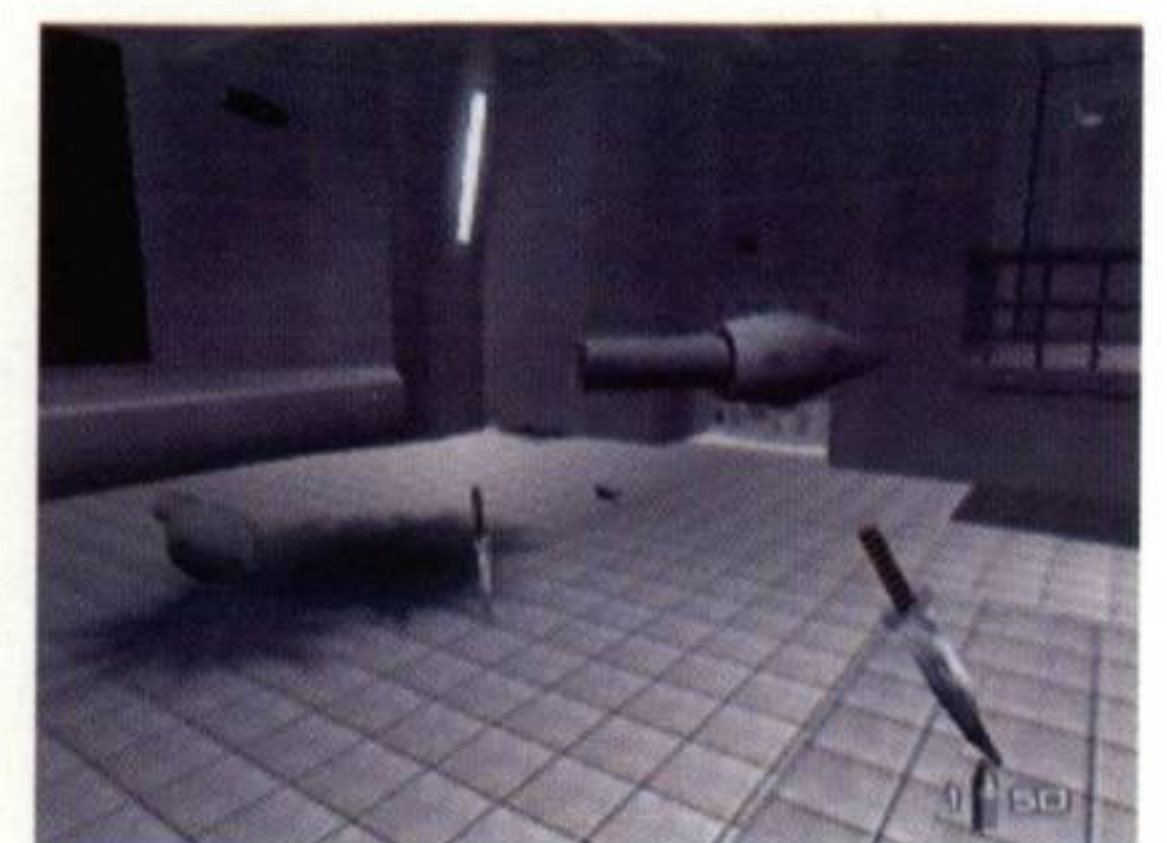


PC

36. Cue to leave

■ Publisher: Virgin

■ This can't be right. Challenge the computer to a frame of *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball* and you'll find yourself chalking up opposite a pair of floating, disembodied hands.



NINTENDO 64

35. Now you see it

■ Publisher: Nintendo/Rare

■ Shoot that monitor hanging from the ceiling in *GoldenEye 007* and it explodes and disappears. Which makes sense. Why, then, is the proximity mine you stuck to it beforehand now hovering unsupported in the air?

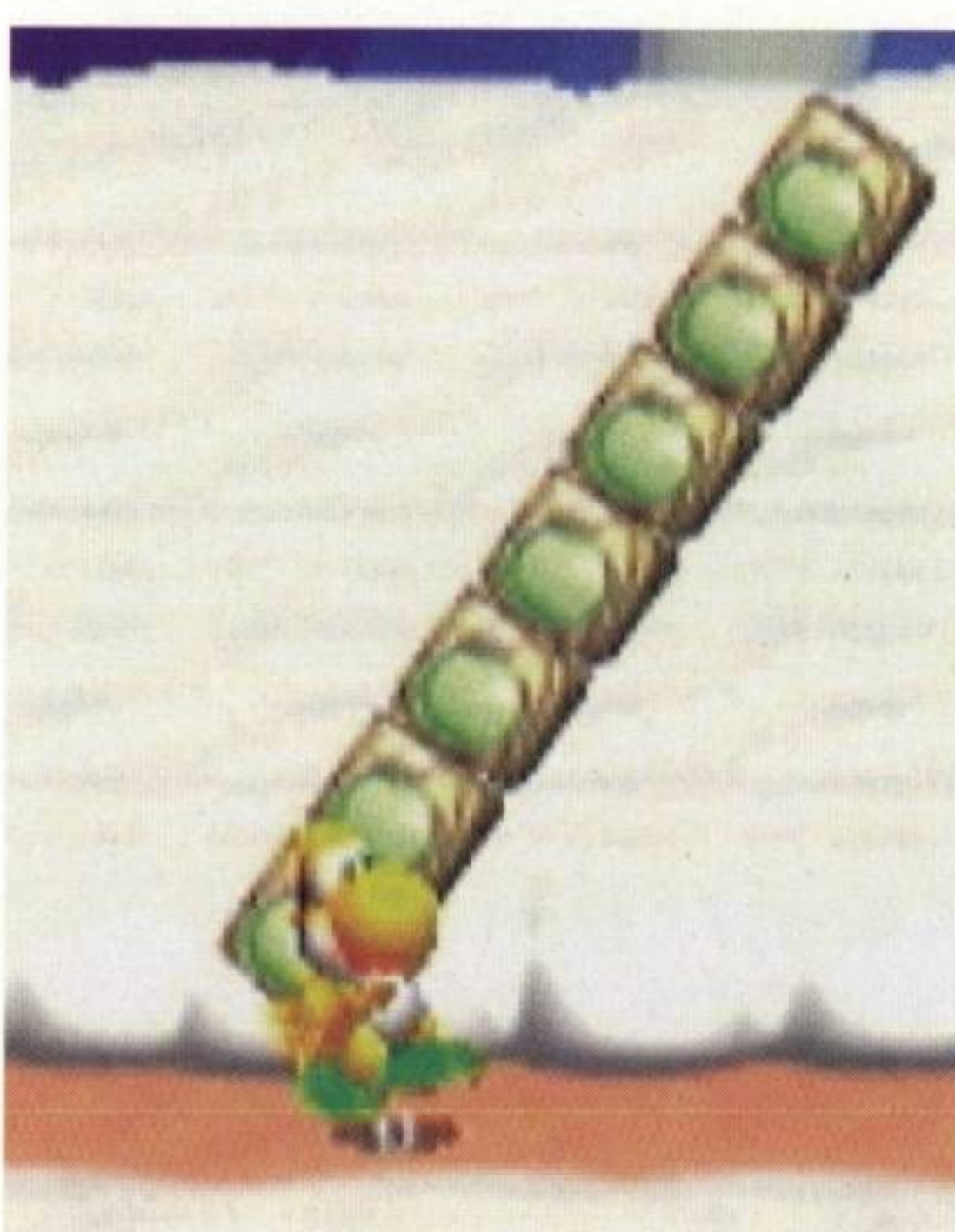


PC

31. Diseased minds

■ Publisher: Ubisoft

■ Giving a racing game a plot of any description is bound to raise an eyebrow or two. But that of *POD* involves a virus that's slowly consuming the world. The cure, apparently, involves racing against other cars through the streets, or something. *POD* is French. That explains it, then.

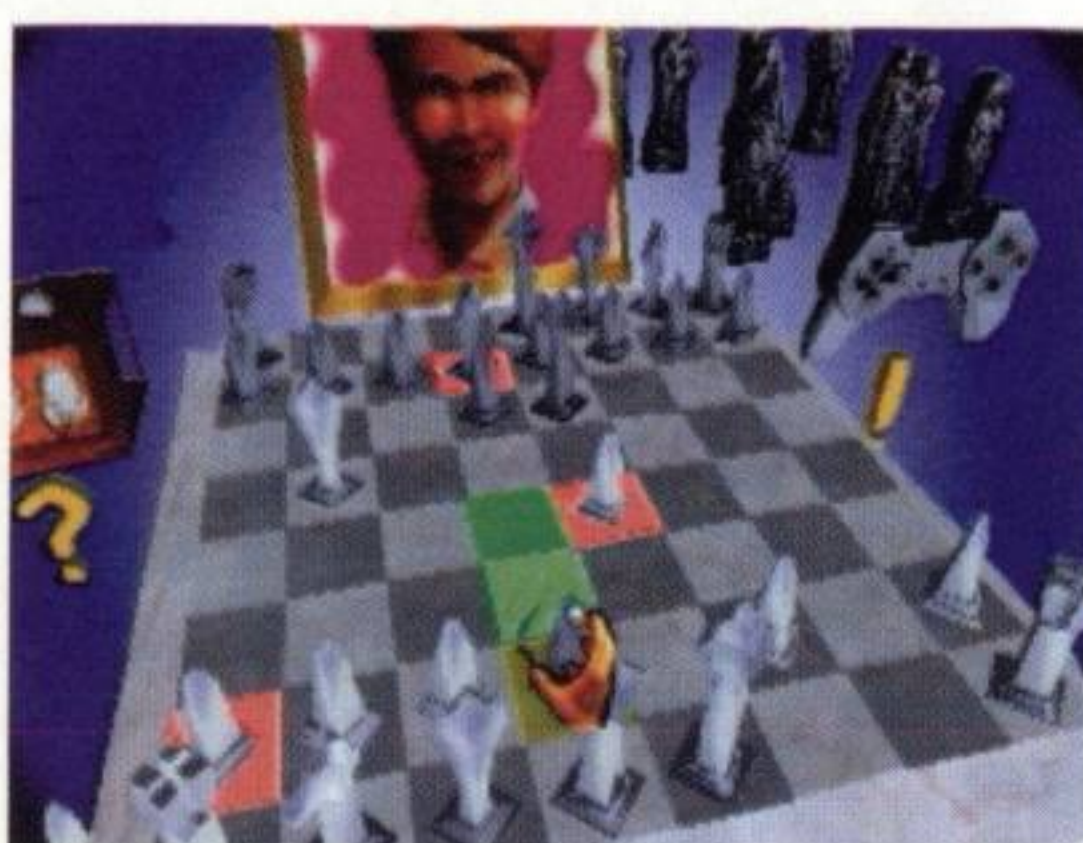


NINTENDO 64

30. Unbalanced

■ Publisher: Nintendo

■ As well as the cutest tunes since the Jackson Five, *Yoshi's Story* boasts more than its fair share of bizarre moments (two in our Top 50, in fact). Here we see a yellow Yoshi shuffling backwards and forwards, struggling to balance a teetering pile of melon crates.

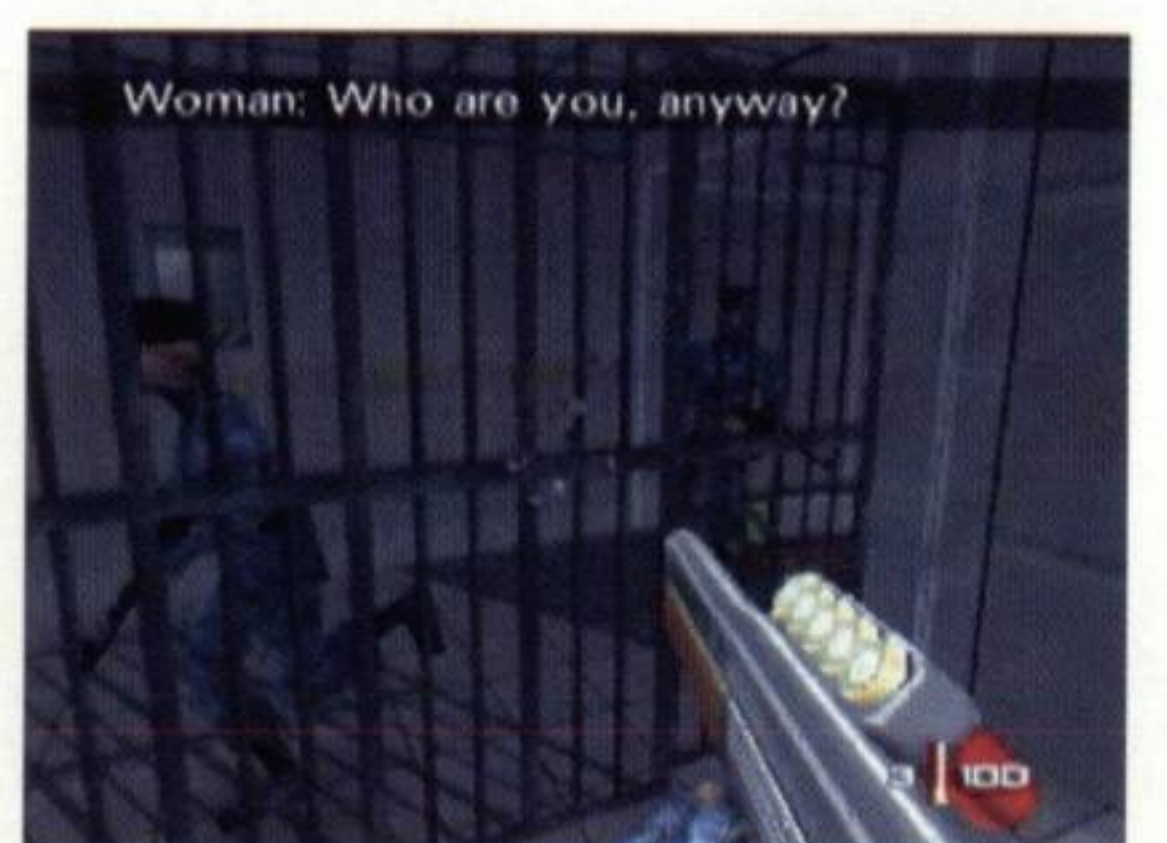


PLAYSTATION

29. Pawn again

■ Publisher: Mindscape

■ The PlayStation is loved by a broad cross-section of society, from zombie-slayers to Spice Girls fans. But men with beards? Mindscape evidently thought so when it inexplicably devoted hundreds of man-hours to creating *Chess Master 2000*



NINTENDO 64

28. Bar-my

■ Publisher: Nintendo/Rare

■ Are they using unusually large-calibre bullets? Or magnetised ones, maybe? Are they suffering a strange astigmatic vision disorder? No? Why, then, are the guards in *GoldenEye 007* unable to shoot through the bars of your cell, while you can?

“You're more likely to find yourself training your sights on a teddy bear, a piranha or a single leaf.”



PLAYSTATION

24. Mad cows

■ Publisher: Interplay

■ Your score – that's what you expect to see at the end of a level. Or a map of the current world. Or the number of pieces you've collected of the key to Princess Breasts' castle. Not the herd of bouncing Friesians that punctuates *Earthworm Jim 2*.



PLAYSTATION

23. Off its rocker

■ Publisher: SCEE

■ Roll your car in *Rally Cross* and what has until now been a perfectly rational game will suddenly turn kooky on you. You'll be asked to rock your stricken vehicle back on to its wheels using gentle, rhythmic movements of the joystick. Authentic, perhaps, but no less odd.

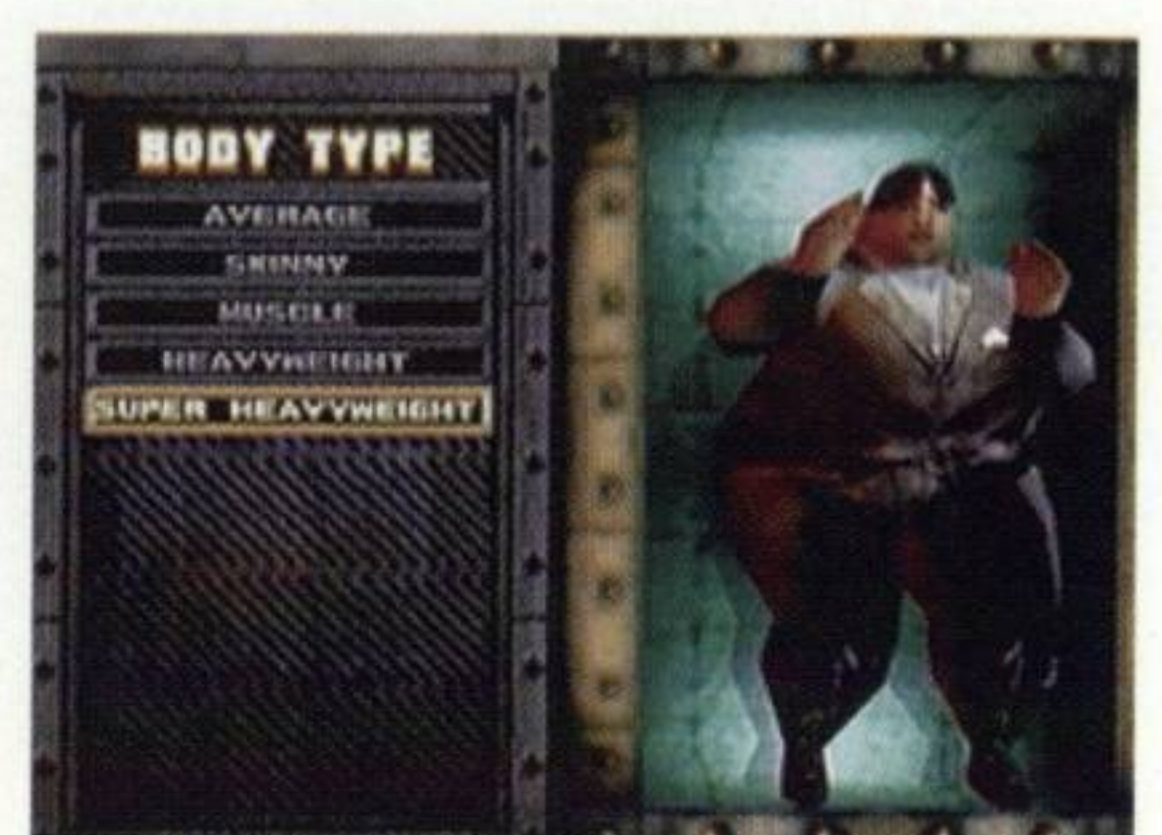


PLAYSTATION

22. Shooting fish

■ Publisher: SCEE

■ *Point Blank* is both the ultimate party game and the oddest use for a light gun. As in *Time Crisis*, you'll be asked to pick off terrorists and ninjas. But you're more likely to find yourself training your sights on a teddy bear, a piranha or a single leaf falling from a tree.



NINTENDO 64

21. Hold on

■ Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment

■ If you happen to weigh 35 stone and have greasy hair and a multicoloured Spandex leotard, please accept our apologies. It's just that we find some of the results of the "Create your own wrestler" mode in *WWF Warzone* deeply disturbing.

THE TOP 50 MOST BIZARRE GAMING MOMENTS



PLAYSTATION

34. Foul eggs

■ Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment

■ When it comes to arranging coloured beans into patterns, karate experts and blue-and-pink dragons rarely enter the picture. Except, that is, in *Bust-A-Move 3*, where they're among the more likely characters on offer.



PC

33. Madness indeed

■ Publisher: Microsoft

■ Most people are used to having the odd leaf land on their cars and (if they're particularly unlucky) a bird dropping. But an entire Monster Truck, V8 revving and wheels spinning? It's just one of the many hazards facing players of *Monster Truck Madness*.



PLAYSTATION

32. Cereal killers

■ Publisher: Codemasters

■ Fallen trees, crashed cars and men in bobble hats – that's what's meant to litter race tracks. Not snooker balls, playing cards or packets of Weetabix. *Micro Machines V3* is full of these and other similarly bizarre obstacles.



PLAYSTATION

27. Strike as odd

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts

■ Knock down enough skittles, or pins, or whatever you call them in *Ten Pin Alley* and the misshapen women beside the alley get up and dance, using all the frames of animation they can muster (not many). It's neither a pretty sight nor a markedly sensible one.



NINTENDO 64

26. Flaming heck

■ Publisher: GT Interactive

■ Were you to draw up a list of all the things that might happen if you put a puck into the back of an ice hockey net, placing them in order of likelihood, "The net bursts into flames" would be well down near the bottom. Yet this is precisely what occasionally happens in *Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey*.



PLAYSTATION PC

20. Aeris-trange

■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive, SCEE

■ The whole of *Final Fantasy VII* is just plain perverse, from the characters with names such as Cid Highwind and Aeris Gainsborough, to turning baddies into frogs and Chocobo racing. *Final Fantasy VII*, coincidentally, was created in Japan.



PLAYSTATION

19. Bots the matter

■ Publisher: THQ

■ *Rise of the Robots* may have scored only 4%, but at least it included some vaguely menacing-looking robots. These ones in *Robopit*, however, look more like the domestic Hoovering and cooking robots from a '50s Home of the Future.



PC

25. Short of a load

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts

■ How hard can it be for a harvester to drop off its load at a refinery? Jolly hard indeed if the specimens in *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* are anything to go by. They seem to spend half their time driving round in circles.



NINTENDO 64

18. Woolly thinking

■ Publisher: Take 2

■ Just what kind of start is this to a game? Dog meets sheep, they fall in love, dog gets flattened by runaway spacecraft. We don't know what they're putting in the whisky up at DMA, but *Spacestation: Silicon Valley* makes no sense at all from beginning to end.

THE TOP 50 MOST BIZARRE GAMING MOMENTS



PC

17. Wacka wacky

■ Publisher: **GT Interactive**

■ The weirdest ideas are often the best, as '70s throwback *Interstate 76* proves. Its cast of big-haired, big-trousered, big-collared vigilantes is among the most unlikely ever assembled, particularly blaxploitation victim Taurus (played by James W Styles), with his '66 Jefferson Sovereign.

Select Yoshi



NINTENDO 64

10. A bit too keen

■ Publisher: **Nintendo**

■ Losing a Yoshi in *Yoshi's Story* is one of the most painful moments in video gaming (see last month's "Top 50 Most Painful Moments In Video Gaming" for proof). So how come, after you've watched your Cretaceous chum's limp form being carried off into the clouds, the next screen shows his friends cheerily hopping up and down, just begging to be picked next?



PLAYSTATION

7. Tummy trouble

■ Publisher: **SCEE**

■ *PaRappa the Rapper* is full of singular moments, as befits its Japanese origin. Indeed, it's perhaps the first game to consist of nothing but bizarre moments. But, even after you've learned to cook, taken driving lessons and brushed up your martial arts, it still comes as something of a surprise to find yourself rapping your way to the toilet clutching an upset stomach.



PC

16. Arm scared

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts**

■ You don't know the meaning of the word 'unnerving' till you've seen Annie's arm floating around the screen in *Trespasser*. It seems that someone suggested this particular control system as a joke and went away on holiday. By the time they got back, the cellophane was already on the boxes.



PLAYSTATION

9. Spots before one's eyes

■ Publisher: **JVC**

■ Another case, here, of a game being bizarre from the moment you hit the power button till the moment you walk off shaking your head in disbelief. It's *Mr Domino*, a game that involves constructing lines of dominoes... then knocking the first and watching them all topple over. Here we see a domino floating down on a parachute before nudging the next in line. *Mr Domino* comes from – yes, you guessed it – Japan.

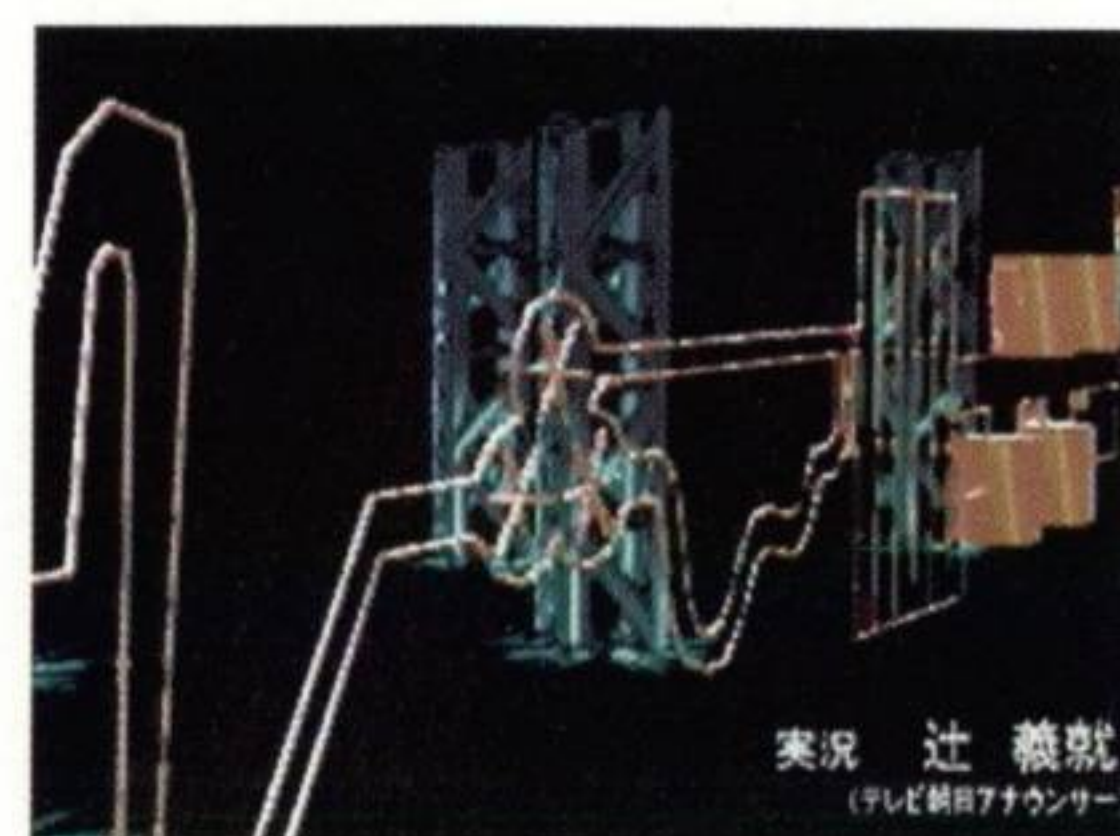


NINTENDO 64

6. Lost bearings

■ Publisher: **Hewia**

■ If you've ever been to Tokyo, and walked down one of its *Blade Runner*-style streets, you'll likely have passed a shop filled with orderly rows of identical machines. Before each one will have been sat a hypnotised salaryman, rhythmically feeding ball-bearings into a hole at the top. For fun. These guys are playing *Pachinko*, a game there's no earthly reason you'd ever wish to play on your Nintendo 64. So let us present *Pachinko World*.



NINTENDO 64

15. Loose wire

■ Publisher: **Hudson**

■ They might have whole arcade machines following the same principle in Japan, but that's still no excuse. *Denryu Iraitabou* is a 64-bit, lovingly programmed rendition of those things they show you how to make in the *Blue Peter* annual, involving a bent wire coat hanger, a bit of wire, a battery and a buzzer.



NINTENDO 64

8. Non-friction

■ Publisher: **Atlus**

■ Whizzing along in *Snowboard Kids*, many thoughts cross one's mind. Would a snowboard really slide over water? You'd have to be going pretty fast. What about this stretch of grass? Maybe it's been raining and it is a pretty steep hill. Rock, though? Well... perhaps it's been worn smooth by generations of big-nosed boarders. But – hang on – a rickety wooden bridge? Such doubts are shortly dispelled by a smack over the head with a frying pan.

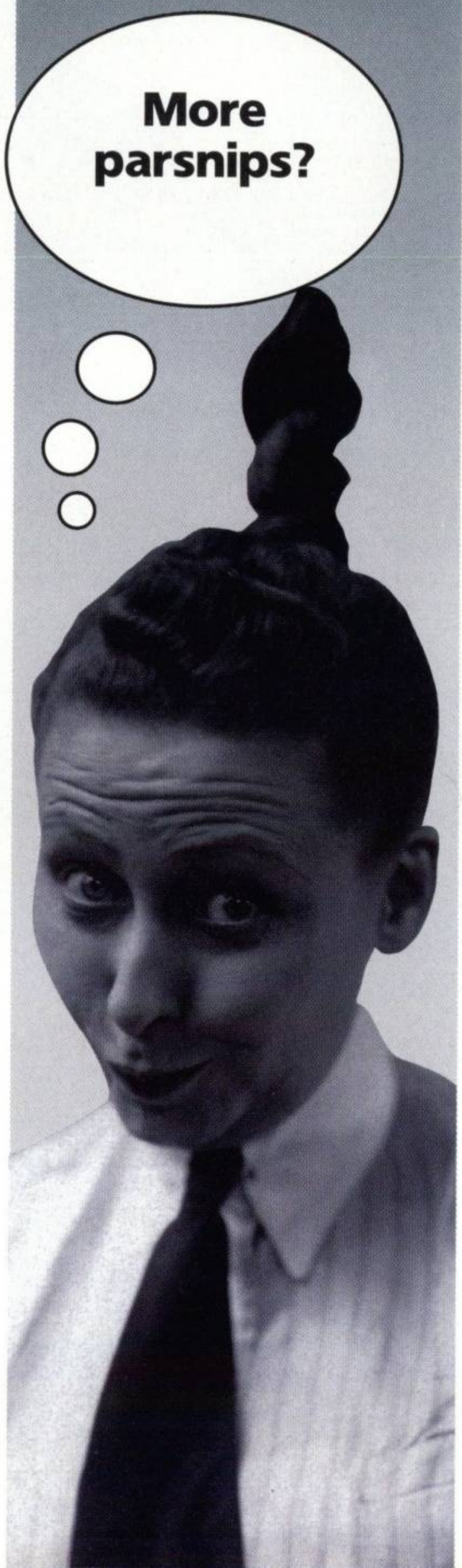


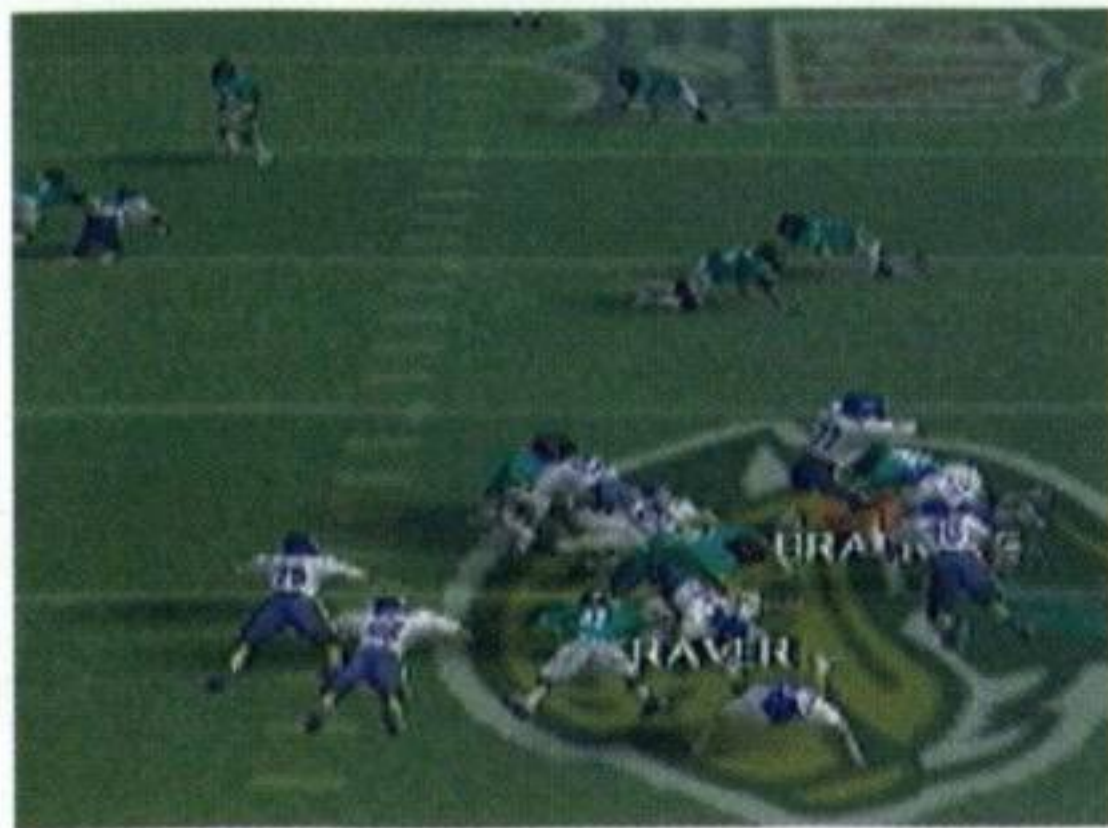
NINTENDO 64

5. Deja vu

■ Publisher: **Nintendo**

■ Remember that bit in *The Avengers* where Uma Thurman is trapped in the house, and whenever she goes through a door she finds herself back in the room she just left? Or had you finally succeeded in knocking yourself unconscious on the seat in front? It was bizarre, anyway. And it resembled the way, in *Pilotwings 64*, if you fly far enough out to sea in a straight line, you eventually sight land on the horizon. An undiscovered continent? No. Striding excitedly ashore, flag in hand, you discover it's the island you've just left.





NINTENDO 64

14. Crawl my bluff

■ Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment

■ **NFL Quarterback Club 98?** What's that doing here? It's a contender for The Top 50 Most Serious Sporting Moments, perhaps? Or The Top 50 Moments Most Likely To Induce Drowsiness In One To Whom American Football Means Nothing? But bizarre? But yes. Enter the "Crawl on all fours" cheat and all the players, er, crawl on all fours.



PLAYSTATION

13. Something fishy

■ Publisher: SCEE

■ In **Fluid** you control not a spaceship, nor a car, nor a furry animal with an alliterative name, but a dolphin. You collect not gold coins, nor fruit, nor even fish, but musical notes. And you're striving to assemble not a magical amulet, nor the key to a castle, nor a map, but a drum and bass track. The Japanese: truly they are the French of the Far East.



NINTENDO 64

12. Unlikely friend

■ Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment

■ You're a small, bare-chested man. You've spent all day slaying dinosaurs. You come across the most gigantic dinosaur ever. Does it (a) run away, (b) eat you, or (c) cheerfully let you ride on its back? If you answered (a) or (b) you're clearly of sound mind, but wrong. Pick answer (c) and you're either being deliberately perverse or you've played **Turok 2**.



PLAYSTATION

11. Niff said

■ Publisher: Time Warner Interactive

■ Some scientists believe that dinosaurs were killed off by a build-up of dust in the atmosphere following a meteor impact. As this particularly odd move from **Primal Rage** demonstrates, they're almost right. It wasn't a build-up of dust, exactly, but something rather pongier. And the dinosaurs had only themselves to blame for their demise.



PC

4. I'll be blowed

■ Publisher: LucasArts

■ "Twist me up one of them, eh fella?" Yeah, yeah, yeah. Twist this, right? "Bet you can't do a cat." Shows what you know, buddy. I can do anything. I got your mammals, I got your reptiles. I can do birds, amphibians, famous poets. Go ahead - name one. "Okay. A cat." Pfft. No problem. **Grim Fandango** is, and will probably remain, the only game to include a balloon artist.



NINTENDO 64

3. Road to nowhere

■ Publisher: ASCII

■ Be grateful that the London Underground isn't run by Japanese developer ASCII. Otherwise, it might work more like **Aerogauge**. There, as you zoom along at breakneck speed in your hover car, you see the track being hastily constructed just a few dozen yards before your disbelieving eyes. This is, of course, to add an extra element of suspenseful excitement. And not because the programmers are idiots.



PLAYSTATION

2. Off the rails

■ Publisher: Konami

■ In Japan it's not just small boys who want to be train drivers. It's a fantasy lasting well into middle age. By day, grey-haired men in suits accrue billions of yen by devising ever-smaller Mini Disc players and motorcars. They then go home, lock their bedroom doors, get out their collections of Shinkansen photographs and make chuffing noises. Hence **Densha Da Go**. One button makes it go! Another makes it stop! Could life get any more exciting?



THE MOST BIZARRE GAMING MOMENT

■ Prepare for take off. Hit the lip fast enough and you'll find out what it's like being a cloud.

"You'll suddenly be catapulted thousands of feet into the air."

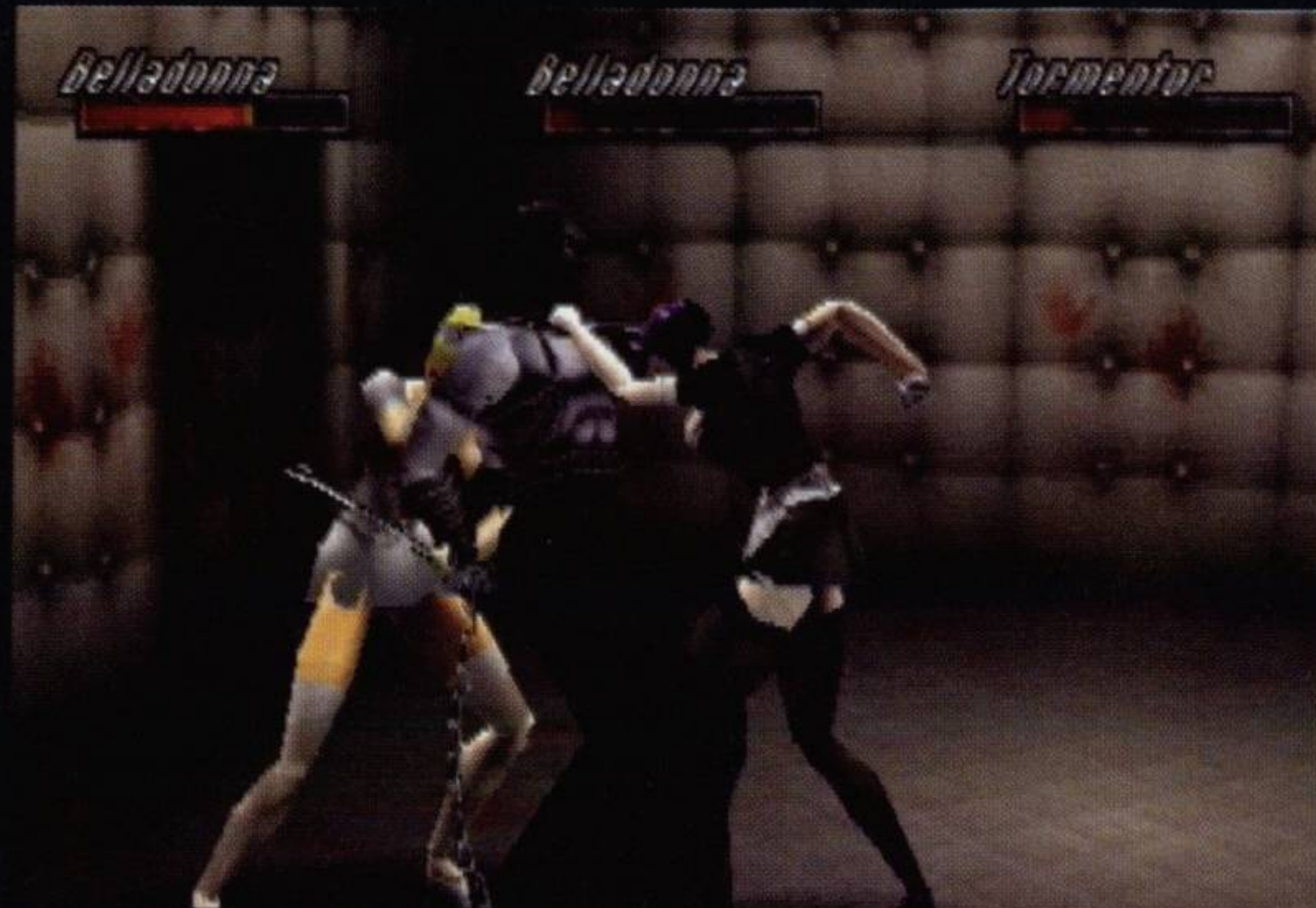


PC

1. Flying tonight

■ Publisher: Microsoft

■ Much of what goes on at Microsoft is bizarre. What possible use can be served, for example, by **Microsoft Word** automatically highlighting the whole of 'labrador' when you're only trying to change the 'rador' bit to 'oratory'? But the wackiest Bill Gates moment occurs in **Motocross Madness**. Get your bike over the 'lip' that surrounds the playing area (possible with a lengthy run-up), keep on riding and you'll suddenly be catapulted thousands of feet into the air. Bike and rider will separate, and the two will spend about 30 seconds falling back to Earth, with just the sound of rushing wind for company.



CENSORED!

STORY BY DAVE ROBERTS

THE GAME SCENES THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU SEE





■ The videogame censors wouldn't let you see any of *Thrill Kill*, shown on the left.



BRACE YOURSELF. TAKE A DEEP BREATH. PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER SIT DOWN. WE'VE GOT SOME NEWS: FIRST, CENSORS ARE RUTHLESSLY EDITING YOUR GAMES. SECOND, WE'RE GOING TO SHOW YOU WHAT THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO SEE...



A wild orgasmic scream fills the air as a dominatrix in full S&M garb wraps her legs around a trussed up victim. She reaches a spectacular and demonstrative sexual climax at the very moment she takes his life with a phallic-looking cattle prod. Don't ask where she sticks it.

That's just one game scene that won't be appearing on a screen or monitor near you in the foreseeable future. Production on *Thrill Kill*, the game in which it features, has been halted indefinitely, probably permanently, by Electronic Arts, the world's largest publisher of computer and videogames.

Thrill Kill (which also features a charming character called Cleetus, a retarded, in-bred cannibal who uses a severed human leg as a weapon) was one of a number of titles picked up by EA when it bought Virgin Interactive US from media corporation Viacom back in August '98. EA has subsequently taken the view, however, that the game – previously known as *Slaughter and Mayhem* – “does not meet our standards for subject matter and appropriate content”. The firm has also refused to sell *Thrill Kill* on to any other publisher that might be willing to release it. A company spokesman explained: “We don't feel the game content is appropriate for the market, regardless of who publishes it.”

In other words EA has taken the decision to

“protect” you from the evils of *Thrill Kill*, deciding unilaterally that the product is not only unsuitable for its own conservative oeuvre, but for the gaming public *en masse*. As a development director at one publisher that would have been keen to handle *Thrill Kill* commented: “Who died and made those guys the moral guardians of the universe?”

It's a good question.

The spiking of *Thrill Kill* is just one high profile example of a process of censorship that occurs as widely in gaming as in any other entertainment medium, maybe more so. Certainly the output of mainstream games publishers is far tamer than that of the major record labels or film studios. There's no real “adult” games market. There's rarely any sex in a videogame. But why not? It's not because gamers don't want it. And it's not because no one in the creative departments of the games makers wants to include this kind of adult content – you know they do. So why is it being held back?

It's because of censorship.

Censorship works its way into the game development process at many levels. Usually it is self-imposed. Occasionally it is legislative. Often the corporate policies of the main format holders (Sony, Nintendo and Sega) have a part to play, applied via strict

“Games may hint at danger, but really it's just Mickey Mouse in a leather jacket.”



licensing agreements (see "Big brother's watching you" on page 83). Sometimes cuts are made because of a sense of moral responsibility, sometimes because of commercial realism.

A great many important decisions are made at a game's inception and a number of factors count against the inclusion of strong sexual or violent content. Historically, there's the fact that a large percentage of any console's ownership was, until recently, always likely to be under 18 years of age. When machines such as Sega's Mega Drive and Nintendo's SNES ruled the roost (from 1991-1995) the average age of gamers was only around 14. Little point, then, in producing a game which would have an 18 certificate slapped on it. Now, however, with the PC established as a state-of-the-art games platform (average user age: 29), and Sony's PlayStation attracting literally tens of millions of punters in their 20s and 30s all around the world, a substantial adult market clearly exists.

Publishers must also consider the policy of major retailers such as Woolworth's, Dixons and WH Smith, all of which have previously refused to stock products they have deemed controversial. Many outlets have kitted themselves out with a new Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) device that alerts their sales staff to the age classification of a product as it's being purchased, helping them to enforce the guidelines more rigorously. But, again, the balance of power is changing, and the majority of games are sold through specialist chains such as Electronics Boutique, Game and Virgin, all of whom will stock any and all legal titles.

Yet, still, the vast majority of software houses aim the bulk of their products, not specifically at kiddies, but at "everyone" – and

■ Little Richard toned down his pop act to reach mainstream audiences. Sensible Software's *Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* (right), however, kept its adult content and won't be sold in high street shops.



The Law

Most videogame censorship is voluntary. But games can run up against legal boundaries...

■ With regard to official legislation on censorship, games operate in a grey area. Confusion reigns and there is currently an intense debate on the subject involving the market's leading publishers, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), and the government itself about how best to control the industry's output.

At present, all media censorship is governed chiefly by the 1984 Video Recordings Act, a bill passed in response to the splatter movies that were so prevalent in the nascent home video market (*The Evil Dead*, *I Spit on Your Grave* and so on) and which extended the powers of the BBFC (previously able to rule only on cinema releases). Games, however, remain

exempt, unless they include "to any significant extent, any one of the following: human sexual activity or acts of force associated with such activity; mutilation or torture of, or other acts of gross violence towards, humans and animals; human genital organs or excretory functions; techniques likely to be useful in the commission of offences."

Only 2-3% of all games edge into any of those categories. Even then they can avoid the censor's scissors. The key word in the get-out clause is "human". Publishers can argue that computer generated sprites are not human.

One common trick is for characters to spill green blood when sliced up. That proves they're not human – even if you wouldn't have

guessed otherwise right up to the point where you hacked them in half. It's how SCI got out of its *Carnageddon 2* dilemma. At press time the BBFC had refused to issue the original game with a certificate, making it illegal to release the title in that form. So, the publisher, Take 2, turned red blood into "green gunk" and put the game on to the High Street. (Take 2 currently has an appeal pending, hoping to return the red hue to the bodily fluid.)

All game publishers are mightily fed-up with the way the BBFC works. They feel it has no understanding of, or empathy with, the games industry. They do not trust its judgement or its methods. It's hard to argue. The body isn't equipped (or skilled enough) to play all



■ Welsh MP Alun Michael is "very concerned" about videogame violence.

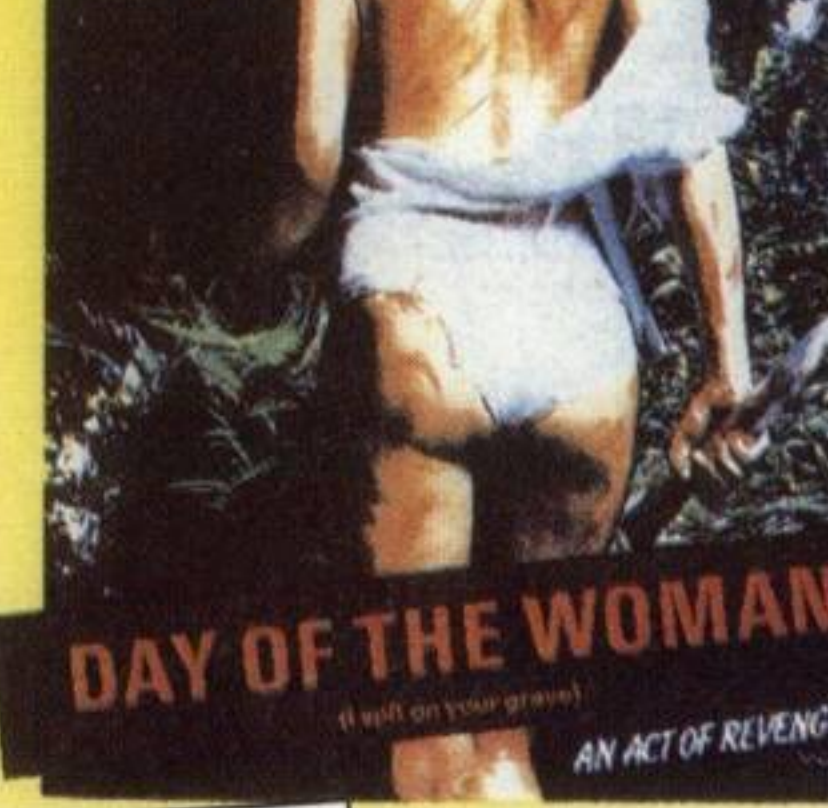
the way through PC or console products and so makes its judgements purely on linear video footage (so missing out on the key element of any interactive product – interactivity). Roger Bennett, Director General of publishers' trade body ELSPA describes the BBFC as "slow, inefficient and uncooperative". SCI

boss Jane Cavanagh states simply: "You just can't work with these people."

Most of the time, game publishers work with the Video Standards Council (VSC) which, along with ELSPA, runs a voluntary age classification system. It was set up in 1994, largely to

THIS WOMAN HAS JUST... CUT, CHOPPED, BROKEN AND BURNED FOUR MEN BEYOND RECOGNITION...

BUT NO JURY IN AMERICA WOULD EVER CONVICT HER!



show willing in the light of bad tabloid publicity and governmental concerns. The idea being that if the powers-that-be saw the games

industry putting its own house in order, they would be less inclined to establish a regulatory body or extend the remit of the BBFC.

So far this strategy has worked, but recently, Alun Michael MP, when at the

“Nintendo, in particular, has very clear and quite draconian views.”

this means they consistently eschew explicit material in favour of safer, catch-all genres such as racing games, platformers and adventures. In 1997, 550 games were submitted to the Video Standards Council, the organisation which, along with games trade body ELSPA (European Leisure Software Publishers Association), runs the UK software publishing industry's voluntary age ratings system: 65% of those titles were deemed suitable for all ages, 25% were awarded 11+ certificates, while the rest got 15+. None were classed as suitable only for over-18s.

One of the reasons for this, however, is that any obviously risqué games are passed on to the government's official classification body, the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification). Even so, of the 44 games submitted to the legislative organisation, only 16 were given 18 certificates. 16 adult-only games from an industry-wide cannon of 550 releases. That's less than 3%. The games market may hint at danger and subversion, offering itself up as a lifestyle choice for the rebel in all of us, but really it's just Mickey Mouse in a leather jacket. Even the supposedly adult stuff comes across like a kid playing at grown-ups. Look at characters such as Lara Croft and Duke Nukem. Big tits, massive guns, desperately adolescent.

Aside from *Thrill Kill*, one other high profile casualty of the games industry's pretty rigorous self-censorship has been *Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll*, a project which Sensible Software (the highly respected British code team behind classics such as *Sensible Soccer* and

Cannon Fodder) had been working on for over three years until it was forced to abandon the labour of love.

Boss Jon Hare is understandably bitter and frustrated: “We took it to literally 20 publishers – every single one said they liked the idea, but none were willing to risk taking it. They were all worried about whether or not Dixons would stock it, whether or not America would like it. Things like *A Young Persons Guide to Becoming a Rock Star* and *Velvet Goldmine* explore exactly the same sort of areas we were covering with *Sex and Drugs*, but the software industry is so uniformly conservative. Unfortunately we produced a rock 'n' roll game for an industry that's about as rock 'n' roll as sliced bread.”

Apart from inherent conservatism and historical economic reasons, there are other reasons why games publishers don't present adult material on a regular basis. For a start, Sony and Nintendo won't let them.

Nintendo, in particular, has very clear and quite draconian views on what gamers should and shouldn't be allowed to see on its consoles. It imposes its moral values on publishers (and, therefore, gamers) through a well-established licensing scheme. This basically means that no one can publish software for a Nintendo system without signing a third-party agreement, part of which outlines a code of conduct on content.

Just to make sure no nastiness creeps through its net. Nintendo itself manufacturers

CENSORED!

THE GAME SCENES THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU SEE

all cartridges for the N64 and so gets to view and approve all master copies of future titles.

Sony is slightly less puritanical, but hardly liberal. It too operates a licensing scheme through which it can check every publisher's products for “suitability”. The software that appears on its own label is never controversial. The company is, after all, managing the biggest leisure culture phenomenon to emerge in the '90s, and feels the responsibility keenly.

Sony's European boss Chris Deering reflects: “As you get bigger, more and more people feel that they have to have an opinion about you, be it the mainstream media or the man on the street who has never played a videogame.” In other words, he's saying that he doesn't want to offer even a molehill of controversial content for fear that it will be turned into a mountain.

Deering does, however, concede that with the PlayStation's appeal reaching ever higher up the age range (as well as ever-lower, strangely), there needs to be a broader range of content available. Asked, in that case, how he'd feel if a third-party publisher approached Sony with a high quality, perfectly legal soft porn title complete with BBFC approval and, obviously, 18 certificate, Deering dodges: “I don't know. It's a very

“You just can't work with these people [the BBFC]”

Home Office, commented that while the Labour government supports the VSC/ELSPA scheme, it is “very concerned about violent games” and noted that “some titles have slipped through the net”.

And it's for these reasons that publishers want the net tightened, but on their terms. At present there's no body to provide official mandatory tests on all games. Most publishers send code to the VSC to receive an age rating, but all they get is a sticker for their box which doesn't have to be adhered to by retailers or consumers. The VSC only provides guidelines. At the moment it's up to publishers themselves to decide whether or not a game's content is extreme enough to forfeit

exemption from the BBFC's scrutiny. If a company chooses to take a game to the BBFC – in order to gain certification which can be useful for appeasing retailers concerned about potentially offensive content – it can find itself dealing with a body which shows no understanding of the nature of their products or business.

Bennett believes that the Video Recordings Act should be amended to give the VSC sole, government-backed responsibility for the regulation of computer and video games. Maybe if it were, the confusion and dissatisfaction surrounding the current system would lift and publishers would feel more comfortable about including more adventurous material.



Big brother's watching you...

Any “adult content” scandal could cost Sony and Nintendo millions in lost sales from concerned parents. So they make sure it doesn't happen.

■ Both Nintendo and Sony exercise strict control over the software released for the N64 and PlayStation respectively. They treat their formats not as CD players or VCRs – open technologies on which anyone can publish any kind of content – but as their own private domains, to be jealously guarded through stringent licensing agreements.

Such agreements must be signed by any company wishing to release games for either of the manufacturers' systems. These agreements cover everything from the size and shape of packaging to the cost of CD or cart manufacturing. They also contain sections that outline game content guidelines, telling publishers what is and, more pertinently, what isn't acceptable. *Arcade* has managed to obtain copies of Nintendo's and Sony's documents. Here are some of the highlights.

Nintendo

The publishers' handbook issued by Nintendo states that its guidelines are designed to help eliminate “themes inconsistent with our corporate philosophy”. To that end, the firm makes it clear that it will only approve products which do not:

- Contain sexually explicit content including, but not limited to nudity, rape, sexual intercourse and sexual touching; for instance, Nintendo does not allow bare-breasted women in its games. However, mild displays of affection such as kissing or hugging are acceptable.
- Contain language or depictions which specifically denigrate members of any race, gender, ethnicity, religion or political group.
- Depict gratuitous or excessive blood or violence. Nintendo does

not permit depictions of animal cruelty or torture.

- Depict verbal or physical spousal or child abuse.
- Permit racial, gender, ethnic, religious or political stereotypes; for example religious symbols such as crosses will be acceptable when fitting into the theme of a game and not promoting a specific religious denomination.
- Use profanity, obscenity or incorporate language or gestures that are offensive by prevailing public standards and tastes.
- Promote the use of illegal drugs, smoking materials, tobacco and/or alcohol; for example Nintendo does not allow an unnecessary beer or cigarette advertisement anywhere in a product, however Sherlock Holmes smoking a pipe would be acceptable as it fits the theme of the game.

Sony

Widely regarded within the games industry as being less tight-arsed than Nintendo, Sony shows its true corporate colours in its “Evaluation Criteria”. It will not approve a product (or product ad) if it:

- Includes graphic depictions of gratuitous or excessive violence.
- Is sexually explicit.
- Includes profane or obscene language or gestures.
- Depicts intoxication or substance abuse.
- Promotes negative racial, ethnic, gender or religious stereotypes.
- Makes negative or disrespectful use of religious symbolism.
- Reflects adversely on the name, reputation or goodwill of Sony.

interesting question. I think to be honest it would cause us a great deal of concern. Even if it was 100% legal, to approve a soft porn title – which, incidentally, I'm sure would sell like crazy – I don't know... put it this way, I don't think we'd pioneer anything."

So again, caution rules. No one wants to be the first to break ranks and take risks. That is why there are, in fact, very few instances of outside forces censoring games. Instead, the industry is shaped by a multi-layered network of checks and measures that amount to a strict system of self-censorship.

In the early days of rock 'n' roll, Little Richard turned the lyrics of *Tutti Frutti* from a quite filthy stream of sexual (and by no means subtle) innuendo into a mixture of playful limericks and harmless doggerel when committing the live favourite to vinyl. The government didn't force him to, but his record company certainly had a say, plus he knew radio

stations wouldn't play it in its original form, so there would be no chance of it being a commercial hit. He also knew that rock 'n' roll was a young art form, still not part of – or trusted by – the establishment (parents, mass media, government). A flamboyant black man with amazing showbiz hair screaming about exactly what he'd like to do to the very sweet sounding Sue and Daisy would have been a perfect excuse to stamp on the genre as a whole. Little Richard and other early performers had to win small victories one at a time in order to establish the levels of artistic freedom within which modern day rappers and rock stars operate.

The games business is still young. The modern games scene can only really be said to have come into being in the '90s. Like rock 'n' roll in the early '50s and '60s, it is seen by those who don't understand it as being solely for kids; a nasty phase

capable of corruption but of little artistic merit. As a result, those involved in the business have deferentially decided that they still need to mind their manners, that any step too far over the standard boundaries of taste and decency will cause more trouble than it's worth – a view backed up the rabid reaction that a few genuinely challenging products have received.

So, for now, games stores are stocked largely with fare for all the family, a sprinkling of ersatz adult-orientated offerings, and one or two genuine grown-up games. And it will stay that way until the industry gets a bit braver. It's a long way from Pat Boone to Marilyn Manson. And videogames are only just entering mop-top territory. **A**

“Who died and made Electronic Arts the moral guardians of the universe?”

Child care expert hits out at sick game

A SICK computer game that challenges players to mow down people in a stolen car, has been slammed by North-east child care experts. *Grand Theft Auto* is due to go on sale at PC World and Dixons stores in Aberdeen at the end of the month. The 18-certificate game awards points to players for shooting down members of the public as well as setting fire to monks. Players are told they are working for gangland bosses and have sev-

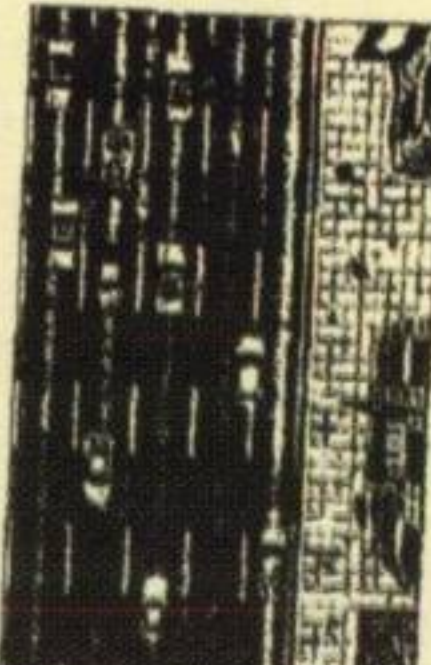
erely damaged the lives of innocent people. The game is set in a fictional city called Liberty City. The game is set in a fictional city called Liberty City. The game is set in a fictional city called Liberty City.

and put it into their children's stockings – or youngsters will get hold of the game and play it – despite the 18 rating. Today, a spokeswoman for Barnardo's said games of violence could damage children. She said: "We do not believe in games of crime and violence are helpful to a child's development. Children need positive images and role models to help them learn what is acceptable and what is not. But Norris Hood, at Aberdeen's consumer protection department admitted they had no answer over-

LEARN HOW TO STEAL CARS AND KILL COPS

Driving publicity to the Max

A 29-year-old publicist Max Clifford was leered in to create a row over *Grand Theft Auto*. But isn't it all too cynical?



Max Clifford branded *Grand Theft Auto* 'sick' to raise public awareness. The game is set in a fictional city called Liberty City. The game is set in a fictional city called Liberty City.

Taking the piss

Sometimes, "bad" publicity is actively encouraged.

An old maxim insists that there's no such thing as bad publicity. In fact, bad publicity is often very good publicity, and games publishers are not averse to courting controversy to spice up their PR campaigns. A company will usually do this in one of two ways. The first is through advertising. Some of the best recent examples have come from notorious watchdog-baiter Virgin Interactive. Virgin probably hit its peak with a giant outdoor poster campaign for PlayStation gore-fest *Resident Evil* which featured a bath full of blood. Not subtle, but effective. It provoked complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority and generated publicity for the product worth far more than was spent on the campaign. The other method is to

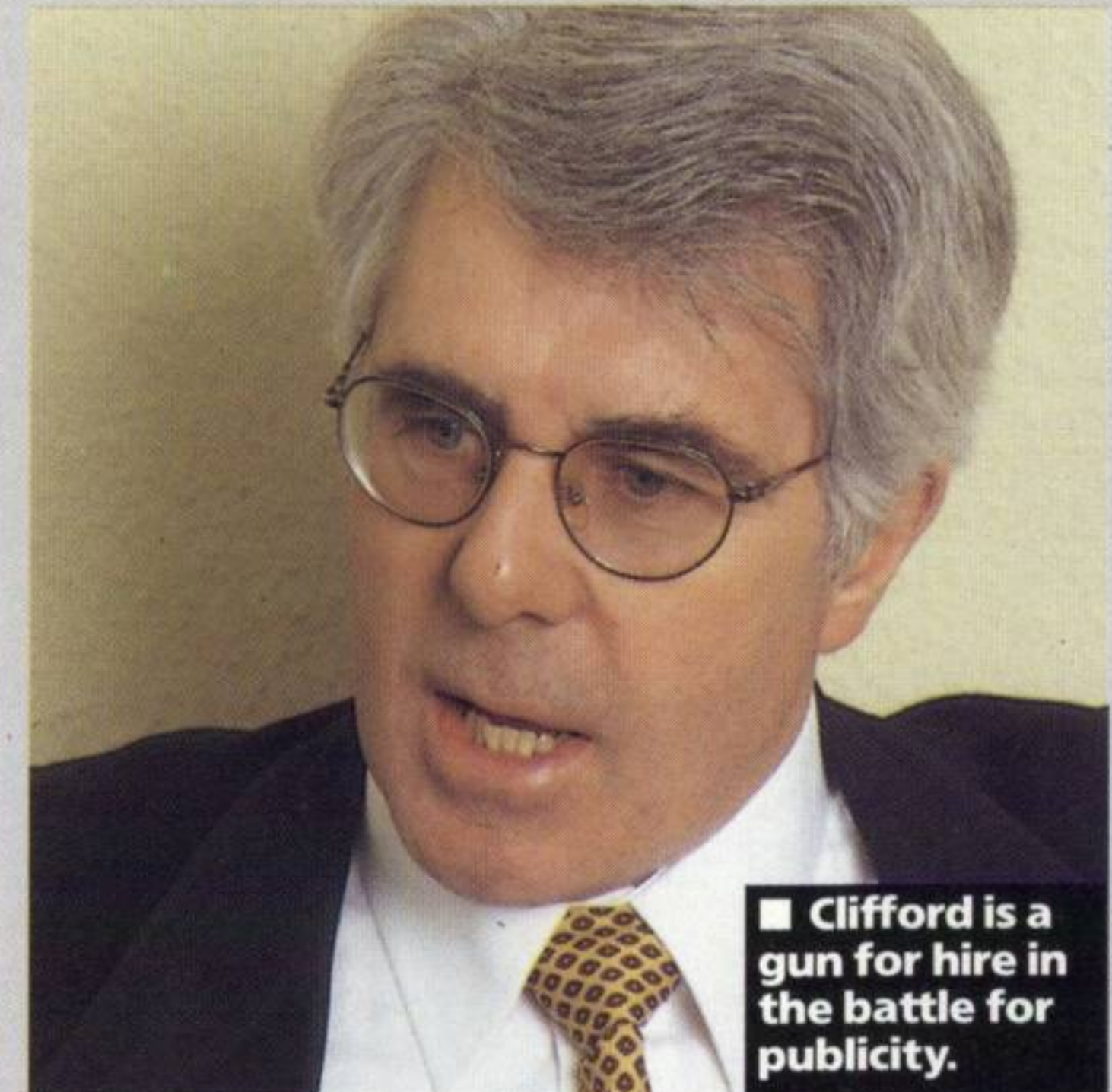
provoke a reaction from the guardians of good taste and decency: middlebrow tabloids, Godbotherers, rent-a-quote MPs, the BBC, and so forth. BMG did this with *Grand Theft Auto*. It employed Max Clifford – the "PR guru" – to maximise the shock value of a game that invited you to revel in nicking cars and doing damage. The press release teased: "If you want to sit in traffic waiting for the lights, that's your business. On the other hand, the park isn't too busy. I mean there are strolling couples and nuns with guitars but the thing is, they're kinda soft. Even if you do get intestine wrapped around your axle, there's a whole city of cars out there." Clifford went on to deliver the maximum amount of moral outrage,

thereby guaranteeing acres of free publicity, with a spread in the *News of the World* and debates on Radio 5 Live and *Newsnight*. He even organised a stunt that saw 11- and 12-year-olds going into shops to buy 18-rated games, only to then go to the media and "grass up" the shops that sold them this material. The subsequent story made the front page of *The Sunday Times*, no less, the sub-text being, "isn't it awful, innocent little kiddies are being corrupted by wicked shopkeepers selling them violent, controversial, adult-only games, games like *Grand Theft Auto* – available now on..." And yes, whenever an Honourable Member stands up in the Commons or Lords to prattle about how appalled he is at the extreme graphical content of a new game, usually it's the publisher of said game (or someone acting on the publisher's behalf) that's drawn his attention to it in the first place. Again, it sure ain't subtle. But it works.

Games firm set to unleash controversial new product

Meet Max Clifford...

Want to create a controversy? He's your man.



Clifford is a gun for hire in the battle for publicity.

There are plenty of games out there dealing in death, crime and corruption, so how come *Grand Theft Auto* got all the attention when it was released last year? The answer's simple; canny old DMA and BMG came up with the wizard wheeze of recruiting PR

a sensationalist description of *GTA*, then sit back and bask in the predictable outpouring of outrage. A tidal wave of disgusted media coverage followed, and *Grand Theft Auto* sold by the warehouse-load. Not bad for the first game that Max Clifford represented, and you can bet it won't be the last: "I've been asked already," he says. But ask him whether he believes that *GTA* is actually a good game and you get a glimpse of the hype machine that spurred it on to the top of the gaming charts. "I've never played it, and I wouldn't know how," he admits. "All I know about *Grand Theft Auto* is that people who regularly play games have said it is good. And I genuinely believe it's not going to encourage 18-year-olds or up to go out and steal cars and kill people."

“Bad publicity is very often good publicity...”



Cut!

Arcade proudly presents the game scenes chopped by the censors' axe.

CENSORED!

THE GAME SCENES THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU SEE

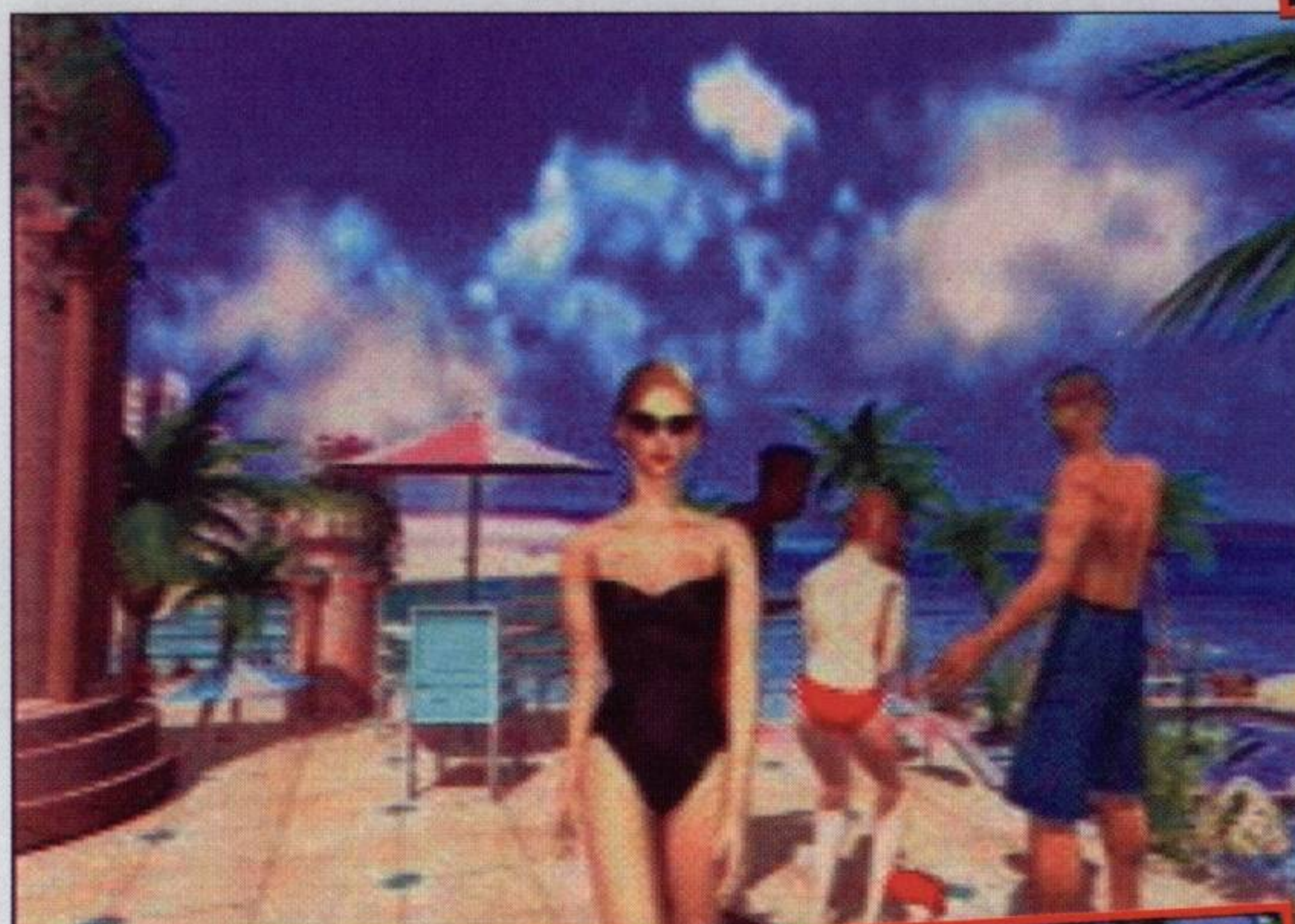
■ SCI was given the red light by the BBFC when it first tried to release *Carmageddon* in the UK. It doctored the offending gore, but the sequel's still not been given green for go.



Road rage

■ Game: **Carmageddon 2**
■ Format: **PC and PlayStation**
■ Publisher: **SCI**

■ Highlighting both the pedantry and bloody-mindedness of the BBFC, *Carmageddon 2* has now been released without an official certificate but with what publisher SCI calls "green gunk" rather than red blood spurting out of your roadkills. It was exactly the same story with the original game in 1997; SCI submitted it to the BBFC, the BBFC ruled that if it stopped the red it could go with green. SCI released an amended version, but then mounted an appeal against the original judgement. It won the case and was eventually allowed to release the full red-blooded original. That's why the company was stunned to hear, in the middle of last year, that the BBFC had refused to grant the sequel a certificate. Once again SCI is appealing – and confident of another victory. The BBFC's real problem with the game is that it believes that *Carmageddon* encourages players to run over and kill real people (that's real as in graphic representations of real people, oh, you get the point), and then rewards the behaviour. That's why – no kidding – the BBFC made SCI go through the game's manual and delete the word "fun" wherever it appeared.



Boob job

■ Game: **Tekken 3**
■ Format: **PlayStation**
■ Publisher: **Namco**

■ Beat *Tekken 3* with Anna Williams on the Japanese version of the game, and you'll be treated to a cut scene of her sunning herself on a beach with her sister Nina. Eager to grab the attention of three male *Gladiator* rejects, Anna is only too happy to flirt out of her comfy sun lounger and tag along with Mr and Mr and Mr Muscle. Not happy at this public display of affection, up comes Nina and twangs Anna's bikini top off. Except, in the UK version, she doesn't. It's not as if you get to see any of Anna's bits. She's facing away from the camera, so only her back is on show. Was it worth the hassle?



■ Would the sight of a bare back corrupt a nation? Sony thinks so.



No nunchukas

■ Game: **Soul Blade**
■ Format: **PlayStation**
■ Publisher: **Namco**

■ The people in those high censoring towers are rather funny about nunchukas. Nunchukas are a type of weapon that originated in Japan. They consist of two bits of wood linked together by a chain, and are apparently rather deadly. Although not as deadly (we would assume) as, say, a gun. Yet nunchukas are completely illegal to own in the UK and are not allowed to be shown in any film in the UK or pictured in magazines or books. No surprise, then, that in the UK version, Li Long's original nunchukas were replaced by something that looked like two sides of a snooker triangle and acted about as effectively.



■ Rip someone's spine out, fine. But don't hit 'em round the head with two bits of wood tied together.

Cut! (continued)



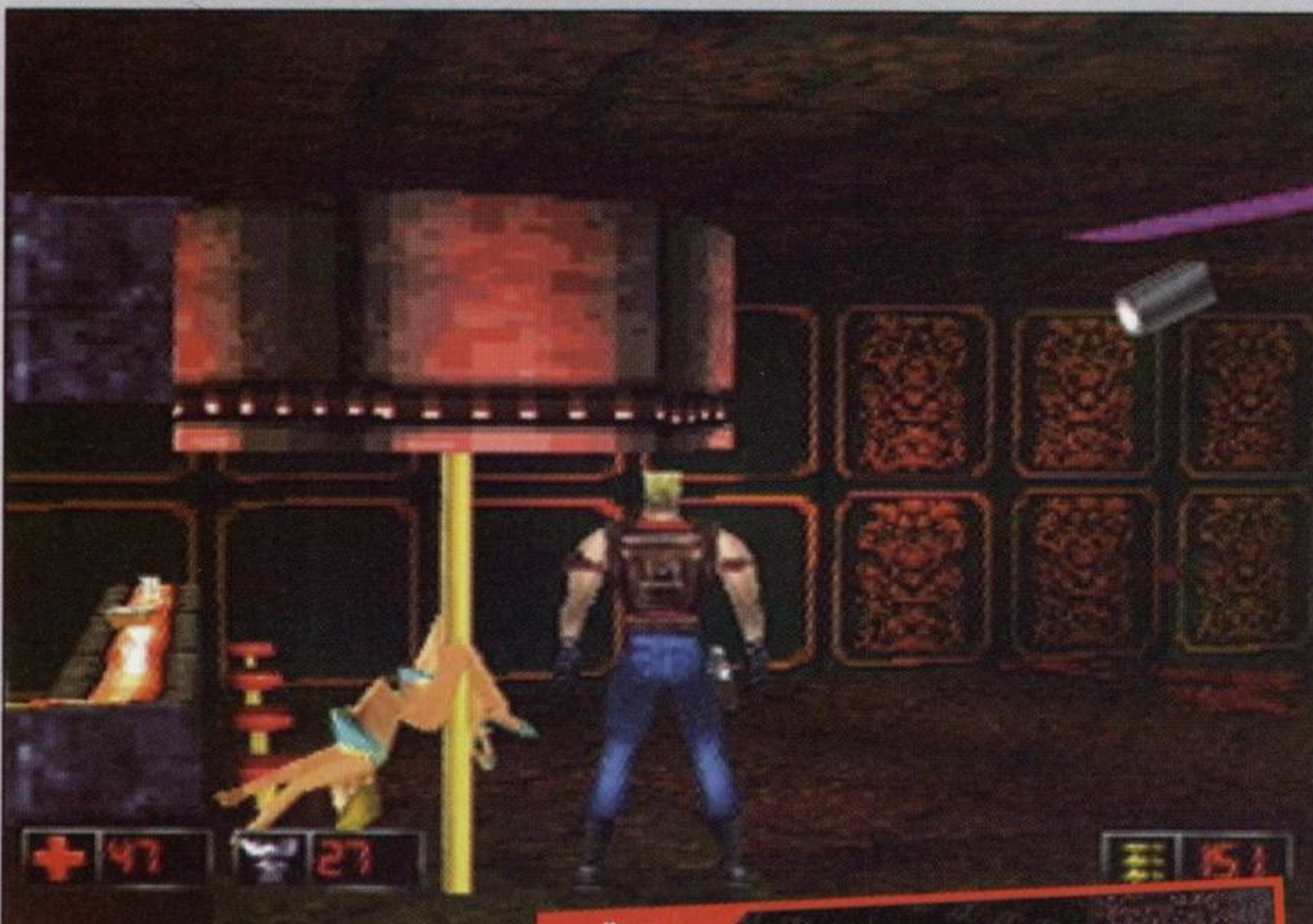
No sex please...

■ Game: **Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll**
 ■ Format: **PC and PlayStation**
 ■ Publisher: **never released**

■ The semi-legendary but now never-to-be-released *Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* involves cocaine, dope, blow-jobs, Hells Angels, plane crashes, shagging Christ, groupies, violence – oh, and rock 'n' roll. Developed by the not-very-aptly named Sensible Software, the game tells the story of an aspiring star who falls for all the above vices on the debauched road to the toppermost of the poppermost. It has been rejected by all major publishers on the grounds of "unsuitable" content.



■ **No Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll please, we're videogame publishers! No one would risk publishing Sensible's not-so-sensible game.**



Cover-up

■ Game: **Duke Nukem**
 ■ Format: **Nintendo 64**
 ■ Publisher: **GT Interactive**

■ Now you see 'em, now you don't. *Duke Nukem* was a huge hit on PC – and action-packed enough to be deemed suitable for the less cerebral demands of the console market. Nintendo wanted the game for its N64 – but on its own terms. So, true to the firm's family-friendly image, when Duke visited a strip joint, the generously proportioned purveyors of modern interpretative dance found themselves ushered out the back door. Duke was still allowed to blast seven shades of shit out of anything that moved, but at least he did it in a nipple-free environment. Global moral meltdown was thus avoided.

What you saw instead



■ **Duke's war on crime is nothing compared to Nintendo's war on strippers. It hates them.**



House of horror

■ Game: **Resident Evil**
 ■ Format: **PlayStation**
 ■ Publisher: **Virgin**

■ Capcom's *Resident Evil* games on PlayStation not only play brilliantly, they also come closer than any other interactive product to capturing the atmosphere of great horror movies. Much of the atmosphere is generated by plot and suspense, but overt gore does play its part. In the original game, the first in-game video sequence features a character turning towards the camera. In the UK version the footage is cut just as the first glimpses of ravaged flesh come into view. In the Japanese original, the full extent of the damage is revealed. Not a pretty sight.

What you saw instead



■ **OK, so it's still a skull – but without all the blood and gore.**

CENSORED!

THE GAME SCENES THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU SEE



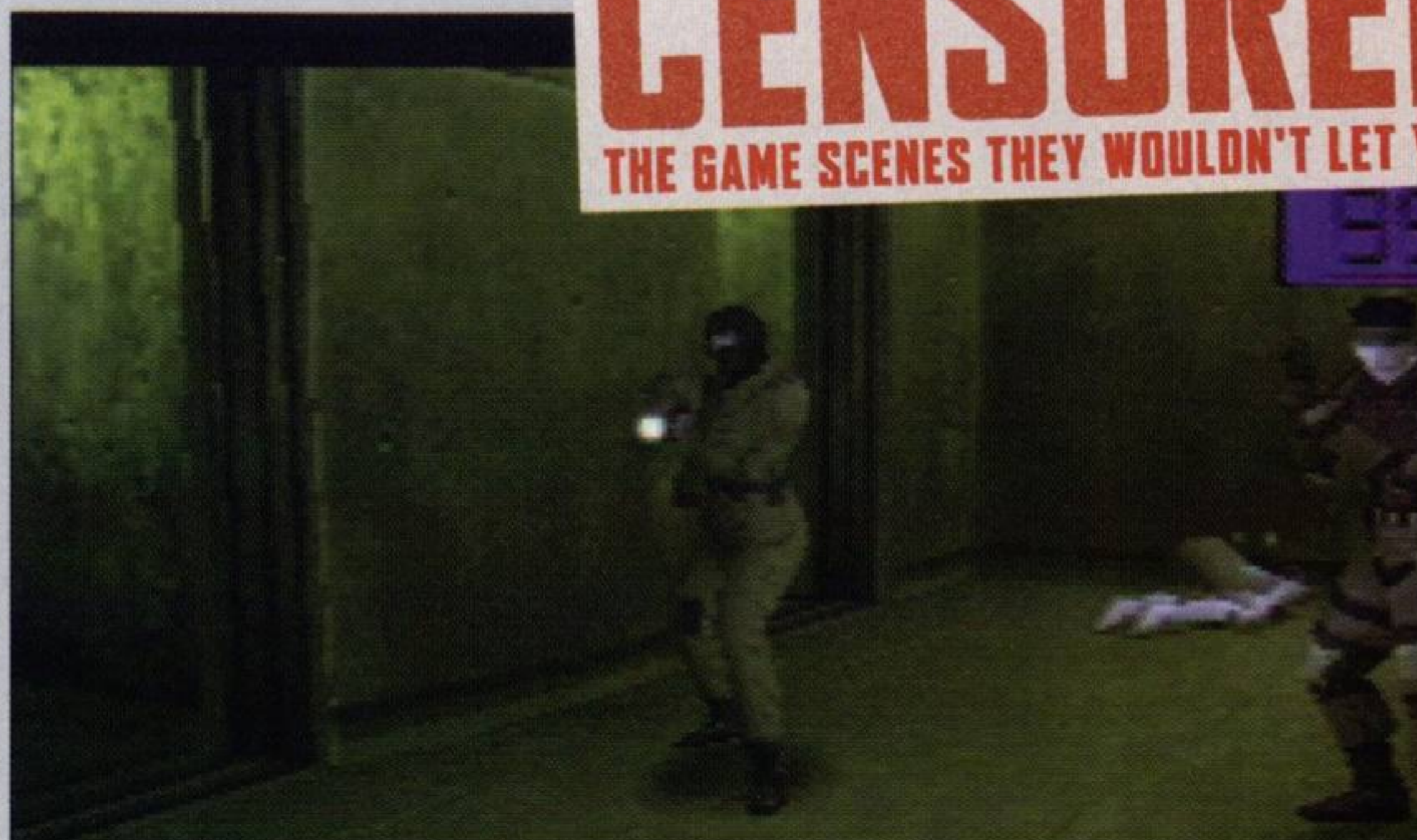
Mail aggression

■ Game: **Postal**
 ■ Format: **PC**
 ■ Publisher: **Take 2 Interactive**

■ In the US, "going postal" translates as something akin to "going psycho". Talk of "going postal" means losing it big time; getting hold of a gun and blowing the crap out of anyone that gets in your way. Apparently, this sort of thing happens to postal service employees in particular in the States (think of Cliff in *Cheers* and Newman in *Seinfeld* and you're on the right lines). Developed by Running With Scissors, *Postal* focuses on just such a *Falling Down*-style shooting spree, but takes things just a little too far for the UK market. In fact Take 2, the game's publisher, decided to cut a couple of particularly unpleasant scenes. One involved decimating a marching band and the other (pictured) saw the central character shooting up school kids.



■ Kids and a marching band get massacred by a psychotic postal worker. All part of the job in the US.



Arse wiped

■ Game: **Metal Gear Solid**
 ■ Format: **PlayStation**
 ■ Publisher: **Konami**

■ *Metal Gear Solid* features guns, bullets, shootings, strangulation, hostage-takings, heart-attacks, grenades and slow, painful shrieks of death. You are legally allowed to see corpses, blood and killings. What you are not allowed to see, however, is the naked man's bum crack after you break out of the cell with Meryl. In the Japanese version, the moon is, as it were, full. But on the American and UK versions, the bum is blurred out. Most of us will never witness a murder, but can see a bottom every day of the week with the aid of a mirror. Odd that *Metal Gear's* morals are switched around.



■ Can you tell the difference? One bum crack is proudly on display, the other has a *Crimewatch*-style fuzz surrounding it.

■ It's that vinaloo feeling again.

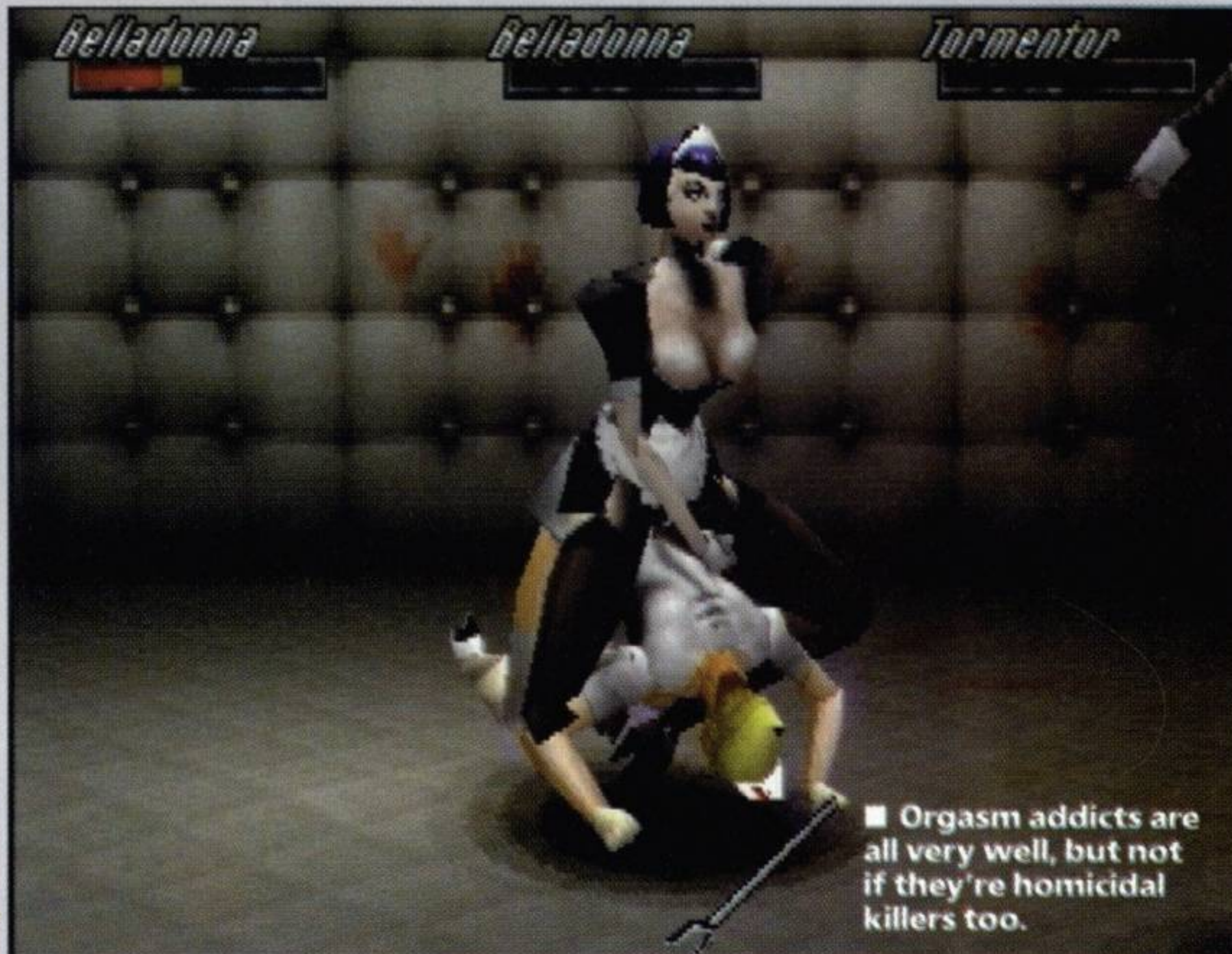


Flushed away

■ Game: **Street Wars**
 ■ Format: **PC**
 ■ Publisher: **System 3**

■ Not due until the first half of 1999 on PC, *Street Wars* from System 3 is the everyday story of gangster folk, with

bloody vendettas and brutal assassinations to the fore. Here, a bomb in the bog has gone off under a trousers-down victim whom we now see burn to death. Lucky us. The publisher has decided to tone down the scene, so that all we actually see is smoke coming out of our friend's bum. Much more tasteful.



■ Orgasm addicts are all very well, but not if they're homicidal killers too.

Turn-on turned off

■ Game: **Thrill Kill**
 ■ Format: **PC**
 ■ Publisher: **never released**

■ Something of a cause célèbre among those keen to see the games industry throw off the shackles of self-censorship, *Thrill Kill* was developed by US team Paradox and was due to be published by the US division of one of the market's more rock 'n' roll publishers, Virgin Interactive. When Electronic Arts acquired the majority of the company's assets last year, however, it decided that *Thrill Kill* was not suitable for release. Indeed EA decided that the game was so sick it should not be



released at all and is currently refusing to consider selling it on to any other software company. The lovely lady featured here is Belladonna, a masochistic dominatrix for whom violent death is the ultimate sexual turn-on.

KICK ASS

BECOME A DEMON GAME PLAYER OVERNIGHT

WELCOME TO KICK ASS

GET LINKED UP

Edited by | Rich Pelley



There aren't many games that can lay claim to the title of "best game ever" without causing wild rioting in the streets, as people with different beliefs and devotions battle it out to try to prove that the particular game that they have pledged their alliance to is the best of the lot. Except, of course, for *Zelda 64*, which is the best game ever. Officially. But what of all the secret bits? We know all about 'em...



HOW TO FIND THE SECRET BITS IN...

ZELDA



Format: **Nintendo 64** | Publisher: **Nintendo** | Developer: **Nintendo** | Price: **£49.99** | Players: **1** | ★★★★★

GENERAL TIPPERY...

GARDENING



■ As a child, you'll find a fat man eating seeds on the bank of Zora's River. Buy some from him and plant them in any of the mounds of dirt scattered around Hyrule, and when you come back seven years later, a big leaf will have sprouted. Jumping on to this enables you to access previously unreachable areas – most



useful for getting the piece of heart above Dodongo's Cavern, and the Rupees high up in Kokiri Forest.

SCARECROWS



■ As a child, you'll find two scarecrows gazing out over Lake Hylia. One is content to repeat any Ocarina song you play, but the other will remember any eight-note tune you create. Keep it simple, return as an adult and play it back to him. From then on, playing it in certain places will make Pierre The Scarecrow sprout up from the ground. If you see Navi zoom off and hover over an empty space, play Pierre's song and he'll probably appear. Fire your hookshot at him and you can reach high-up areas and take shortcuts.



28 GAMES TIPPED THIS MONTH

PLAYSTATION

- P92 BUST-A-MOVE 4
- P95 CRASH BANDICOOT: WARPED
- P95 BUST-A-MOVE 4
- P95 ASTEROIDS
- P95 CRASH BANDICOOT 3/ SPYRO THE DRAGON
- P96 TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
- P96 SMALL SOLDIERS
- P97 SPYRO THE DRAGON

PC

- P84 HALF-LIFE
- P87 PANDEMONIUM 2
- P87 TRESPASSER
- P87 SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOR DIVISION
- P87 SIN
- P88 COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES
- P88 ACE OF EMPIRES: THE RISE OF ROME
- P88 BLOOD 2
- P88 POWERSLIDE
- P88 CARMAGEDDON 2: CARPOCALYPSE NOW

NINTENDO 64

- P88 ZELDA
- P96 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
- P96 SAN FRANCISCO RUSH 2: EXTREME RACING USA
- P96 GLOVER
- P97 SOUTH PARK 64
- P97 BODY HARVEST
- P98 V-RALLY
- P99 GOLDENEYE
- P99 TUROK 2: SEEDS OF EVIL
- P99 STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON
- P99 ISS '98

NOW PLAYING

RIGHT NOW, THERE'S PROBABLY ONE OR TWO GAMES THAT YOU'RE HOOKED ON. WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU GET EVEN MORE FROM THEM WITH THE FOLLOWING LITTLE EXTRAS:

- INCLUDING
- P93 PICTURES FROM THE MAKING OF HERETIC II
- P97 INTERVIEW WITH TOCA TOURING CARS 2 PROJECT LEADER
- P98 ARCADE GAMEPLAY CHALLENGES

HAPPY MASKS



There are four masks to "hire" from the Happy Mask Shop in Hyrule Market. Sell Keaton's mask to the guard standing at the gates between Kakariko Village and Death Mountain, the Skull mask to the solitary skull kid in the Lost Woods, the Scary mask to the kid in Kakariko's Graveyard, and the Bunny mask to the marathon

man who you'll find running around Hyrule Field (he only stops running at night). You can then use the Mask Of Truth to talk to the one-eyed giggling statues dotted around the game, some of which provide you with valuable information.

SKULLTULAS



There are 100 skulltulas scattered around Hyrule. To find them you need to listen carefully for the scratching they make. Some are hidden behind rocks (you'll need to bomb them or use the Silver/Gold Gauntlets), and some can only be reached by using Pierre The Scarecrow. Cunningly, if you store some bugs in a bottle and place

them in the little mounds of dirt (where you'd normally put the seeds), they'll burrow away and miraculously transform into a Gold Skulltula. For every ten you collect – up to 50 – head back to the house in Kakariko Village and win a prize – the last resident needs you to collect all 100 to lift the curse on him.

ROCKS AND STATUES



Placing bombs, or picking up rocks with the Silver or Gold Gauntlets will normally reveal a hidden area, a great fairy, or a gold skulltula. But what are those one-eyed statues for? See the Happy Mask Shop for their true purpose, but you might also like to try using the Megaton Hammer on them, firing Fire Arrows at them, bombing

them and hitting them with your sword. Very amusing. Also, playing the Song of Time next to them causes a valuable Red Fairy to fly out, which you can catch in a bottle or touch to renew your health.

TRADING GAME



After waking up Talon with the chicken at Hyrule Castle, take the clucking wonder back to the chicken lady in Kakariko and swap it for a blue cucco. Take this to the sad bloke in the lost woods (head left from the entrance). Quickly take the mushroom he gives you to the old woman behind the potion shop in Kakariko, then leg it back to the lost woods and give the potion to the Kokiri girl who's sitting where the sad bloke was.

Give the poacher's saw she gives you to the man outside the tent in Gerudo Valley. Take the sword he

gives you to the Goron at the top of Death Mountain. He'll give you a prescription, show this to King Zora, who (as long as he's thawed out), will give you a frog. Use Epona to quickly take this to the scientist in Lake Hylia's laboratory. Leg it back to the gigantic Goron, give him the eye drops, wait three days, and Goron's Sword is yours!

BEGGING GUY



There's a little begging guy in Hyrule Market (child) and Kakariko Village (adult). "Sell me something," he pleads, "With C, with C." Offer him a bug, fairy or fish in a bottle and he'll pay you a shed-load of money.



BOTTLE COLLECTION



Bottles are invaluable. With them, you can collect Red Fairies to resurrect you when you die, catch Big Poes, hold fish and bugs, and carry health-restoring Lon Lon Milk. Talon gives you a bottle for winning the Super Cucco game at Lon Lon Ranch, the chicken lady gives you another for finding all her cuccos, the odd bloke at

Hyrule gives you another for ten Big Poes, and there's one on the bottom of Lake Hylia holding Princess Ruto's distress message.

HOW TO FIND THE SECRET BITS IN...

ZELDA

THINGS TO DO IN HYRULE



■ The land of Hyrule. There's more to it than you'd think.

LAKE HYLIA



■ Fishing (adult)

Hunt around for the massive lunkers which loiter around near the logs and rocks, and you'll get hold of the Golden Scale from the armpit-scratching fisherman. Once you've caught a fish worth

10lb+, you'll find a hidden sinking lure near the pond's centre – although don't expect the Armpit Man to be accommodating if you use it. The best thing to do is teach him a lesson by hooking his hat clean off.



■ Laboratory (adult)

If you've got the Iron Boots or Golden Scale (see above), walk over to the Laboratory and touch the bottom of the pool. The old scientist will be so happy that he'll hand over a piece of heart.

■ Fire Arrows (adult)

To get these, you'll need to have already polished off the boss in the Water Temple. Head for the island with the pool. The old scientist will be so happy that he'll hand over a piece of heart.

DESERT COLLUSUS



■ Great Fairy (adult)

On the east of the map near the entrance to the desert are two palm trees. Place a bomb against the wall between them to open up a cave, within which lurks one of those ugly Great Fairies. She'll bestow Nayru's Love upon you – this uses up a ton of magic, but makes you invincible in the process.



■ Lovely Lake (adult)

The lake in the west part of this area can be filled up by standing on the adjacent stone and playing the Song of Storms. Once the water has appeared, a band of fairies will start floating around nearby, giving you the opportunity to renew your health and bottle some of them up real nice.

GERUDO VALLEY



■ Gerudo Training Ground (adult)

To succeed here you'll need the Longshot, the Lens of Truth and the Megaton Hammer – you can solve each puzzle by using one of these handy items. Also remember that if Navi is glowing and hovering over an empty space, whipping out your Ocarina and playing the Song of Time or the Scarecrow's Song might prove beneficial. Use the Lens of Truth in the room with all the chests – there's a sneaky hole in the ceiling in the first room to the left.



■ Horseback firing range (adult)

It's best to knock out the pots on your first run, and then go for scoring multiple bull's-eyes on the targets on the way back. Score over 1,000 points and you'll get yourself a glowing piece of heart, but the fun doesn't end there – 1,500 points and over will reward you with a quiver that enables you to carry up to 40 arrows at once. Handy.

HYRULE CASTLE

■ Zelda's pictures (child)

Mario and Luigi are in *Zelda* – official! Before you talk to little Princess Zelda for the first time, have a look around at the windows – one of

them contains pictures of Mario and friends, and it will chuck Rupees at you if you shoot at it. Another window contains a plant – shoot that and a rude bloke will pop up and throw bombs at you.



■ Great Fairy (child/adult)

Once you've climbed the vine and hopped over the Castle Gate, wander over to the "dead-end" and shove a bomb by the big rock. Behind the rock you'll find a Great Fairy who'll give you the Din's Fire Offensive spell. Head for the same place as an adult (there's a path leading from the apocalyptic Market) and pick up the big black rock (you'll need the Golden Gauntlets from inside Ganon's Castle). Say



"Hello" to another Great Fairy, who'll then double your defensive power.

HYRULE MARKET



Treasure Chest Game (child)

Use the Lens of Truth and you can see into the chests, making things a tad easier.



Open up! (child)

There are two doors in the back alleys that you can't open. You can only enter them at night, and then only after you've been backwards and forwards through time once or twice. Behind one of the doors is a Bombchu Shop, while the other leads to the Loitering Man's House.



Big Poe collecting (adult)

Behind the door nearest the Market Drawbridge is an odd man who's interested in buying Poes (ghosts). You can find Big Poes by riding Epona around Hyrule Field, but because they scoot off so quickly, you'll need to use your arrows on them. There are ten Poes, so hunt well, take them back to the odd guy, and you'll get an empty bottle for your trouble.

GORON CITY



Rotating pot (child)

If you've set all the torches burning on the bottom floor of the city, go up a few floors and chuck a bomb into

the spinning vase. You'll receive a random goodie each time, which could well be a piece of heart for your ever-rising meter.



Wild rolling (adult)

Lay a bomb in the path of the wild rolling Goron on the third floor to stop him in his tracks. In return, he'll donate a Bomb Bag to your cause, enabling you to carry up to 30 bombs at once.

Secret area (adult)

If you're wondering what that circle of stones is for on the platform just outside Goron City, try playing the Song of Storms while standing in the middle. Oh, did you fall down a secret hole? This often works for other stone rings scattered around Hyrule.

ZORA'S DOMAIN



Diving game (child)

Head left from King Zora's Throne Room and you'll be able to play a diving game. Pick up all the Rupees that the Zora chucks in the water and you'll get your hands on a Silver Scale. This enables you to dive deeper and exploit the underwater shortcuts in the Lost Woods, Lake Hylia and Zora's River.



Great Fairy (child)

Hidden behind the giant bulk of Jabu-Jabu is a small island, leading to a Great Fairy. It's her pleasure to grant you the Farore's Wind Teleportation Spell – to gain access to her, lay a bomb next to the rock on the island.

Torch action (child)

Whip out your Deku Stick and use the flames in King Zora's Throne Room to light the torches down the stairs, outside the shop, next to the circle of stones (hug the wall as you run through the water), and inside the cave under the waterfall. You'll activate a big chest containing a piece of heart.

LON LON RANCH



carrot just before each jump to clear the jump, but make sure that you never touch the last carrot on your meter), Malon will give you a present (a cow). The cow is the present, you see.

Ride Epona (adult)

If you're already in possession of Epona, talk to Malon and take up her offer of a steeplechase. If you manage to complete it in under 50 seconds (use a

Boxes (child)

There's a small shed at the north-west of the ranch, which, by deft movement of the boxes within, will yield a small hole in the floor that leads to a piece of heart.



Hang on a minute... (child/adult)

Take a closer look at Talon and Ingo... both have big moustaches... Talon's dressed in red and blue, Ingo's in green and white... sound familiar? You might also want to take a closer look at

Malon's brooch – it's in the shape of a certain plumber's arch-enemy.

KAKARIKO VILLAGE



Cucco collecting (child)

The attractive young lady who's lost her chickens will reward you with an empty bottle if you find them all. Some of them are trapped in wooden crates, and a few can be reached only by holding on to another chicken – this enables you to sail over fences and across gaps. The chickens escape again after you've collected them all – a piece of heart is your reward if you scoop them up once more.



Hidden Hylian Shield (child)

Pull the gravestone that has flowers laid next to it and you'll find a rather splendid Hylian Shield.

Dampe's Tour (child)

Dampe will only find hidden goodies on patches of dirt – stone slabs won't yield anything. Keep paying the old man and he'll eventually stump up a piece of heart.

LOST WOODS



Ocarina kids (child)

You can tame the dancing children who you'll find playing in the Lost Woods – you just need to bring out your Ocarina. Copy the tune that they play for you and you'll be rewarded well.



Beautiful face (child)

Enter the Lost Woods from Kokiri Forest and head East, North, East, North then West. Walk over to the butterflies playing in the grass and you'll fall down a hole into a secret area. You can bring masks from the Happy Mask Shop here to get them "rated". If the residents of the hole like your mask, they'll do a little dance and give you presents. Isn't that sweet?



Target practice (child)

Due east from the Kokiri Forest entrance to the Lost Woods is a circular object hanging from a tree. Fire your Fairy Slingshot at the centre of it three times and you'll get a present from a shrub.

HOW TO BEAT YOUR MATES AT...

Written by | **Aaron Taylor**

BUST-A-MOVE 4

Format: **PlayStation** | Publisher: **Acclaim Entertainment** | Price: **£29.99** | Players: **1-2** | ★★★★★

BLOWING BUBBLES



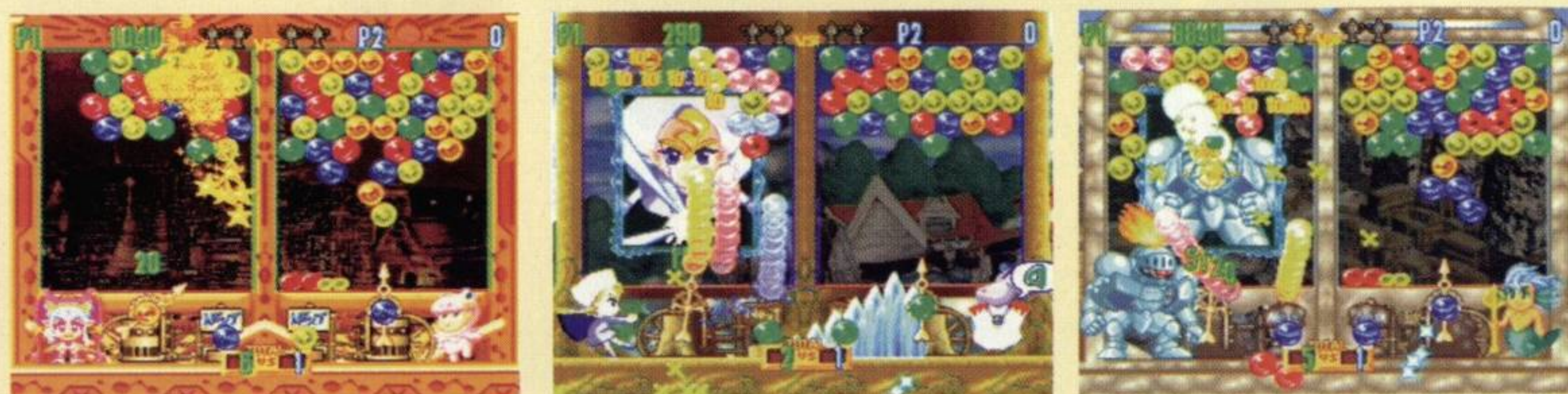
There are several different bubbles in *Bust-A-Move 4*, so here's a full rundown.

■ **Coloured bubbles:** your basic bubble. Join three of the same colour together and they burst.

■ **Rainbow bubbles:** these change to the colour of the bubble that is burst next to them.

■ **Star bubbles:** fire a bubble at these and all the bubbles of that colour burst, regardless of where they are on the screen.

■ **Block bubbles:** these can't be burst, so you'll have to drop them to get rid of them.



Fire the bubbles, make three in a row, and hope for the best. That's how you play *BAM 4*, isn't it? Well, that's the easy way, but if you really want to become a master, there's plenty more you need to know besides...

BUBBLE DROPPING

■ This is the skill used in the previous three *Bust-A-Move* games, and is still useful in *BAM 4*. What you have to do is to fire some bubbles so that they're only touching one other colour. Now burst the bubbles holding these new ones up, and they'll fall off the screen. This will send some bubbles over to your opponent. The amount of bubbles sent depends on how many you drop. Here's how to do it:



1 The start of a two-player match. See the line of blue bubbles? This will be the base for your drop combo.



2 First, start attaching other bubbles to the base line of blue bubbles. Make sure you leave a big enough gap for you to fire a blue one through.



3 It's building up nicely. This is where courage comes into it. How many bubbles do you attach before you finally burst the base?



4 Wow. Right down to the bottom. But you've still left room for the base-bursting bubble to get through haven't you? Haven't you?



5 Baboom! Yes you have! This bubble-dropping operation has been a success. Now watch your opponent struggle against this attack!

BUBBLE COMBOS

■ When you perform a bubble drop, look at the colour of the bubble. If it could be used to burst another set higher up, it will shoot back up, and cause a Bubble Combo. This is where the big attacks come from, especially if you can set up a really big Combo. Here's an example of how to set up a Combo:



1 This is a typical starting setup. Notice your first bubble is red. It'd be very easy to throw it up against the other reds, but this is a great chance for a Combo. Start things off as if you were going for a Bubble Drop. This time, pay attention to other bunches of like-coloured bubbles. A lot of advance thinking is called for.



2 Shoot the red bubble on to the bunch of yellow bubbles, and when you burst the bunch the red bubble will then come back and Combo into the red bunch.



3 A couple of shots later, and a three-hit Combo is taking shape. The red bubbles will fall on to the reds, this will make the orange shoot back up on to the two orange bubbles, which will be freed once the yellows have gone.



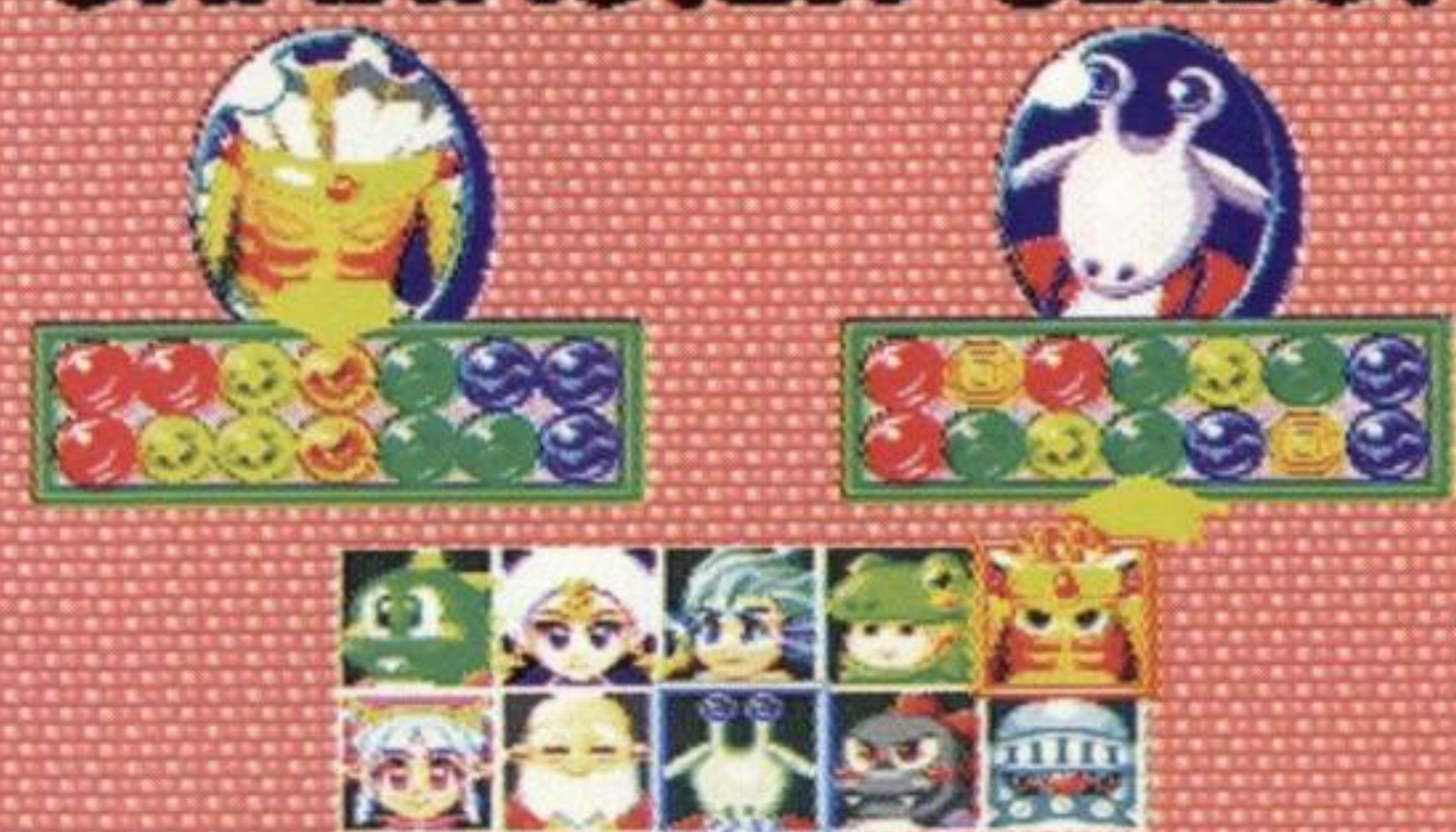
4 Fire a yellow bubble on to the yellow bunch and watch your amazing Combo. Explosions all-round.



5 When all is calm, go for your next Combo.

ATTACK PATTERNS

CHARACTER SELECT



■ There are two ways of attacking your opponent, either from the top, or the bottom. Your character's attack pattern is shown when you pick him/her/it. Bubble attacks from the bottom are useful as they can block any combos your opponent is going for, but they can also aid them. Top attacks don't interfere with these combos, but give your opponent less room to play with. A blend of both is best.

EXTRA CONTROL

■ Everyone knows that you move left and right, and press the button to fire a bubble. However, most people don't know that by using the R1 and L1 buttons you can move your bubble launcher in very fine increments. This is more useful than it sounds, as it enables you to make those really tight shots much easier.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

■ If you find all the talk about Bubble Dropping and Bubble Combo-ing tricky to follow, then the best weapon you have is speed. You can usually fluke enough Combos to win, but you can't afford to be right down low for too long. If you learn to fire your bubbles rapidly, then you'll always stay near the top. It doesn't look pretty, but at least you'll either win or stay alive long enough to avoid the ridicule of your mates.

WON!!

THE MAKING OF...

NOW PLAYING

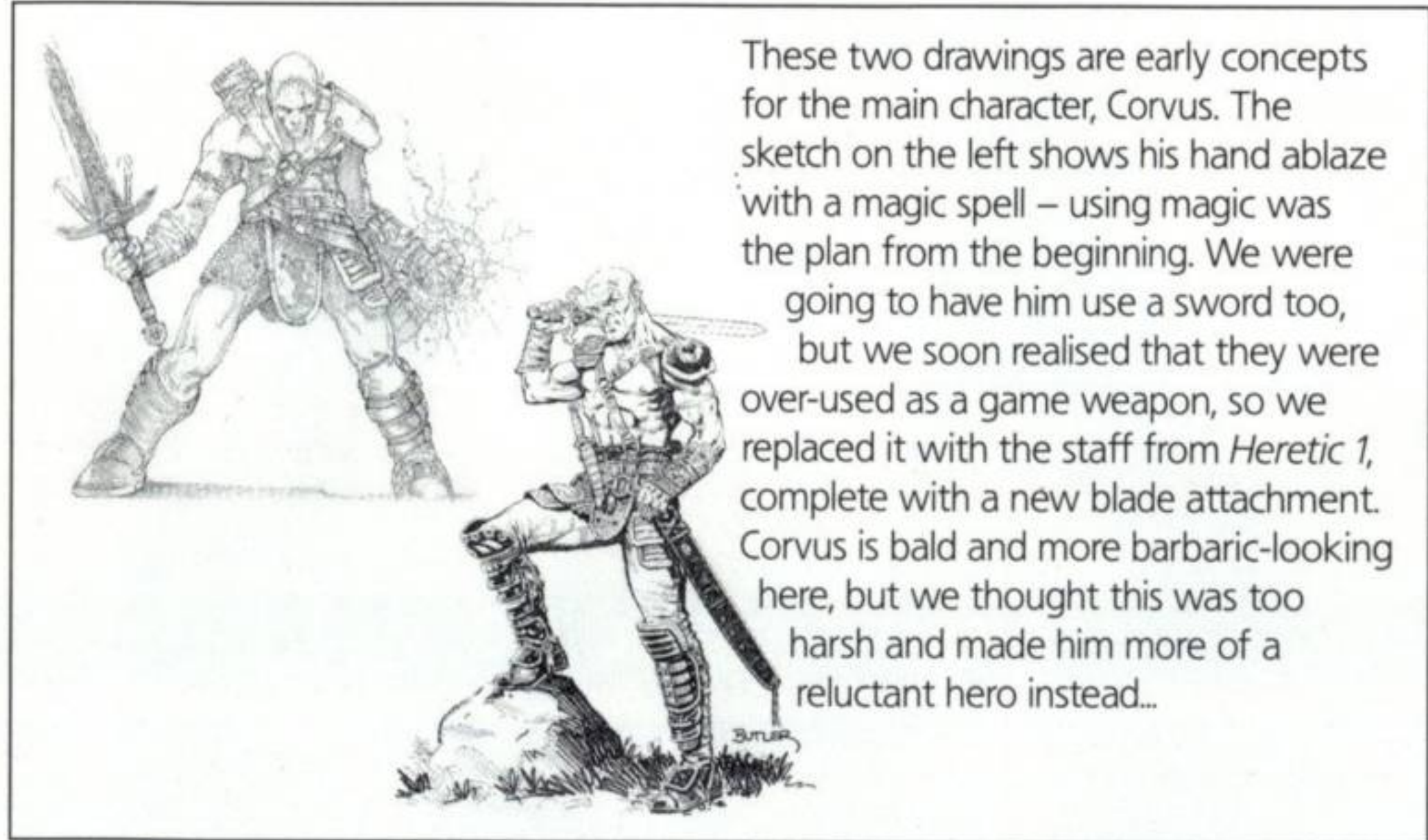
HERETIC II

Format: PC | Publisher: Activision | Price: £29.99 | Players: 1-32 | ★★★★★

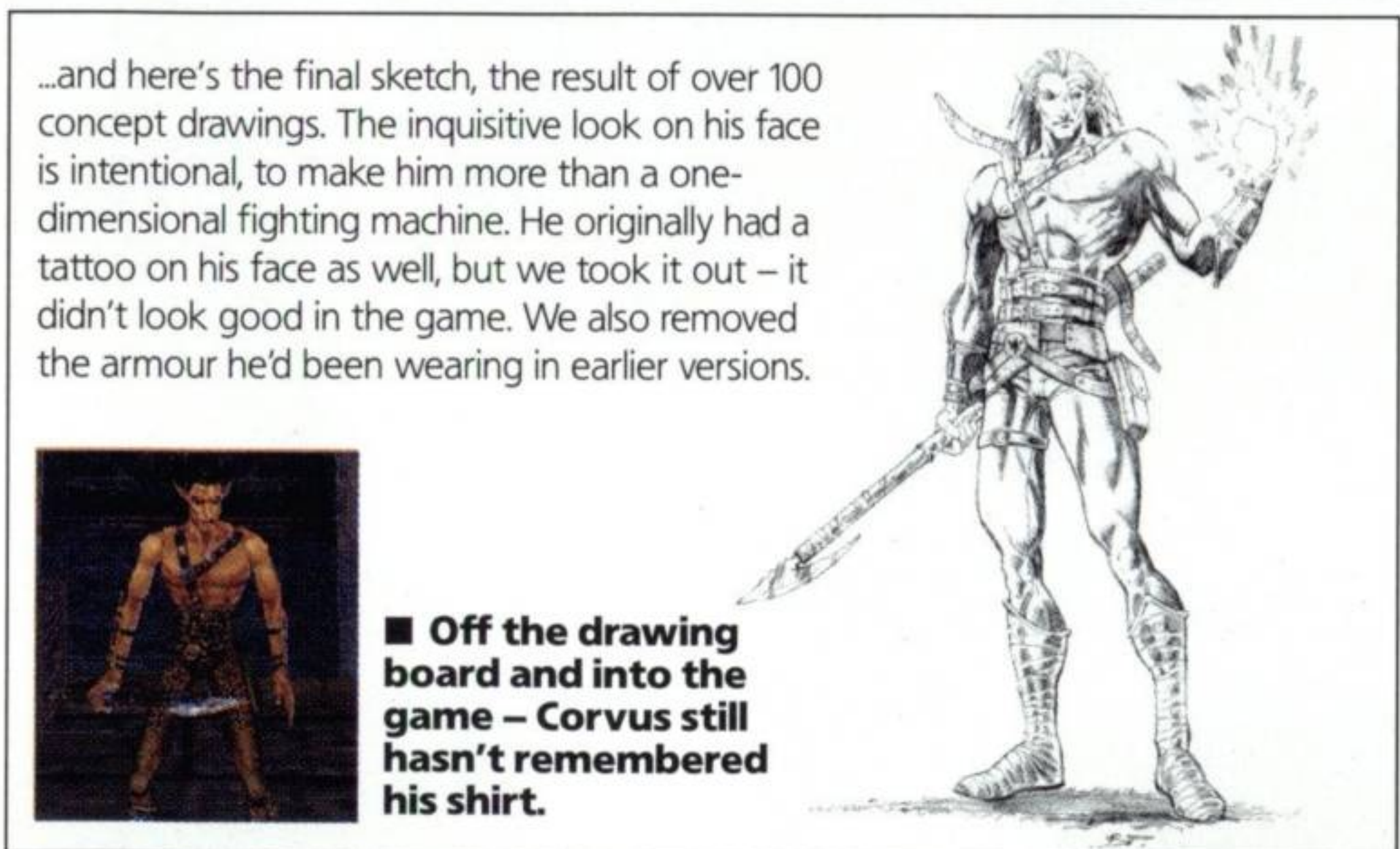
Run and shoot gameplay with glorious graphics...

Raven's *Heretic II* is a medieval *Tomb Raider* game with lots of lovely shooting. It's so good we made it our PC Game Of The Month last issue. If you're wondering how it came about, step right up as Brian Pelletier,

Heretic II's Project Leader and Lead Artist, takes us through the early concept sketches for the game. We've scattered some finished screenshots around too, so you can do a bit of comparison. Aren't we nice?



These two drawings are early concepts for the main character, Corvus. The sketch on the left shows his hand ablaze with a magic spell – using magic was the plan from the beginning. We were going to have him use a sword too, but we soon realised that they were over-used as a game weapon, so we replaced it with the staff from *Heretic 1*, complete with a new blade attachment. Corvus is bald and more barbaric-looking here, but we thought this was too harsh and made him more of a reluctant hero instead...



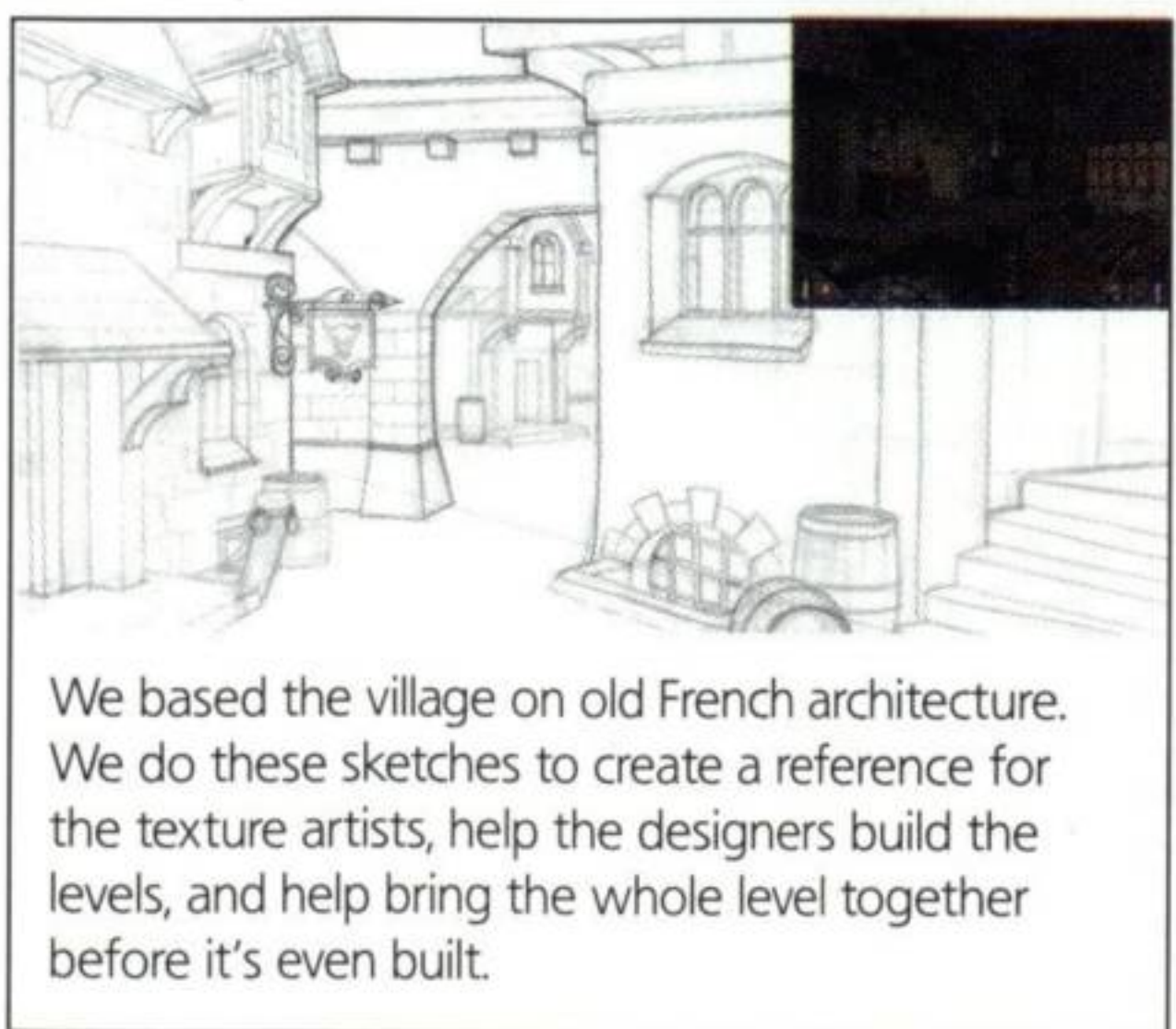
...and here's the final sketch, the result of over 100 concept drawings. The inquisitive look on his face is intentional, to make him more than a one-dimensional fighting machine. He originally had a tattoo on his face as well, but we took it out – it didn't look good in the game. We also removed the armour he'd been wearing in earlier versions.



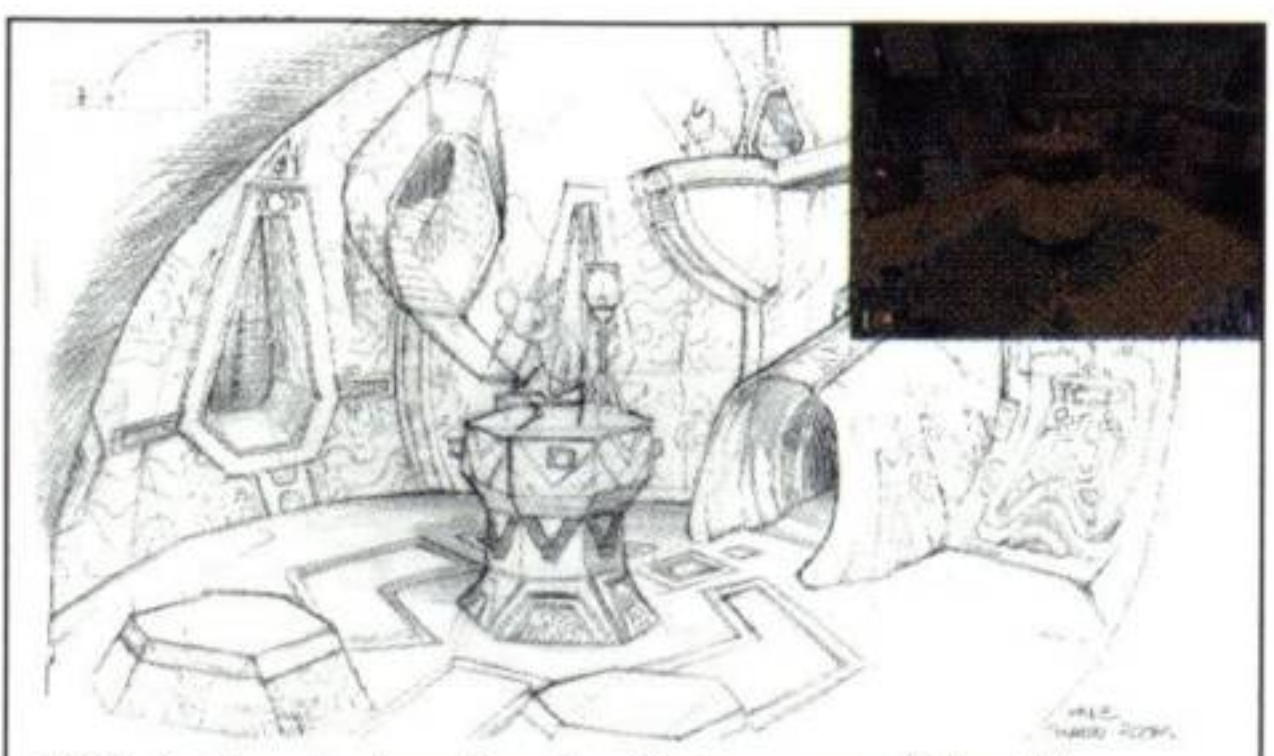
■ Off the drawing board and into the game – Corvus still hasn't remembered his shirt.



This was a very early illustration for the storybook novella of the game, which we had to create for Activision to approve the final game. It was such a good sketch that we used it as the final design. The actor who did Siernan's voice used it to get into character too.



We based the village on old French architecture. We do these sketches to create a reference for the texture artists, help the designers build the levels, and help bring the whole level together before it's even built.

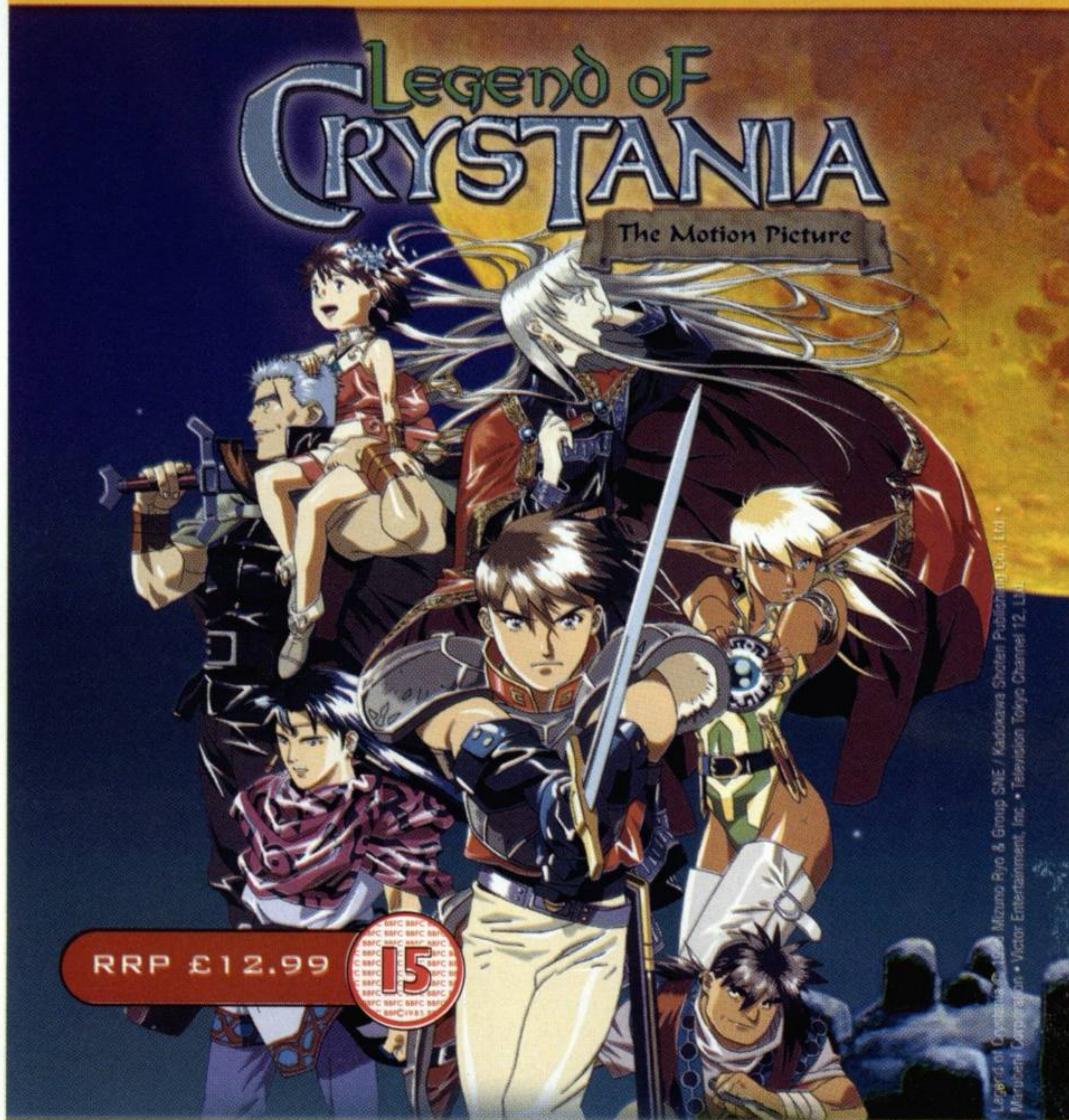


This is the design for the first room of the hive. The game level stayed true to the drawing; that's not always the case. The Hive levels were the hardest to design, and went through many changes before we got something that we liked.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY: BRIAN PELLETIER, JEFF DEWITT, JEFF BUTLER, ROB GEE, LES DORSCHIED, MARK A. NELSON, BROM



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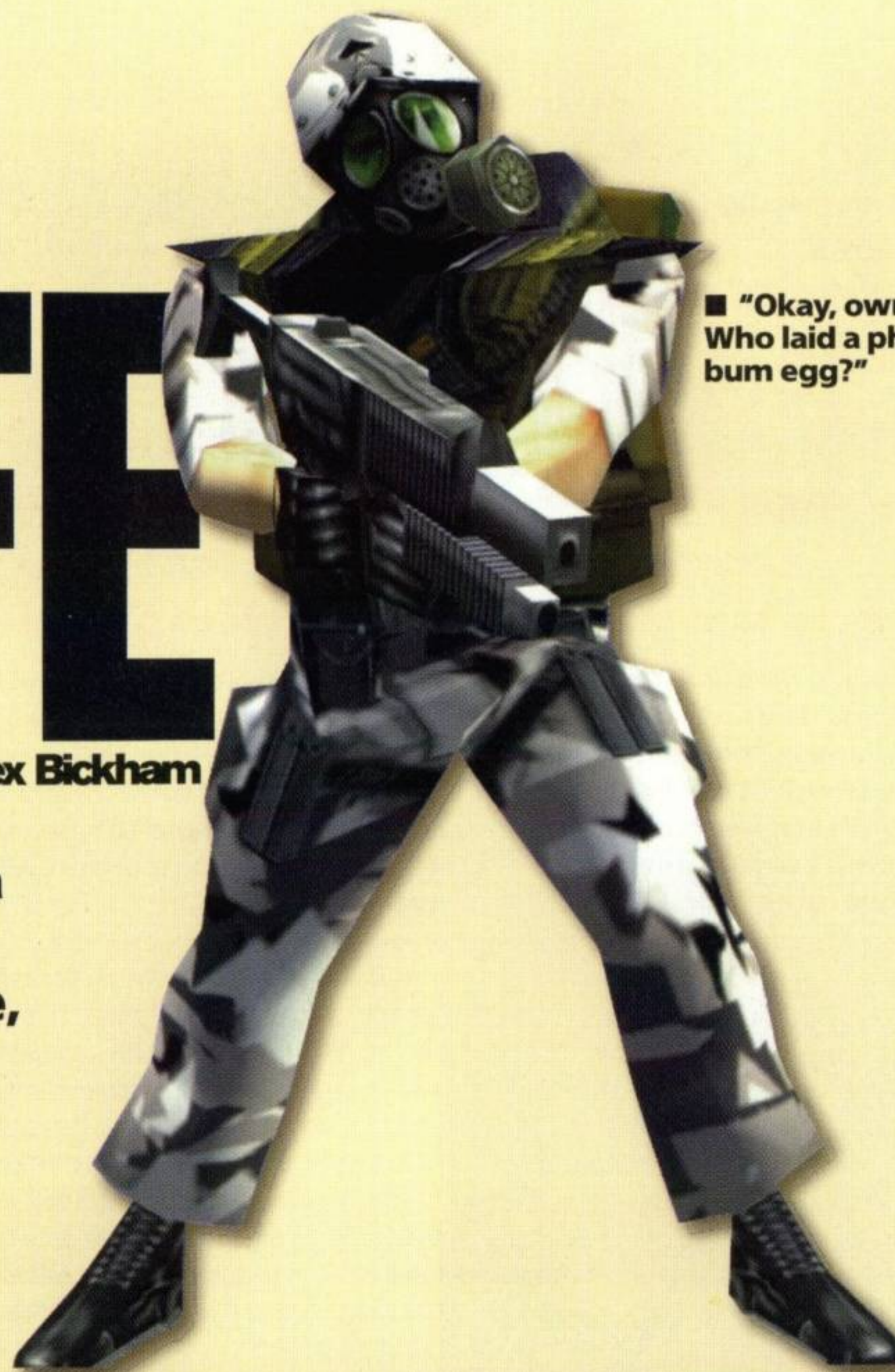
HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF...

HALF-LIFE

Format: **PC** | Publisher: **Sierra** | Price: **£39.99** | Players: **1-16** | ★★★★★

Written by | **Alex Bickham**

So, you've got *Half-Life*. It's big, it's beautiful... and it's a bitch. The decent thing to do, of course, is to play it on "Hard" and explore every crack and crevice of the game, thereby heightening the nut-clenching terror that Valve's baby offers. Try this approach, though, and a couple of levels in you'll begin to feel like a pig in a butcher's shop. Instead, here's a few pointers to keep you on the up-and-up. Tread carefully, Gordon...



■ "Okay, own up. Who laid a phantom bum egg?"

BASIC STRATEGIES

■ You'll be needing more than just a pistol to take these guys on...



HEALTH ISSUES

■ This chap's ducking for safety. Take a leaf out of his book.



GUNS ON THE RUN

■ The crowbar can be swift and lethal in toe-to-toe situations.



■ The crossbow: favoured choice of silent assassins worldwide.



■ In this case, empty a clip into his head. It'll do extra damage.



■ Use the Gauss-Gun's secondary mode of fire to take out large targets.



■ *Half-Life* just ain't the kind of game to let you wade in and wreak carnage on the enemy's unholy ass. You'll need to apply some thought to your attack strategies to get anywhere, and it's essential that you take things quietly and carefully. Most enemy troops and creatures in the game are alerted by your weaponry, so pick your targets carefully; if there's a couple of troops guarding a doorway, pick the first off from a distance with a crossbow bolt, and the other will run towards you, tripping the mine you set previously. No fuss, no bother, plenty of mess. Now, if you'd been traditional about it and run in with the

shotgun, the guards would simply waste you with grenades and bullets from their MP5s. The moral is, always look for ways to reduce enemy numbers with no risk to your person, and if you must get into a short-range slugging match (inevitable at points), then make sure you're only up against one or two baddies at most, otherwise, you'll be overwhelmed and chewed up in seconds. Generally speaking, take it slow and deal with each conflict as it comes along. There's no rush. You're only saving the world, after all...

■ The really tricky thing about *Half-Life* is that when the bad guys' weapons are used against you, most of them can kill you quickly. For this reason, you'll need all the armour and health you can get your mitts on. When you come across health/armour top-up points that you don't immediately need, then commit their location to memory, or at least write down where they are; you *will* want them later. Also, after topping up on these vital points, don't keep your finger on the Action key – any health/armour in excess of 100 that you try to absorb will be wasted if you do. And remember – ducking will

present the enemy with a smaller target, so you'll be less likely to take damage from ranged projectile weapons.

■ Every weapon is good for something, even the humble crowbar; a couple of sound cracks about the noggin, and even a government agent will tumble like a sack of spuds. Always try to counter the problems you meet with a suitable choice of weaponry, and try not to use more ammo than you need to get the job done. If you know there's a pack of Alien Slaves lying in wait at the bottom of that shaft, deposit a grenade in their midst. If there's a lone gunman manning a distant post, snipe him with the Python. Get the picture? Also, temper your enthusiasm to see big pretty lights with some common

sense; using up your basic weapons first means you'll have big-gun ammo to spare when you really need it. And every time you fire a weapon, press "Reload"; if you get into this habit, you'll be far less likely to get caught with your HEV pants down.

WATCH AND LEARN

It's imperative that you watch the events unfolding around you. As entertaining and plot-progressing as they are, they can also save your life with the lessons they proffer. Here are a few examples of *Half-Life* at its educational best.



■ John Doe scientist gets closer to an Air Barnacle than is really sensible. And the moral of this tale? Keep yer peepers peeled.



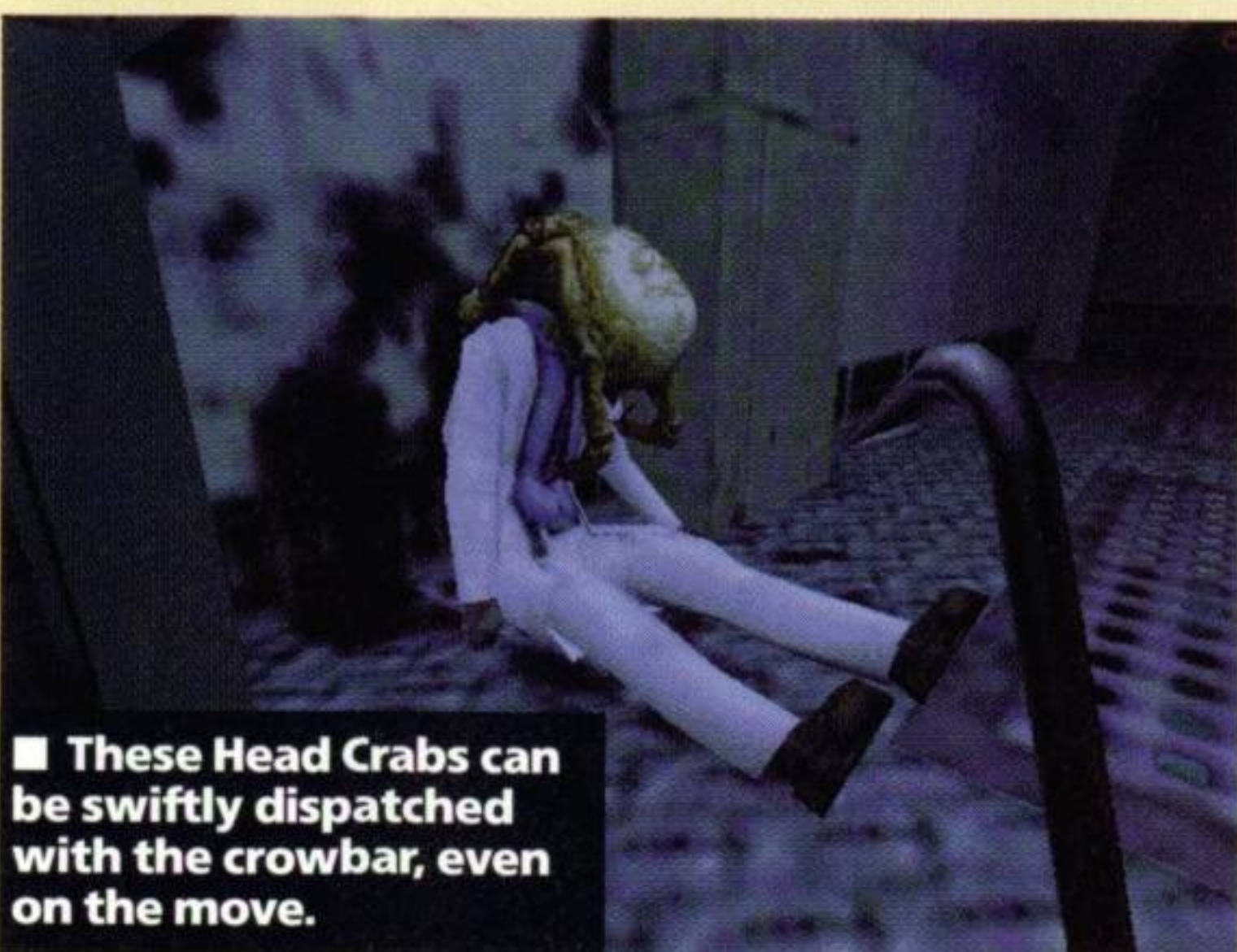
■ See this tri-tentacular fella? He hunts by sound. You'll discover this as a guard tries to unload a noisy pistol in his direction. Thank you my friend, for your noble sacrifice. Heh, heh, heh.



■ "Aah, the cavalry's finally arrived. But... what's this? Why are you pointing a gun at me? Couldn't we discuss thi..." Sigh. Sometimes you have to learn the hard way not to trust strangers.

FIGHT AMONG YOURSELVES

■ The Snark is best used to draw fire away from yourself in a firefight.



■ These Head Crabs can be swiftly dispatched with the crowbar, even on the move.

■ There's nothing quite like sowing the seeds of confusion in the enemy ranks, and some of *Half-Life's* weapons are designed especially for this. Try dropping a few Snarks into a room full of troops, and watch the chaos. In certain situations, it's actually possible to draw different types of enemies into combat with each other. Simply attract the attention of one variety, and head in the direction of another. If the two clash, they'll do your dirty work for you, leaving a single battered and bloody baddy for you to dispatch with relative ease. What this manoeuvre costs you in labour, it'll save you in health and ammo.

FUN WITH FIREARMS

Here's some useful weapon facts that may just help you win the day...

■ Perfecting your Gauss jump will pay dividends in a hairy situation.



■ You can "rocket jump" with the Gauss rifle's secondary mode of fire. time. Just don't hold it down for too long, or it's good-night Gordon...

■ Both the crossbow and the Python have long-range sniper modes.

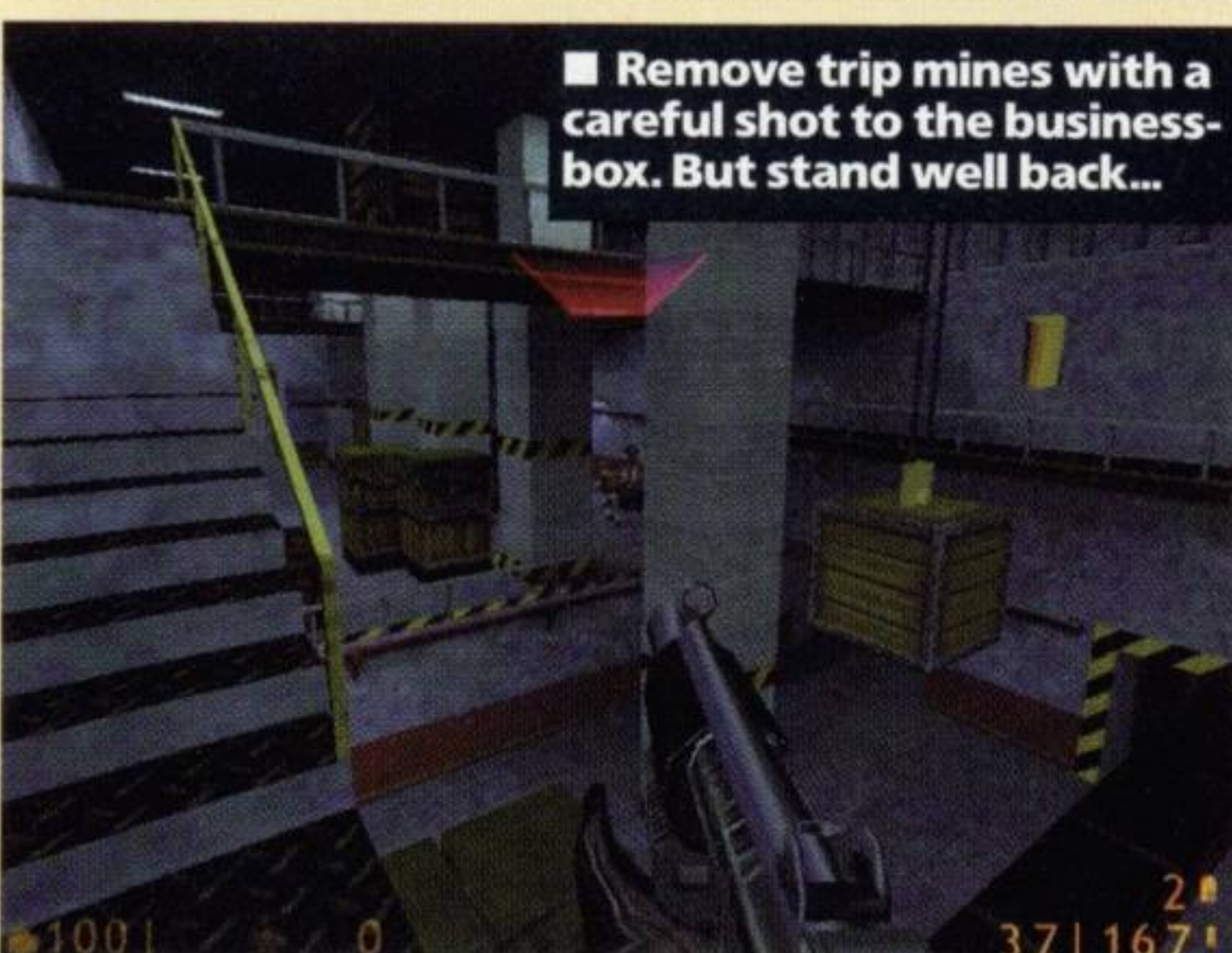
■ Snarks will not attack aliens, but they love the taste of human flesh.

■ Holding the Fire button down before throwing a grenade reduces its fuse

■ With the RPG's laser sight on, you can adjust the path of a missile after it's fired.

TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS

■ Confined spaces and Trip-Bombs make utterly lethal bed-partners.



■ Remove trip mines with a careful shot to the business-box. But stand well back...

■ Get to know the area in which you're fighting. If you're out-gunned or come under a surprise attack, pull the enemy back to previously covered terrain. You'll know the area better and, providing you've been thorough, it will also be clear of hostiles. This will give you time to form an attack plan and change your weapons, if need be. Use the terrain to your advantage: even the humble wooden crate can provide cover. But don't sit there and wait for too long – your enemy certainly won't and those government troops are demonically good shots with their grenades. Use the terrain around you to your advantage;

if there's an obvious bottleneck or narrow pass, use it to set up Trip Mine and Satchel Charge traps. If there are troops nearby, and you can get above ground level, drop a few Snarks. They'll locate the enemy for you; just follow your ears to the gunfire and squeals. Generally speaking, try to get the drop on the enemy; fighting from above means you can place grenades more easily, and you'll generally get a better view of the combat situation.



PLAYSTATION

CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED



■ A selection of secret bits to back up the huge guide we ran back in *Arcade 2*. Remember that? It took us ages.

To reach the Hot Cold bonus level (level 31), go to level 14 and ride about half-way through the level. Find the alien crossing sign on the left-hand side and you'll be taken to the Hot Cold bonus. To reach the Eggipus Rex bonus level (level 32), go to level 11 and take the

Yellow Gem ride. Continue until you reach the area where the huge dinosaur chases you. Allow the second pterodactyl to capture you, and you'll reach level 32. To gain five extra lives, start the game on level 14 and take the Yellow Gem ride. Go all the way to the end, and use a double-jump over the Yellow Gem. Next, use a double-jump to cross over the steel wall and you'll get your five extra lives.

PLAYSTATION

BUST-A-MOVE 4

■ Everybody's favourite small-boys-turned-into-dinosaurs are back (for the fourth time) in puzzle form. And there's a bonus world, too, apparently.

To find a bonus world, press **Start**, **Left**, **Right**, **Left**, **Start** at the title screen. You'll hear a sound, and a small face will appear at the bottom-right portion of the screen to confirm your finger tappings.



PLAYSTATION



ASTEROIDS

■ Get access to the original *Asteroids*.

When "Press Start" appears at the title screen, hold **Select** and press **Start** three times, **Start**, **Start** twice then **Start**. An option to play the *Classic Asteroids* will now appear on the menu, so climb into your flares and prepare to get retro.

SECRET STUFF...

NOW PLAYING

CRASH 3/SPYRO

Format: **PlayStation**

■ If you've got a PlayStation, your personal library of games probably includes either *Crash Bandicoot 3* or *Spyro the Dragon*. But did you know that they each contain a demo of the other?

If you've got *Spyro the Dragon*, shove the disc in

and wait for the screen that says "Press Start". Then simply press **L1** and **Start** together. A secret *Crash Bandicoot 3* demo will spill forth from your TV screen.

If you have the full version of *Crash 3*, wait for the title screen and press **Up**, **Up**, **Down**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **Left**, **Right**, **Start**. You'll find yourself with a *Spyro* demo to play at will.



■ Crash (left) and Spyro (right) go on holiday.

HOW TO CHEAT, CHEAT, CHEAT AT... MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Avoid trouble, find the gas mask and get lots of good stuff...

On the train roof section of *Mission Impossible*, the secret is to go slow. Tip-toe up the train roof (staying on the right side). Provided that you move slowly, only one thug will appear at a time, and you should prevent two to three guys, plus the cars and helicopters shooting at you at once. The simplest way to take out the cars (besides using the rocket launcher), is to shoot at the tyres.

The easy way of getting through the Terminal Room is to push down on the control stick until you are perfectly straight facing down. Then hit "C-down" until the view is as far as it will go. While you hold down on the control stick, simply push and hold "A" until

you get to the yellow laser beam. (You won't get hit by the red laser beams at the top). Repeat this, remembering to keep holding down on the control stick.

Finally, in case you're having trouble finding the gas mask, here's where to go: in the Sewage Control level, keep on going to both corners on each hallway and you will find little health boxes. Press A to open the box and drink the medication. The first of the green iron boxes should be in the right-hand corner along another hallway. Shoot the silver box for the gas mask.

And the cheats? Enter the following during the Mission Select screen.

INVINCIBILITY	R, Z, C-Down, R, C-Down
INFINITE AMMO	C-Up, Z, C-Left, Z, L
GIANT HEAD MODE	C-Down, L, C-Up, C-Right, L
TURBO MODE	C-Up, Z, C-Up, Z, C-Up
KID MODE	C-Down, C-Up, R, L, Z
BIG HEAD MODE	C-Down, R, C-Up, L, C-Left
BIG FEET MODE	C-Down, R, Z, C-Right, C-Left
UZI	C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, C-Down, R
MINI ROCKET LAUNCHER	R, L, C-Left, C-Right, C-Down
SILENCER	C-Up, L, C-Right, C-Left, C-Up
HI POWER	R, L, C-Down, C-Up, C-Up



Once you've activated Kid mode, go to the level on the map "Recover NOC List" then go to the level "Embassy Function". After the intro, talk to the couple looking at the painting, then go to the main room and look at the piano player - his head is sticking through his chair. Talk to him, then go to the bar and talk to Dieter Harmon. You'll still talk to him even though neither of you can see over the bar. If you keep talking to him, the drink and nausea powder will appear, slide over to you and disappear. Then you need to get Scofield - the psycho woman who is following you -

into the bathroom and knock her out. After that, Ethan will put her in the toilet. Look at her, she'll be actually in the toilet with her head in the bowl. Start walking back to the main room and talk to the couple with their heads sticking through the chairs and get the score. Then give the piano player the score. The Administrator's Aid will come down. Get him to drink the poisoned wine and follow him to the bathroom; he will be splashing water on himself out of mid air. Knock him out. After Ethan drags him into the stall, he too will be sticking out of the toilet bowl.

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH 2: EXTREME RACING USA

When you get to the loop on the track map in Las Vegas, hang a sharp left into the parking lot with the white grid. Grab the key from the corner, then run diagonally into the corner behind the key. Provided you are going fast enough, your car will shake side to side, and fall through the bottom of the track, leaving you to drive bizarrely around on a blank blue surface. There are plenty of cheats as well...

GRAVITY	Hold Z and press C-Up, C-Down, C-Up, C-Down, C-Up, C-Down
CONE MINES	Hold C-Right and press R, L, R, L, R, L
CAR MINES	C-Right, C-Right, Z, C-Down, C-Up, Z, C-Left, C-Left
BURNING WRECK	Hold C-Up and press Z four times
SUPER SPEED	Hold Left and Right then press C-Up, C-Down, C-Left, C-Right
INSIDE OUT CAR	Hold all of C-Down, C-Right, R, L and Z in order
INVINCIBILITY	Press C-Up, Left, Right. Repeat four times
INVISIBLE CAR	Hold C-Up and C-Right and C-Down. Repeat seven times
INVISIBLE TRACK	Hold L, R and Z, then press all four C buttons seven to eight times
SUPER TYRES	Hold L and R, then press all four C buttons six to seven times
KILLER RATS	Hold L and R, then press Z four times
LEVITATION	Hold L, R and Z, then press all four C buttons four times
NY CABS	Hold R, L and Z in order, then press C-Up, C-Down and C-Up



TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Riding high in the charts at present and, like its big brother, riddled with cheats. Enter the following as your name:

CMNOHITS	Disable collision detection
FLEX	Better traction
CMDISCO	Disco background
JHAMMO	All tracks unlocked
CMLOCK	No tracks unlocked
CMCOPTER	Helicopter view
CMTOON	Cartoon background
CMSTARS	Starry sky background
CMGARAGE	Bonus cars
GONGOGO	All cars
TANK	Shoot other cars
CMCHUN	Go-kart mode
CMMAYHEM	Aggressive cars
CMHANDY	Big hands on steering wheel
CMLOGRAV	Low gravity
CMRAINUP	Reverse falling rain
XBOOSTME	Fast mode
CMFOLLOW	Film camera view
CMUPSIDE	Upside-down view

SMALL SOLDIERS

A strange release, this, that bore about as much similarity to the film as a banana does to an elephant (absolutely none at all). You may have been swayed by the huge advertising campaign into buying this oddity, though, in which case here's how to access the different levels. Type the following codes in at the Password screen:

Level	Password
Gorgon	⊗, ⊗, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊗, ⊗, ⊗
Dimensional Temple	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Floating Fortress	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Spirit Bog	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Canyon Village	⊗, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Creepy Caverns	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Space Ship	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Hall Of Patriots	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Graveyard Of War Machines	⊗, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Nuclear Mine	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕
Launch Center	⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕, ⊕



GLOVER



To open the portals during gameplay, pause the game and press C-Up, C-Right, C-Right, C-Down, C-Left, C-Down, C-Up, C-Right. And to get the secret characters? Press Start and enter:

Fish Eye	C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, Left-C, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right
Mad Garibs	C-Down, C-Right, C-Down, C-Up, C-Left, C-Down, C-Left, C-Up
Enemy Ball	C-Left, C-Down, C-Up, C-Right, C-Left, C-Left, C-Down, C-Down
Froggy	C-Up, C-Right, C-Down, C-Right, C-Up, C-Left, C-Left, C-Up
Tilt Camera	C-Left, C-Right, C-Up, C-Up, C-Down, C-Right, C-Down, C-Right

NINTENDO 64

SOUTH PARK 64

■ You want cheat codes? It's like you read our minds. On the menu screen enter the following codes on the "Enter Cheat" option:

BOBBYBIRD	All cheats enabled
SCREWYOUGUYS	Show credits activated
OMGKKYB	All characters activated
SLAPUPMEAL	Starvin Marvin activated
PHAERT	Phillip activated
RAFT	Terrance activated
DOROTHYSFRIEND	Mr Garrison activated
CHEATINGISBAD	Mr Mackey activated
LOVEMACHINE	Chef activated
CHECKATACO	Wendy activated
FISHNCHIPS	Pip activated
KICKME	Ike activated
ALLWOMAN	Mrs Cartman activated
GOODSCIENCE	Mephisto activated
STARINGFROG	Jimbo activated
HAWKING	Ned activated
OUTRAGE	Big Gay Al activated
ELVISLIVES	Barbrady activated
MAJESTIC	Alien activated
THEEARTHMOVED	Level select activated
VEGGIEHEAVEN	Skinny activated
MEGANOOGGIN	Big heads activated
FATTERKNACKER	Unlimited ammo activated
FATKNACKER	All weapons activated
ASSMAN	Invincibility activated
PLANEARIUM	Pen and ink activated

PC

PANDEMONIUM 2

■ Enter these codes on the Password screen of this recently re-released game:

IMMORTAL	31 lives
NEVERDIE	Invincibility
HORMONES	Full health
OCMCKKEJ	Level select
MAKMYDAY	Weapons
GONAHURL	Rolling camera view
SKATBORD	Speed mode
GENETICS	Mutant mode
ACIDDUDE	Psychedelic textures
JUSTKIDN	Regenerating monsters

PC

SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOR DIVISION

■ Press T, type one of the following codes and press Enter:

MPCAMERA	Adjust camera
MPLIGHTSCAPE	Adjust lightscape
MPKFA	All weapons and armor
MPPOS	Display location
MPARMOR	Full armor
MPGOD	God mode
MPTEARS	Reload weapons
MPHEALTH	Restore health
MPCLIP	Walk through walls

PC

TRESPASSER

■ Press Ctrl and F11. A cursor will pop up in the bottom-left corner. Type the desired code, then press Enter. When you've finished press Ctrl-F11 again.

BIONICWOMAN	Slow motion
INVUL	Invulnerability
LOC	Displays your location
GORE 2	Enhances level of blood
DINOS	Pauses dinosaurs
BONES	Shows the outline of objects you can interact with
WOO	Unlimited ammunition
TNEXT	Transports you to important places in the level
WIN	Ending movie

■ To select your level, at the main menu, hold Ctrl, Shift, Q, W and then release W. You can now choose your starting level.

There's a hidden gun, too. In the area where you have to pile up boxes to get over the cliff, pick up the smallest rock possible. Try to throw it to knock down the box on the farthest left. If you hit it just

right you should have knocked down a Bannell1 M1 Super 90 that's yours for the taking.

And the secret level? In the small town, go behind the church and build a staircase against the outer wall with boxes. Climb the staircase and walk to the left along the top of the wall. Keep walking on the wall keeping to the right.

PLAYSTATION

SPYRO THE DRAGON

■ Fancy a Ninety-Nine?

Pause the game, enter the Inventory menu, and press @ six times, then @, Up, @, Left, @, Right and @. You'll now have 99 lives, which will come in handier than, er... a spare pair of hands.

PC

SiN

■ During a game press the ~ key to bring up the console window, then type one of the following:

/SUPERFUZZ	God Mode
/HEALTH 999	999 health
/WUSS	All weapons
/WALLFLOWER	No target mode
/NOCOLLISION	No clipping mode
/SPAWN HELIGUN	Spawn the gun from the chopper
/SPAWN COOKIES	Creates cookies
/SPAWN COIN	Creates a coin
/SAVE #	Saves game to specified slot #
/LOAD #	Loads game from specified slot #
MAP	Warp to any map



NINTENDO 64

BODY HARVEST



■ Use the name ICHEAT. Then, while playing, press A, Right, C-Down, C-Right, C-Up, A, Left. This gives you all the weapons available in the local area. Press Left, A, Right, Down to give the aliens huge legs.

■ Press C-Down, C-Up, Up, Z, Z, Left, C-Right to make your weapons stronger than normal.

■ Press C-Down, Up, Z, Z, C-Right, Right when a Harvester is nearby. A mutant alien will appear.

I DID THAT!

NOW PLAYING

TOCA TOURING CARS 2

Format: PlayStation

TOCA's project leader on the making of the game...

■ Codemaster's racing sequel was our PlayStation Game Of The Month back in *Arcade 1*, and it's been riding high in the charts ever since. Here's Gavin Raeburn, the Project Leader, talking about his baby.

Q. What was the hardest bit to get right?

A. The graphics – we had to completely redo the *TOCA 1* visuals. Fine-tuning the car physics and mechanics was surprisingly difficult too, especially as there were 16 cars riding around the track that all needed to act believably. Not many other PlayStation racers can boast that many cars, I can tell you.

Q. Which bit did you spend most time on for least reward?

A. The link-up. We spent ages making sure that it worked so

that every single-player mode could be linked-up with another machine, but no-one really took any notice.

Q. What bit of TOCA 2 are you most proud of?

A. It's difficult to pull out a single bit, because we're so proud of the entire game. We took everything that we'd achieved in *TOCA 1* and improved upon it. It's the most realistic representation of the sport out there.

Q. Is there room for improvement?

A. I would like the race replays to have been a little slicker, to try and match *Gran Turismo*'s, but I don't want to get too picky.

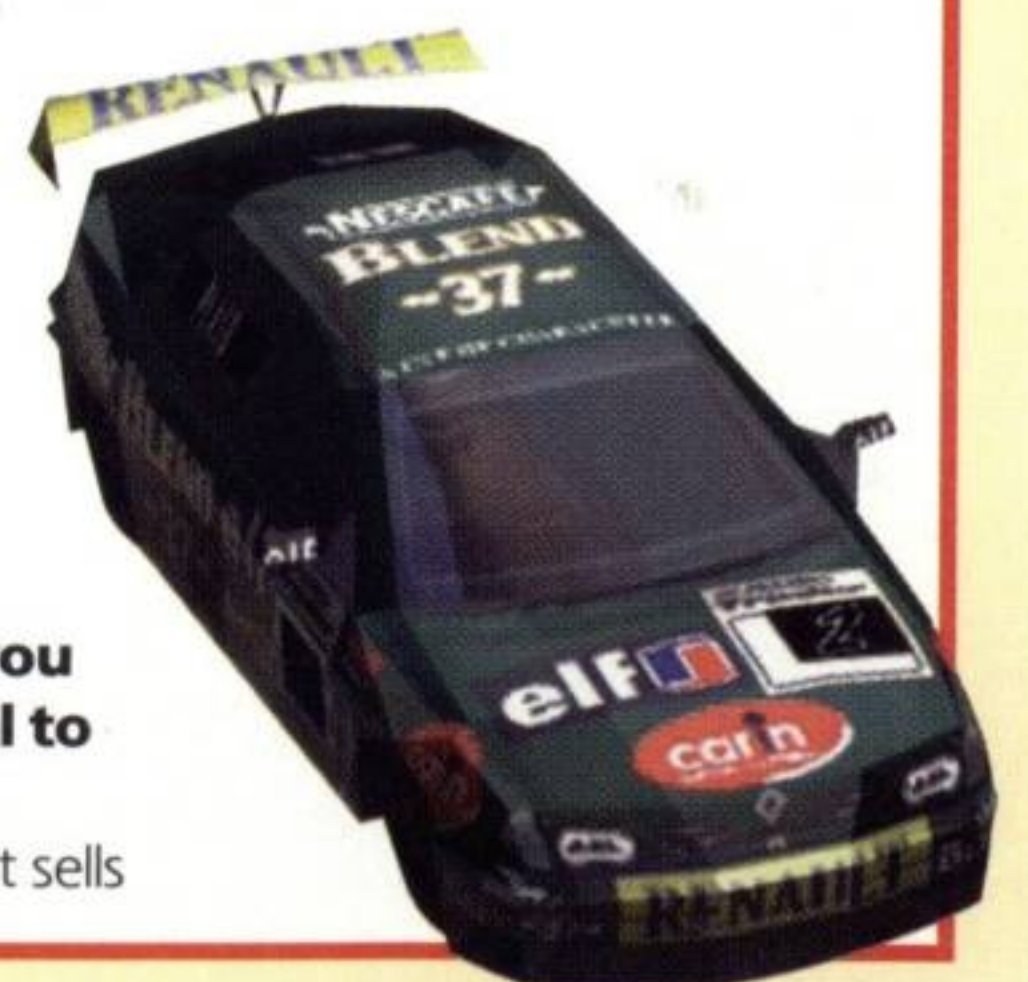
Q. Which game do you see as the main rival to TOCA 2?

A. Any racing game that sells

well, especially a rallying title such as *Colin McRae*. Obviously, though, *Gran Turismo* is our main rival, just like it is for every other driving game out there.

Q. Give us a tip.

A. Brake, brake, brake. Everyone glues their finger to the accelerator button when they first play *TOCA*, but as soon as you start slowing down for corners, it all becomes a lot easier.



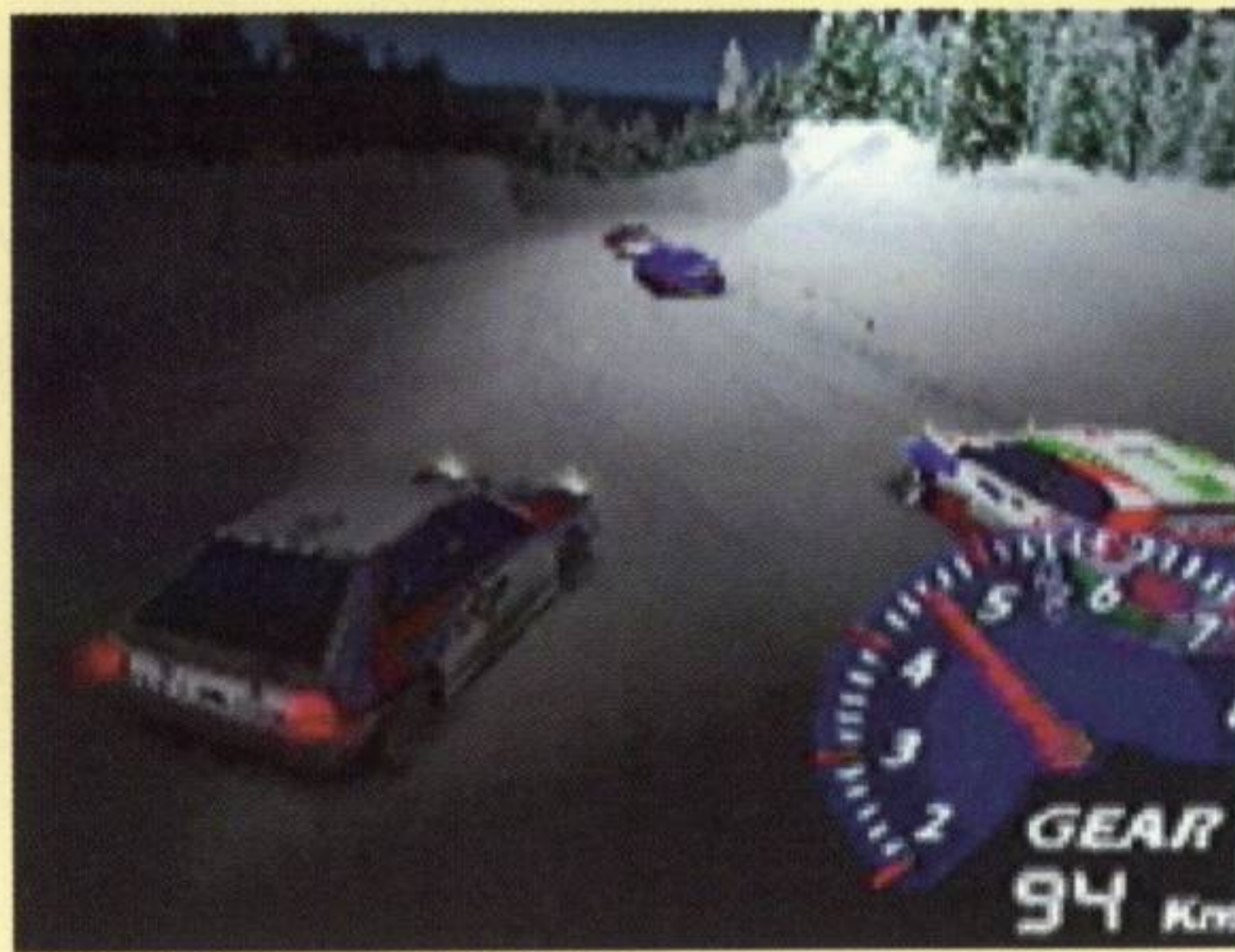
HOW TO GET ACE STUFF IN... V-RALLY

Access all tracks, restart a race and other stuff...

■ Watch the game's loading sequence carefully; when you see the Infogrames logo begin to appear on a white background, quickly press Up, Down, then immediately hold the **△** button and press **⊙**

You should see the words "LOCK OFF" in green letters, right in the middle of the screen; this enables you to access all of the tracks in Arcade or Championship mode.

As soon as you see the words "LOCK OFF," release the **△** and **⊙** buttons and you can enter any or all of the additional codes show below; you must hold down these buttons before the Infogrames logo is coloured in, and you must continue to hold them until the memory card message appears:



■ Hold L1 and the words "TIME OFF" will appear; now the race won't end if the timer runs out in Arcade mode.

■ Hold L2 and the words "NARROW ON" will appear; now the tracks will be narrower in Arcade mode.

■ Press Left, then press and continue to hold R2, and the words "RESTART ON" will appear.

This adds a "Restart" option to the "Pause" menu in both Arcade and Championship modes, enabling you to restart a race if something goes wrong.

■ Press Left, then Right and the words "FULL DEBUG" will appear. Now you can see the programmers' debugging data on the screen and a new "Pause" menu option called "Memory". Note: you can't use the "Restart" option if you enter this code.



COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

■ Type 1982GONZO: (including the colon) while playing the game. For instant Movement, type Shift-X. For Invincibility type Ctrl-I. To become invisible, press Shift-V.

It is also possible to move barrels without the use of Tiny. Line up the barrel between your commando and the spot you want it, then click on it repeatedly to keep the motion going.

And the Passwords?

- Level 2 4JJXB
- Level 3 ZDD1T
- Level 4 RFF1J
- Level 5 K4TCG
- Level 6 MIR4M
- Level 7 7QVJV
- Level 8 K99XC
- Level 9 AAAX1
- Level 10 JSGPW
- Level 11 CMODD
- Level 12 JGHD3
- Level 13 PUUWW
- Level 14 WT348
- Level 15 139P0
- Level 16 L9IPV
- Level 17 5LIMV
- Level 18 YJOJG
- Level 19 YFCWJ
- Level 20 GDKWT

ACE OF EMPIRES: THE RISE OF ROME

■ Press Enter while playing, type in the desired code and then press Enter again.

- STORMBILLY Gives you a powerful robot
- KING ARTHUR Turns the eagle into a dragon
- DIEDIEDIE All opponents die
- E=MC2 TROOPER Creates a super trooper
- RESIGN You resign
- REVEAL MAP Reveals the whole map
- PEPPERONI PIZZA 1,000 food
- COINAGE 1,000 gold
- WOODSTOCK 1,000 wood
- QUARRY 1,000 stone
- PHOTON MAN Creates a nuke trooper
- GAIA Control the animals
- HARI KARI Commit suicide
- FLYING DUTCHMAN Catapult ships can go on land
- NO FOG Removes fog of war
- STEROIDS Buildings and people are created instantly
- BIGDADDY Fast car with a rocket launcher
- KILLX Kill player X
- HOMERUN Win the current scenario
- BIG BERTHA Heavy catapults are stronger
- ICBM Ballistas get 100 range points
- HOYOHoyo Priests are faster and stronger
- DARK RAIN Composite bowmen turn into trees
- BLACK RIDER Horse archers become black riders

GAMEPLAY CHALLENGE

Finished a game? Think it's got no more to offer you? Think again. There's plenty of extra value to be found in even the most dust-covered, Dodo-like game collection. You want proof? Try this selection of challenges...



PLAYSTATION

TOCA 2

■ Challenge: **to get disqualified as quickly as possible**

■ Time to beat: **2 minutes 30 seconds**

■ After reading Mr Raeburn's thoughts on his baby in *Kick Ass* this issue, you should be ready for our challenge. It's tricky, but its violence will give

you a warm feeling inside. Start a normal championship, begin the first race proper (you can skip the qualifying lap), and then get chucked out of the race as fast as you can. The best way to succeed, we reckon, is to smash into other cars head-on, which means racing around the track the wrong way to meet your rivals as quickly as possible. Stop the clock when "Disqualified!" appears. Get to it!

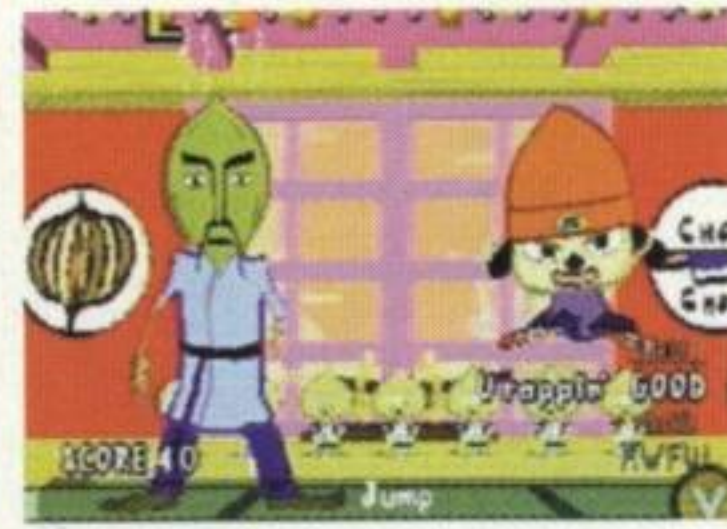


PLAYSTATION

ISS PRO '98

■ Challenge: **score with your goalie**

■ You should have heard the screams of staff writer Sam as he tried this one out. He didn't manage it, but maybe you will. Start an exhibition match against the computer - we don't care what teams you choose, although it had better not be you playing Brazil against the computer's Faeroe Isles - pass the ball back to your goalie and attempt to score against the computer using the goalkeeper *and no-one else*. If you have to pass at any point, it doesn't count. You *will* swear.



PLAYSTATION

PARAPPA THE RAPPER

■ Challenge: **the Sound of Silence**

■ This is a classic challenge that Japanese games players were trying on for size almost as soon as the game was released. If you're the sort who dances like the audience on *Top Of The Pops*, though, you should probably give it a miss. The idea is simply to see how well you can keep the rhythm by completing the game with the sound on your TV completely muted. It is possible. Honest.



NINTENDO 64

LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME

■ Challenge: **kill the spinning green sods**

■ If you've been a-wandering out in the Desert Colossus, you know the pain and anger that comes from dealing with the green jellies that pop up out of the sand to smack you up. Well, we want you to teach them a lesson. Simply warp to the Colossus using the Song of Spirit, and then kill as many of the little green buggers as you can in two minutes. And the catch? You're *not* allowed to use spin attacks or spells. Give 'em one from us.



PC

RAINBOW SIX

■ Challenge: **complete Level Three without setting up a plan**

■ There's nothing more tedious than having to sit down with Rainbow Six for an hour, working out your assault tactics, so this is the challenge you've been waiting for. Complete Level Three with the minimum number of waypoints that the computer lets you get away with, using the other men as "extra lives". Stealth is the key. Just ramp up the difficulty level if you manage it too easily.

NOW PLAYING

PC

BLOOD 2

■ While playing, press T and type in the following. Repeat the weapon codes for the dual version.

MPGOD	God mode
MPKFA	All weapons
MPAMMO	Full ammo
MPCLIP	Spectator mode (no clipping)
MPHEALTHY	Full health
MPBEEFCAKE	Increased power (more gore)
MPKILLEMALL	Kills all monsters on level
MPSPEEDUP	Increases speed
MPSTRONGER	Increases strength
MPCALEB	Play as Caleb
MPOPHELIA	Play as Ophelia
MPISHMAEL	Play as Ishmael
MPGABBY	Play as Gabriella
MPBERETTA	Gives you the Beretta
MPSUBMACHINEGUN	Sub-machine gun
MPFLAREGUN	Flaregun
MPSHOTGUN	Shotgun
MPSNIPERRIFLE	Sniper rifle
MPHOWITZER	Howitzer
MPNAPALMCANNON	Napalm cannon
MPSINGULARITY	Singularity generator
MPASSAULTRIFLE	Assault rifle
MPBUGBUSTER	Bug buster
MPMINIGUN	Mini-gun
MPLASERRIFLE	Cobalco laser rifle
MPTESLACANNON	Tesla cannon
MPVOODOO	Voodoo doll
MPTHEORB	The Orb
MPLIFELEECH	Life leech
MPGOSHOPPING	All items
MPNICENURSE	+25 health
MPREALLYNICENURSE	+300 health
MPWARD	+25 armour
MPNEWCROWARD	+100 armor
MPCARBONFIBER	Willpower power-up
MPTAKEOFFSHOES	Invisibility
MPHERKERMUR	Triple-damage power-up
MPBEANSOFCOOLNESS	Nice selection of weapons

PC

POWERSLIDE

■ You need to enter the following codes while playing Powerslide. You'll need to hold Alt as you type. The codes don't have to be capitalised.

BOMB	Fires a bouncy grenade that detonates after three seconds. On detonation the grenade creates a blast that affects nearby racers
BURN	Fires a ball of fire directly from the front of your car and explodes on impact
LAUNCH	Forms an out-of-body experience. Use the mouse to control the screen
JUMP	Subsequently pressing Alt causes your car to jump in the air
TWISTER	In one-player, your car acts like the centre of a hurricane and causes nearby cars to be flung around
SUCK	In one-player, this acts like a magnet and pulls you toward other racers
ICBM	When you accelerate, your car ignores gravity, and so your speed increases dramatically. Your car will head in the direction it is facing
SLIPPY	Decreases all the cars' grip on the track
STICKY	Increases all the cars' grip on the track
LIGHT	Increases acceleration dramatically
LUNAR	Decreases gravity affecting you and your opponents
HOVER	Your car hovers above the ground and the terrain type doesn't affect traction
BLAST	Blasts all other cars away from yours
SPIDER	Enables your car to grip on any surface, so you can even drive up walls
APOLLO	When you press Alt your car acts like a helicopter
SLEEP	The other drivers fall asleep at the wheel and don't steer
GLIDER	Your car acts like a glider. It dives when you push Up, and pulls back when you press Down
WARP	All the other cars slow down and run at lower speeds

NINTENDO 64

GOLDENEYE

■ **Paintbrush weapon**
There's a secret weapon, you know. It's, er, a paintbrush. To get it in a one-player game, go to the dam, kill the guys that get in your way but don't pick up any guns. Go to the tower that holds the Sniper Rifle, de-select your PP7 and choose

your hand. Pick up the Sniper Rifle and hit A three times. In multi-player mode, set guns to Sniper Rifles, set the mode to any other than The Man With The Golden Gun, select any character and start any level. Pick up nothing but the Sniper Rifle and press A quickly twice.



■ **Meanwhile, here's how to gain access to the hidden characters. On the Multi-Player Character Select screen, look at the last available character (Mishkin or Moonraker Elite). Then:**

- Hold L and R and press C-Left
- Hold the L button and press C-Up
- Hold the L and R buttons and press Left. This will select a different character on-screen
- Hold the L button and press Right
- Hold the R button and press Down
- Hold the L and R buttons and press C-Left
- Hold the L button and press C-Up
- Hold the L and R buttons and press Right
- Hold the L and R buttons and press C-Down
- Hold the L button and press Down

NINTENDO 64

TUROK 2: SEEDS OF EVIL

■ In the cheat menu, type:

STOMPEN	Big hands and feet mode
UBERNOODLE	Big head mode
LIGHTSOUT	Blackout mode
WHATSATEXTUREMAP	Gouraud mode
IGOTABFA	Pen and ink mode
HOLASTICKBOY	Stick men mode
PIPSQUEAK	Tiny enemy mode

■ If the Zombies are giving you hassle in level 2, turn the blood colour to "off." They'll stop throwing their bloody limbs at you, making it *much* easier to kill the dead sisters. And you did know why you should kill seagulls in Level 1? It opens the gate on top of the ladder near the city.



NINTENDO 64

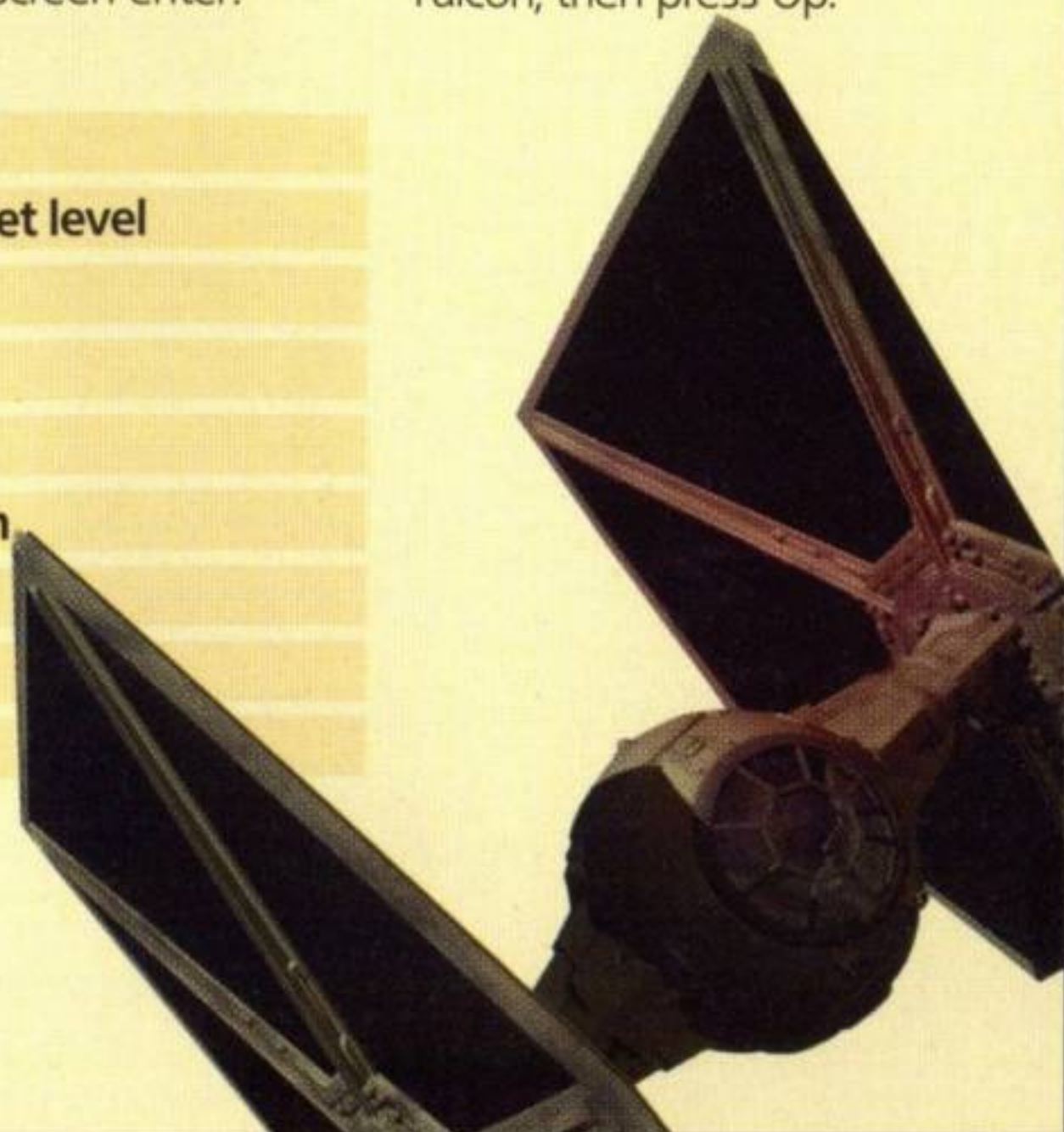
STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

■ If you want to just fly around Tatooine without having to worry about the mission objectives, destroy the probe droids shooting the little homesteads, but don't shoot the ones that

are just hovering around. Your fellow rogues won't be able to destroy them, which leaves you free to roam the planet. As for cheats, at the Password screen enter:

■ And if you fancy flying the TIE-Interceptor, use the FARMBOY cheat to select the Millennium Falcon. Wait until the camera has stopped on the Falcon, then press Up.

ACE	Increase difficulty
CHICKEN	Play as an AT-ST in a secret level
IGIVEUP	Infinite lives
DIRECTOR	View all FMVs
MAESTRO	Hear all music
FARMBOY	Fly the Millennium Falcon
TOUGHGUY	Super shields
RADAR	Improved RADAR
CREDITS	Watch credits



NINTENDO 64

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER '98

■ For Big-Head mode, wait for the words "Press Start" to flash on the title screen. Now press C-Up, C-Up, C-Down, C-Down, C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, B, A. Hold Z button and press Start.

PC

CARMAGEDDON 2: CARPOCALYPSE NOW

■ During the game, press Shift then Enter to open your doors. Do this while approaching a bunch of pedestrians and you'll kill them. Press the same keys to shut your doors.

CLOCKING OFF

■ Phew. I'm all tipped out, now. In fact, I think I'll go home. Can I? Thanks. Next month we've got... Y'know? I can't even bear to think about it just yet.

Write to us at

Arcade

30 Monmouth Street,
Bath BA1 2BW

Fax us on:

01225 732375

E-mail us at:

arcade@futurenet.co.uk

Win some

Finally, these brave warriors arrived at the scene of the tournament. Who will emerge victorious? Will the God Of Fighting be crushed?

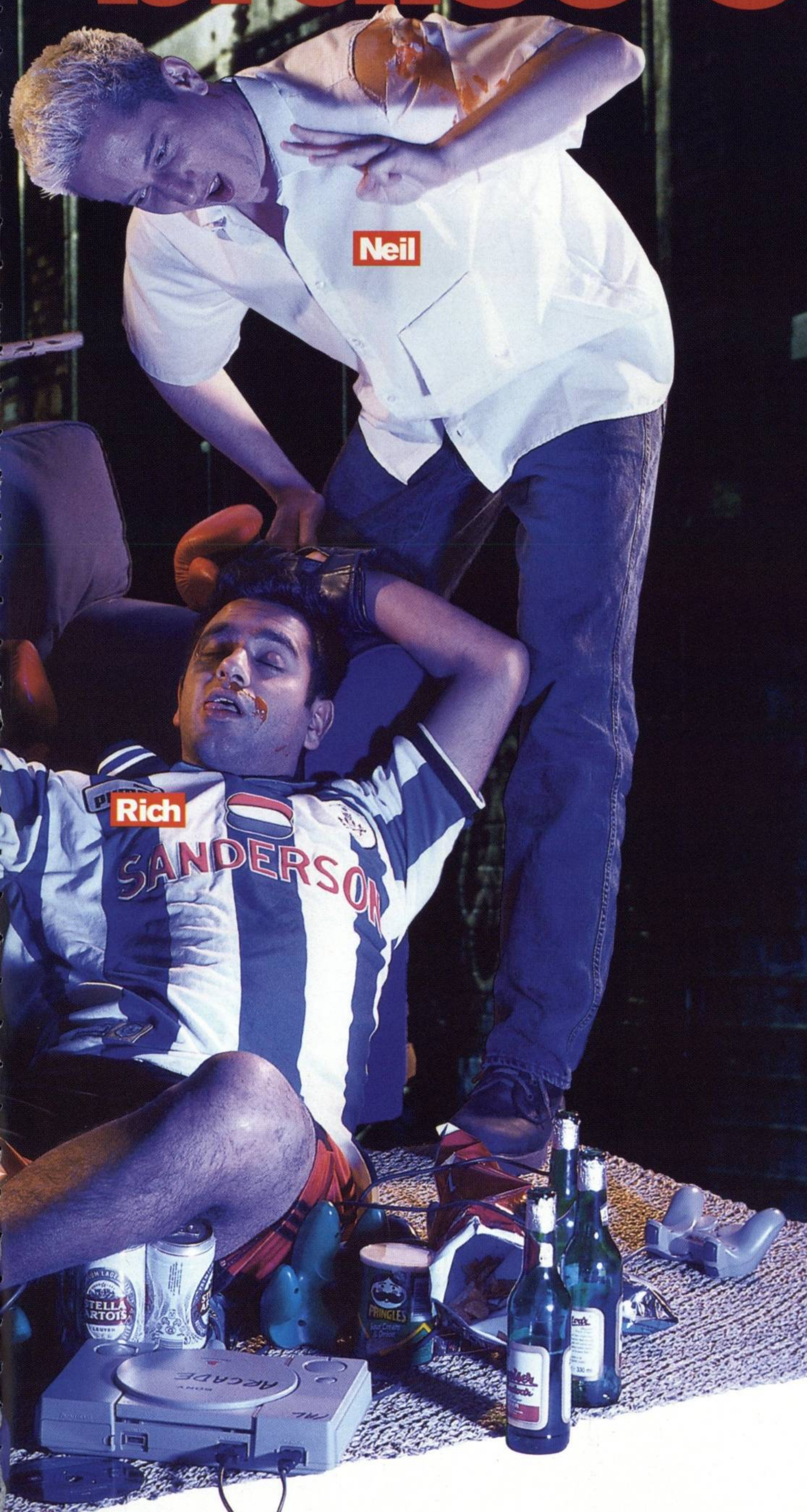
Mark

Sam

PHOTOGRAPHY: DARREN FERRIERA, JOHN RAE/PHOTONICA



bruise some



Neil

Rich

Your host | **Sam Richards**

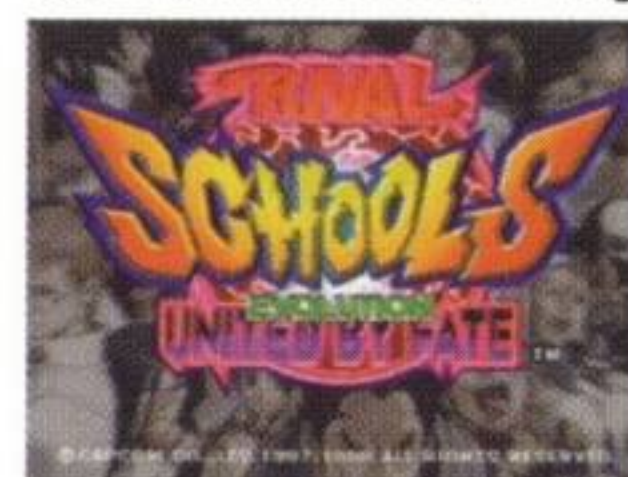
Everybody's not so much kung fu fighting as smashing joypads over each other's heads. Yes, it's four grown men drunk in charge of a curry, two consoles and a selection of beat-'em-up games.

For years, the *Tekken 3* "God Of Fighting" has terrorised the world, feeding on the souls of martial arts masters and destroying communities in his pursuit of absolute power. But how do we halt his terrible progress? By organising the king of fighting tournaments: the Games Night Iron Fist Beat-'em-up Challenge! Surely, such a gathering will be too much for the God to resist?

The contenders came from all over the world (well, Bath), encountering danger and adventure on their way. Rich's car broke down outside Saltford and – kapow! – he had to bitch-kick the AA man to get it fixed in time. Neil had to battle his way out of the barbers – kerblam! – where they were fiendishly attempting to prevent his hair from going totally Beckham. Mark was ambling down the high street when he spotted a girl in the launderette about to wash her Levis without first turning them inside out and – kersmash! – he leapt through the window to rescue the situation. Finally, these brave warriors arrived at the scene of the tournament – my living room. Who will emerge victorious? Will the God Of Fighting be crushed? Or will we end up scrapping among ourselves when Neil resorts to underhand tactics, such as tugging the lead out of the PlayStation when he's about to lose? Let battle commence.

7:12pm

Rival Schools, PlayStation (Virgin Interactive)

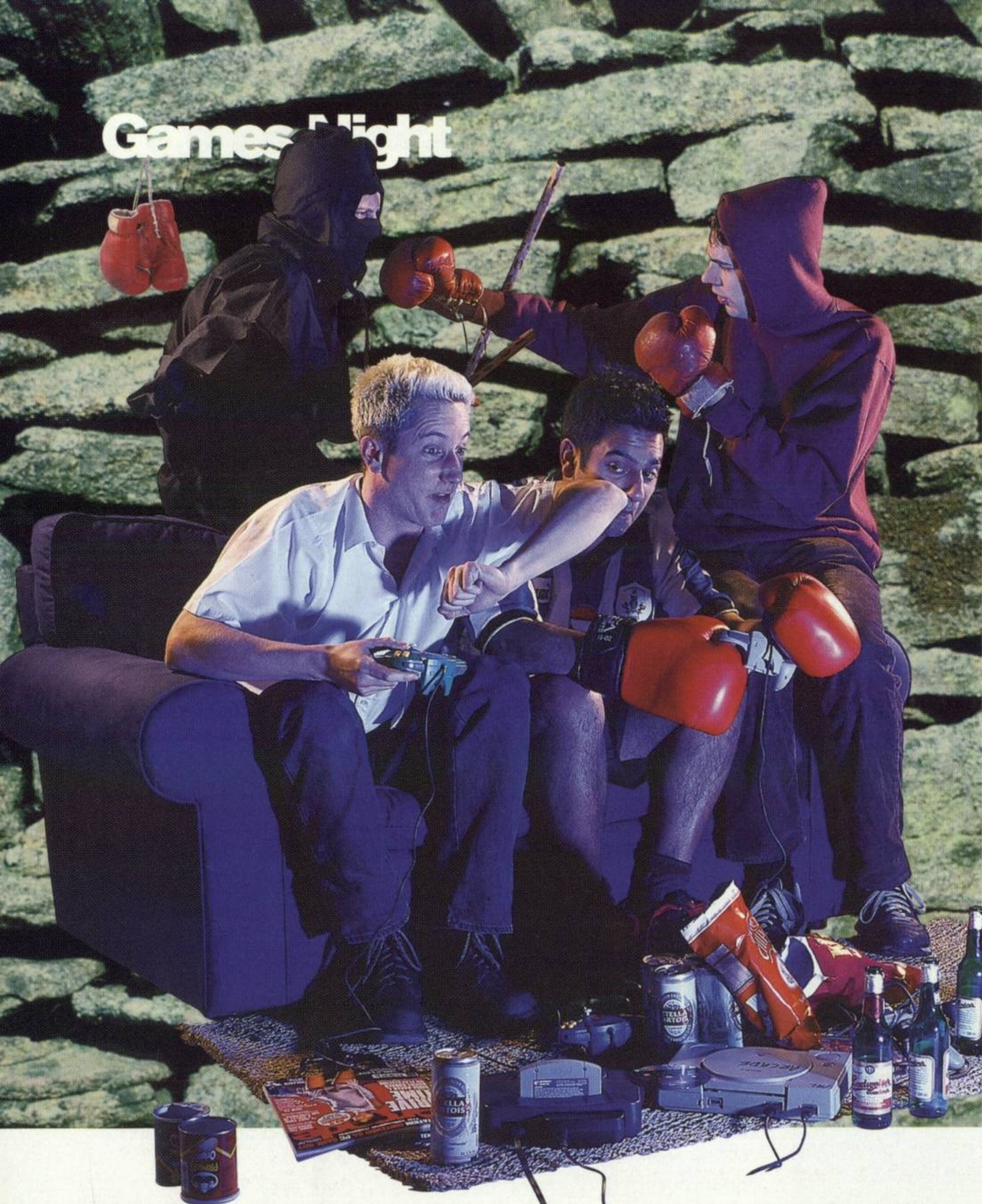


School fights were never like this in my day. Culverhay versus Beechen Cliff was always an important date on the school calendar, but *Rival Schools* is different, as the teachers are all too willing to join in the fray. Caught skiving off geography to toke on a ciggie round the back of the Sixth Form Block, and your Head of Year is more likely to respond with a Burning Vigor attack than a detention. However, you can have your revenge for all those years of mind-numbingly dull algebra homework by pounding your maths teacher into the ground with a baseball bat. This kind of dynamic is greatly appealing to members of the Games Night panel.

Mark: "I always wanted to drop a grand piano on Mr King."

Neil: "I would've liked to shove a rugby ball up Mr Hughes' arse."

Luckily, *Rival Schools'* gameplay is just as entertaining as the thoughts of mutilating your old PE teacher. The fights are even more ridiculous than the overall concept, with characters leaping 20 feet into the air, unleashing a volley of fireballs and then teaming up with a partner to dispense a particularly violent



Rival Schools



■ *Rival Schools'* teacher vs pupil dialectic had us all fantasising about doing in our old maths teacher with a Burning Vigor attack.

dose of the bumps. The 3D environments are impressive, the colours wild and the noises... well, amazing.

Rich: "I rate a beat-'em-up by the quality of the noises and these are above and beyond the call of duty."

Mark: "Shoma's the best. He's one angry pupil, and he's got a massive truncheon."

Rich: "I prefer Kyoko – the mild teacher with deadly high heels. However furious the fight, she always keeps a firm grip on her clipboard. Sweet."

Neil: "Check out Roberto. His preferred method of attack is to kick footballs at his opponent and then he flies in with a two-footed tackle."

So we all have favourites, but it's the girl-on-girl battles that are getting the closest attention. Mark's becoming obsessed with cute-but-deadly Hitana, and when Rich's Kyoko uses his headlock move, it's knicker action aplenty. Then Kyoko forces a conclusion by ramming a stiletto heel into her assailant's groin. Ow. As the school bell rings, it's Rich who – just – emerges top of the class.

8.05pm

Mortal Kombat 4, PlayStation (GT Interactive)



Aaaarghhh! *Mortal Kombat 4* is the most disturbing beat-'em-up on PlayStation, largely because, although it's in 3D, it looks like terrible 2D. Our

characters are straining to block, kick and punch, but it's the graphics engine that's really struggling. Win a fight and you're rewarded with a frozen loading screen. Hurrah! But enough cheap digs at the game's expense, we've got a celebrity fight to the death on our hands.

Rich: "I'll be Richard O'Brien!" (Quan Chi.)

Mark: "I'll be George Michael!" (Jarek.)

Rich: "Right, which game do you want, physical, skill or mystery? Or shall I just pummel your head into the ground?"

Mark: "You'd better watch out for my replacement... it's Andrew Ridgeley! (Quan Chi.) And he's surprisingly more useful than in his Wham days.

Rich: "Hang on, you're mincing about just like Ridgeley in the "Wham Rap" video."

We discover that making characters dance is almost as fun as making them fight. Someone should invent *Bust-A-Groove*. Oh, hang on...

Finally, the underachieving George Michael sidekick is victorious and condemns the slaphead *Rocky Horror Show* creator to tumbling helplessly down a well before being impaled on spikes at the bottom. Nice.

Rich: "There really is some hefty cleavage in this game. I'm not sure if it's the kind of thing kids should be seeing."

Mark: "But heads exploding in a fountain of blood is okay, right?"

Rich: "Cheap sex and filthy gore. Well, I suppose a bad game's got to have one good selling point."

But, despite the amusement provided by celebrity fisticuffs and severed heads

flying across the screen, *Mortal Kombat 4* is not generally enjoyed.

Mark: "It's funny, but shit."

Rich: "Hilariously bad."

Mark: "There are only about four moves."

Rich: "The fighters just look like camp, badly constructed robots."

8.28pm

Tekken 3, PlayStation (Sony)



Acknowledged as the king of console beaters, *Tekken 3* oozes style. The intro sequence still holds us spellbound for a moment, even though we've seen it many times before. The idea of showing each character's journey from their home town to the *Tekken* tournament gives them a personality, which no other game can really match. This is supported by the distinctive moves boasted by each character. The story behind *Tekken* is a pile of old chod, but the fact that there is a background to the events of the game makes us care that little bit more. So, instead of button mashing, we're all trying to trigger those special moves which we diligently learnt when *Tekken* first appeared. Unfortunately, at first I can only succeed in making Eddy breakdance like a goon, and Mark can't stop King punching thin air. A couple of memory-refreshing bouts later and we're pulling off throws and combos like true pros.

Rich: "Can I be technical for a moment? I like the way the camera swings round. It's

Mortal Kombat 4



■ *Mortal Kombat 4* is a game of much blood and gore, but there's nothing as painful as its limited gameplay and terrible graphics.

Tekken 3



■ As the Games Night panel discovered, a new excuse for losing at *Tekken 3* is to claim that you wanted to check out Nina's victory pose to ascertain the status of her underwear.

easier to see what you're doing."

Mark: "Tekken's slower than the other games, but that's not a bad thing. It's a considered fight."

Rich: "It means that skillful players do show through."

While we're all in such a reflective mood, it's time for Rich Pelley's abstract insight of the month.

Rich: "Beat-'em-ups are like table tennis – if you hit too hard, you miss the table. You need little, skilful jabs. In the end it's guile and not power that'll win you a game of *Tekken*."

The tone soon plummets as, when both players choose Nina, it becomes a matter of debate as to whether Nina 2 is wearing any pants.

Mark: "Do it again! I wanna see!"

Rich: "There are definitely pants there. She's got VPL."

Mark: "I disagree. There are no pants."

Rich: "Look at you moving closer to the screen. You won't see any more if you tilt the TV, you know."

Mark: (Tracing a groinal outline on the screen): "Actually, I've changed my mind. She appears to be wearing a tiny thong."

Rich: "You let me win that match just so you could see her victory pose again! That's the first time you've deliberately given me a chance, and it's all motivated by computer-generated pants. I still prefer the teacher from *Rival Schools* anyway."

Suddenly, Neil re-enters the room, wrestles control of a joypad and proclaims that he is Paul Phoenix. The leathers, the Harley... yes, we can see it all falling into

place. Mark confesses an affinity with Yoshimitsu's "deft sabre action" and we're all fond of Eddy's fleet feet.

9.45pm

Virtua Fighter 3tb, Dreamcast (Sega)



It was *Virtua Fighter* that invented the whole idea of a beat-'em-up series but, homeless in console country for

the last couple of years, it's surrendered the crown to *Tekken*. *Virtua Fighter* isn't as extensive as its Namco counterpart as far as scene setting goes, but the overall depth of the game compensates for that. Consequently, it's difficult to do justice to

The tone soon plummets as it becomes a matter of debate as to whether Nina 2 is wearing any pants

Virtua Fighter 3tb (a faithful port of the groundbreaking Model 3 coin-op) as players with different degrees of VF expertise will find it hard to have anything like a fair scrap. A player with more experience will always rule the roost and, in this case, it's *Virtua Fighter* devotee Neil. To say that he's revelling in this opportunity to finally kick

The joypad jury

Four men itching for a bitching and cruising for a bruising.

■ Proving that violence is indeed a very ugly thing, our testosterone-laden pugilists prepare to enter into battle. But this time, it's personal. Let the blood flow...



Neil
Highly trained in jujitsu, tai kwon-do and Hong Kong Phooey, Neil's love of martial arts is due to a sexual fondness for the dressing gown.



Rich
More a veteran of the spontaneous pub brawl than the kick-boxing duel, Rich is known to wander the streets of his home town Bristol, shouting "Finish him!"

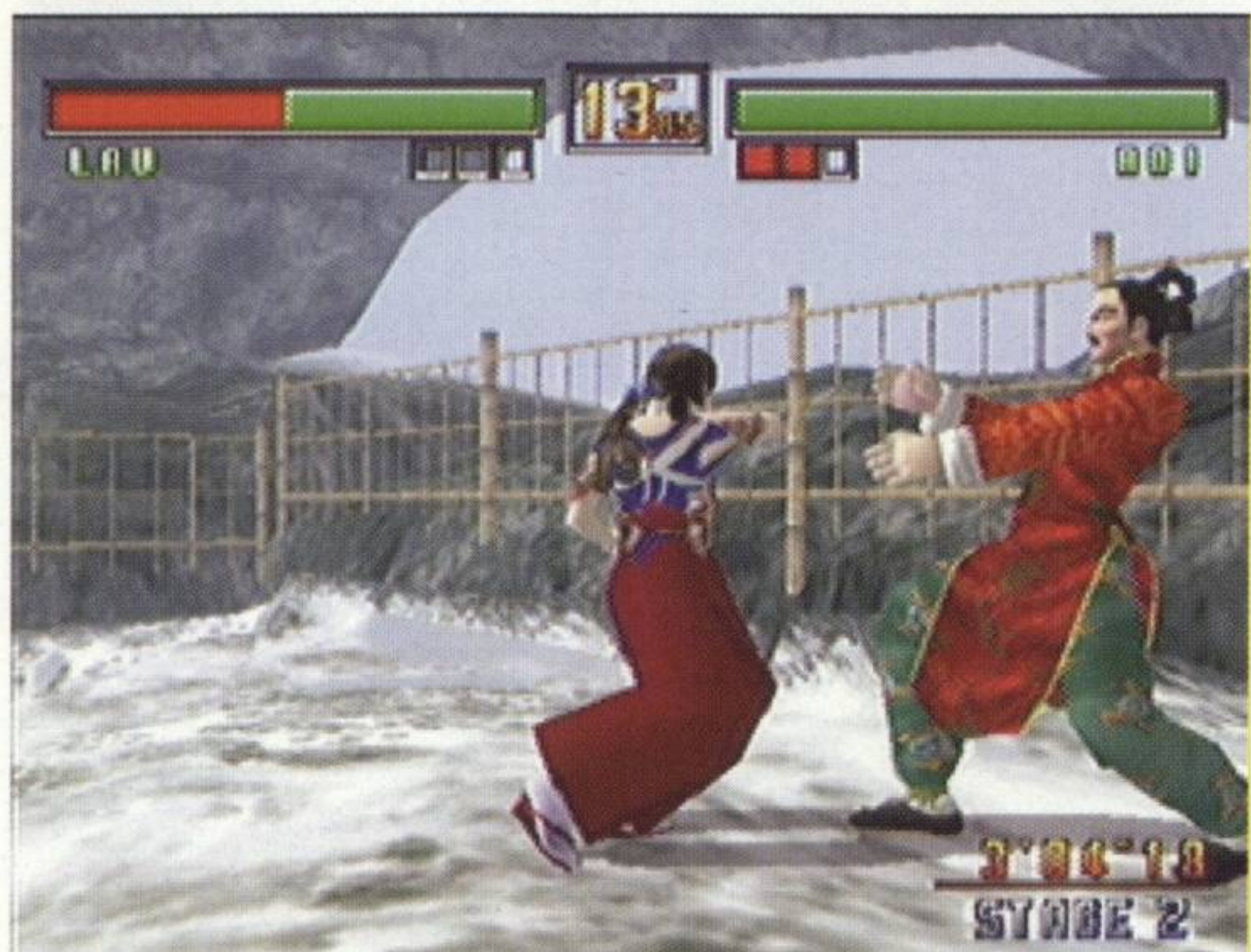


Mark
Recently jumped by a posse of muggers, Mark put up an impressive defence for 50p. "I thought they were after the £100 in my shoe," he explained.



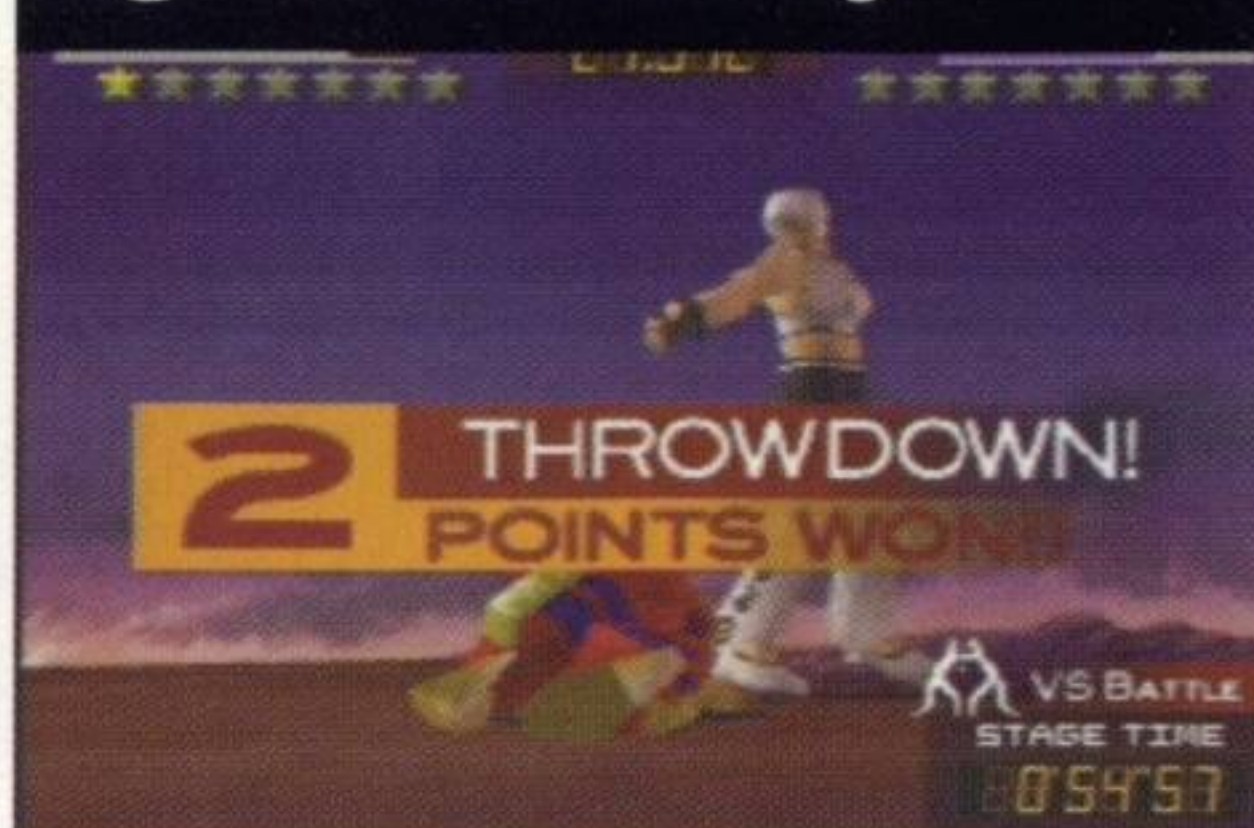
Sam
Fresh from a terrace ruck at Bath City v Ilkeston Town, Sam proudly wears his bruises like medals – on a chain around his neck, oddly enough.

Virtua Fighter 3tb



■ *Virtua Fighter* lasted only minutes, thanks in large part to the Dreamcast's time-consuming and irritating reset process.

Fighter's Destiny



■ *Fighter's Destiny* provided an odd judo-style battle, with points being scored for throwdowns. "You're fighting like a clown!" "That's because I am a clown." Cheers.

everybody's arse is something of a highly significant understatement.

Neil: "After all those *GoldenEyes*, all those *Turoks* and that round of *Mario Kart* – you know the one I mean – this is my revenge. You lot are going down."

Sure enough, Neil's *Virtua Fighter* prowess proves no match for the rest of us, as our characters collapse pathetically under a volley of unanswered blows. Then the excuses begin to flow.

Rich: "It's a case of Neil not showing us the right buttons again."

Mark: "It's just started raining on the screen. I was distracted."

Rich: "I was scared when they started talking. That's why I didn't win. And it looks like Sarah's got chest hair, which took my mind off the fight."

Mark: "Do you notice how Neil always fights with Sarah? He's memorised the moves of one character so he can't fail."

Rich: "I got lumbered with the sumo. He's big and fat but entirely useless. It doesn't take many hits to fall so there's no time for the weaker player to fight back."

Despite our whining, it's impossible to dislodge Neil from the winner's podium. Maybe we should learn from his handling of the new Dreamcast joystick.

Neil: "I rest it on my leg and tap the buttons with my finger, not my thumb."

Rich: "Ah, arcade-style, a true master."

We may have found the ideal way to play beat-'em-ups with a Dreamcast pad, but there's a function of the machine which is less than perfect. Having talked

Neil into changing his fighter to facilitate a fairer battle, we find it impossible to quit out of the current game without re-setting the Dreamcast (supposedly you can force a reset by pressing all the function buttons on the pad at the same time, but no – it doesn't work). This is tremendously irritating and, as fight time is at a premium, we decide to move on.

10.23pm

Fighter's Destiny, N64 (Infogrames)



"Come on then!" goads the N64 in the manner of the finest pub hardmen. But before we get the chance to

remove our metaphorical jackets and grasp the empty Becks bottle in readiness, we must understand that *Fighter's Destiny* differs from the other beat-'em-ups we've played this evening. In addition to the typical energy bar, fighters score points for holds and moves. The first to seven points wins the round and this is a more common conclusion than victory by energy bar, as your health is gradually restored if hits aren't continuous. The result is a contest which owes as much to judo or wrestling as beat-'em-ups. Button mashers don't stand a chance, but then *Fighter's Destiny* is not as complex as *Tekken* or *Virtua Fighter*, leaving it balanced precariously between the two.

Mark is our resident expert but, typically, he fails to inform us that we

"I got lumbered with the sumo. He's big and fat and entirely useless."

need to use the shoulder buttons to block attacks – until he's doled out a few.

Rich: "He does this every month. It's a sly and cynical ploy and I'd like to see it investigated by the relevant authorities."

Mark: "I only just told you because I only just remembered. I wasn't using the shoulder buttons before now. Honest."

Neil: "It's no use whining. Green, your underhand tactics have been noted."

Mark sulkily informs us that the PAL *Fighter's Destiny* moves more laboriously than the US version and he's not playing any more anyway. Inevitably, Rich has some far more trivial quibbles.

Rich: "Why does the crowd cheer when you're fighting on top of a skyscraper and nobody can see you? And why the lift muzak? What's with the panpipes when you're stripped to the waist and trying to kick someone in the bollocks?"

10.49pm

Pocket Fighter, PlayStation (Virgin Interactive)



Enough of tense, tactical battles and complex button-press combinations. We're back where we began the

Pocket Fighter



■ Look! There's a lion polishing a shotgun! There's a panda on a unicycle! There's a monkey on ice skates! Repeat to fade...

evening, in Capcom's realm of the ridiculousness. *Pocket Fighter* at first appears to be a kiddie version of *Street Fighter*, but its sensory overload is too violently entertaining to be dismissed as mere child's play. Blink and you'll miss Morrigan's amazing ability to briefly metamorphose into a nurse and poke her opponent with an enormous syringe, or run them over with a wheelchair. Random hitting of all the joypad buttons either in sequence or simultaneously is ultimately recommended, as the ludicrous special moves seem to materialise from nowhere.

Rich: "None of your smut this time around Green, these characters are only six years old."

Mark: "But that one's got breasts. And Zangief has a beard."

Rich: "Well maybe he's just a bit of an early developer."

Pocket Fighter's number one rule is "if you laugh you lose", as Mark and Neil's epic battle across a number of different landscapes proves.

Rich: "Look, in the background, it's a panda on a unicycle!"

Neil: "No it isn't, now shut up, I'm trying to concentrate."

Rich: "Ha! And there's a monkey, and it's on ice skates!"

Mark: "Pelley, shut up! I can't see what I'm doing."

Rich: "Look! Up in the air! There's a pig on a cloud holding a broom!"

Neil: "I'm not paying attention to you, I'm trying to play the game."

Rich: "Now there's a lion sitting in an armchair, polishing a shotgun!"

Mark: "A lion? You're right! And he's grinning like a maniac... shit! You just made me lose."

Neil is still refusing to acknowledge the nonsense happening around him.

Neil: "I'm using the normal *Street Fighter* moves, but that's no defence when your opponent prods you with a huge fish or turns you into a penguin."

Eventually, however, Neil's resolve is broken when, after falling foul of Ibuku's balalaika, he manages to retaliate by forcing Hsien-Ko into a combo which involves cooking a three-course meal and pushing Ibuku to the floor with a large bowl of egg-fried rice.

Everyone's claiming victory, but we're too busy laughing to argue, so we settle on a four-way tie. It's a rather unlikely conclusion to Games Night, an evening that traditionally ends in violence followed by drunken collapse, but perhaps we've exorcised all our demons on screen. One possible suggestion for this unlikely outbreak of sportsmanship is the lack of tension in beat-'em-up games, as opposed to last month's 3D shootouts. Unleash your pent-up frustration in a volley of fire punches and perhaps your stress is relieved. Why, if only those Saturday night heroes down at your local no-trainers nitespot would opt for quick spot of *Tekken* before they splashed on the cheap aftershave, maybe they wouldn't feel the need to keep battering

each other. Something for the nation's psychologists to investigate.

To recap, there's no beer split on the carpet, no pizza trodden into the floor and no hard feelings. Neil's even offered to wash up. The "God Of Fighting" slinks sheepishly away, finally defeated by the overwhelming spirit of international harmony. Ah, bless.



Games Night picks

We might be going down punching and kicking, but here's what we're a-picking.

1) Whatever the type of beat-'em-up, it's vital to include a wide range of different moves and combos to keep the bouts interesting (this is where boxing sims typically fail and why we haven't included any). The greater number of moves that can be personalised for a particular character, the better.

2) The best games tend to be the ones that can entertain button-mashers and grand masters alike. Anyone who's taken the time to learn moves should always emerge victorious, but there's

still got to be room for the brawny bungler.

3) Alarm clocks as weapons, skating monkeys and having the handy ability to metamorphose into a frog are good things.

4) As are ladies with a laissez-faire attitude towards underwear, apparently.

5) If in doubt, the quality of a beat-'em-up can usually be verified by the noises which a character makes upon giving or receiving a punch and winning a bout. Squeals and whimpers are bad, unintelligible Japanese or pidgin English in a silly voice are good.



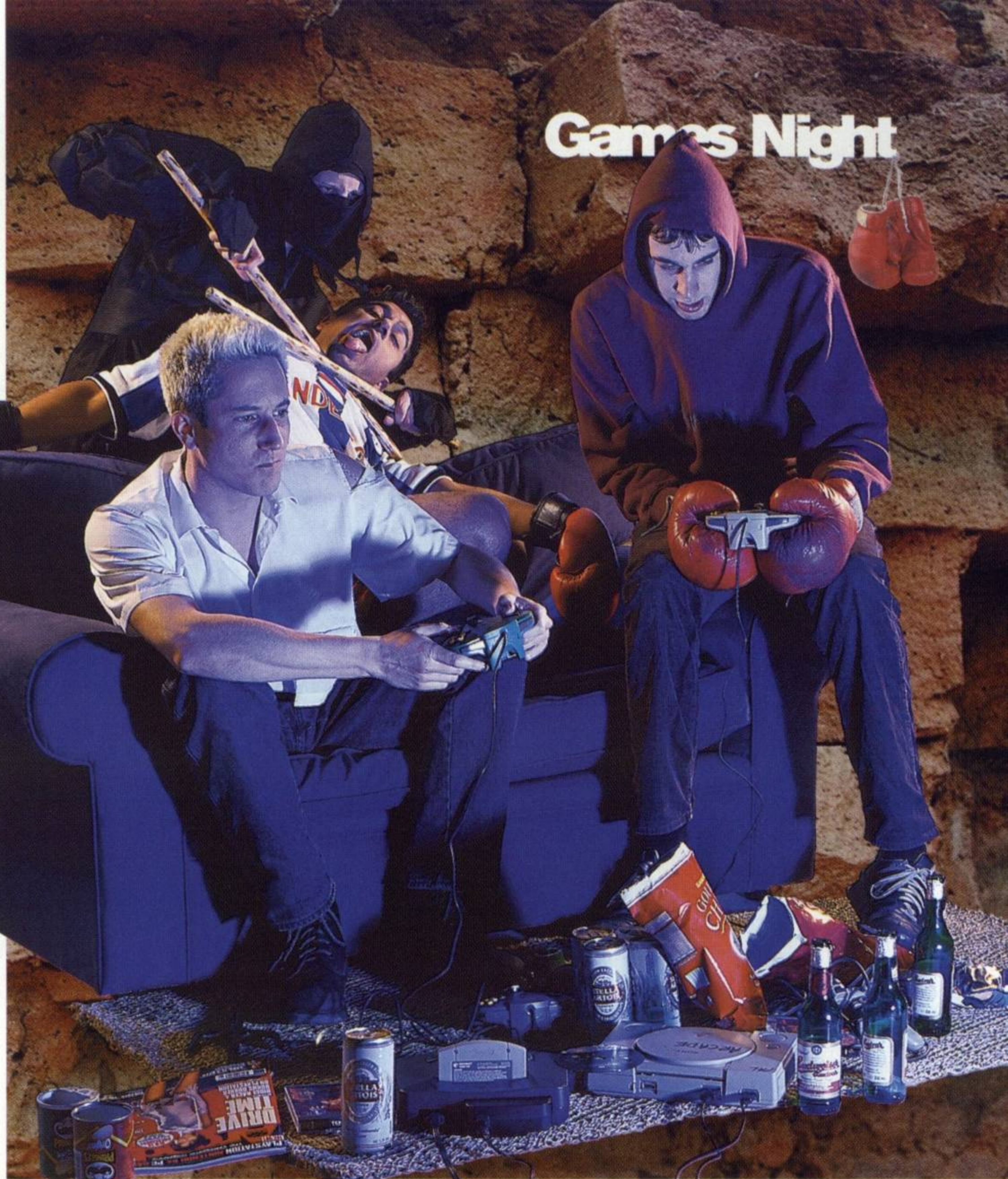
The winners

Tekken 3

The classiest beat-'em-up around. Enjoyable for those of all levels of competence, *Tekken 3's* depth is immense and the personality of its characters unparalleled.


Rival Schools

Slick, speedy and funny. If you're seeking beat-'em-up thrills, enrol in *Rival Schools*. Its sheer entertainment value is, er... unrivalled.



Games Night

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METAL GEAR SOLID

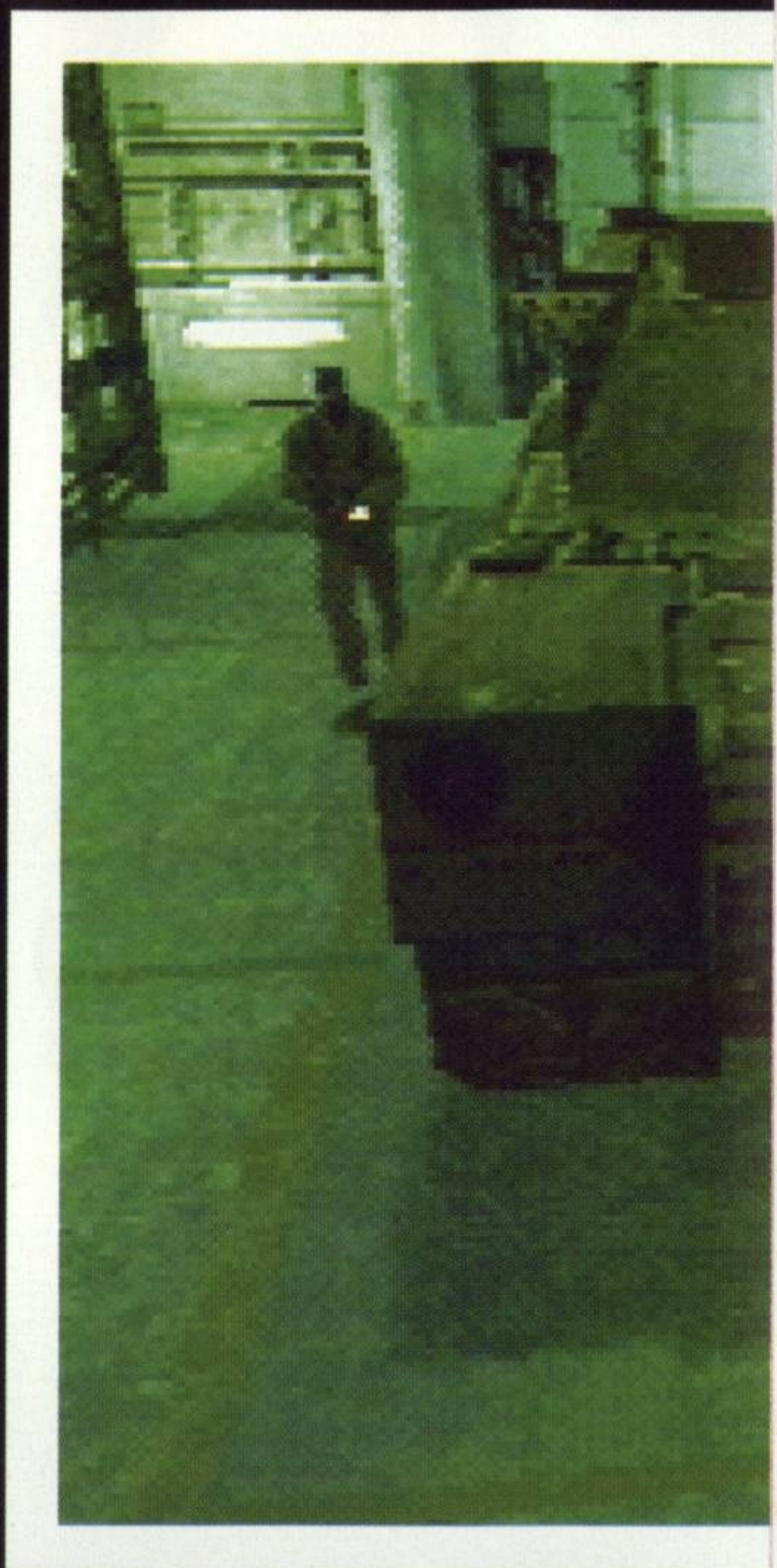
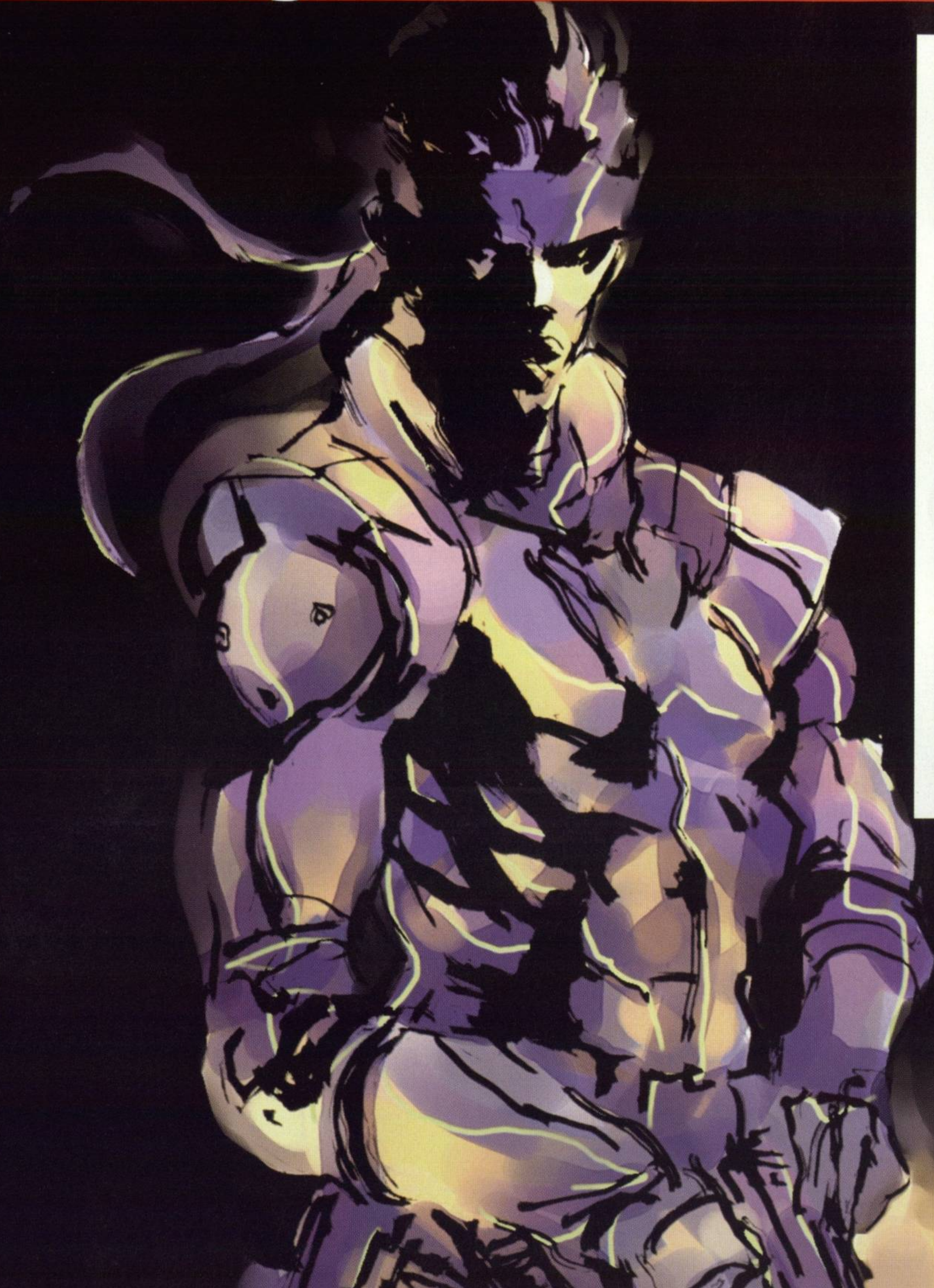
IS THIS THE BEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER? YES IT IS. BUT BEFORE YOU SPLASH THE CASH, READ THE REVIEW - THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW. YOU SEE? WE LOVE YOU GUYS. WE REALLY DO.

PLUS! VIDEOS/BOOKS/MUSIC/COMICS/INTERNET/TOYS/BOARD GAMES/GAME ACCESSORIES/FILMS/CD-ROMS/GADGETS

Star ratings

***** Simply the best. A game you really must play.
 **** Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
 *** Good stuff. Not a world-beater, but fine within its genre.
 ** Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
 * Awful. Avoid at all costs.

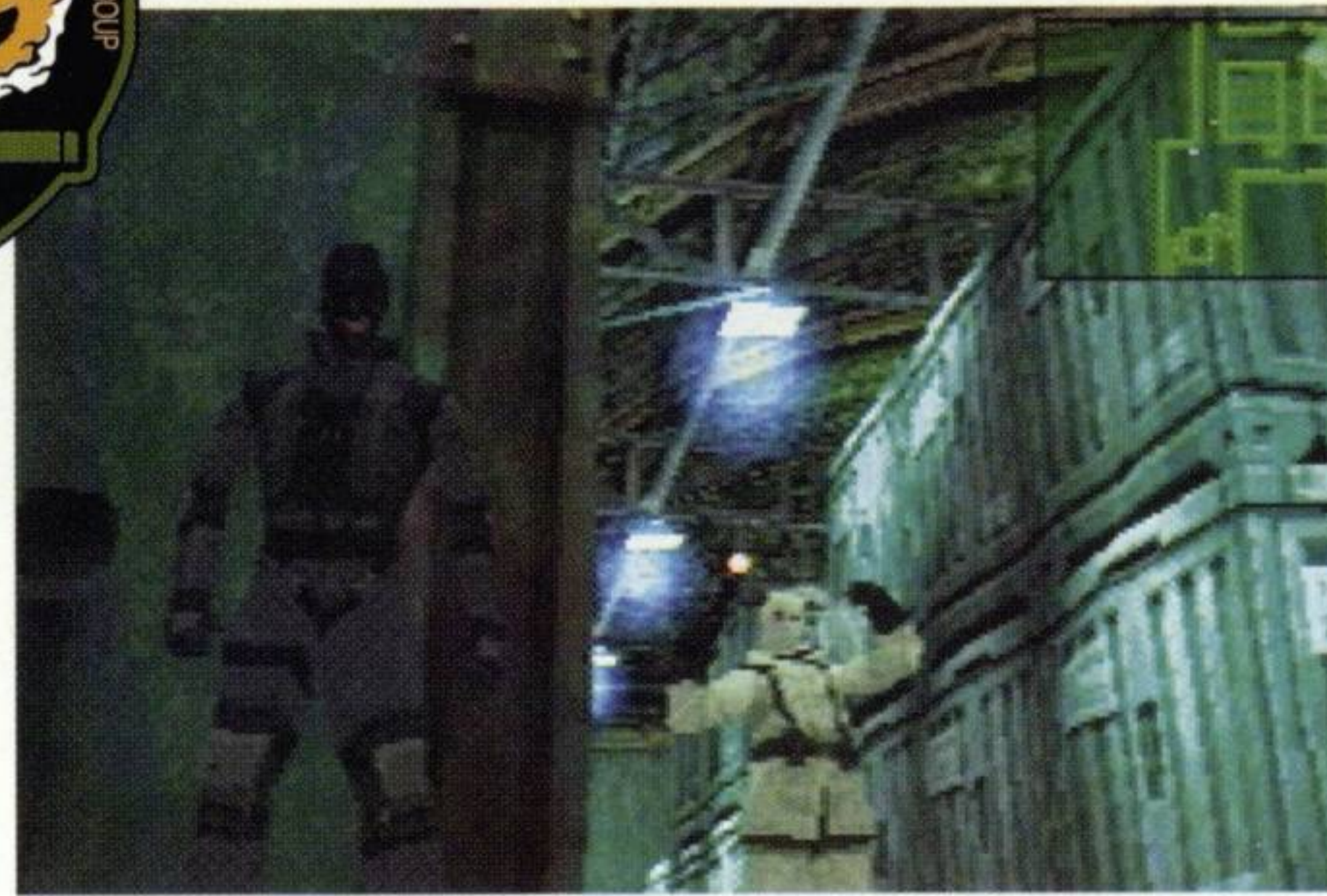
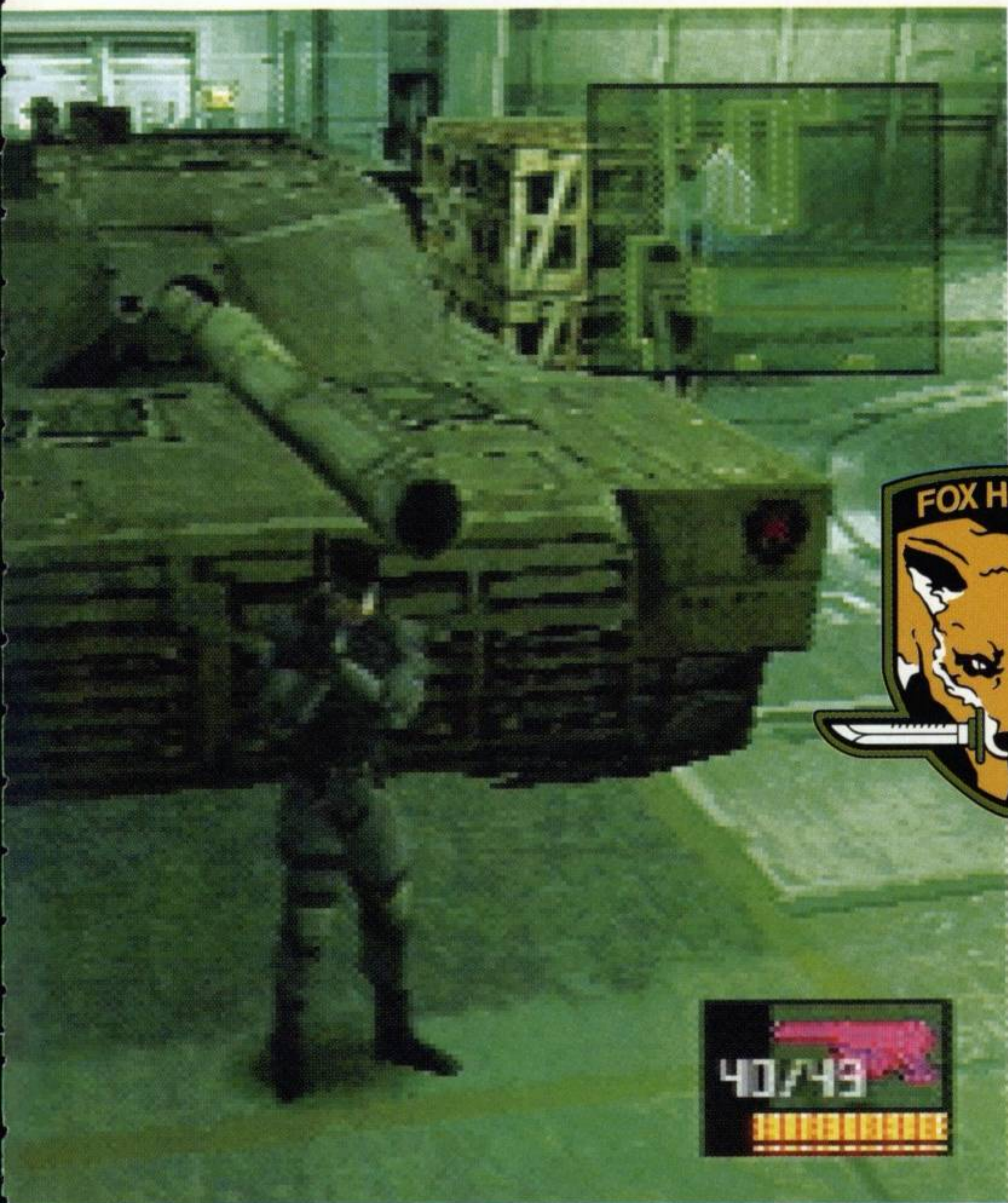
New PlayStation Games



Arcade
PlayStation
Game of
the Month

TOP GEAR

IT'S HERE: THE PLAYSTATION'S GREATEST GAME



■ Backing up against scenery causes the camera to fly to a more advantageous position. The first-person view also gives a new perspective on the action, enabling you to check out Snake's cohort Meryl close-up. Phwoar.

Metal Gear Solid

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Price: **£39.99, Special Edition £59.99** ■ Release date: **end February**
 ■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **memory card, Dual Shock pad**

It's one of the most eagerly-awaited (and stupidly delayed) PlayStation games ever. But now it's here: one man against seemingly unbeatable odds with the fate of the world at stake.

Nothing in this world is perfect. Rain follows sun. Fast cars use more petrol than slow ones. Milk will always turn sour eventually, no matter how vigilantly you keep the fridge door shut. And *Metal Gear Solid* is too short. As Tyrell said in *Bladerunner*, "The light that burns twice as bright burns half as long". And *Metal Gear Solid* burns so very bright.

Maybe it's because it is such a gem that *Metal Gear's* shortness is so disappointing. And yet it's still worth £40. It's one of the best games ever made and, except perhaps for *Legend of Zelda: the Ocarina of Time*, the best game this reviewer had ever played. What on paper sounds like a sort of hi-tech, James Bond-style cross between *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider* winds up being much more than that.

The star of the show is Solid Snake, an ex-trained killer who is lured out of retirement for just one more mission. Yup, Solid Snake's a veteran – having previously starred in *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear: Solid Snake* on the NES. It has taken producer Hideo Kojima eight years to produce this sequel (while he waited for technology to make facilitating his dreams a possibility, and for his team to make these still-near-impossible dreams a reality on PlayStation). In the previous games, Snake battled with the Big Boss and his ultimate instrument of war, the Metal Gear, a huge armed-to-the-

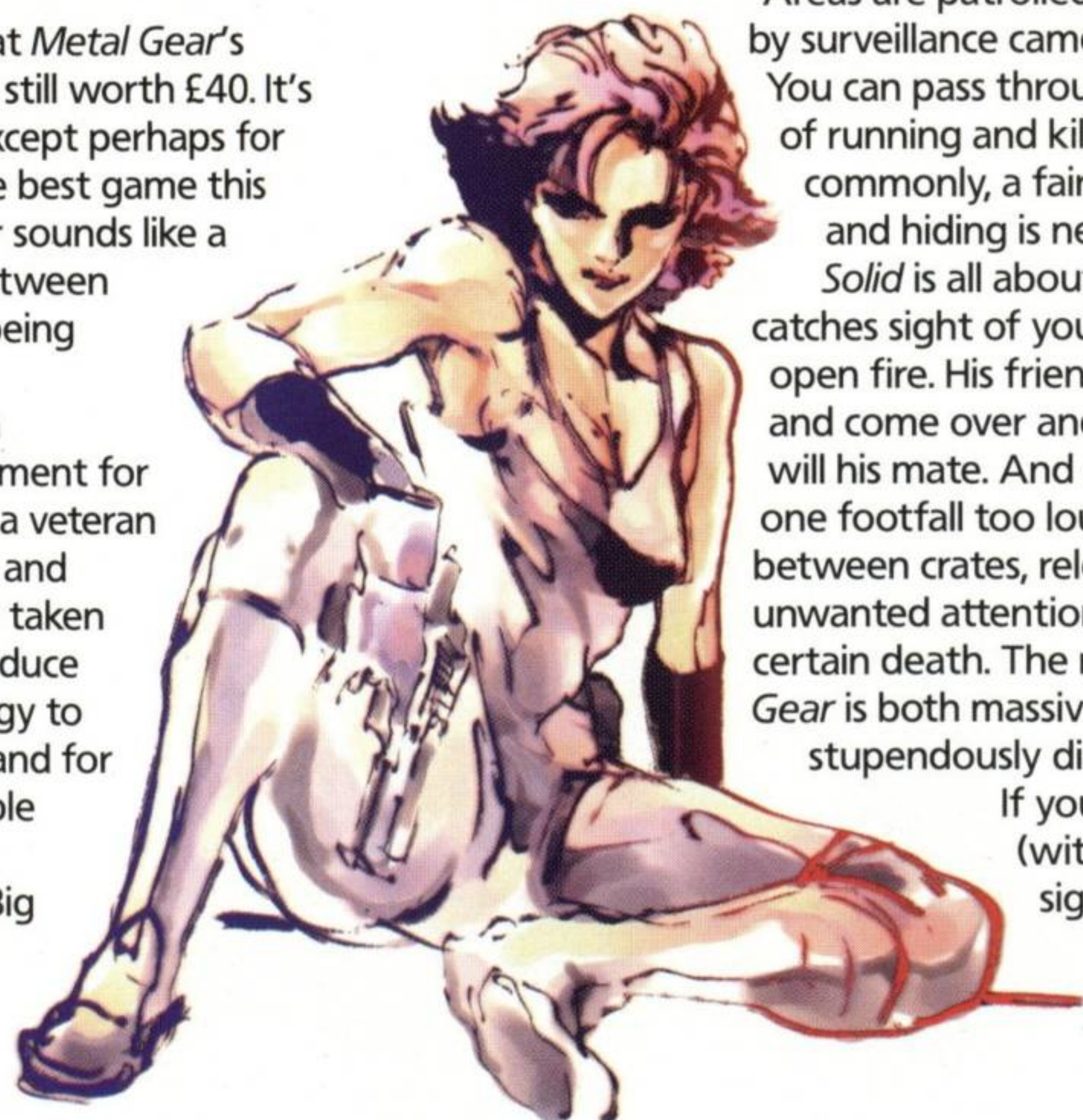
gills robot. Big Boss is no longer to be seen (bringing him out of retirement for "just one more mission" was perhaps a little too much to swallow), but the Metal Gear is here, as are a host of preposterously-named baddies who act as sub-bosses for you to defeat.

So prepare for combat with Vulcan Raven, Sniper Wolf and the Revolver Ocelot! Grr. Each one dwells in their own little "set-piece", waiting to be discovered as you manoeuvre Snake through the game's 50-or-so areas. Each area is a sizeable chunk of scenery – the floor of a building or the cavernous interior of a hanger – and each has its own unique set of problems that will need solving before you can pass from your entry point to the exit, where the next set of brain-and-joypad gymnastics awaits.

METAL GEAR IS BOTH MASSIVELY EXCITING AND STUPENDOUSLY "DIFFERENT" TO PLAY

Areas are patrolled by guards or scanned by surveillance cameras and searchlights. You can pass through them with a mix of running and killing but, more commonly, a fair portion of crawling and hiding is needed. For *Metal Gear Solid* is all about stealth. If a guard catches sight of you, he'll run over and open fire. His friend will hear the noise and come over and do likewise. And so will his mate. And so on. One mistake, one footfall too loud, or one glimpse between crates, releases an avalanche of unwanted attention that'll end in almost certain death. The result is that *Metal Gear* is both massively exciting and stupendously different to play.

If you kill a guard clumsily (with a noisy gun, or in sight of another guard, for example), the game replaces him





■ The Metal Gear in its full glory. This gigantic mechanoid makes a not-entirely-unexpected appearance near the end.



■ The battle with Liquid Snake (attacking from a Hind chopper) is spectacular and hair-tearingly difficult.



■ Revolver Ocelot: Be afraid. Be really bloody afraid.

off-screen somewhere to run on and taunt you again. However, if you take him out silently with the *GoldenEye*-style sniper rifle, silenced Socom pistol or – best of all – your bare hands, he won't come back. There's something intensely satisfying about killing every guard in an area, picking each one off individually, but more often there's no reason to kill them when you can duck, squat and press yourself against the nooks and crannies provided for you to hide in. Fab.

The guards employ a brilliant detection system, and once their attentions have been aroused, a huge question mark appears above their heads and they wander over to investigate. If they do make a firm sighting, the question mark is replaced by an exclamation mark, a comical hooter sounds and

they open fire with guns. However, all is not lost. If you can keep Snake out of their sight for ten seconds, the guards will forget about the shady bloke in the rubber suit they were chasing and return to their posts. Liberal flinging of stun grenades while making your escape will throw them off your scent, too.

Up in the top right of the screen, a scanner shows the world around you and the positions of the guards and, cleverly, where they're looking. It's an invaluable tool and an integral part of playing the game. Incidentally, there are four skill levels in the UK and US version of the game: Easy, Normal, Hard and Extreme. Hard and Extreme remove the scanner which makes the game suicidally tricky.

Because of its simple area-based structure, *Metal Gear* is frighteningly linear. *Resi*' and *Raider*, for example, require continual backtracking to find keys for doors and so on. *Metal Gear* is one long journey from the docks (where Snake swims ashore) to *Metal Gear*'s hanger (where a battle with the beast awaits). Because of this the game is continually surprising and always fresh. Making it into each

THERE'S SOMETHING INTENSELY SATISFYING ABOUT KILLING EVERY GUARD IN AN AREA

new zone is a voyage into the unknown. But, as mentioned earlier, programming this structure is time-and-idea-intensive and the end comes all too soon. Some things are just too good to last.

In an attempt to make it all last longer, *Metal Gear* throws some cheap tricks at you near the end. These make you travel back through many of the areas to pick up equipment that you couldn't get at earlier. This isn't exploration backtracking – this is having to play big chunks of the game twice in a cynical effort to up its lifespan.

You can also whizz through certain areas in an instant, leaving the vast majority of floor-space untrodden (we won't spoil it by telling you how). Imagine if N64's *Zelda* made a similar mistake. Imagine if, after creating the complex and intensely satisfying gameworld, Miyamoto lost his marbles and placed a straight, unerring pathway marked "This Way To The End Of The Game" leading from Link's doorway. There is clearly something wrong with a game that you can finish in a weekend. By Hideo Kojima's own admission, one of his team has finished *Metal Gear Solid* in an hour and a half. You



■ *Metal Gear* features perhaps the first ever videogame trouser-soiling, along with such treats as the sniper rifle and a truly brilliant, wrist-busting, *Track & Field*-style torture session. Hnngh!

↑ Uppers & Downers

- Solid**
- Totally original and absolutely gorgeous to play
 - Exciting
 - Gripping
 - Exquisite
 - Ace full-screen PAL conversion
 - Buy it!
- Flaccid**
- Too short



■ Cut-scenes and cunning camera angles keep you abreast of Snake's antics.

will more likely notch up around 12 hours on your first attempt, but that's just a week's entertainment for most of us, and a day's worth for a dedicated gamer.

At least there are plenty of incentives to tempt you in for a second or third crack at it. A complex ranking system bestows you with an animal name at the end of the game, so you can replay and improve your performance to glean a cooler-sounding pseudonym. And two alternative endings, one awarding you with a invisible stealth suit to play with, the other dishing out a magic bandana, awarding all the weapons and infinite ammo, will tempt you into playing the game through a second time at least.

Metal Gear should be viewed, then, as a self-indulgent treat for you and your PlayStation. Like Chanel soap or Thorntons' Continental chocolates, there are better value alternatives, but they're nowhere near as good. Think of *Metal Gear* like you would front row tickets to a favourite band's gig. Great fun, and then fond memories forever.

The PlayStation's best ever game then? Certainly. While it lasts. ★★★★★ **Simon Garner**

Or you could try...

Resident Evil 2
Virgin Interactive Entertainment ★★★★★
One of the finest glorious, gory, gruesome flesh-ripping games of all.

Tomb Raider III
EIDOS Interactive ★★★★★
Lara's third puzzle-based, third-person wanderabout.



■ The Jeep-based chase will knock your socks off. Should you be wearing any.



Thr 6 Sep '98

Top Teams Paul Newsham NEWCASTLE UNITED

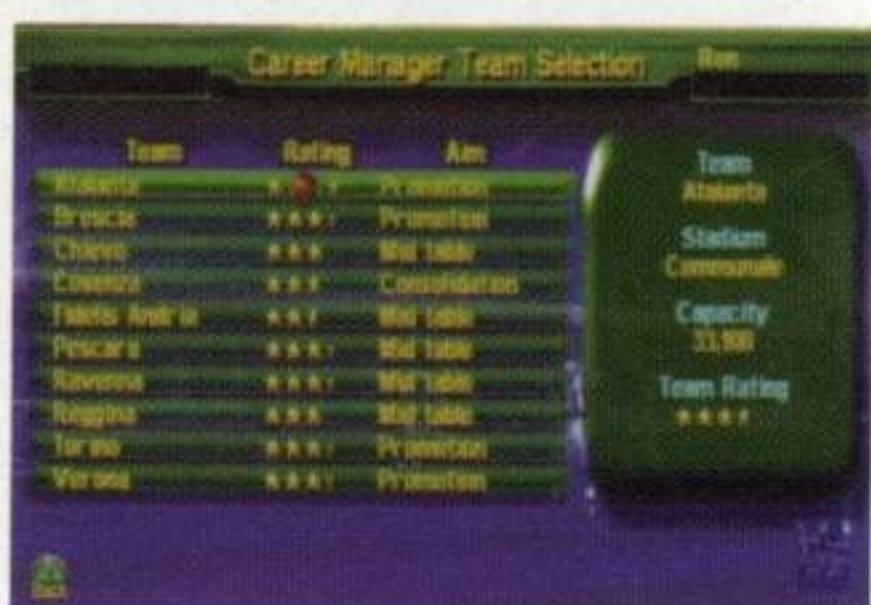
English Division 1

Teams and Managers:

- Talia (SWINDON TOWN)
- Nadal (SHEFFIELD UNITED)
- Gibbs (WATFORD)
- West (BURY)
- Yates (WATFORD)
- Sonner (IPSWICH TOWN)
- Beresford (HUDDERSFIELD TOWN)
- Sneekes (WEST BROM)
- Maresca (WEST BROM)
- Banger (OXFORD UNITED)
- Francis (OXFORD UNITED)



Match highlights courtesy of Actua Soccer 3's graphics engine, with a commentary from TV's Barry Davies.



Trying to please the world's PlayStation-owning Stattons, Premier Manager copes well.

PREMIER PASSIONS

BEAT KEVIN KEEGAN AT HIS OWN GAME

Premier Manager '99

■ Publisher: Gremlin ■ Developer: Gremlin
 ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1
 ■ Extras: memory card

£10,000-a-week prima donnas. Slack performances. Embarrassing cup exits. Just a few of the delights Gremlin has in store for wannabe Alex Fergusons.

The battle to produce a decent football management simulation for the PlayStation is creating rivalries akin to the infamous Keegan/Ferguson spat of the '96/'97 Premiership challenge. Anco's terminally bad *Player Manager* series has failed twice to recreate the high-pressure world of big money transfers and match day anguish and the Keegan-endorsed *Premier Manager '99* is Gremlin's second attempt at the genre.

The main problems that a footy management developer faces are in cramming enough statistics into the PlayStation to ensure the game remains fresh, while creating an interface that enables you to skip through the menus with ease. This time round, Gremlin has coped well with such demands and *Premier*

Manager '99 is the best PlayStation effort to date.

The game uses the icon-based menu system of its predecessor, but adds depth with a bucketload of new options and features. Every squad from the English leagues or the Italian Serie A awaits your attention and the full gamut of managerial responsibilities is covered, with transfers, budget balancing and even redevelopment of the

stadium left to wannabe Big Rons. Things start off lightly with a handful of pre-season friendlies, and then progresses as injuries take their toll, squads need strengthening, and training schedules are revised – while the game gently eases you into its complexities.

The option to enter a European Superleague is available – something even Rupert Murdoch hasn't managed – and pits a number of Europe's finest in a tournament similar to the Champions League. A secondary benefit of the inclusion of Barcelona, Ajax, *et al*, is that it adds the likes of Ronaldo to the transfer possibilities.

Gremlin has also livened things up by employing *Actua Soccer 3* players in the edited match highlights. It's a nice touch and provides nail-biting moments as tactics work or fail, genuinely conveying the helplessness that managers all over the country must feel for 90 minutes every Saturday.

Ultimately, the fun you get out of *Premier Manager '99* depends on what you put into it. If you are willing to spend time working on strategies and building the strongest

possible team, the game will prove an engrossing title. It doesn't, however, offer a quick fix and won't be fully enjoyable unless you spend several hours at a time refining things and planning ahead.

The PlayStation is still in the Ryman league compared to the deep managerial delights offered by PC games, but *Premier Manager '99* manages to cram a sufficient amount of data into its team sheets, and marries this with a welcoming control system. The end result is a complex and involving title that will keep you up all night working on tactics. A very rewarding challenge. ★★★★★ **Steve Merrett**

Uppers & Downers

Promotions

- Impressive team rosters
- Easy-to-use interface
- Depth of responsibility offered
- European signings and transfers
- Lasting challenge

Relegations

- Still not as many stats as wedged into a PC

Or you could try...

Premier Manager Anco ★
Buy this if you must, but only to take a look at how bad it really is.

Premier Manager '98 Gremlin ★★★
Last season's effort with last season's stats.



NEAR MISS

COMMENDABLY DIFFERENT, ANNOYINGLY HARD

Viva Football

■ Publisher: **Virgin Interactive Entertainment**
 ■ Developer: **Virgin Interactive Entertainment** ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**

Sounding exotic, and coming complete with some of the best footy visuals on the PlayStation, can Viva Football compete with the heavyweight trio of ISS, Actua and WLS?

Doing football "differently" is fine, as long as you know what you're doing will work. The massively over-hyped *Three Lions* attempted a fresh approach and failed spectacularly. *Viva Football* tries, once again, to rewrite the script and, well, does okay. Sort of.

The alternative approach this time is a completely power bar-based passing and shooting game. Every time any one of your team members touches the ball, the amount of time you hold the Pass (or Shoot) button down dictates how hard and fast the resultant lay-off or shot is. This is also the case with chips, one-twos, goal kicks, throw-ins, free kicks, corners and just about every other aspect of your football-playing repertoire. There's a problem, though. This system's not quite as handy as Virgin thinks it is.

You see, for all intents and purposes – and this is the reasoning behind the power bar-led gameplay – you've got complete control over what you're doing. You choose the power of the pass, so you can't blame anyone else – least of all the CPU – if it goes astray. Fine. Taking control of your own destiny is quite appealing. And, after a fair bit of practising (you'll have to put a couple of solid hours in to get anywhere near "average"), you start to get a feel for which

situation requires what amount of power. You've got a midfield player running through: you need a half-strength pass, so fill up half the bar.

But, there's a problem. Sometimes you just don't have the *time* to think of all the connotations that come with a simple forward pass in *Viva Football*. The matches are lightning quick and, in the middle of a clogged-up midfield melee, you often just wish – when you try to quickly play a pass back to the defence – you didn't have to think of where it was going (you have to direct the pass, as in *FIFA*) and how much power it will need. This becomes especially frustrating when you consider how good the opponents are and, often, how ineffective the sliding tackle seems to be. Perhaps if the passing game had been more accurate, seeking out selected players with a greater degree of ease, the power bar system would have worked better. As it is, a chip can often – when you're under pressure – turn into a pointless punt into nowhere, while passes frequently over-run and shots tend to end up at the corner flag, or in row Z. Or both.

This isn't ideal. Neither are additional problems, such as rubbish 'keepers and a control system which often sends players away from the ball. And that's a shame, because you really want to like *Viva Football*, if not because it's intriguingly brave, then because it's had so much work put into it, from the graphics and the huge database of teams and players, to the comprehensive management set-up. But, at the end of the day, it's flawed. ★★★ **Tim Weaver**

↑ Uppers & Downers

Team
 ■ Chunky, detailed visuals
 ■ Stunning database of sides, past and present
 ■ Interesting control system...

Scream
 ■ ...that's not quite there
 ■ No commentary. Just a bit of shouting
 ■ Unreliable goalies and a problematic control system

A CHIP CAN OFTEN TURN INTO A POINTLESS PUNT

■ Goals. Very hard to get.



Or you could try...

ISS Pro '98
 Konami ★★★★★
 Repeat after me: buy this football game before you buy anything else.

World League Soccer '99
 EIDOS Interactive ★★★★★
 Not much of a looker, but the play is stunning. Buy this, too.



Wild Arms

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **Sony Japan** ■ Price: **£44.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **memory card**

This massive role-playing game lifts ideas from several rivals, yet somehow remains fresh and new.

■ Nobody puts together a role-playing game like the Japanese. As shown by Square's *Final Fantasy VII* and Capcom's long-running *Breath of Fire* saga, Japanese developers are as determined to advance the genre as the ardent gamers who await each new epic. *Wild Arms* has already proven its worth in Japan, selling over 400,000 copies since its release last year, and is certain to do well over here.

On first sight, *Wild Arms* looks like just another mundane RPG, with the familiar bird's-eye view doing little to further its cause. The initial feelings of *deja vu* are duly compounded by the animé-inspired intro sequences and cartoon-like main characters and scenarios. Only as the game unfolds do its attributes shine. *Wild Arms* follows the adventures of three young heroes as their separate adventures eventually culminate in a battle royal against a race of metal-bodied demons. The interaction between these three characters is the key to *Wild Arms*' success, and the trio work individually to solve introductory puzzles, before heading into town where they meet up and the real challenge begins.

As the adventure progresses, your trio is often split up and sent off on specific missions ideally suited to their abilities, while other characters you meet during the game will only comply with one particular member of your party. Similarly, the individual attributes of each of the trio extend to the use of special weapons and objects during the game – bombs or a small rodent, for example.

For such an obvious idea, the subtle use of each of the three heroes ensures that *Wild Arms* is as essential to RPG fans as *Final Fantasy VII*. It crams the usual RPG motifs like hit points, experience levels, and huge bosses into its running battles, and everything is pulled together with a simple but comprehensive interface and a handful of attractive graphical touches. Don't be put off by the unimaginative front end, *Wild Arms* is worth sticking with, and marks yet another step forward for the often-ignored role-playing scene. ★★★★★ **Steve Merrett**

BOARD STUPID

SONY'S OWN ATTEMPT AT COOL BOARDING FLOPS



■ Tina may be in first place, but we look way cooler. Yes, a sad attempt to justify another inexplicably bad performance – a bit like the game itself, actually.



Uppers & Downers

Board

- The sheer number of moves available
- Not just downhill racing
- Alternate routes designed to increase fun

Bored

- Looks shoddy
- Nasty sounds
- Plays like a beat-'em-up

X Games Pro Boarders

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **Radical**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Extras: **analogue controller, Dual Shock-compatible, memory card**

Yes siree, it's another radical American sports game. And selling this snowboard sludge will certainly be a stunt.

Radical. According to a dictionary near you it means original, extreme. Of course, it can also be used in conjunction with "sport" to describe growing dodgy American pastimes played by goateed men in outsized trousers, usually sponsored by ESPN or Pepsi Max. *X Games Pro Boarders* is based around such a "radical" sport. It has ESPN and not-as-well-known X Games branding slapped over every fence and scoreboard. And, hey man, whaddya know? It's not original, or extreme in the slightest. It's just snowboarding. Again.

At least *Pro Boarders* has some character, though. Indeed if you're at all familiar with ESPN, you'll quickly find that the best-known snowboarding "stars" of the world are present and correct, and they each come laden down with their own special moves and speech. It's not just your typical race to the bottom of the hill à la *Cool Boarders* either. There're nine different events for your racers to participate in, from slalom to half-pipe, and downhill to

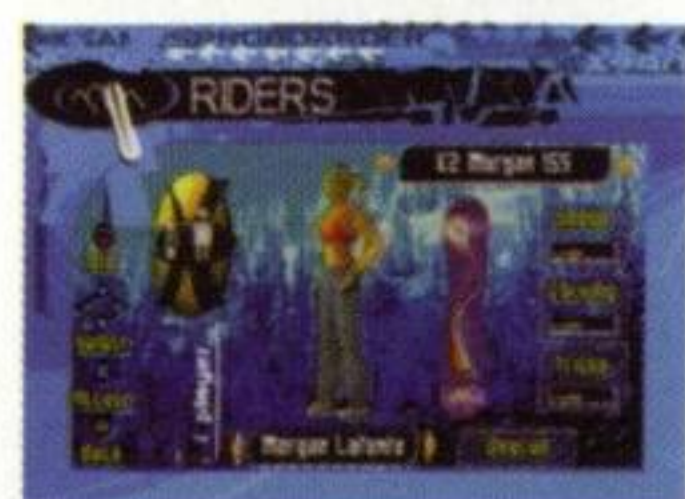
freestyle. And, well, each one of these seems to be sufficiently "rad".

Maybe we'll never really understand this American fascination with the ridiculous. After all, wrestling games still come over from the States by the truckload. But *Pro Boarders* just doesn't make you feel like you want to understand anyway. For starters, if Nintendo's *1080° Snowboarding* and *Cool Boarders 3* started out at the top of a downhill race with *Pro Boarders*, they'd be down the bottom sunning themselves and enjoying a well-earned slice of après-ski before *Pro Boarders* had avoided the first fir tree. Indeed the whole game is achingly slow at times. All a bit shoddy really, but sins that you might be persuaded to forgive if the gameplay was up to scratch.

Which it isn't. Most of the events rely on you to accrue as many points as you can via gravity-bending stunts. In Professional mode, there are over 2,000 moves to attempt, a frankly stupid amount – if only because most are just far too difficult to pull off.

In some respects, *Pro Boarders* is like *Tekken* without any opponent except the snow. It's that interesting. The combos take too long to learn and longer to perfect. And, naturally, when you do perfect a stunt, you won't have seen it happen anyway, because you'll have been too busy glaring at the joystick.

Pro Boarders may be sufficiently interesting if you've just spent two weeks perfecting your skills at Val D'Isere, but everybody else in the world should avoid it. ★★ **Ben East**



■ Snow joke; she really does wear next-to-nothing on the piste.

Or you could try...

Cool Boarders 3
 SCE ★★★★★
 Best snowboarding action on the PlayStation. Beware of imitations.

Cool Boarders 2
 SCE ★★★
 Like the third, obviously, but not quite as good.



■ The track editor is clever but with only a limited selection of blocks the courses are never going to be top-notch.



The Granstream Saga

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **Sony Japan** ■ Price: **£34.99**
 ■ Release date: **February**
 ■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **Dual Shock-compatible, memory card**

A 3D RPG/adventure about an animé hero's quest to save his world. Cue dozens of blatantly obvious clues and a selection of simple puzzles...

■ *The Granstream Saga* is the antithesis to Sony's other new RPG/adventure effort, *Wild Arms* (reviewed opposite). While *Wild Arms* looks dated, with its depth only apparent after prolonged play, *Granstream* looks more accomplished, but is marred by its pedestrian content.

The *Saga* begins on one of four floating islands. For reasons explained as the plot progresses, these islands are starting to lose altitude, and the populace will soon be splattered on the volcanic landscape below. The locals all try to hold back the inevitable by chopping off huge lumps of land to lighten the load; the game's hero – Eon – is introduced when he lops off a corner in the introductory sequence. The intro also shows us just how much of a hero he is, as he rescues a nest of chicks from the collapsing ledge – inadvertently hinting at *Granstream's* unsubtle plot.

Eon is duly embroiled in a mystery. He has to find crystals and rescue a princess who's imprisoned on one of the floating pirate ships that is waiting to attack the falling islands. Sadly, this promising start to the story is passed over, and a painting-by-numbers adventure unveils a series of obvious puzzles instead.

Granstream Saga's biggest problem is that it doesn't let you get on with the quest. Instead, every character Eon meets has acres of tedious dialogue, and drops heavier hints than an eight-year-old at Christmas. The exploration is constantly hampered by the reams of text, and even the visual puzzles fail to disguise hidden rooms or entrances – the developer might as well have put "Pull Me" labels above every switch.

The game's eagerness to help is its ultimate downfall. If you've played *Zelda* or *Final Fantasy VII*, you'll know that the whole point is that you have to work for the clues. *Granstream Saga* prefers to hand everything to you on a plate, and the result is unfulfilling and dull. ★★ **Steve Merrett**

HEAVY METAL

HAVEN'T WE ALL GROWN OUT OF THIS?

Rally Cross 2

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **989 Studios/Idol Minds**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **March** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Extras: **steering wheel**

Mud is glorious stuff. As is sand. And gravel. Why not drive cars fast on a mix of all three and see what happens? Because you might get this...

The term "off-road" can mean many things in the world of videogames. It can signify a selection of challenging courses from around the globe (*Colin McRae Rally*). It might hint at vehicles that hardly ever touch the track (*Test Drive 4x4*). Or it could suggest that a game's creator has attempted to produce the muddiest, slidiest, filthiest driving game ever – as is the case with *Rally Cross 2*.

As early as the vehicle selection screen, subtlety doesn't even get a look in. Choose from a lumbering 4x4, a floaty buggy or a souped-up saloon. The set-up of

these cars can be tweaked, but all three are inclined to eat wall, fence or rival driver at the merest touch of your fingers on the D-pad or analogue stick.

And there are more problems. Visually, *Rally Cross 2* is decidedly second rate. Its handling also leaves a lot to be desired, as hillocks send you hurtling into the air and you are unable to build up any rhythm through the tight turns. It's learnt nothing from either the original *Rally Cross* or games such as *V-Rally*, either: while the occasional roll is a good thing, consistent crashing is infuriating and ruins any chance of high-speed, edge-of-your-bucket-seat action.

The one bit of oomph in this lacklustre package is the track editor. This genuinely novel option enables you to knock up your own courses then race them against CPU opponents or a mate. The trouble is, your amateurish circuits end up worryingly similar to the ones provided, with nothing but 90° turns, dull straights and hazards. Brash, noisy and revelling in its naffness, *Rally Cross 2* is the off-road equivalent of Iron Maiden. ★★ **Pete Wilton**

Or you could try...

Colin McRae Rally
 Codemasters ★★★★★
 Slidy, fast, thoughtful and challenging. Undisputed king of off-road.

Total Drivin'
 Infogrames ★★★★★
 Budget-meisters should check-out this brilliant old banger.

Uppers & Downers

- Happy**
- Custom courses
 - Lots of modes
 - Enjoyable shunts
- Cross**
- Zebedee-esque handling
 - Satanic rawk music
 - Kinda ugly lookin'



Global Domination

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Developer: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Extras: **memory card, analogue controller, Dual Shock-compatible**

The wargame sim screams into the '90s with a nod to Never Say Never Again along the way. Grab an ICBM and pick your continent.

■ When you flick it on, strategy/war game *Global Domination* comes over all squeaky clean and friendly – like global conflict bathed in a sanitised feel-good post-*Men In Black* wash. It has Hollywood production values and a sparkling big-boned, vitamin-enriched cast who swan around in the opening chunky FMV (which screams of Saturday afternoon action TV), smiling beatifically or scowling mysteriously. There's even a foxy lady lieutenant.

You star as Phoenix, a wet-behind-the-ears strategist hotshot, newly recruited to ULTRA (the Universal Tactical Response Agency), a global defence agency set in the near future who will happily defend whichever country stumps up the readies. There's an evil counterforce (WOE) established to oppose your every move and over 20 basic missions.

So, let rip with missiles, fighters, bombers, submarines, cruisers and even high-tech satellites, while trying to complete your mission objectives, whether it's the tactical defence of Central America from an aggressor (Argentina), or knocking out the missile silos of its allies.

When it comes to the attack, *GD* lets you rotate a hologram of the world globe and get stuck right in. Even zooming in on countries to analyse their tactical profile via a sexy little multi-colour wireframe looks cool. There's also a video window that shows various tactical launches; and all the while a friendly female voice in your headset keeps you up to date with the escalating conflict.

Global Domination is miles more than a world-view *Command & Conquer*. It feels like *Missile Command* for the phat trainer brigade, but coupled with the cerebral effort of a game such as *Risk*. The only downsides are that it fills an area that's a niche market and that it's an absolute pig to get to grips with when you first plug it in. But war is hell, right? ★★★ **Iain White**



IMPORT

ZERO COMPLAINTS

COME AND ALPHA GO IF YOU'RE HARD ENOUGH

Street Fighter Zero 3

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**
 ■ Price: **£54.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan), TBC (UK)** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

Yes, it's another Street Fighter game. But – get this – it's absolutely fantastic.

Uppers & Downers

Zero

- It looks great
- It plays better
- Loads of play modes

Zilch

- Not much at all
- Amazing

Say what you like about the Saturn, but it was almost tailor-made for running *Street Fighter* games. A dedicated sprite-handling machine at heart – in contrast to Sony and Nintendo's more polygon-oriented 3D equivalents – it played host to the best conversions of Capcom's fighting finest. The first two *Alpha* games were *okay* on Sony's format. But brilliant? Alas, no. From loading times to absent visual niceties, the PlayStation played second fiddle to the Saturn's rare and, largely unheralded, virtuoso lead.

This conversion of *Street Fighter Zero 3* goes a long way toward compensating PlayStation-owning fans of Capcom's 2D fighting games. It is, without question, the finest, most significant home version of a

Street Fighter game in a number of years. Part of its appeal is its sheer depth and attention to detail. For those who would argue that the standard linear tournaments are becoming a little stale, Capcom has introduced a novel World Tour option. Here, your player wins abilities – from Air Blocking to greater guard powers – by fighting bouts in a variety of locations. Although the fights themselves adhere to familiar blueprints – with a few novel touches – the almost RPG-like overtones of this mode are to be applauded.

Zero 3's cast list is impressively large, with over 20 characters to choose from. It's the familiar faces, however, that will delight most *Street Fighter* fans. From Honda to Cammy, this latest instalment marks the return of fighters absent since the excellent (though aged) *Super Street Fighter* update.

Another new feature is the introduction of three different fighting styles. No matter which character you choose, there are three disciplines to choose from. These are Xism (aggressive), Zism (defensive) and Vism (balanced between the two). Finding the style that suits you – there are serious differences in their interpretations of the now-standard power-up bar – takes time. Ideally, you'll want to grasp the nuances inherent to all three.

It's lamentable, then, that many PlayStation owners equate "sprite-based game" with, for example, "crap". Replete with options, modes and secrets, *Street Fighter Zero 3* marks the pinnacle of 2D fighting perfection. Along with *Tekken 3* and *Virtua Fighter 3tb*, it's part of a genre aristocracy that every self-respecting gamer should pay homage to. To disregard *SF3* on account of its lack of polygons is tantamount to gross stupidity as – lapsing into childish superlatives for the sake of an apt summary – it's ace. ★★★★★ **James Price**

■ **Ryu vs Chunners.** We've seen it before, but never this good.



Or you could try...

Street Fighter Collection
 Capcom ★★★
 Classic Street Fighter, as you first played it years ago.

Tekken 3
 Namco ★★★★★
 Harkening for polys? This has a few. It fights like a demon.



Eliminator

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Developer: **Magenta Software** ■ Price: **£39.99**
 ■ Release date: **March**
 ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Extras: **memory card, Dual Shock-compatible**

Criminally, this has nothing to do with the Traveller-dominated end game on Gladiators. Instead, race around in a hover ship shooting things.

■ You can spot a Psygnosis game a mile off; far-future dystopian setting, lashings of lens flare and an altogether better quality of explosion. When next millennium trimmings are used to add an icy, *Bladerunner*-style atmosphere to a great game such as *G-Police* or *WipEout*, the effect's strong enough to make you want to cash in your pension plan before society descends into chaos.

When such trimmings are dressing up old tat such as *Eliminator* though, it's just annoying. The constant rain and industrial setting for this 3D,

arena-based racer-come-blaster only compounds the misery already caused by a badly-thought-out concept and difficult-to-control ship.

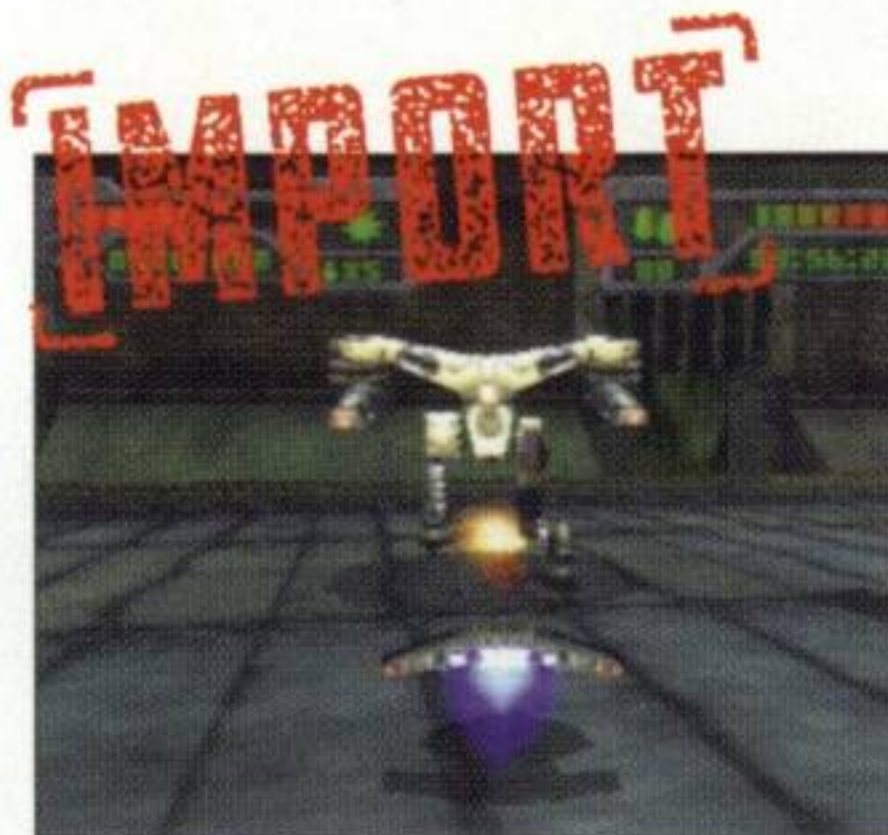
Eliminator's a basic idea, not very well done. Zipping around an enclosed area in a choice of six (rubbish-looking) crafts, you simply shoot a wave of enemy ships or robots with a weedy laser, pick up the power-ups left behind and progress to the next section via a connecting tunnel. Controlling the ship is a nightmare and targeting enemies with a sight that you have to manually adjust while moving around to avoid their fire, is carpet-chewingly frustrating.

Almost pitifully, there's been an attempt to ratchet up the tension in the shape of a bomb, fitted to the bottom of your ship, that constantly ticks away. You can only stave off being blown to pieces by collecting time bonuses. But this is an annoyance rather than an adrenal gland-prodding feature, particularly when you're sent back to the start of the level as soon as you lose a life.

The amount of fire-power on offer is pretty stingy too. The usually glorious explosions lack oomph and the dreary weapon effects provide little reason to hammer the fire button. Technically, *Eliminator* lacks the glossy production values and smooth, ultra-buffed edges of the likes of *Colony Wars: Vengeance*; coming across instead like a shabby, early PlayStation effort when developers could still use

the excuse of not knowing the machine well enough. Perhaps even more damagingly, we've yet to see one enemy in the game worth hating. The opposition are so badly designed that you almost can't be bothered to shoot them.

Eliminator never comes close to offering the sort of arcade action that you'd willingly pay even 20 pence for. There's perhaps a glimmer of a good game in the two-player battle option, but if you were expecting *Eliminator* to be another *WipEout*, but with more blasting and less racing, you've been badly misled. Have a word. ★ **Simon Garner**



Ehrgeiz

■ Publisher: **Square Soft**
 ■ Developer: **Dream Factory**
 ■ Price: **£49.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan), TBC (UK)** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

Ehrgeiz. Don't ask us to pronounce it, but we'll happily praise it as – finally!

– a fighting game that genuinely embraces 3D technology.

■ For all of *Tekken 3's* many charms – and Namco didn't get much wrong with the PlayStation conversion – it's hardly the most progressive of titles. It's *Tekken* writ large; a technically outstanding update of an aging design brief. But innovative? No.

Ehrgeiz, by contrast, is arguably the most forward-thinking fighting game released on PlayStation for a long time. Not only is it virtuously playable, it also waves two fingers at the long-accepted wisdom that videogame combat should take place on a simple horizontal axis. Each location is a fully-explorable arena, where you move as you please within, of course, predictable confines. Tapping the D-pad or analogue stick in a direction causes your fighter to run that way. And initially, it's bewildering.

By blessing players with greater mobility, *Ehrgeiz's* developer Dream Factory could have killed its potential as a "proper" fighting game. But the company's solution to the problems inherent in translating 2D gameplay into a 3D environment is simple. It might also sound rather familiar. By holding down a right-hand shoulder button, your on-screen persona rotates around their opposite number. The D-pad now becomes the means by which you approach, retreat from, or circle

your opponent. And, as any *Zelda* devotee will attest, this method genuinely works.

This intuitive system becomes second nature after a surprisingly low number of bouts. Better still, certain stages feature simplistic, yet integral pieces of furniture. From a lower platform on the Elevator stage to a small building on the Rooftop arena, these objects influence your strategies to an extraordinary degree. If your fighter is blessed with projectile attacks, for example, you'll prefer to fight in perfectly flat locales – such as the ring in the Dome stage. Conversely, if you're lacking ranged attacks, you'll relish the opportunity to cower on any available higher platform, defending your elevated floorspace with, say, kicks aimed vaguely mouth-ward.

But *Ehrgeiz* isn't perfect. Its one-player game is flat compared to its (excellent) two-player equivalent, with AI competitors fighting like... well, like AI competitors. Its blocking system, similarly, can prove frustrating. You ward off blows by, get this... pressing nothing. Madness. There are counter moves but, robbed of the reassuring presence of a dedicated "guard" button, many players will adopt hit-and-run tactics. This often results in fragmented, frantic combat – a far cry from the toe-to-toe battle of wills that *should*, and can sometimes, occur. Set this aside, though, and you'll find a fine game. ★★★ **James Price**

PlayStation budget round-up

by Robin Alway

Just found £20 on the pavement? Recently won a pub bet involving a bar stool, two bar maids and a pickled egg? Got two crisp tenners in your back pocket from some dubious "massaging" side line? Let Arcade help you spend your wealth, by pointing you in the direction of some £20 bargains...



Mickey's Wild Adventure

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **Disney**
 ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**

■ "One for the younger player." Such a cruel thing to say about any game, if only because it means that a nation of six-year-olds are getting the likes of *Mickey's Wild Adventure* instead of the *Tekken 3* they really want from well meaning relatives. Still, it's a learning process.

Receiving *Mickey's Wild Adventure* wouldn't necessarily provoke a foot stamping tantrum, however – unless you're 24, of course. As with *Hercules*, also recently out on Platinum and reviewed last

issue, there's plenty to like about this colourful 2D platformer. The graphics show Disney's crayoning skills off to good effect – even if they've only been given a mild buffing since the likes of *Mickey Mania* on the SNES – pleasing the eye as you guide the allegedly lovable rodent through levels based on his most famous silver screen appearances.

There are plenty of nice touches too. *Mickey's Wild Adventure* kicks off in flickery black and white like the mouse's first appearance in *Steamboat Willie*. And even if you're a hard-core *Mortal Kombat* fan, you'll warm to the quality animation as the mouse jumps and swings his way through the game.

But although there's all manner of warm fluffiness happening on screen here, if you've ever held a pad before you'll soon tire of it. The platforming's been stripped right down to basics. You run from left to right, jumping where appropriate and throwing stuff at enemies – all simple stuff that soon gets monotonous before even taking a turn for the painfully straightforward. An almost total lack of sparkle and innovation makes for an unchallenging leapathon that appears to seriously underestimate the reactions of the very young.

Criticising Mickey Mouse might be akin to punching the Queen Mum or complaining about *Animal Hospital's* lack of hard-hitting political analysis, but ultimately *Mickey's Wild Adventure* is too harmless to be much fun, despite the Disney sheen of quality. We can't help thinking that even under-tens would prefer *Crash*. ★★

4 PlayStation Multipack

■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Core, EA, Gremlin, Psygnosis** ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ Gulp. It's charity game compilation time. Where any negative comments from a bitter games hack are going to be seen as taking hard cash from the outstretched hands of needy children.

Thankfully, *4 PlayStation Multipack* is a reasonable good value compilation that we can be nice about while keeping our hard-fought journalistic integrity. Yes. For the £40 asking price you're getting – as the cunning title suggests – four complete games.

Worst of all, and barely worth the power needed to run your PlayStation's green On light, is *Independence Day*. A classically bad movie tie-in that has you taking on massed alien hordes in an arcadey into-the-screen 3D blaster. It's basically a reworking of the old coin-op *Afterburner*, but with some appalling pop-up. Whatever you think of the film, this does not, in any way, kick ass.

Next up, and looking its age in the ultra-competitive footy game sector, is *Actua Soccer Club Edition*. Essentially, it's the same as the original *Actua Soccer*, but with League teams rather than international ones. It's still looks fairly slick, but there are far better examples of the sport around, including the original *ISS Pro*, now on Platinum.

Hold back those tears, though. *4 PlayStation Multipack* picks up the pace with *Thunderhawk 2: Firestorm*. Sure, it's as old as the hills, but it still offers a rattling



■ **Independence Day: aliens!**



■ **Thunderstrike 2: choppers!**



■ **Overboard!: pirates!**



■ **Actua Soccer CE: goals!**

good blast as you fly an easy-to-control helicopter in a string of explosion-heavy missions. Your objectives are varied and your chopper's so loaded down with weaponry that it's a wonder it can get off the ground at all, let alone rule the skies in a flurry of Surface-to-Air missiles. There are woefully few console flying games, and while *Thunderhawk 2* isn't exactly *Apache Havoc*, there's something about the thwapping noise of rotor blades to excite even the most jaded gamer. Top stuff.

Finally, and best of all, though is *Overboard!*. A shoot-'em-up-come-puzzler where you sail a mini pirate ship through complicated levels, opening gates, avoiding traps, and loosening your cannons on

enemy craft. The cartoony graphics are beautifully dinky and the whole concept is novel enough to keep you on the high seas for some time, despite a frustrating save game system. A quirky but great offering that's all the stranger, coming as it does from those cool, cutting-edge types at Psygnosis.

All in all, at only a tenner a game, there's some reasonable value for money kicking about in *4 PlayStation Multipack*, particularly if you include the warm feeling you get from contributing to British children's charities. Maybe next time the software industry could look just a little nearer the front of their games cupboards for contributions though. ★★★

■ A new terrain set means it's goodbye to *Civilisation II*'s lush green pastures.

Arcade
PC
Game of
the Month

STAR POWER

THE FUTURE OF CIVILISATION AS WE KNOW IT

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

■ The graphics are hardly state of the art – but this is a game meant for the brain, not for the eyes.

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Firaxis Games**
■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Requires: **P133, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive**

Wake up, get out of bed, impose your ideology on an alien planet and destroy anyone who gets in your way with bolts of blue laser death. Sounds like fun to us.

And so the world ends. The last vestiges of mankind voyage to colonise a new planet, dreaming of a newer, better civilisation. En route, however, old rivalries flare up.

Factions are formed, a bomb explodes and the mission ends in disaster. Crash-landing on Alpha Centauri, the ideologically divided remnants of the human race are soon at each others' throats once again. They plunder the planet's resources, squabble over territory and pollute the atmosphere. Welcome to the future. Not much has changed.

And that's a phrase you'll find yourself muttering all the

way through *Alpha Centauri* – or *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri*, as it insists on calling itself. (Assuming, of course, that you've played either *Civilisation* or *Civilisation II*, Sid Meier's earlier mega-hits. And if you haven't... well, you should have done.)

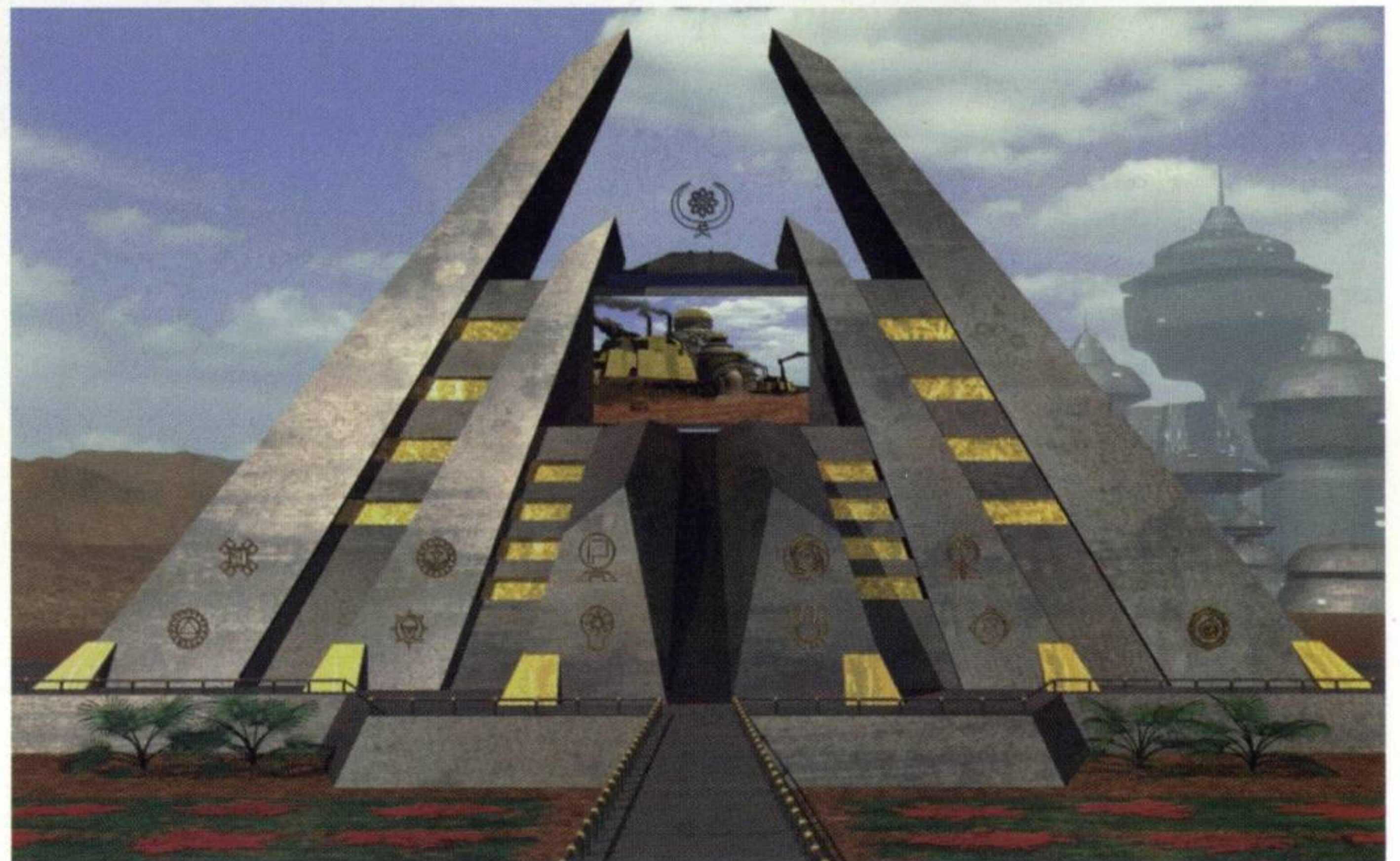
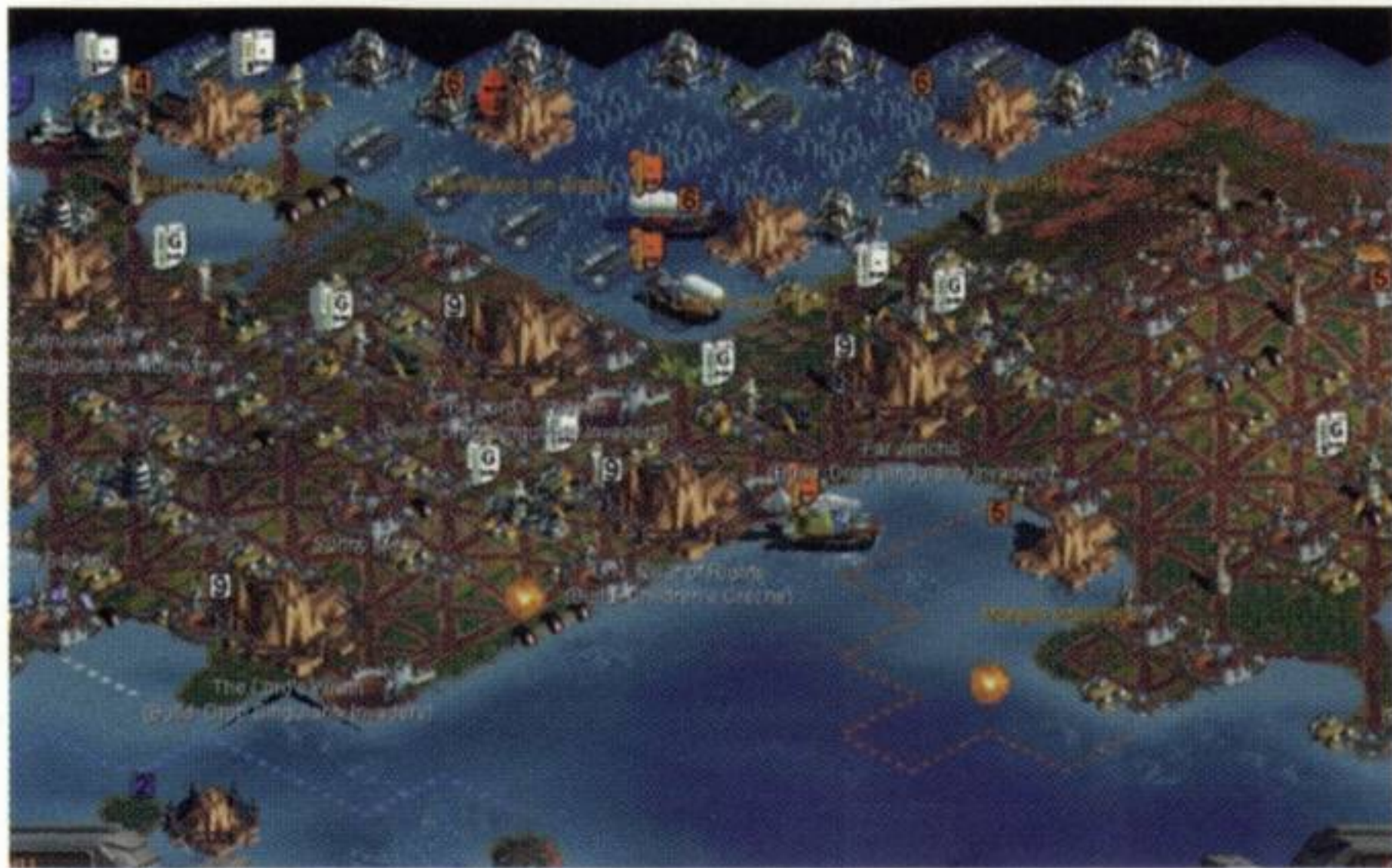
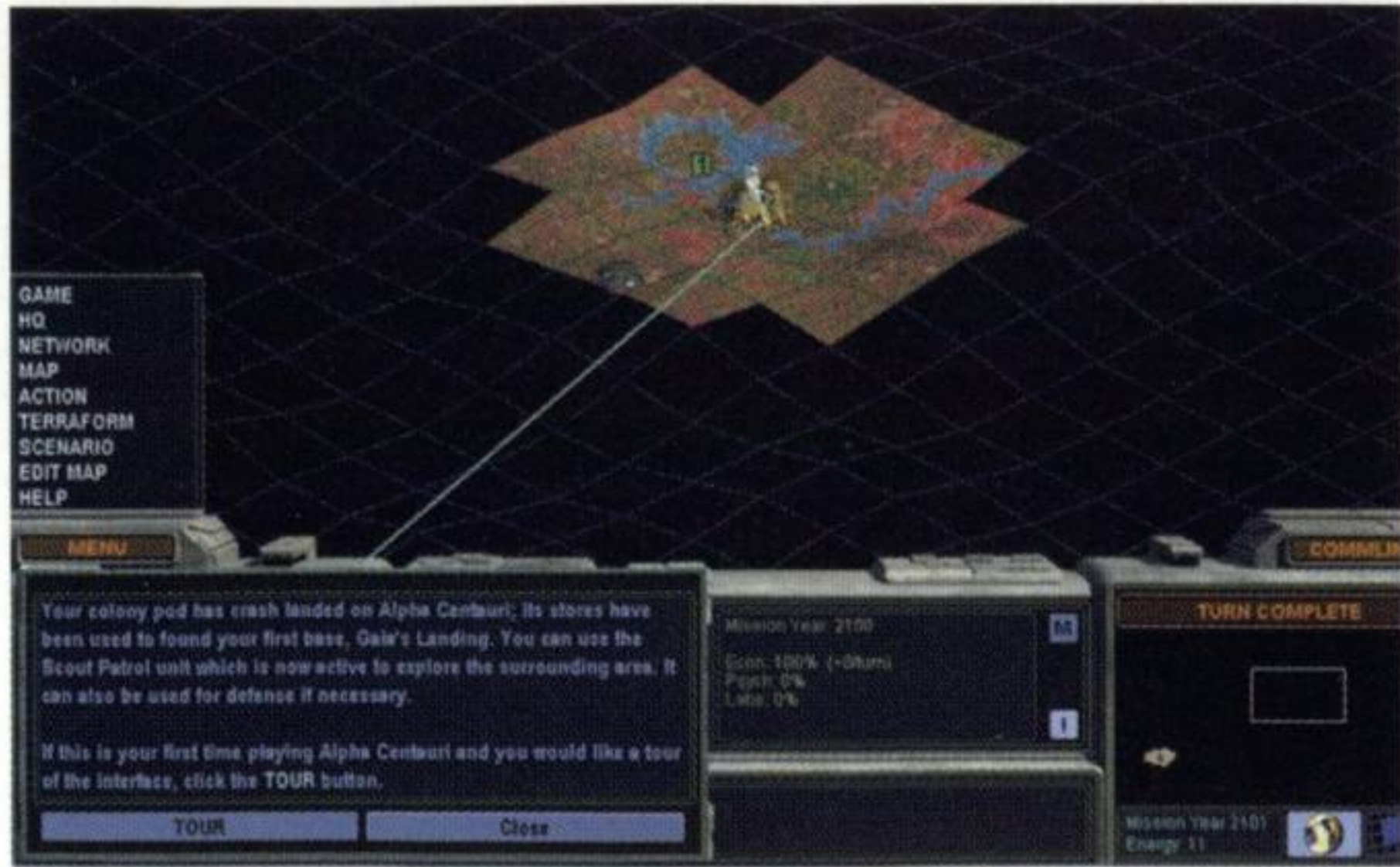
So. Nothing much has changed. In many, many ways, *Alpha Centauri* is exactly the same game as the three-year-old *Civilisation II*. As the seven-year-old *Civilisation*, even. Yes, there's a slick new interface layout here, lots of clever details, and a much-welcome multi-player functionality, but the fundamental gameplay is completely unchanged. The graphics look just the same, too – except they're a little less colourful than those of the first two games.

In a way, this doesn't matter a jot. It's impossible to overstate how great the experience of playing a *Civ* game has always been, and *Alpha Centauri* sucks you in just as its ancestors did. After an hour or so spent discovering how everything works, you'll find yourself completely and unrecoverably absorbed. My very first play, for example, had me rooted to my desk for a solid ten-hour stretch, without

pause even for food. You don't have to be especially charitable to describe gameplay this addictive as "tried and tested".

On the other hand, you don't have to be unusually brutal to





describe something this unapologetically derivative as "anachronistic and disappointing".

Still, the fact remains that it's tremendously enjoyable – just as it's always been. The flow of the game, as priorities shift from exploration to discovery to resource management to conquest, is still compelling. You start out, as is traditional, with a lone scout and a single, tiny base, but a few hours later you're running an entire continent, launching satellites and threatening your neighbours with air strikes. And you really do get attached to your creations, tending them carefully and vowing hot-blooded vengeance when they come under attack. Just as you always did.

There are some new features, of course. Terrain is now elevated – in other words, there are hills and valleys. And because solar collectors (which you need to accumulate energy, *SMAC's* cash-equivalent), need to be placed as high as possible, this does have some strategic impact. There's a great new workshop, too, where you can customise your units to give them greater shielding or amphibious abilities, for example, at a higher cost. Oh, and the game can now be played multi-player, and even supports voice-links between players. AI diplomacy is much more fully implemented, too.

But more work should have been spent making the *Alpha Centauri* experience seem *alien*, compared to the *Civ* games. Having the odd aggressive indigenous lifeform pop up annoyingly from time to time really isn't enough. And the dodgy new-age philosophising, as a personification of "the planet" that starts visiting you at night and reading

you bad eco-poetry, is just embarrassing. This is sci-fi as allegory, rather than a truly new world of possibilities.

SMAC's technology development is nowhere near as compelling as it was before, either. There are many more technologies to research, but they're confusingly undifferentiated, with very few radical "alien"-type effects of any impact. In *Civ II*, you could start blowing things up when you developed gunpowder; you could clearly see the difference between a dragoon and a paratrooper. But in *SMAC*, things are much less obvious. Which unit is "better": the Singularity Invaders, the Neutronium Sentinels or the Probability Garrison? Hard to guess, isn't it? And matters aren't helped by the fact that most advanced units look the same.

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri, then, isn't the best-ever new videogame that strategy fans were hoping for. Despite its futuristic premise, it fails to develop the *Civilisation* formula in any exciting new direction. It is, nonetheless, an incredibly deep, playable and absorbing game. Set aside several days, forget about *Civilisation II*, and lose yourself in it. ★★ ★

Jonathan Smith

■ *Alpha Centauri* suffered delays while Sid Meier and Brian Reynolds gave the graphics a quick makeover. You wouldn't know it from the visuals, but it's simplicity itself to lose yourself in the game's atmosphere.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERSTATE HOW GREAT THE EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING A CIVILISATION GAME HAS ALWAYS BEEN

Or you could try...

Civilisation II
MicroProse ★★★★★
Still probably the most engrossing game you can play. A true day-eater.

Fragile Allegiance
Gremlin Interactive ★★★★★
Fiercely complicated space base-building title, which rewards your patience well.

Uppers & Downers

Blast off

- An endless challenge
- Multi-player
- Full of neat details

Piss off

- Nowhere near revolutionary
- Dull graphics
- Dull future technologies



■ Take the alien-eye view, or zoom right in to ground level.



■ It's another hot night in your very own Hell's Kitchen.

CITY LIFE

GRIPPING OLD-FASHIONED FUN

Sim City 3000

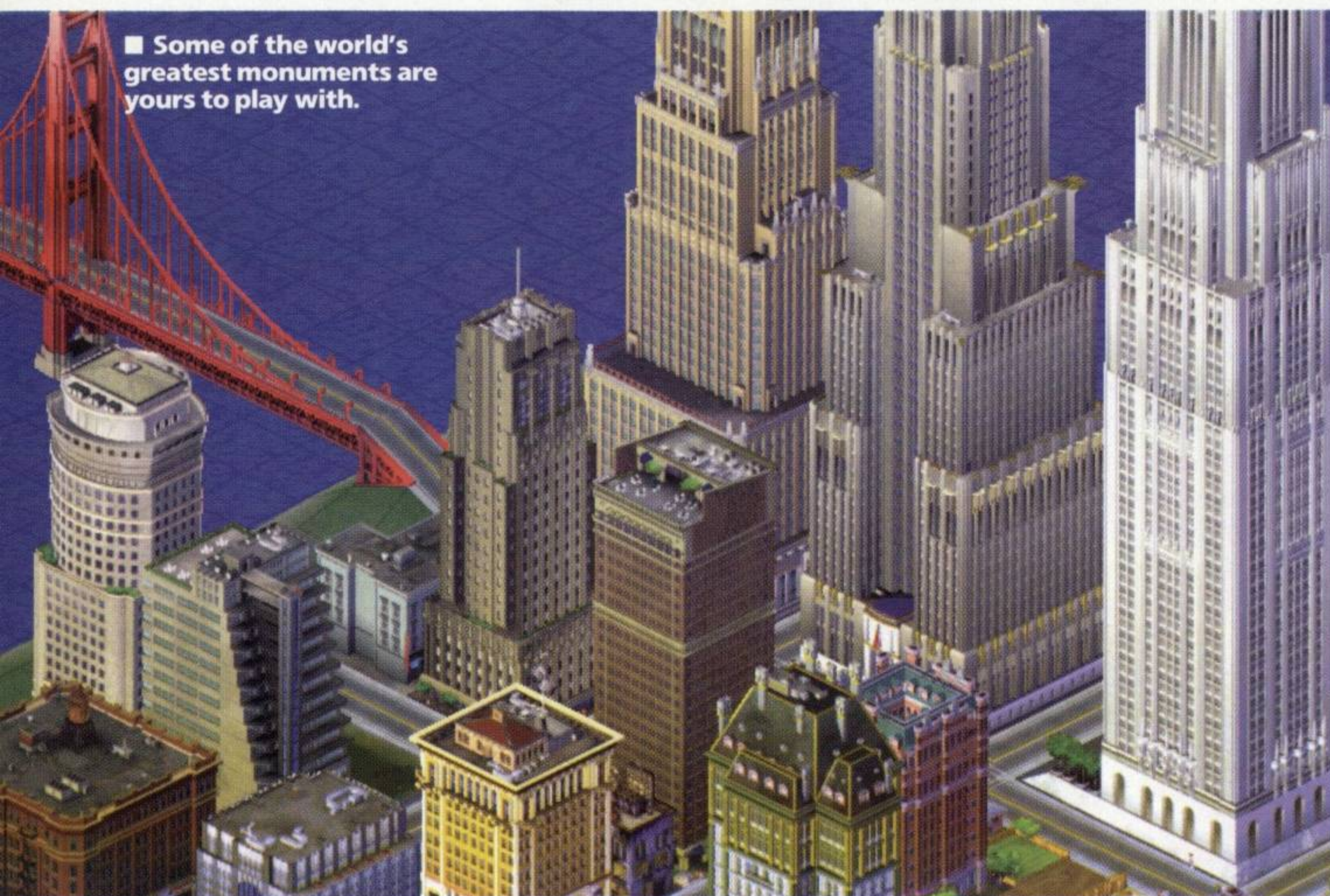
■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Maxis**
■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2Mb video card, Direct X-compatible soundcard**

Time to don that hard hat again. But is this 3,000 times better than the original?

Maxis perfected the Lego-on-the-PC idea long before the Danes cottoned on to the scheme. With the apocalyptically successful *Sim City*, you could build houses, streets, offices and factories without ever losing bits up the Hoover, or kneeling painfully on a roof brick. Beautiful.

Ten years on, this 3000 update is the PC equivalent of a top-of-the-range *Space Shuttle* Lego set, with opening cargo bay doors and retracting undercarriage. Zoom in and out of your city! View it from four different angles! Ask advisors for, er... advice! Sell electricity and water to your neighbours! Import your favourite *Sim City 2000* creations!

But it also provides a full clip of ammunition for *Sim City* cynics. Surely, in 1999, you should be able to view your city



■ Some of the world's greatest monuments are yours to play with.

from any angle, like in *Syndicate Wars* or something? Why does it sometimes take about 30 seconds to redraw the screen when you rotate to a new angle? And, well... is this it? After a decade's hard graft, Maxis presents us with *Sim City* again – but slightly more complicated?

The principle of *Sim City 3000*, then, remains unchanged. Click the "Play" button and you're presented with a tract of

HAVING BUILT A SMALL TOWN IT'S DIFFICULT TO STOP UNTIL IT'S A LARGE TOWN... AND THEN A CITY

unspoilt countryside and orders to get spoiling. As in *Sim City 2000*, the second game in the series, you demarcate areas into "zones" – residential, commercial and industrial – and hook them up to water and electricity supplies. You then hope people move in and start building stuff.

Expecting nice posh suburbs to spring up next to offal reprocessing plants is just asking for trouble, as is building industrial estates in the middle of nowhere unless you have roads leading to them. A subway system is essential for avoiding those rush-hour jams. Parks, zoos and theme parks brighten the place up. Schools and libraries make for a much smarter population. Police, a fire brigade and hospitals are important too. The name of the game is to create a pleasant environment for people to live in. People, you see, pay taxes, and these taxes enable you build more roads and schools and zoos, which in turn attract more people.

Which may all sound fairly dull, tempting you to turn over to Simon Garner's review of *Viper Racing* on page 122. But do this and you're reckoning without the Lego effect – the joy of starting with nothing and gradually, over a period of many hours, constructing something huge. Having built a small town it's very difficult to stop until you've turned it into a large town. And then – before you know it – that has grown into a city, which then generates enough revenue to buy you even more suburbs and good grief is that the time?

Sim City 3000 looks prettier than its 2000 forebear. You can zoom right up above the clouds and get a hazy overview of the entire map, or swoop down to street level and see cars, buses and trains tooting about. The detail is fantastic, with intricate carvings on Edwardian mansion blocks, little pointy bits on the tops of skyscrapers, planes taking off from your airports and tanks driving round your army base. There are some truly massive tower-blocks in store for successful city-planners, and there's a range of real-life landmarks to spice things up – the Eiffel Tower, the UN building and so on. Altogether there are around 350 different buildings, three times as many as in 2000.

What's more, the new game's a bit less fiddly than 2000, too, with the impenetrable bond system replaced by simple cash loans, and the advisors helping you decide which laws to pass.

But it's still got irritating quirks. The *Populous*-style controls for raising and lowering the landscape are infuriating, seemingly carving out chunks of earth



at random. They're okay for making big hills, but if you're really trying to create a small area by the coast to site a desalination plant, you can fuff about for hours trying to make it flat. The terrain also makes laying roads, cables and pipes a headache. For some stupid reason, these refuse to cross diagonally-sloping bumps – so trying to get water to a building at the top of a hill that's not perfectly square involves endless prating about.

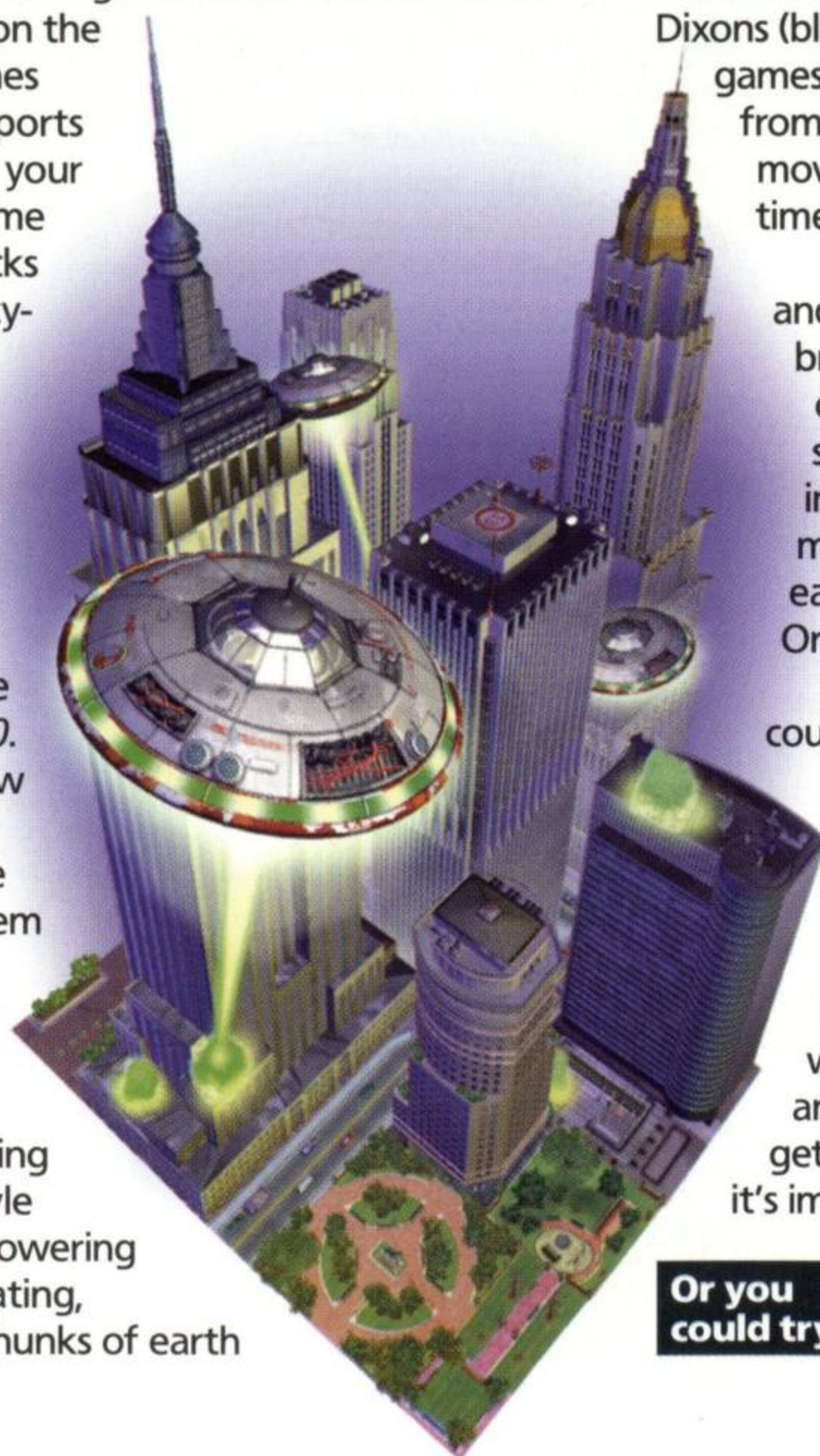
Sim City 3000's main problem, though, is that building cities is exactly the same amount of fun – to three decimal places – as it was ten years ago. And in 1989, when *Sim City* first appeared, *Super Mario Bros. 3* on the NES was state of the art. And you could probably still buy a Spectrum +3 in Dixons (bless). The idea of the PC ever becoming the leading games computer would have produced gales of laughter from smug Atari ST owners. All in all, things have moved on since then – unless you live in the Maxis time-bubble, it seems.

These days, having built up a decent-sized city and accrued a healthy bank balance, the urge is to breed an army of Ultralisks and Zerglings and head over the border into neighbouring East Court to settle that pollution dispute once and for all. But in *Sim City 3000*, you've got no such option. The most fun you can have here is to inflict a few earthquakes and UFO attacks on your population. Or build a Statue of Liberty. Ho hum.

"But it's not meant to be a game!" Maxis would counter. "It's a... erm... recreational... edutainment... software... toy. Yes, that's it." This is marketing babble (if you haven't yet guessed).

Sim City 3000 remains terribly old-fashioned: but unlike Texan bars, Spangles and Pacers, it's somehow managed to survive the test of time. It's a game that's complicated in all the wrong ways. It's got no storyline, no goal, no structure and very little in the way of "thrills". It deserves to get one star at the very most. And yet, infuriatingly, it's impossible to switch off. ★★★★★ **Jonathan Davies**

■ Just because it's the apple of your eye, doesn't mean it has to be beautiful. Your urban adventure won't work without a dose of industrial pollution and exhaust fumes.



↑ Downers
↓ Uppers

Skyscrapers

- Hyper-vivid graphics
- Simple controls
- Unturnoffable

Barrel scrapers

- Hardly revolutionary
- Annoying terrain
- You can't kill things

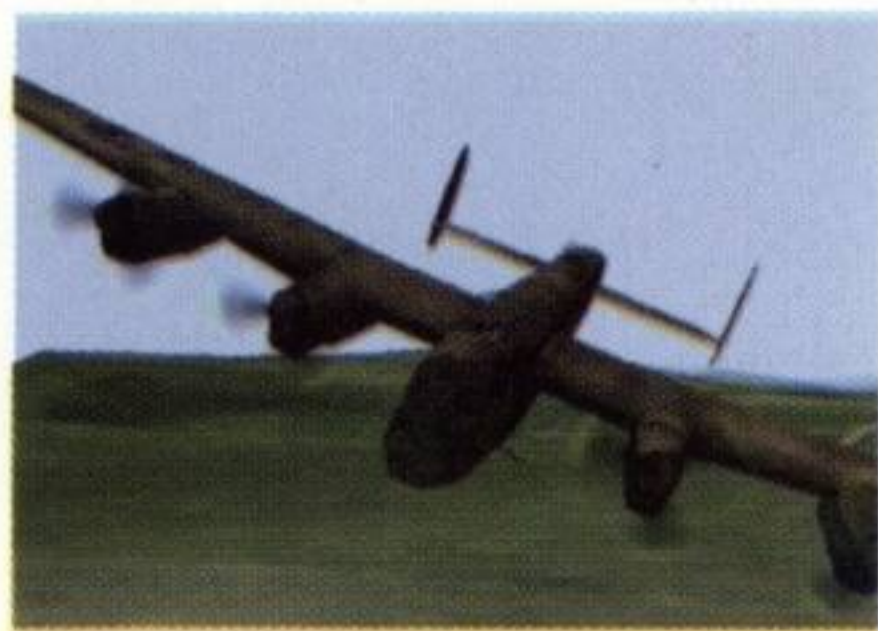


■ Whinge and moan, that's all people ever do. What do you mean, you need water?

Or you could try...

Sim City 2000
Electronic Arts ★★★
For fans of the Microsoft Windows look.

Starcraft
Blizzard ★★★★★
Similar, but you can kill the aliens.



Fighter Squadron: The Screamin' Demons Over Europe

■ Publisher: **Activision**
 ■ Developer: **Parsoft**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-16**
 ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 3D accelerator card**
 ■ Recommended: **modem for Internet play**

The skies are certainly crowded with World War 2 sims. With all those guns on your plane, let's see if you can't reduce the numbers...

■ *Screamin' Demons* was developed by Parsoft, a company that includes the coding talents of Eric Parker, the man behind such seminal sims as *Hellcats Over the Pacific* and *A-10 Attack!*, so it's not unreasonable to expect something special from this new release.

And special it is, too. Parsoft strives for realism, and *Screamin' Demons* is, frankly, too real for comfort. Quite apart from the flight physics model that uses floating-point maths to handle such aerodynamic niceties as compressibility and ground-effect, the aircraft are designed to react to damage just like the real thing, so a radical manoeuvre can bend or break your wings, and a hard landing can quickly buckle your undercarriage. And if you shoot up an enemy plane, bits of it can fly off, smack you in the cockpit and kill you. Just so you know.

Screamin' Demons also has a somewhat unusual policy when it comes to the planes it includes. As well as the usual fighters, there are twin-engined planes like the Lightning and the ever-popular Mosquito, and even four-engined heavies like the B-17 and (wait for it) good ol' Lancaster bomber.

As a result, the missions are rather more diverse than in, say, *Microsoft's Combat Flight Sim*, and involve actual bombing runs, during which you can man the various turrets throughout your aircraft. Yes it's shades of *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, but done so much better.

This is strictly a game for flight sim fanatics. The physics model is smooth and complex, and makes the computer planes feel very real, especially at low speeds. However, if you just want to fly around and shoot things down, you may find that the physics get in the way of the fun. *Screamin' Demons* looks and feels very realistic, but you'll need to play it for some time to get the best out of it. ★★★★★ **Jim Chandler**



■ The Viper was unveiled in 1989 and can do 0 to 60 in 4.8 seconds. Dodge wanted to create a sleek sports-mobile to loosen the Italians' grip on the market.

AMERICAN DREAM

DODGE'S 200MPH HOT ROD COMES HOME

Viper Racing

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **MGI**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Requires: **P133, 32Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive 3D accelerator card, Win 95/98** ■ Recommended: **soundcard, modem/LAN for network play, steering wheel/joystick**

The Dodge Viper is one of America's most dreamed about high-end sports cars. Until now, there's been no sim dedicated to the taming of these beasts. Calling all boy racers – your dreams just came true.

It's all there in the name. *Viper Racing*. A game about racing Vipers. The title doesn't muck about creating any false sense of either glamour or prestige. Functional and confident, it encapsulates the essence of the PC's first Dodge Viper rally simulation.

In terms of visuals and gameplay, Sierra's latest racer is initially alienating. Rugged and minimal, it looks bleak and drives like a shopping trolley. Launch straight into a quick-start session and you're confronted by roadside graphics eschewing frills: hilltop castles, packed grandstands, lens flare and engine smoke are all there, but delivered more matter-of-factly than the conspicuously comely backdrops of *Motorhead* or *Ultimate Race Pro*.

It's not designed for instant-access arcade action either. The 1997 Dodge Viper GTS-R is a powerful blighter and getting used to its foibles is challenging. Over-steer at 200mph and you're junk; clip the bank and you're spinning like a dervish. It takes saintly patience to become accustomed to the punishing physics model, and the three modes (Arcade, Intermediate and Simulation) are progressively more nail-biting. It's tempting to just give up.

But *Viper Racing* profits from its simulation-heavy inclinations. Garage options reward

perseverance, as do the upgrades you can purchase during your "career" (the single-player campaign mode). There's a surprisingly accurate set of dynamics, meaning the chassis and suspension of each wheel are precisely balanced and can be tuned to your liking: familiarising yourself with the nuances of your automobile is vital.

When the road no longer frightens you, you can appreciate the game's other features. Thankfully, there's no invisible barrier keeping you in place, so it's possible to attempt nippy shortcuts across the grass – lose control, however, and you could hit a building or plop into the sea. The tracks are a mix of urban, rural and grandstand locations, some oval, some meandering. None of them delight like the sunset-shaded picturesque paths of *Ultimate Race Pro*, but all are adequate for pummeling up to seven rivals.

Viper Racing's connectivity options mean that your seven opponents can be controlled by human players, and providing everyone is *au fait* with the game's required skills, then you can also enjoy a passable multi-player game. A paint shop enables you to alter your machine's appearance, adding decals or drawing rude images on the roof and, since the motors will be individually tweaked, it can become a real battle of personalities.

Viper Racing may not offer immediate entertainment, nor be as complex and thrilling as *Grand Prix Legends*, but it has a trunk-full of stamina. Think of it as an introduction to driving simulations, a no-nonsense car game which makes up in substance for what it lacks in sparkle. ★★★

Simon Garner

↑ Uppers & Downers

Ladders

- Great car physics
- Range of garage options
- Cool paint shop

Snakes

- Requires patience
- Punishing simulation mode
- Charmless graphics

THE VIPER IS A POWERFUL BLIGHTER AND GETTING USED TO IT IS CHALLENGING

■ These babies cost \$250,000, so try not to hit things with them.



Or you could try...

Ultimate Race Pro
 MicroProse ★★★★★
 Ridiculously fast treat for the eyes.

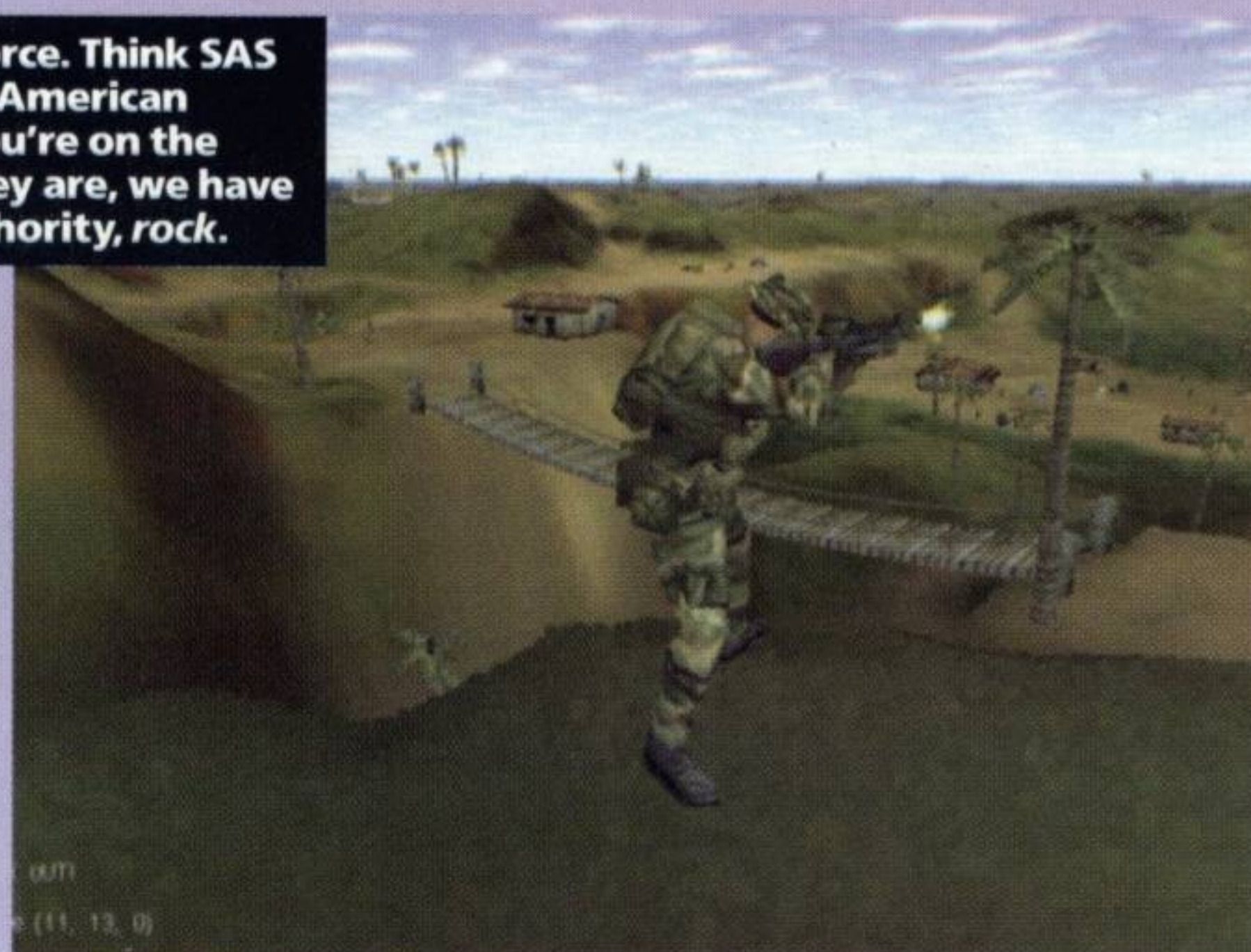
Grand Prix Legends
 Sierra ★★★★★
 Panache-filled racer recreating the Stirling Moss era.

MIGHT IS RIGHT

AND RIGHT NOW YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU



■ The Delta Force. Think SAS with frightful American accents and you're on the right track. They are, we have it on good authority, rock.



Delta Force

■ Publisher: **Novalogic** ■ Developer: **Novalogic**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-30** ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 180Mb HD space, CD-ROM drive, SVGA, Win 95**

They make the Marines look like a bunch of weedy wets, the Rangers look like the Brownies, and the Arcade seven-a-side rugby team look like a gaggle of giggling girls. Which isn't tricky.

Yeah, they're the Delta Force, the gung-ho-est, big-ballsest, goddamn Uncle Sam-lovin' heavy brigade of crack troops the world has ever seen. At least, that's what we remember from the Chuck Norris film, but Chuck's nowhere to be seen here. A waste of a license if ever there was one.

So, *Delta Force*. It could have been so boring, mired as it is in a game world of realistic weapons and believable scenarios. But no; Novalogic has gone for the first-person shooter jugular and damn us all to Ipswich if it hasn't conjured up a corker. You're plunged into a wealth of missions with pleasingly brief briefings and plenty of guns to choose from and, as long as you keep within the generously broad confines of the mission structure, you get to run around like a real soldier and kill people with nearly real weapons. Strategy? Arse.

Well, almost. Obviously, you don't want to go shooting your own men, but you do get a handy warning if you accidentally line one up in your sights. And if you stand around like an idiot you'll end up dead within seconds. This isn't *Quake*, you know. A couple of bullets is all it takes before you're going home in a body bag and the operation is SNAFU. Be thankful, then, that some of the enemy don't know one end of an M-60 from the other. Can you spell head shot? Too late.

It handles well, the keys easily shaped into something resembling a decent first-person-shooter setup with only a few extras for sniper sights, binoculars, crawling – all

Uppers & Downers

Testosterone
 ■ Bang after bang after realistic bang
 ■ Gun-toting meatheads need not apply
 ■ I love the smell of napalm in the morning

Progesterone
 ■ Are battlefields really that lumpy?
 ■ Someone should tell Novalogic about 3D cards
 ■ No survival instinct, some of these enemy troops

those usual things that crack troops have to worry about, and that you'll need to get the hang of before you taste too much success. The only real downside is the fact that it looks awful on anything less than a PII-266MHz. 3D card. *Delta Force* is software-only, but at least you can customise the settings so that it'll run well on slower systems.

You get plenty of missions (jungle, city, snowy), the usual bad guys, almost claustrophobic action when you're hemmed in by enemy fire and you know a rocket jump will do you no good at all, troops who shout obscenities at you, and a deathmatch as well. It's great; shame it doesn't do so well in the looks department. ★★★★★

Travis

Or you could try...

Rainbow Six Red Storm ★★★★★
 Zippy and Bungle nowhere to be seen in this Cancy-derived Special Forces 3D-fest.

Half-Life Sierra ★★★★★
 Sierra's festival of aliens and nasty black-clad Special Ops rotters.



■ Look, where the hell is Chuck Norris? We could have had an interview with him and everything. We could have asked him if he ever planned to make a decent film.



Ultimate Soccer Manager 98/99 Season Edition

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Impressions UK** ■ Price: **£29.99 (£19.99 for USM98 upgrade)** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Requires: **P75, 16Mb RAM, 65Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 1Mb graphics card, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **P120, 32Mb RAM, 90Mb HD space**

Sierra tests our decision making in more ways than one with an update of last years excellent football management sim.

■ At the end of last season *Ultimate Soccer Manager '98* was released to much acclaim, and rightly so as it provided the first real challenge to *Championship Manager 2's* dominance in the football management genre. Less than a year on and we have a new version, which updates the teams and players for the 98/99 campaign and adds the Dutch to the list of six European leagues previously available. But even allowing that we can now take charge of Go Ahead Eagles in the Toto Division it's still a moot point whether even the most avid Amsterdammer would be prepared to part with 30 Euros for this upgrade to *USM98*. That's 20 quid, and should "moot" be Dutch for "On the whole it's not worth it mate" then enough said.

However, if you missed the original, £30 for the full updated version represents excellent value. *USM98/99* has the best interface of any game of this type – just as well, since you are given the task of managing your club down to the minutest detail. Budding accountants will be overjoyed at the prospect of getting involved in every financial aspect, while if you want to concentrate on coaching, this side of the game is also covered in enough realistic detail to be thoroughly enjoyable.

Because your coaching decisions really do seem to affect the outcome of your team's games and – just as importantly – the match representation then enables you to see the precise effects of your decisions, *USM98/99* has every chance of finishing this season on top of the highly competitive football management sim league table. It's a winner.

★★★★★ **Glen Weston**

■ All the top footy management sims are reviewed on page 53, as part of our 25-page footy feature.



Mad Trax

■ Publisher: **Black Friar**
 ■ Developer: **Rayland Interactive** ■ Price: **£29.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Requires: **P200, 32Mb RAM, 71Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM, 3D card (Voodoo 2 compatible), Win 95**

Yet more futuristic PC racing, but watch out: these "trax" aren't sane. Quite the opposite. They're mad.

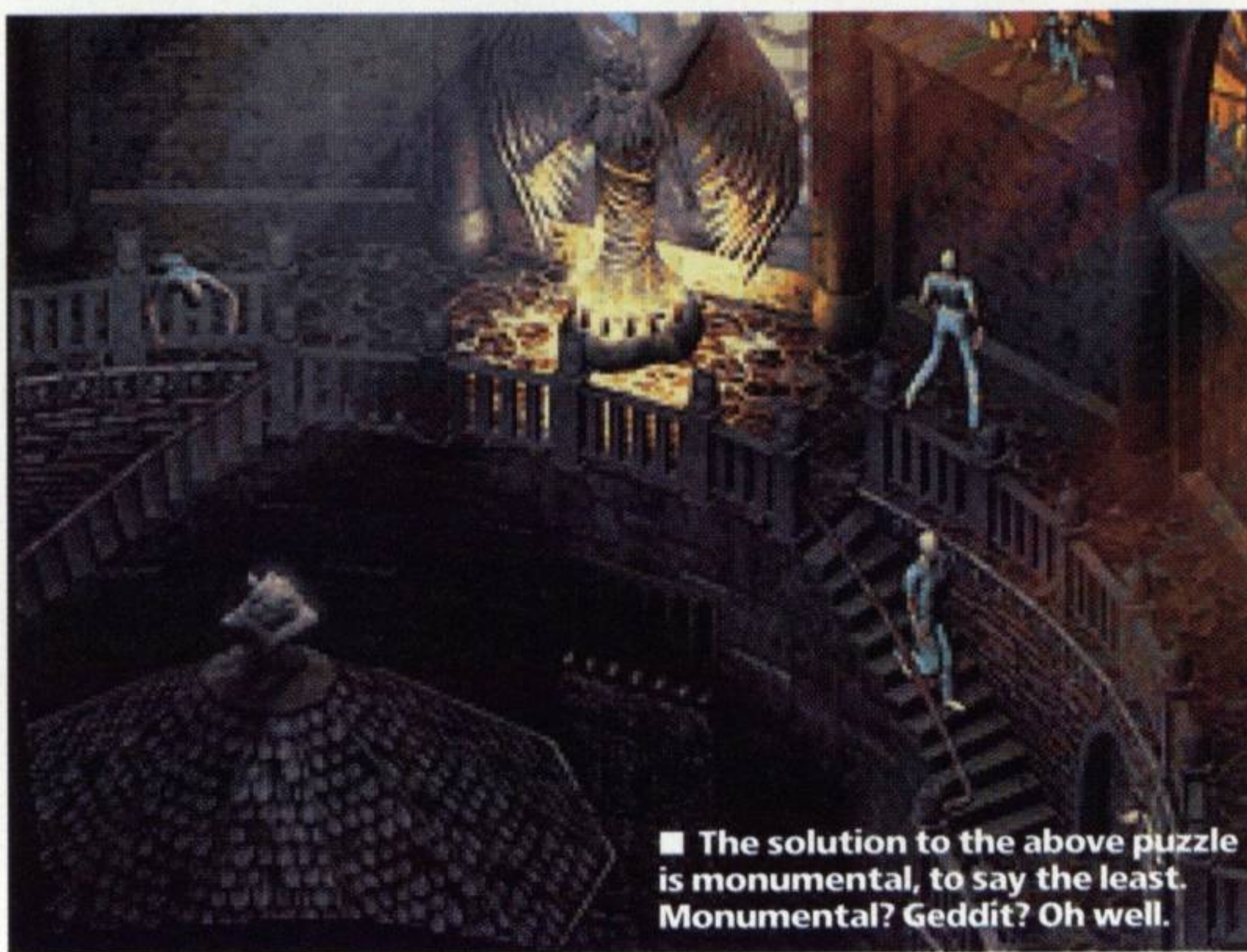
■ If you've seen a fair few PC racing games then playing *Mad Trax* will feel like a drive down memory lane. The graphics, with their futuristic sheen and familiar lighting tricks, are uncannily similar to Gremlin's groovy (though unpleasantly tricky) *Motorhead*. You'll realise that the gameplay ill-advisedly borrows from Ubi Soft's *SCARS* as your space buggy-type car zooms around various tracks employing a combination of speed and power-ups including mines, turbos, shields and two types of missile. Of course, the opposing vehicles can also make use of these random bonuses, so it can get kind of crazy out there.

It may all sound like fun but there are a few problems. For a start, the cars don't handle too well out the gate and it's necessary to have a fiddle with the alterable vehicle attributes to make the buggy's steering more acceptable. The enemy cars' AI is naff too, and it's obvious that you're racing a load of cloned drones when they all file into line at the start of every race. The addition of power-ups is nice, and not something you often see in PC racers, but the selection is so limited and unimaginative that you wonder why they bothered. It's also practically impossible to avoid one of your opponent's missiles, unless you're incredibly lucky. This wouldn't matter if they weren't so meaty, but because they deck the crap out of your car it becomes a real pain (especially when you get relegated to last place just before the finish line). The car-to-car collisions are a bit dodgy too; if you get nudged from behind your car will obviously get jolted forwards slightly, but then it will inexplicably slow down so you've got to accelerate to top speed again – bizarre, and frustrating.

In its favour, *Mad Trax* has lots of courses and a simultaneous two-player mode. You've seen it all before elsewhere though, and better executed too. You really don't need another game like this, do you? ★★ **Tim Cant**

MAD FOR IT

A TALE OF GRAPHIC INSANITY



■ The solution to the above puzzle is monumental, to say the least. Monumental? Geddit? Oh well.

Sanitarium

■ Publisher: **Mindscape** ■ Developer: **ASC Games** ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1** ■ Requires: **P133, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, Win 95**
 ■ Recommended: **32Mb RAM**

Grim Fandango fans will soon be looking for a new graphic adventure to get stuck into. To these people we say move along, there's nothing to see here...

There are plenty of great graphic adventures. There's the amusing *Monkey Island*, the personable *Broken Sword*, and the progressive *Grim Fandango*. But there are also a lot of "me too" cash-ins that are as welcome as a lighter-toting Nazi in a library. *Sanitarium* isn't quite the latter, but it's a close run thing.

Don't get the wrong idea. *Sanitarium* is, despite its limited scope and lack of hardware-pushing nous, an entertaining piece of software. After a brief introductory sequence, where your on-screen persona speaks via a mobile phone about an incredible discovery, drives like a fool and then crashes, play begins in an almost baroque chamber. Moving around

with mouse clicks and conversing with the other characters, it soon becomes apparent that you're incarcerated in a lunatic asylum. From here, the "Is he sane? Is he insane?" story premise acts as a frontispiece to some seriously odd narrative developments.

For the sake of variety, there are more "hands-on" moments where *Sanitarium* pays homage to LucasArts' propensity for including arcade sequences. It also tries – and partially succeeds – in offering a more engaging challenge by featuring a number of brain-teasers that don't involve arbitrary exchanges of objects. These are known as "blow-up puzzles", and vary from plugging cables into a VCR to operating obscure locking mechanisms. They're generally no harder than the Mensa ads you find in tabloid newspapers, but there are a few real swines in there. We'll wager that most people will need to refer to a solution at least once in order to complete them.

But, despite such niceties, *Sanitarium* is an old-skool adventure to its core. While negotiating its (admittedly excellent) backdrops, it's infuriating to find your progress

IT'S INFURIATING TO FIND YOUR PROGRESS BLOCKED BY INVISIBLE WALLS

blocked by invisible walls and questionable collision detection. Similarly, conversations with its cast are blighted by the fact that you simply click on-screen prompts to elicit a piece of recorded dialogue. *Grim Fandango*, for all its merits, didn't offer much more, but at least it attempted to fool players into thinking they were talking in a semi-realistic manner.

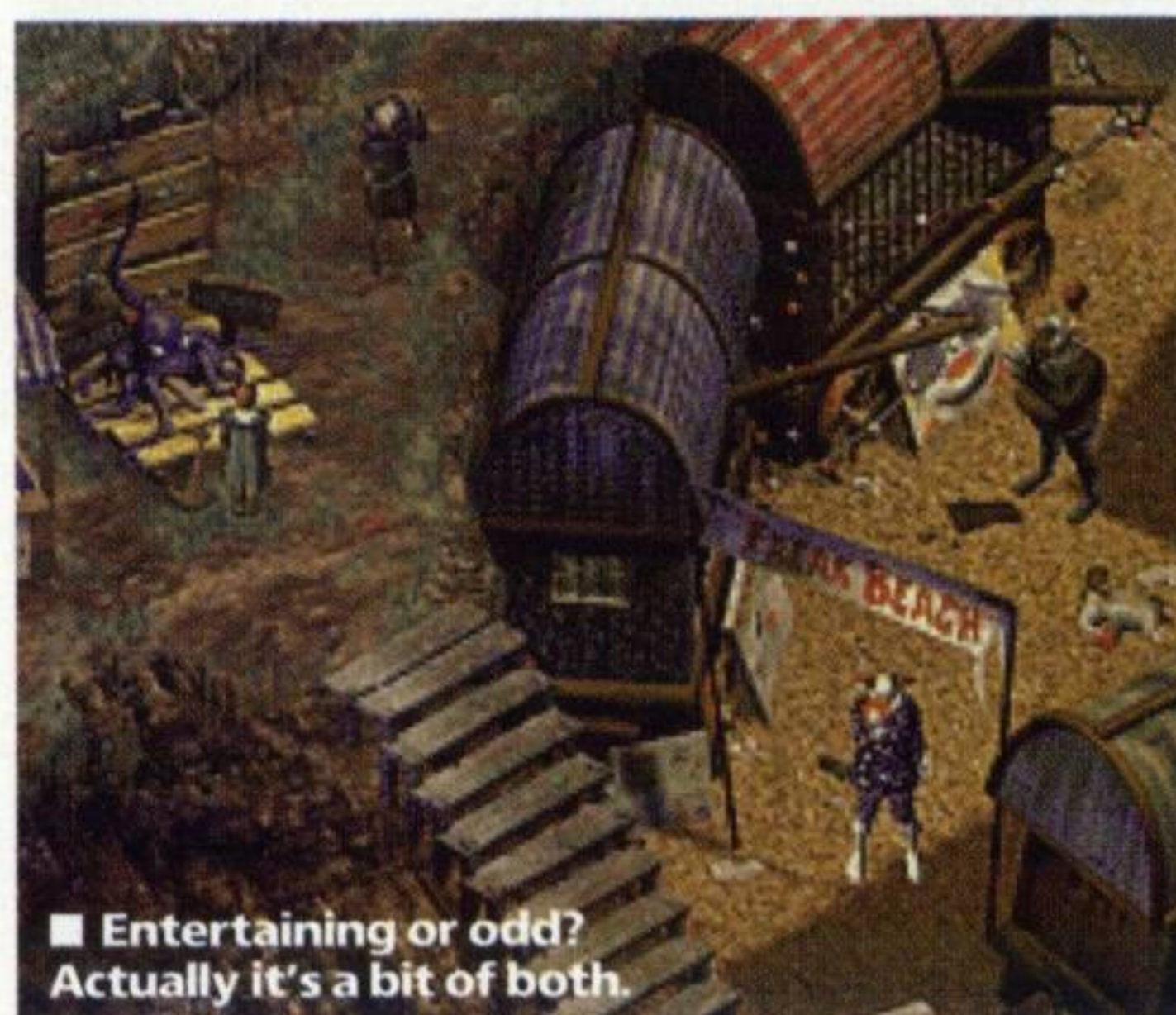
All in all, it's a tale of "Close, but no cigar", as Clinton might mutter to an intern. Sit down to play *Sanitarium*, and it's possible to lose hours; even days. It's a big game, and there's always an urge to discover what happens next. There are few instances, however, where you'll find yourself entirely engrossed. Call us greedy, but if we're to invest hours and cash into a game, we want to be ecstatic, not merely happy.

At its core, the graphic adventure genre is still pushing back creative boundaries. The enjoyable, if oft-workmanlike, *Sanitarium*, however, shows that too many developers are simply treading water. ★★★ **James Price**

Or you could try...

Grim Fandango
 Lucas Arts ★★★★★
 This epic graphic adventure is a must-buy.

Monkey Island
 Lucas Arts ★★★★★
 Possibly the funniest adventure game ever made.



■ Entertaining or odd? Actually it's a bit of both.

↑↓ Uppers & Downers

Compos mentis

■ It's large and it will take you a while to finish
 ■ And it's comfortably familiar to play

Mad as a hatter

■ Feels all too linear and limited at times
 ■ The voice acting can be cringeworthy



STAR DUST

ALL IT'S MISSING IS BURT REYNOLDS

Speed Busters

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Ubi Soft** ■ Price: **£29.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 35Mb HD space, 4x CD ROM, 3D accelerator** ■ Recommended: **P200, 64Mb RAM, 247Mb HD space** ■ Extras: **Steering wheels, Force Feedback, modem, network, serial link-up**

Arcade racing heads for Hollywood and beyond in a game where the ability to dodge rolling boulders and drive between giant blades is as crucial as being tasty with the handbrake turns.

It's not so easy to get ahead in the world of road racing videogames any more. Old Geoff Crammond has the serious simulation side of things sewn up with *Grand Prix 2*, while Codemasters does visceral things in *Colin McCrae Rally* that can shake a steering wheel to dust. Which is why it makes perfect sense for *Speed Busters* to try something a little different, opting to fool around with the conventions of the genre rather than compete with the existing crowd. Ladies and gentlemen, get ready for car wars, Hollywood style.

Speed Busters is not simply a racer with the sort of exaggerated jumps, skids, and stunts as seen in the Burt Reynolds movies of old, although the game does all that and with relish. Rather, it's the way every race seems to weave in a variety of familiar movie moments, sometimes to provide drivers with an extra challenge, other times just for the spectacle of it.

Where else can your average racing videogame fan face *Indiana Jones*-style boulders? And, while other racing games have included extras such as alternative routes, what other game would have the imagination to make one such shortcut a moving train that can be jumped onto for a fast track to the finish line? *Speed Busters* is brimming with oddball ideas, each successive lap of the six tracks introducing new challenges and set pieces. And,

while such fooling around could have interfered with, or been used as a substitute for gameplay, here it compliments a rock solid foundation. Behind all the gimmicks there's a finely-tuned beast of a racing game, where the choice of cars, and the upgrades that can be bought with race winning, really do have an effect on vehicle performance. Which in turn makes multi-player battles (including those on a dedicated on-line server) a riot from start to finish.

Speed Busters even has the audacity to turn in some of the most wondrous 3D visuals to ever alight on a PC monitor. The game's gloriously colourful environments are made even more impressive by the excellent lighting

BEHIND ALL THE GIMMICKS THERE'S A FINELY-TUNED BEAST OF A RACING GAME

effects which suit the weather and time conditions, while the detail lavished on all the trackside scenery and those extra effects, really lets you know that there's a 3D accelerator in your machine.

Racing games just aren't supposed to look this good. Or play this well. And they definitely aren't the sort of thing to make you laugh out loud. Somebody obviously forgot to tell Ubi Soft. ★★★★★ **Mark Ramshaw**

Or you could try... Screamer Rally Virgin ★★★★★ Not so madcap, but just as speedy. Ultimate Race Pro Microprose ★★★ Another multi-tracked 3D feast.



■ You're never sure which movie monster will strike next.



Beavis & Butthead: Bunghole in One

■ Publisher: **GT Interactive**
 ■ Developer: **Illusions** ■ Price: **£29.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Requires: **P120, 16Mb RAM, Win 95**

The slow-witted chums and a few of their closest enemies take to the links for a spot of golf. But we're buggered if we know why.

■ A mini-golf game starring Beavis and Butthead – it's hardly a concept you've been crying out for, is it? It seems that this game's sole reason for existence is to back up the puny title, which is worrying when you think about it.

But things look up slightly when you load the game: the presentation is actually pretty good, and the opening screens could have been lifted straight from an episode of the show. However, although there are six characters to choose from, including the eponymous pair and a few of the show's regulars, they all behave identically.

And once the game begins, it's clear that every expense has been spared to create an entertaining atmosphere. There's no music, the players aren't represented graphically on the golf course, and the rest of the graphics are, frankly, drab. The control method is simple, though, and it won't take you and your chums long to get into the game. Sadly, despite being easy to learn, it's a bastard to master, and some of the more fiddly holes will drive you completely crazy.

The holes themselves are based on easily recognisable locations and themes from *Beavis & Butthead*, but – missing the point entirely – none of the show's humour makes it into the game. Each character has several key phrases which they'll slip in at an appropriate moment but, out of context, most of them just seem bizarre. And there are so few voice samples used here that you'll have heard them all before you're half-way through your first game. Yawn.

Beavis & Butthead: Bunghole in One has precisely one redeeming feature: if you're playing against human opponents you can interfere with their balls in an attempt to frustrate their efforts. Despite this mildly entertaining bit, *B&B: BIO* is too boring to recommend to even the most ardent fan. ★ **Tim Cant**



Falcon 4

■ Publisher: **MicroProse**
 ■ Developer: **MicroProse**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date:
on sale now ■ Players: **1-**
Internet ■ Requires: **P166,**
32Mb RAM, 175Mb HD
space, 4x CD-ROM drive,
4Mb graphics card,
DirectSound 6.0-compatible
soundcard, Win 95
 ■ Recommended: **TCP/IP**
network or modem for
Internet play

The latest instalment in a classic flight sim saga that began in the distant past...

■ I remember playing the original version of *Falcon* on my old Atari ST ten years ago. At the time, it was by far and away the most complex and realistic combat flight simulator available. After a decade of improvement, version four has finally arrived.

Falcon 4 offers a single aircraft to fly – the F-16C Fighting Falcon. The game's developers include an ex-F-16 pilot and aeronautical engineers, ensuring that the new version has a decent pedigree.

The graphics are great, and make full use of 3D accelerator cards. Terrain detail comes from real satellite photos, and there are enough visual goodies to add to the impression of being there.

In combat flight sims it's traditional to be involved in a desperate struggle to stem the tide of international nastiness, and in *Falcon 4*, your job is to give the rotten old North Koreans a good kicking. The Korean peninsula has been mapped accurately in the game, with the major airfields rendered with the correct number and orientation of runways, and all large towns and cities in place.

This is so realistic that it's almost wrong to describe *Falcon 4* as a game. Although it's certainly fun to pit your skills against a computerised opponent (or, via the Internet, a real one) in the virtual skies over North Korea, the real point of the game is as a simulation. Everything is included, from the correct use of radios and approach patterns at airports, to in-flight refuelling, and fiendishly difficult dogfights.

The designers seem fond of the simulation of the war itself, to which you can contribute, but which also carries on without you while the game's running. If all this sounds complicated, that's because it is. The dozens of radar, radio and weapons modes are described in a huge manual and you won't get far without reading it. ★★★★★ **Jim Chandler**

HACK 'N' SLAY

GADZOOKS! IT'S MEDIEVAL SLAUGHTER-TIME



■ *Myth 2* takes its battles seriously. So there's no mucking around with resource-management. It's just straight to the carnage.

Myth 2: Soulblighter

■ Publisher: **GT Interactive** ■ Developer: **Bungie**
 ■ Price **£40** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Requires: **P233, 32Mb RAM, 100Mb HD**
space, 4x CD-ROM, Win 95 ■ Recommended: **64Mb**
RAM, 3D accelerator card (3Dfx, D3D)

It's a lot like Braveheart, with walking stiff's playing the stuffy English and dwarves and rabid lunatics swelling the Scottish ranks. Realism is all.

It's like Thora Hird saying "Damn!" on *Songs Of Praise*. Why? Because although *Myth 2* is hardly X-rated, it's still pretty strong stuff for its audience – the real-time strategy clan. In fact, so grisly is the game that Bungie has included a "blood padlock" system in case you know any suggestible maniacs who are likely to run amok at the first sight of digitised body parts.

Which is the *raison d'être* of *Myth 2*. It's a real-time strategy game with decent 3D graphics. You can even see your blokes' faces, just before they're chopped off, and their limbs depart, and their blood arcs in a crimson rainbow splattering flagstones like a Turner Prize winner.

So the graphics are good then. And the battles are prime examples of medieval carvery that would disgrace an abattoir. Which – Thora Hird forgive me – is marvellous news. And it's all right because, as the name suggests, *Myth 2* is set in a fantasy kingdom, infested with the undead. Confronting the canny cadavers is your blend of

shiny knights, fireball flicking wizards, petrol bombing dwarves and other bill-fitting types.

You control them all using an advanced version of the usual RTS mouse-point-and-click system. It's advanced because the nifty *Myth* engine draws in fully rotatable 3D. Which makes the terrain a major factor as you spin around the map searching behind hills and trees for the enemy and scouting for some high ground to deploy your archers on.

All this tri-dimensional business, however, has a number of knock-on effects. The most obvious one being that it complicates matters. *Myth 2* isn't a game like *Red Alert* that you can just pick up and have a laugh with. It's a game of tactical subtlety that takes a lot of time and effort to master. Not least because wielding your force like a rapier, rather than a crazy-castor shopping trolley, means coming to terms with a tricky interface. While rotating the map in 3D space, you've got to choose the right battle formation for your troops every time you move them, and make sure that they face in the right direction, while trying to get your archers into firing positions, and stopping your dwarves lobbing Molotov cocktails into the middle of your own troops.

The upshot is you have to turn the game speed right down to cope with everything *Myth* throws at you, which makes it more of a chin-rub plodathon rather than the all-out rampage promised by the graphics. So, if you're given to pondering your next move, you may swear by *Myth 2*, but if you're more a quick kick type you'll probably just swear at it. ★★★

Mark Donald

■ **Shining knight**
 ■ Beefy graphics
 ■ Buckets of gore
 ■ Vast on-line support
 ■ **Syphilitic goblin**
 ■ It plods
 ■ Complicated interface
 ■ Few unit types

Or you could try...

Warhammer: Dark Omen
 Electronic Arts ★★★
 Old now, but still bursting with dwarves, wizards and beard-stroking strategy.

Populous: The Beginning
 Electronic Arts ★★★★★
 A great instalment of a great gaming dynasty (now in full 3D). You must play it.



Deo Gratias

■ Publisher: **Cryo Interactive**
 ■ Developer: **Cryo Interactive**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-16**
 ■ Requires: **P133, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 5, 2Mb S-VGA, SoundBlaster or compatible soundcard, 6x CD-ROM drive, Win 95/98**
 ■ Recommended: **P166, 64Mb RAM** ■ Extras: **Modem for multi-player (16 player network, or up to 1,000 players over the Internet)**

Putting the "god" into god sim, *Deo Gratias* gives you the opportunity to create and rule your own universe.



But, as it turns out, being a deity is not all it's cracked up to be.

Day one: got very excited about *Deo Gratias*, and the prospect of playing a Demiurge, creating and controlling planets and races, while fending off the challenges of other deities.
Day two: realised that there are no rules to being a god and that the instruction manual for *Deo Gratias* reflects this. It offers scant, poorly explained information on how to play this attempt at simulating a supreme being's day.
Day three: struggled on regardless, as every good god should. Created a planet and a persona for myself, including

several powers, such as the ability to cast thunderbolts. Great stuff.
Day four: chose a race of people to be the Engendered Ones. These are to be my worshippers and evidently it's essential that I keep them happy while they develop their civilisation. So I do.
Day five: let some eons pass and see how my world has developed. I answer the call of worshippers and cast spells as appropriate, being especially careful to deal swiftly with heretics and atheists.
Day six: further discover that the confusing interface makes it difficult to deal with the management of my world. I also had to contend with various lock-ups and crashes, that show *Deo Gratias* is in desperate need of

patching. This is no Eden. More of a smelly Edam.
Day seven: frustration took over. I uninstalled the game, and took a well-earned rest.
 It's a pity *Deo Gratias* is littered with problems, as the premise for the game is worth pursuing. The graphics are okay, providing 3D isometric views of your people's cities and the High Place, from which you control your universe. The emphasis is on atmosphere, with plenty of cut scenes and dramatic music. However, you never feel in control and don't have the tools to deal properly with the challenge. The step from omnipotence to impotence is sadly too short. ★★ **Jason Weston** **A**

PC budget re-releases

by Robin Alway and Sam Richards

Think of budget PC titles as chickens. Imagine scattering corn feed to tempt them out of their barn, and then grabbing them by the throat and choking them for the pot. It's an irrelevant and pointless image, of course, but we like it.



3D Ultra Pinball 3: The Lost Continent

■ Publisher: **Sierra Originals**
 ■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4**
 ■ Pinball tables have always been themed, but Sierra went overboard with its *3D Ultra Pinball* series. Behind the B-movie iconography of *The Lost Continent* the game requires you to guide three crash-landed heroes to safety, as in an adventure game (think flip-and-boing instead of point-and-click). You have to beat 15 rounds, with puzzles that involve lame tasks such as lighting the correct number of power-up lights in a set time before your stranded heroes are crushed by moving walls.
 Taking out dinosaurs with a giant steel ball is fun for a while, but the tables aren't as clankingly complex as the real thing. ★★



Apache Longbow

■ Publisher: **Sold Out** ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-16**
 ■ Being both accessible and energetically accurate, *Apache Longbow* was a must-have flight sim almost three years ago. It plonks you at the controls of a US Apache helicopter gunship, in the thick of three campaigns: Yemen, Korea and Cyprus. Loads of missions mean *Longbow's* longevity is ensured, and when you've finished flying solo you can re-fly the whole lot over a network with your mate as the pilot while you handle the guns – cool. The 3D is pleasantly clear, and your opponents explode in an ample amount of smoke and flames, but the terrain is bland. This is its weakest point. It's aged badly, and you might not want to put up with this lack of finesse. ★★★



Baldies

■ Publisher: **Sold Out** ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Possibly the silliest god game of 1997, *Baldies* is a perverse cross between *Lemmings* and *Settlers*, but this time you have an army of tiny slap-heads under your control. The object is to wipe out your opponent's hair-free nation, and the miniature animations of folk being splattered in comedy cartoon fashion weren't so basic. There are 100 levels, split across five realms, and each scenario sees you assigning tasks to your shiny-pated crew. You must research inventions and build weapons before you march off to point-and-click war. The overall effect is cute, but it's too repetitive and none of the maps provide any real challenge. ★★



Blizzard Pack

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4**
 ■ Blizzard, it would appear, has never produced a duff game, and three of its classic hits are bundled here in one box. The original *Warcraft 2* is traditional top-down fantasy orc-bashing stuff and has humour in spades. Although there's plenty of depth, it's unsophisticated by the standards of *Starcraft*, the second game in the collection. This pits three races against each other for control of a distant solar system, and its greatest strength is the finely balanced strengths and weaknesses of the aliens.
 Finally, *Diablo* is an isometric fantasy quest game. It rivals the *Ultima* games for atmosphere, and has become one of the most played games on-line. ★★★★★



Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft Classique**
 ■ Price: **£12.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ The consoles are certainly the home, sweet home of the 3D platform game, but occasionally PC conversions come up trumps, especially if the developer takes full advantage of the PC's graphics capability. Thus *Gex 3D* is honest, psychedelic amusement in the manner of *Croc* or *Mario 64*. You play Gex, a James Bond-like gecko, voiced by Leslie Phillips. His cheeky comments become genuinely bothersome, but you can ignore them and merely revel in the absurdity of bouncing through TV land looking for "remote control" power-ups. The PC conversion of *Croc* is better, but it isn't out on budget yet. ★★★



Phantasmagoria II: A Puzzle of Flesh

■ Publisher: **Sierra Originals**
 ■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ After the kicking received by the original it's hard to believe that Sierra dared to make a sequel. Although it offered a new story, everyone expected *Phantasmagoria II: A Puzzle of Flesh* to be another charmless FMV adventure. And mostly, that's what it is. Its biggest failing is the dreadful amount of time-wasting video – whenever you want to open a door you have to watch the appropriate hand-on-handle clip. The plot, too, is a mish-mash of over-used thriller clichés. Fortunately, the set pieces are well executed and the atmosphere is managed cleverly so that even the most predictable encounters can scare the willies out of you. ★★



Rayman

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft Classique**
 ■ Price: **£12.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ This demented French platform game suffers from one major shortcoming (apart from the conceptual oddities often found in continental releases – giant pencils, oversized bouncing baddies, chunky pastel-coloured settings and unfeasibly mobile hair-dos). The real frailty lies in the gameplay style, which is an outmoded 2D run-and-jump platform approach. There are some surprisingly similar Amiga games, making *Rayman* look rather artless in 1999. Even if you find this unrefined format charming, you have probably already progressed to *Rayman Gold* which is now selling for about 20 quid. *Rayman* remains popular in some Internet circles, but we find it oddly unsatisfying. ★★



Star Wars: Supremacy

■ Publisher: **Activision Classic Line** ■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Not, alas, the *Star Wars*-themed strategy game we were hoping for – that will be *Force Commander*, due out in the spring. Known as *Rebellion in America*, *Supremacy* is an over-complicated, turn-based resource-management simulation, made slightly more interesting by the presence of a few favourite Lucas characters. Playing as either the Rebel Alliance or as the Empire, your task is to amass armies, deploy forces and slowly conquer sectors of the galaxy, as represented by rather uninspiring tokens on a star map. *Supremacy* may hold some challenge for hardcore strategy fans, but the tiresome pace and over-intellectualised tactical details don't capture the *Star Wars* ethos. ★★



Terminal Velocity

■ Publisher: **EIDOS Interactive**
 ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4**
 ■ An early but passable attempt at an outdoor *Descent*-style game, *Terminal Velocity* sees you pelting over rendered 3D landscapes shooting at spaceships from your own heavily-armed space fighter. Most of the action takes place across canyons, hills and even in space, where you can whizz around the surface of the great Moon Dagger spaceship. Although dated now, when it first came out *Terminal Velocity* was astoundingly good fun. The AI opponents are varied and large in number, leading to intense dogfighting encounters. The controls are straightforward, although the auto-levelling feature tries to hold your hand and will frustrate talented pilots. ★★★



This Means War

■ Publisher: **Sold Out** ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ With a broader scope than *Command & Conquer*, but let down by its visuals, *This Means War* is a real-time strategy game set in the days after a computer virus has kneed the world in the crotch. Working for the benign Free World Alliance, you must defeat the forces of such amusingly-named reprobates as Crocodile Gandhi and Mondo Khan. Warfare takes place from an attractive isometric perspective, and there are 40 missions in which to train troops and research weapons. Depth is added by the need to baby-sit your civilians as well, but this also over-complicates the game – a fact not helped by an annoyingly fiddly control system. ★★★



Wing Commander Prophecy Classic

■ Publisher: **EA Classics** ■ Price: **£12.99** ■ Release date: **February**
 ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ Developer Origin's overhaul of the long-running space combat series resulted in *Prophecy* – its best episode yet. In early games you faced the Kilrathi, but now you face an unidentified alien threat, fortunately with less FMV and more 3D shooting than in previous Origin games. The visuals are superb. They could be straight out of *Babylon 5*, with excellent deflector-shield flash and vast starships, and the game engine is unrelentingly fast. The only criticism is the clumsy heads-up display in your fighter, but this is such a minor niggle that we're tempted to forget it and insist that you buy *Wing Commander Prophecy Classic* now. ★★★★★



X-wing Vs TIE Fighter

■ Publisher: **Activision Classic Line** ■ Price: **£9.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-32**
 ■ Yet again you return to the *Star Wars* universe, but who wouldn't want to chase their friends around Alderaan in an X-wing fighter? LucasArts knew it was on to a good thing when it finally designed a 3D game engine which enabled you to construct your own battles and hop into any craft from the movies. There are only two failings. One, the multi-player space combat is dull (although few people in the UK have a fast enough LAN or Internet connection to make this part of the game a viable option anyway). Two, single-player gamers should probably wait for *Star Wars: X-wing Alliance*, due out in February. ★★★★★

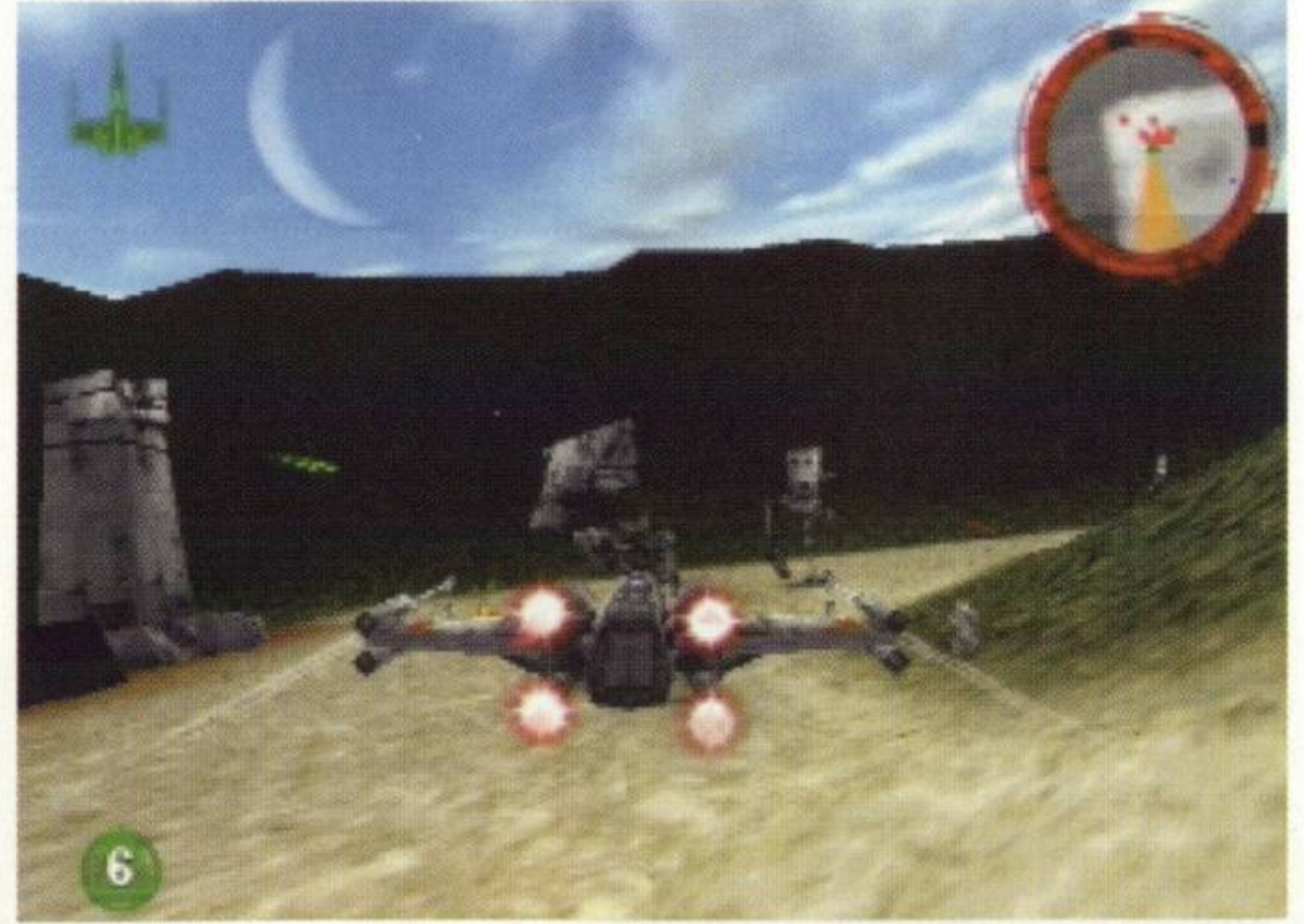
New Nintendo 64 Games



■ Your A-wings and Y-wings are nice enough, but for that real "I am Luke Skywalker" feeling, nothing beats the famous X-wing. Fold up the wings to fly faster.



Arcade
Nintendo 64
Game of
the Month



LOVABLE ROGUE

MY DAD'S GOING TO KILL ME

Star Wars: Rogue Squadron

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **LucasArts/Factor 5**
■ Price: **£49.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Extras: **Expansion Pak, Rumble Pak**

Pick up and play, X-wing-based blasting, in the most arcadey take on Star Wars since the sit-down, vector graphics coin-op.

As soon as you hear the low pitched shriek of a swooping TIE Fighter, it's clear that maintaining full critical functions in the face of *Rogue Squadron's* sheer *Star Warsness* is going to prove tricky. John Williams' rousing score sweeps over you, Luke Skywalker stares out of the intro screen and R2 units trundle around the X-wing hanger, bleeping merrily. You can only look on dreamily. There's little doubt that *Star Wars* can do funny things to a man (or woman), as any of the millions who crowded around 4cm square of Internet footage to see the *The Phantom Menace* trailer will be only too happy to confirm, and *Rogue Squadron* isn't

scared to use such awesome iconic power. Those double-sided lightsabers, eh? Coo.

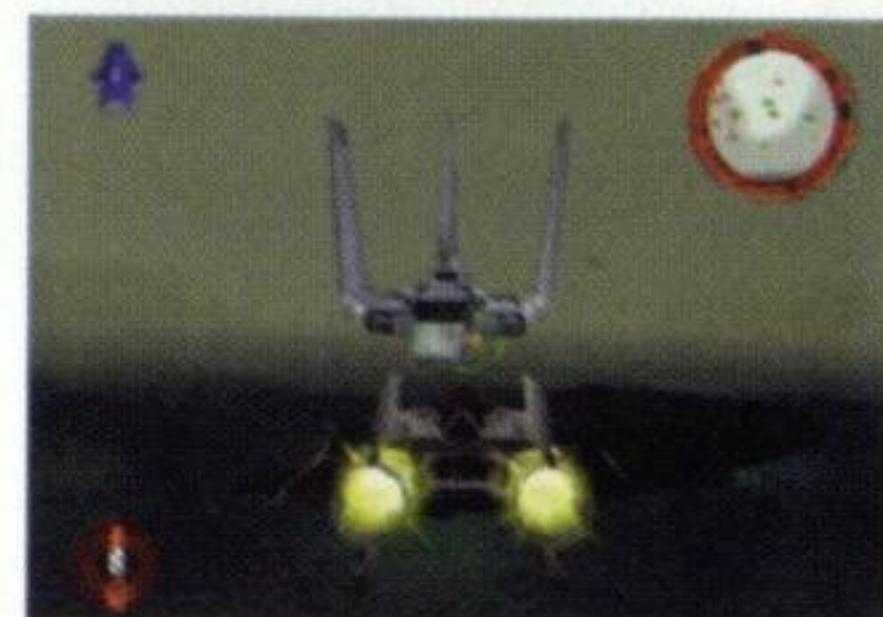
Must pull ourselves together. *Rogue Squadron* hones in on the best level of N64 *Star Wars* partwork *Shadows of the Empire: the Battle of Hoth* – and expands it into a 16-mission game. Strapped into a variety of Rebel ships (X-, Y-, A- and V-wings, plus the Airspeeder you flew in *Shadows*), you take on the massed forces of the Empire from either first-person or third-person perspectives. The stern tones of General Rieeken set out your mission objectives, which break down roughly into destroying Imperial bases, protecting Rebel craft, or reconnaissance deep into enemy territory.

At which point – and it's a long shot admittedly – if you don't actually like the trilogy in any way, shape or form (not keen on democracy or chips either, right?), you could be disappointed. While *Rogue Squadron's* a far better game in its own right than the hit-and-miss *Shadows* or the dire likes of FMV-driven *Rebel Assault*, if you stripped all the *Star Wars* out, it'd be difficult to get excited about it.

Most heinously, it's slow. Flying so low to the ground that you can see your X-wing's shadow should be terrifying, instead, you saunter along at a far-from-incendiary pace. In the thick of a battle this isn't such a bad thing, giving you the opportunity to avoid mountains when



■ Get strapped in to all manner of *Star Wars* hardware from AT-STs to X-wings. The bonus craft include a TIE Fighter and the Millennium Falcon.



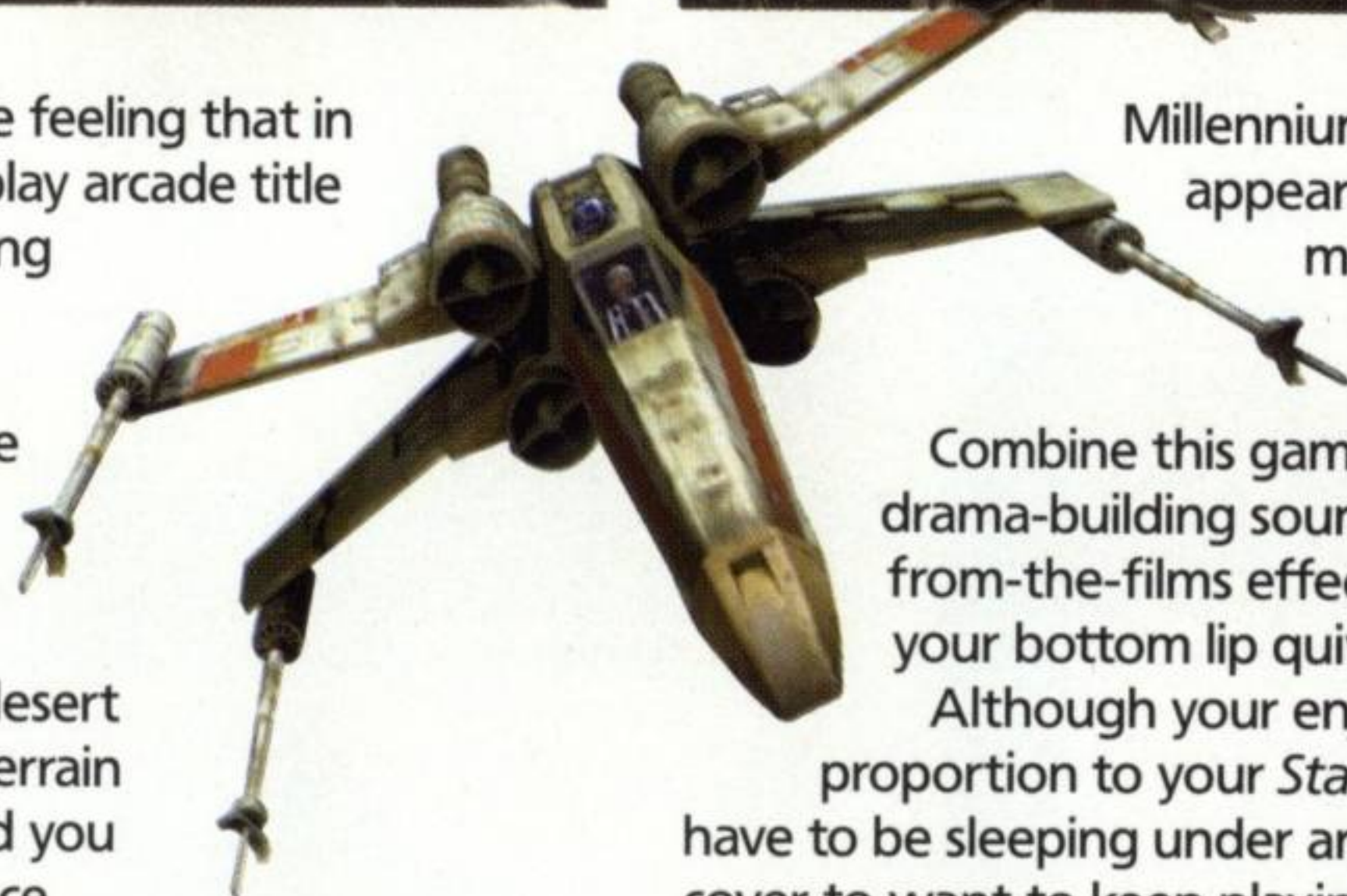
under fire. Still, you can't shake the feeling that in its quest to make this an easy-to-play arcade title Lucas has held back on fully handing over the keys to its X-wings. It's almost like the developer's sat in the back seat with R2, making sure you don't go too fast.

Then again, this speed problem could well have a technical basis, since even on the desert planet Tatooine, it's a foggy day. Terrain slowly appears out of the mist and you really have to work hard to convince yourself that this is down to atmospheric conditions rather than a chronically short draw distance. Playing in hi-res with the Expansion Pak only serves to throw things into even sharper contrast. The ships look superbly crisp, and detailed to the point where *Star Wars* obsessives may loose

IF YOU STRIPPED ALL THE STAR WARS OUT, IT'D BE DIFFICULT TO GET EXCITED ABOUT THE GAME

control of themselves, but the add-on only serves to make the fog even fluffier.

Don't underestimate the *Star Wars* Factor, though. It's enough to overpower any serious doubts you may have about the game. Indeed, where *Rogue Squadron* really excels is in providing heart-rousing moments of thrilling resonance. Unlike *Shadows*, and its unfortunate-looking hero Dash Rendar, there's been no skimping on including major elements of the *Star Wars* universe in all their magnificence. You fly X-wings and Airspeeders over Tatooine, icy old Hoth and the mines at Kessel. You're shot down by TIE Fighters and Interceptors, AT-STs and AT-ATs stomp frighteningly below. Swoop down and you can – ha! – blast stormtroopers as they run for cover. A fully flyable



Millennium Falcon even puts in an appearance if you complete the final mission. It's just what you want from a *Star Wars* game, but are so often cruelly denied.

Combine this gameplay with the flag-waving, drama-building soundtrack and perfect straight-from-the-films effects and it's enough to make your bottom lip quiver.

Although your enjoyment is likely to be in direct proportion to your *Star Wars* obsession, you don't have to be sleeping under an *Empire Strikes Back* duvet cover to want to keep playing until the credits roll. Merely having a healthy interest will more than suffice, thanks to a variety of well-crafted missions that always seem achievable. There's a definite (ahem) force driving you on to the next one, partly because you want to see which *Star Wars* elements crop up next, but also because there's a hunger for the sort of laser bolt-fuelled exchanges with TIE Fighters that, until now, you've only been able to thrill to on the PC after putting in plenty of hours training in the *X-wing* series. *Rogue Squadron's* control system enables you to roll and loop the loop on to an enemy's tail, while retaining an arcadey, easy blasting feel.

Rogue Squadron does have a few problems and deficiencies. The lack of a deathmatch mode rankles. Your wingmen are rubbish. But you're likely to forget them when you send a TIE Interceptor spiralling into a mountain or an AT-AT crashing to its steel knees. There's also no way it matches the complexities of say, *TIE Fighter* on the PC, but by firmly pressing the *Star Wars* button lurking in nearly everyone's brain, *Rogue Squadron's* a rollicking piece of *Star Wars* excitement. It's the best you'll find on a console, and it'll appeal to anyone who's run through a crowded playground with outstretched arms making laser cannon noises. Quite a lot of us then. ★★★★★

Robin Alway

Or you could try...

Lylat Wars
Nintendo ★★★★★
Miyamoto's epic cinematic blaster. Like *Star Wars* with cartoon animés. Only good.

Shadows of the Empire
Nintendo/LucasArts ★★★
Flawed *Star Wars* license with *Doom*, speeder bike and shoot-'em-up levels.



Uppers & Downers

The Force

- Arcade-quality excitement
- All the ships, enemies and locations
- Rousing soundtrack, proper effects

The 'flu

- Too slow
- Foggy graphics
- No multi-player

Subscriber



Pause your game for this

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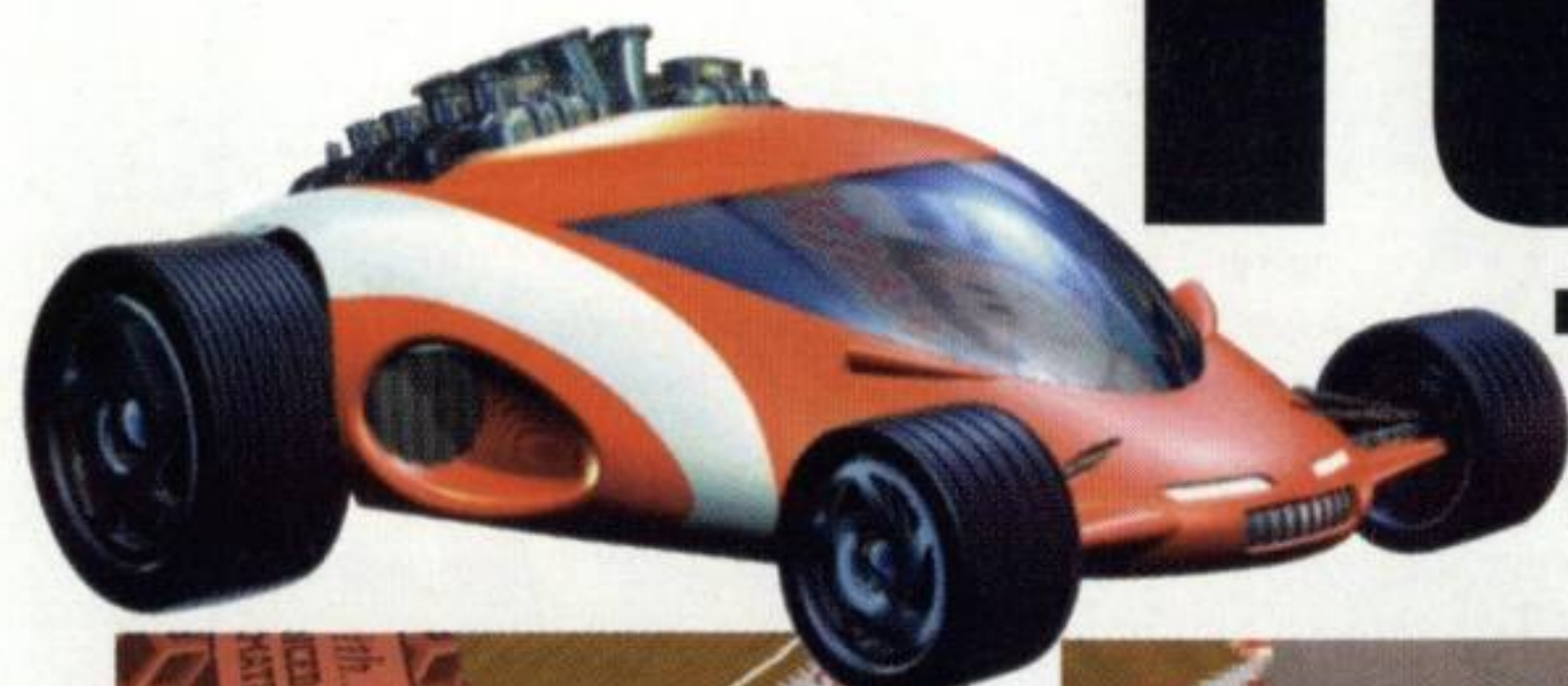
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TOY RACER



THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN



■ Race your tiny motors over Mum's best tablecloth. If you can get used to the strange perspective, *Micro Machines* has retained its charms.



Micro Machines 64 Turbo

■ Publisher: **Codemasters** ■ Developer: **Codemasters**
■ Price: **39.99** ■ Release date: **late February** ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Extras: **three extra joypads, Memory Pak, Rumble Pak** ■ Other formats: **PlayStation, PC, Saturn**

The dinky toys get a run-out on the N64, but do the mighty miniatures cut it in the home of multi-player excellence?

Micro Machines used to be a gaming institution. Back in the days of the Mega Drive and SNES it was one of the first games to offer more than two-player simultaneous races, and it rightfully gathered the gongs as one of the finest party games going.

Based on the inexplicably popular miniature plastic toy range, the idea of *Micro Machines* was to race

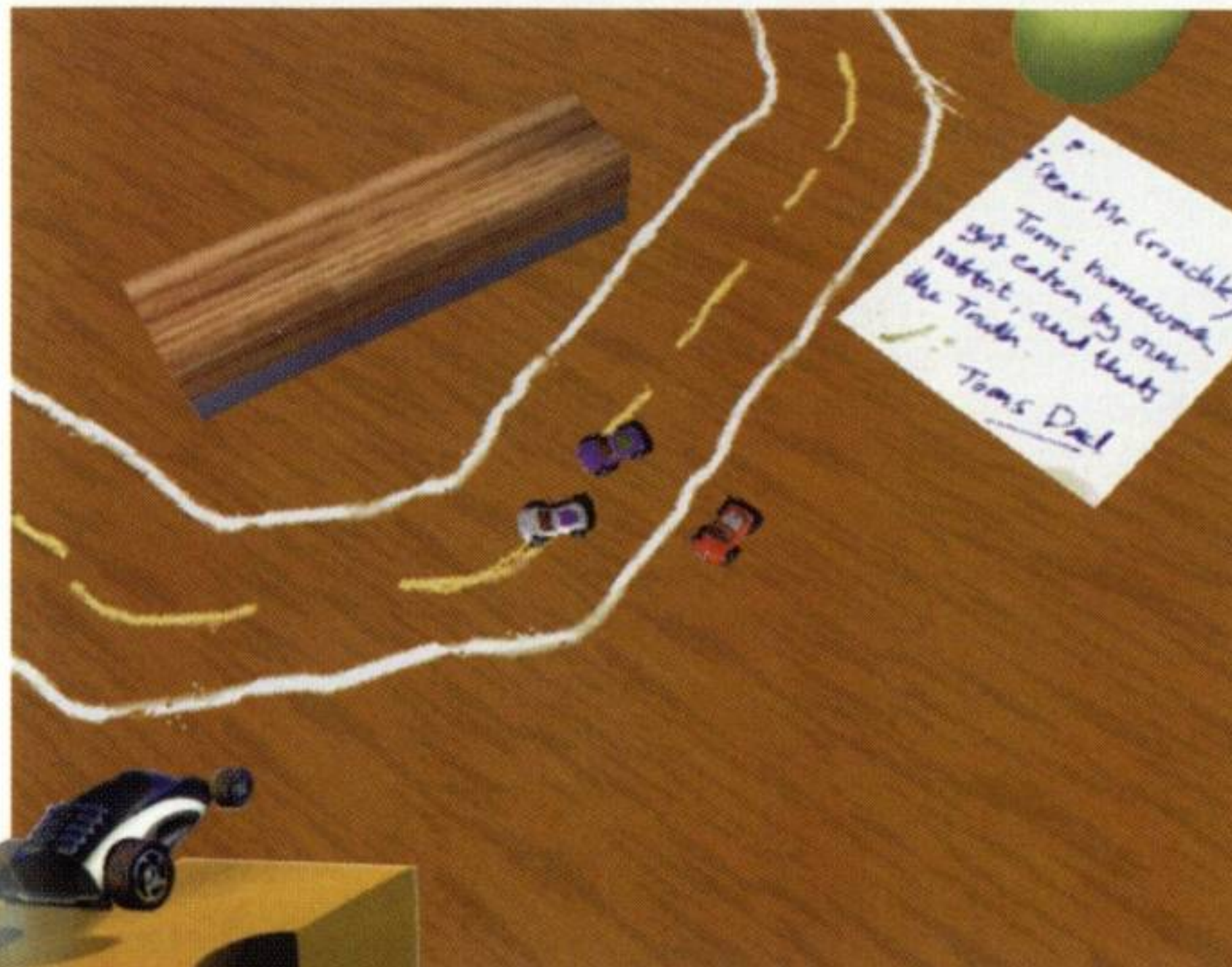
around a selection of real-world scenarios, albeit at a diminutive scale. At this size household pets became mountainous obstructions, plastic rulers were the launch pads for enormous jumps, and normal table furniture (such as knives and forks) were the barriers around which to slalom your vehicle.

You observed the proceedings from a strictly top-down view, but the real revolution was the way in which the multi-player game worked. Rather than split the screen, as all racers had up until then, players raced on the same screen until the gap between them was such that they couldn't both be shown at once. As soon as this happened the trailing car would disappear in a puff of smoke (losing a life of course) and the racing would resume from an equal footing. It was the basis for some epic battles.

Micro Machines 64 Turbo is essentially a brushed-up version of the PlayStation *Micro Machines V3*, which itself saw fit only to fiddle with this winning formula. Instead of

■ Classic curry house carpet distracts you on this level.





the rigid top-down plan view, the race camera now takes a slightly isometric perspective, enabling you to see more intricate detail of the tiny/huge courses. As well as racing cars, there are other miniature vehicles such as mini speed boats, remote control hovercrafts and various military bits and bobs (complete with guns) from the toy box. The difference in handling between vehicles is pleasantly pronounced, calling for a variety of driving styles, but the racing always remains hard-fought and – as long as you don't ever fall too far behind – hand-numbingly tense.

The upshot of this is that anyone who fell in love with the very first *Micro Machines* games will find that technological improvements have wrought no damage at all on their beloved format. Sigh of relief. The range of championships, different tracks and various one-player options in this 64-bit version of the game also offer excellent value, with loads of variations from race to race to keep even the most expert racer involved. However, as far as N64-specific additions are concerned, there really only is the titular "Turbo"; a feature that enables you to adjust the speed of races from a sedate plod to something, frankly, inadvisable for humans with a normally regulated brain metabolism.

As well as the original 48 tracks, you're provided with all 32 weapons from the previous outings. Admittedly the effects and graphics have been polished up and are of a high standard, but there's nothing that makes this N64 game outstanding in comparison to the PlayStation version.

The traditional strength of *Micro Machines* has always been its multi-player game and it's in this area where you can make a definitive judgement on the game. Unfortunately for *Micro Machines*, N64 owners have come to expect the very best when it comes to multiple joypad action, with games such as *Mario Kart*, *GoldenEye*, *ISS*,

THE TRADITIONAL STRENGTH OF MICRO MACHINES HAS ALWAYS BEEN ITS MULTI-PLAYER GAME

Turok 2 and *F-Zero X* leading the way. Multi-player *Micro Machines* definitely feels dated by comparison and if you're unused to the stop-start nature of single-screen racing, you might soon find yourself frustrated by its disjointed feel.

There is also an air of simplicity that – while initially extremely appealing – might leave experienced *Mario Kart*ers (the kind who have mastered trailing shell defence and know exactly when to detonate a Lightning on Wario Stadium), feeling somewhat short-changed. You learn the

courses, you try not to fall off the raceway, but that's about it – there's a disappointing lack of subtlety over and above the basics.

Maybe it's because we now expect so much in the way of graphical entertainment that *Micro Machines 64* seems slightly underwhelming. This judgement may initially seem unfair when applied to a game that has so much to offer in terms of tightly-scripted and increasingly difficult gameplay. It's there nonetheless, though, and you can't help but feel that these tiny motors are definitely singing their swan-song. Spark up *F-Zero X* after playing *Micro Machines 64* and the difference is thrown into sharp relief – maybe the days of games as simple as this have finally passed. ★★★ **James Ashton**

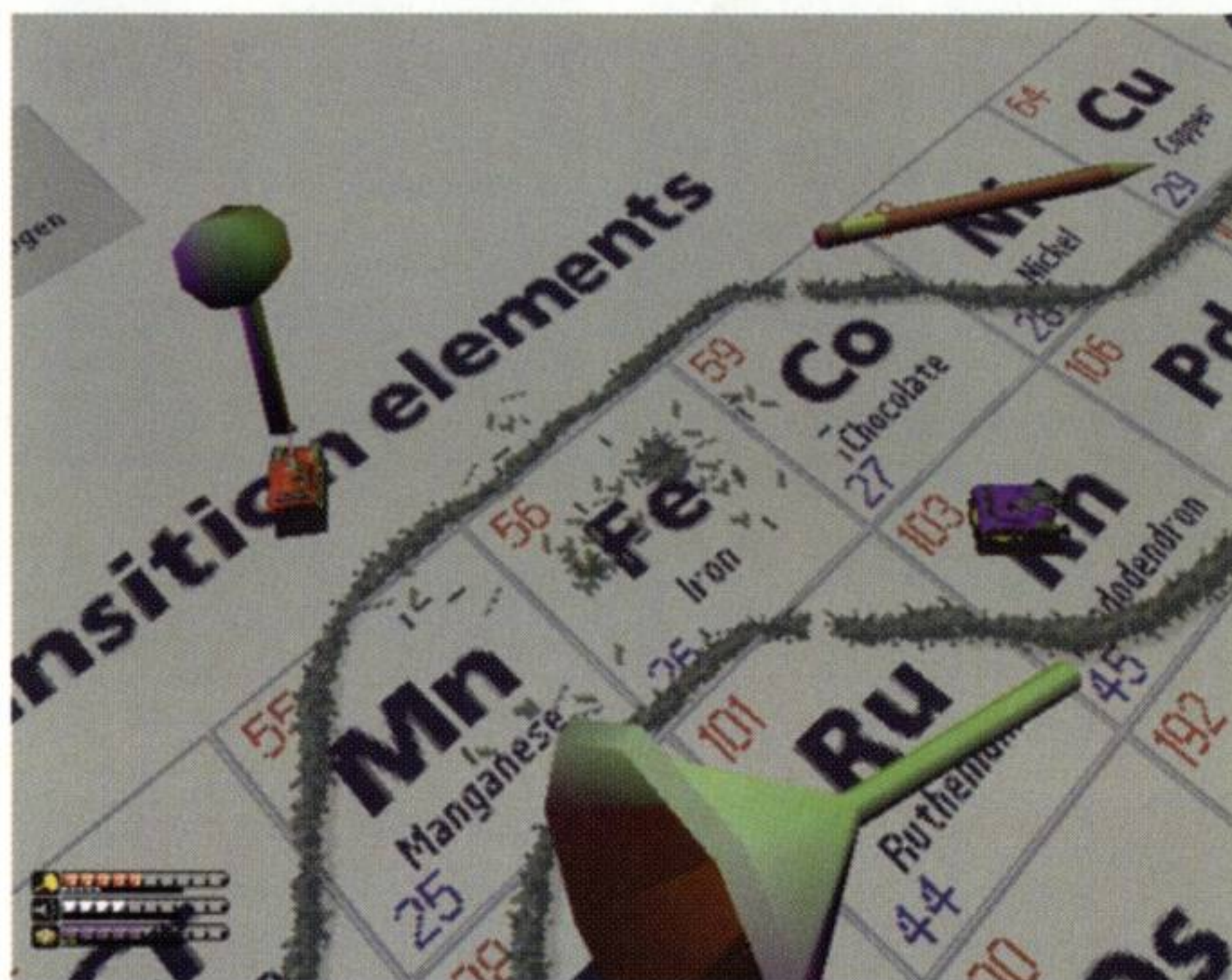


■ In multi-player mode, it's a stop-start sort of game, but the one-player mode is still a sweaty joypad experience when you race against four CPU competitors at once.

Or you could try...

Mario Kart 64
Nintendo ★★★★★
The finest multi-player racing experience in the modern world.

Diddy Kong Racing
Nintendo/Rare ★★★★★
Flawed multi-player, but supreme one-player adventure racing.



Uppers & Downers

Dinky

- Lots and lots of tracks
- Plenty of challenge in one-player mode
- Turbo feature an interesting addition

Stinky

- Stop-start multi-player experience
- Twice the price of the PlayStation Platinum version
- Multi-player pales in comparison with *Mario Kart*

■ Race on a pool table. Don't try this at your local.





[IMPORT]

PARTY ON

BRING YOUR OWN CONTROLLER

↑ Uppers & Downers

Gold star

- Never the same game twice
- Inventive mini games
- Full of fun
- All the Nintendo favourites are there. Even Luigi

Black mark

- A waste of money if you don't have any friends
- Waiting for the computer players is tedious
- Not all the sub-games are fun



■ You can select *Mario Party*'s various games and options from this map.

Mario Party

- Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Hudsonsoft**
- Price: **£60** ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan), February (UK)** ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Extras: **Rumble Pak**
- Contact: **Game Front 0161 256 3479**

Everyone's favourite Nintendo characters shoe-horned into a multi-player console board game. Real parties don't get much better than this.

Alright, mate, how's it going? Glad you could make it. Yeah, just dump your coat on the bed upstairs. Be careful, though, there's some strange noises coming from up there – we reckon Mario and Peach are going at it hammer and tongs again. Drinks are over there, but watch you don't tread in what Wario's just chucked up. Yoshi? Yeah, he's here – grabbing anything with a skirt and trying to slip 'em the tongue, as usual. Dirty sod."

At least that's how a game called *Mario Party* could have turned out. But Nintendo has sensibly avoided such scenes

of debauchery – the “Party” tag is there because this is a board game on your N64. Now, when we say “board game”, dispel any pre-conceived image of sitting around the coffee table, watching in despair as your family holds their breath waiting for the Community Chest card to be read out. This is very different. Grab yourself three friends, some Pringles, a Tesco carrier bag full of lager and you’ll quickly discover that *Mario Party* is, quite simply, the best board game you’ll ever play. Except for *Mouse Trap*.

To be honest, the term “board game” is stretched to its limits, if not burst completely, by Nintendo’s game, although it’s difficult to see why at first. The seven boards are unremarkable (though

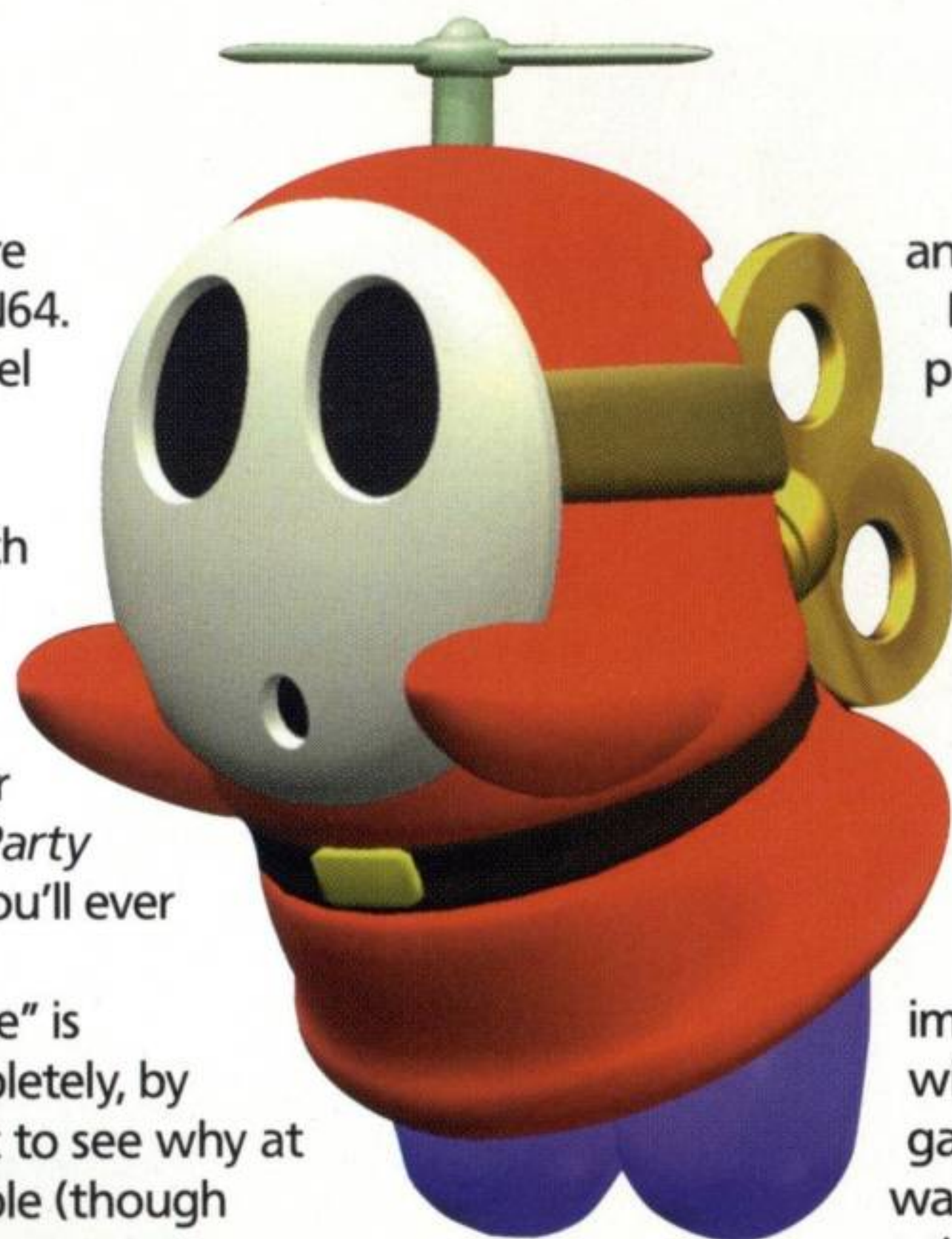
GET SOME LAGER IN AND IT’S THE BEST BOARD GAME YOU’LL EVER PLAY. EXCEPT FOR MOUSE TRAP.

littered with 3D characters and alternate routes), and each player – assuming the identity of a traditional Nintendo character, with the N64 controlling any non-human players – rolls the die in turn and moves forward the designated number of spaces. It’s what happens after everyone’s had their go that’s a bit different. Rather than an argument about who goes first this time round, you’re plunged into one of 50 impossibly entertaining mini games.

We’re not talking here about one-player jaunts where the other three players sit round and twiddle their thumbs. *Mario Party*’s sub-games are designed for everybody to enjoy. Some of them pit everybody against everyone else, others pair the players up into two teams, while a few set one participant against the other three. Occasionally, a one-player game *does* crop up, but it’s always mercifully short, and often employs the other players in an advisory “No, not that way, you idiot! What are you doing?” capacity.

How Hudson has managed to dream up so many great ideas for the sub-games is a question for the ages, but you’ll be consistently surprised and delighted by each new game’s inventiveness. How many times have you been asked to save a jumping skittle (emblazoned with Mario’s face) from being toppled by a tortoise shell? And how many so-called “classic” games give you the chance to roll around a small island on a beach ball, knocking your friends into the sea?

Of course, there’s a reason for all this hilarious ingenuity, with each player being awarded a collection of coins depending on how well they’ve performed. These in turn can be used to gain the upper hand on the main game board, by buying stars (the player with the most stars and coins at the end of the game wins), or paying your way on to alternate routes. Every section of the game plays a part in the frantic battle to earn, grab and steal coins and stars in



an effort to win.

It’s clear that *Mario Party* has been polished and play-tested to perfection. The simplistic 3D versions of each character come fully equipped with their own little victory routines and odd catchphrases (“Wario! I gotta win!” is a guaranteed belly-laugh), and every menu screen, twee tune and jingly sound effect blends seamlessly into the uncomplicated, vibrant *Mario* world.

There’s still an overbearing aura of impatience as the dice-rolling takes place, with everyone anxious to find out what game will crop up next – especially as you wait for the impassioned N64 characters to get through their round of moves. In fact, it’s difficult to think of many games where having four people on the controllers is as integral to the gameplay. The host of one-player quests – where you can buy helpful items and new game options with the money you’ve earned from each party game – are useful, but they’re difficult, lonely and frustrating experiences.

If you do find yourself playing *Mario Party* alone, punch yourself in the head, go to the pub, find some friends, come back and indulge. Its visuals aren’t going to blow your eyes out of their sockets, and its toe-tapping tunes will bounce irritatingly around your brain for months, but its got a glimmer in its eye, a cheeky grin on its face and F-U-N scrawled across its forehead in the biggest capital letters you’ve ever seen. ★★★★★

Mark Green

Or you could try...

Bomberman 64
Hudson/Nintendo ★★
Multi-player mate-bombing, ruined by its perspective problems and one-player mode.

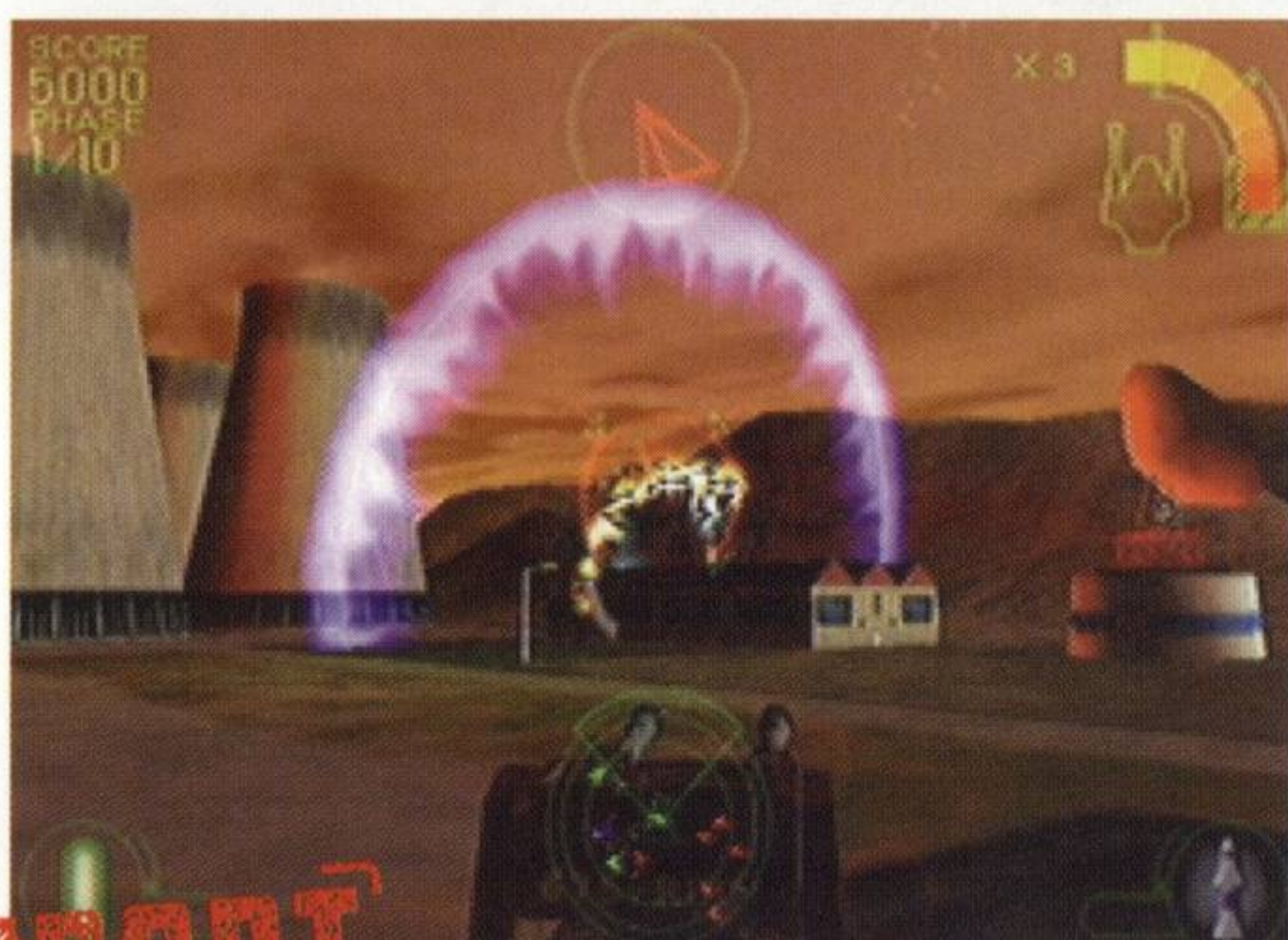
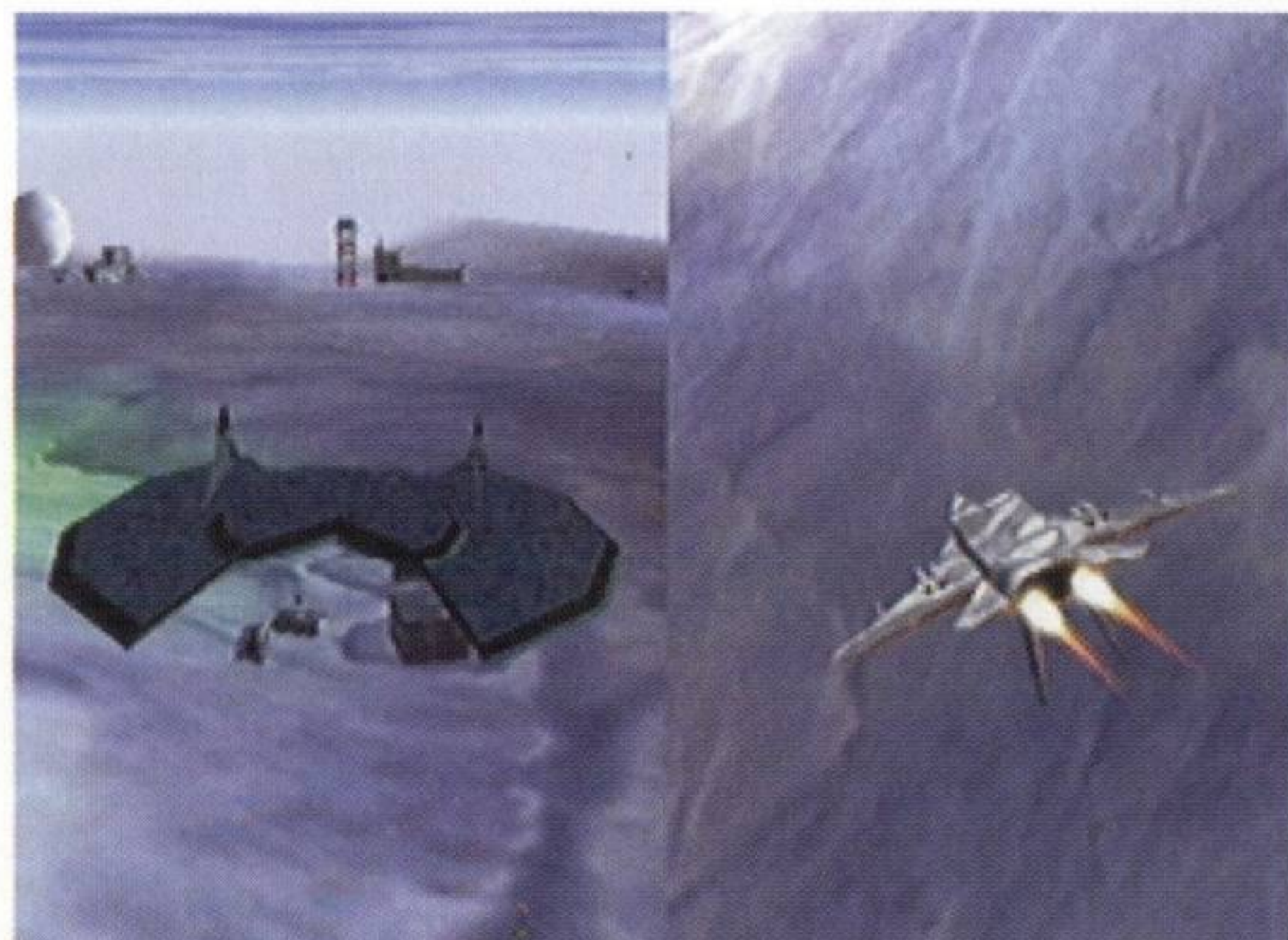
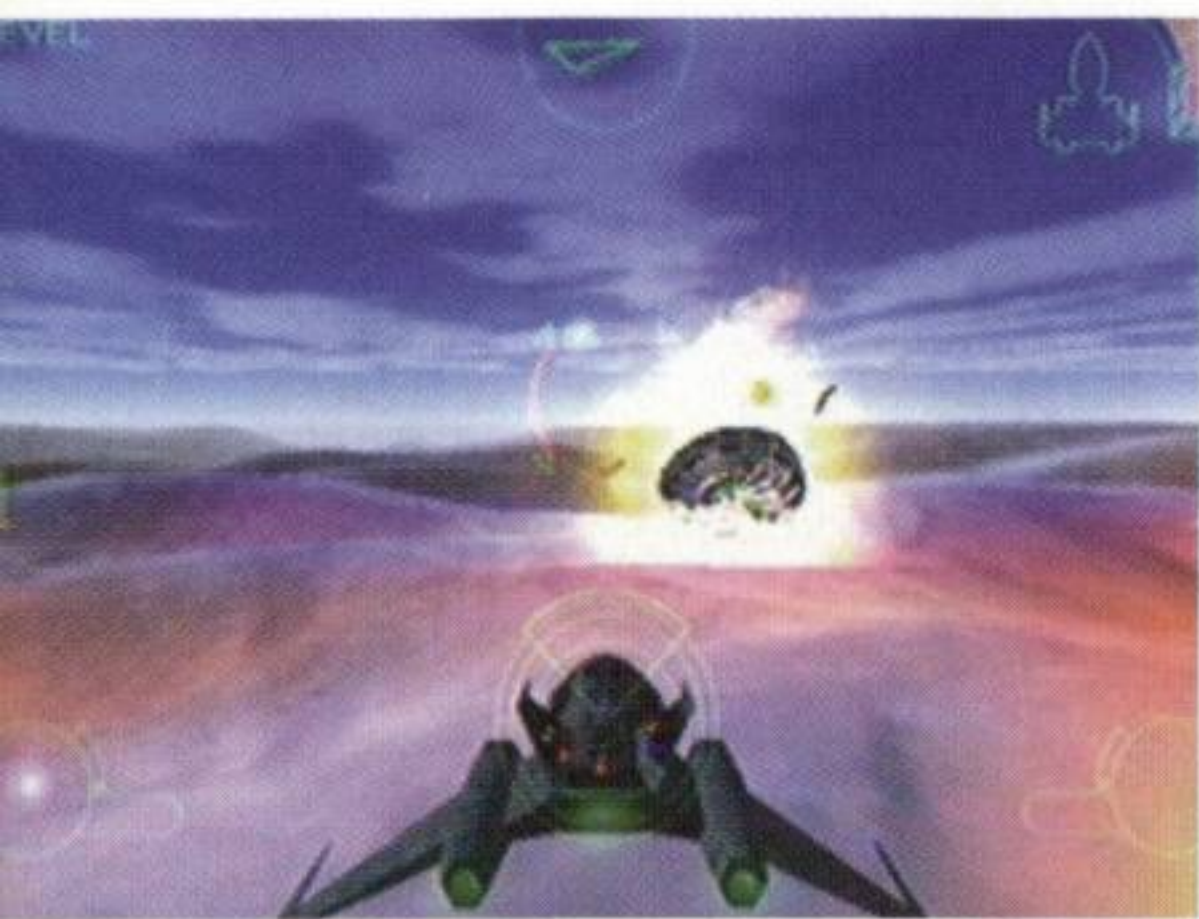
Mario Kart 64
Nintendo ★★★★★
Mario and friends on wheels, and arguably the best N64 multi-player madness money can buy.



■ See? It’s exactly like the board games you’ve got in your cupboard at home. Sort of. Ane let’s not underestimate the fun of drowning your favourite Nintendo character (left).



New Dreamcast Games



■ All of *Incoming's* locations look stunning. And a good thing, too, because you're not going to find yourself too distracted by the gameplay.

[IMPORT]

IN YER FACE

SHOOT TO KILL, THEN REPEAT AD INFINITUM

Incoming

- Publisher: **Rage** ■ Developer: **Rage** ■ Price: **£59.99**
- Release date: **on sale now (Japan)** ■ Players: **1-2**
- Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

Originally on the PC, does this new Dreamcast shoot-'em-up finally realise the potential of the Japan's freshly squeezed orange one?

Recently, I've been going on, to anyone who will listen, about a revolutionary new system I've invented to score videogames: the Golf Scoring System™. How it works is this: every game starts at par. This par value reflects the initial expectations of the audience regarding the game, hence a game that we expect to be phenomenal and one we expect to be crap both start at the same value. A game that lives up to its expectations remains par; if it's better it might get an Eagle or a Birdie, or if it's a must-buy, the *Arcade "Albatross of the Month"*. Likewise, games that disappoint score Bogies, or double Bogies, with really crap offerings scoring three and upward. So, while *Zelda* would be a Hole-in-One and receive a complimentary tie, *Hugo* (given one star last

month) would score 16. Or maybe even 18. As you can see, my new system all makes perfect sense.

Using the Golf Scoring System™, *Incoming* would score particularly badly. While it was well-received on the PC, for some reason it just doesn't seem to sit quite so nicely on the Dreamcast, a brand new console which demands a totally brand new kind of game.

Incoming is totally unoriginal, it's a shoot-'em-up that begs, borrows and steals from every other shoot-'em-up around. The game is set in three locations: one using a ground-based anti-aircraft gun, another a tank and a third up in the skies, piloting a helicopter, plane or UFO. The rules are simple: shoot anything that moves before it shoots you.

THE TANK SECTIONS MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE ON A MILKROUND

And so F1s shatter into a zillion different pieces like some sort of firework display. Tanks explode with a huge, nuclear boom illuminating the ground like a set of gigantic neon Christmas lights. Homing missiles zonk around the sky like... well, that's enough analogies for now.

Incoming boasts some fantastic-looking backdrops to fly up to and 3D rendered planet surfaces to rumble over,

↑ Uppers & Downers

- Hole in one**
- Speedy engine
 - Dramatic backdrops
 - Different vehicles
- Miss-hit**
- Japanese text
 - Samey gameplay
 - Not enough weapons



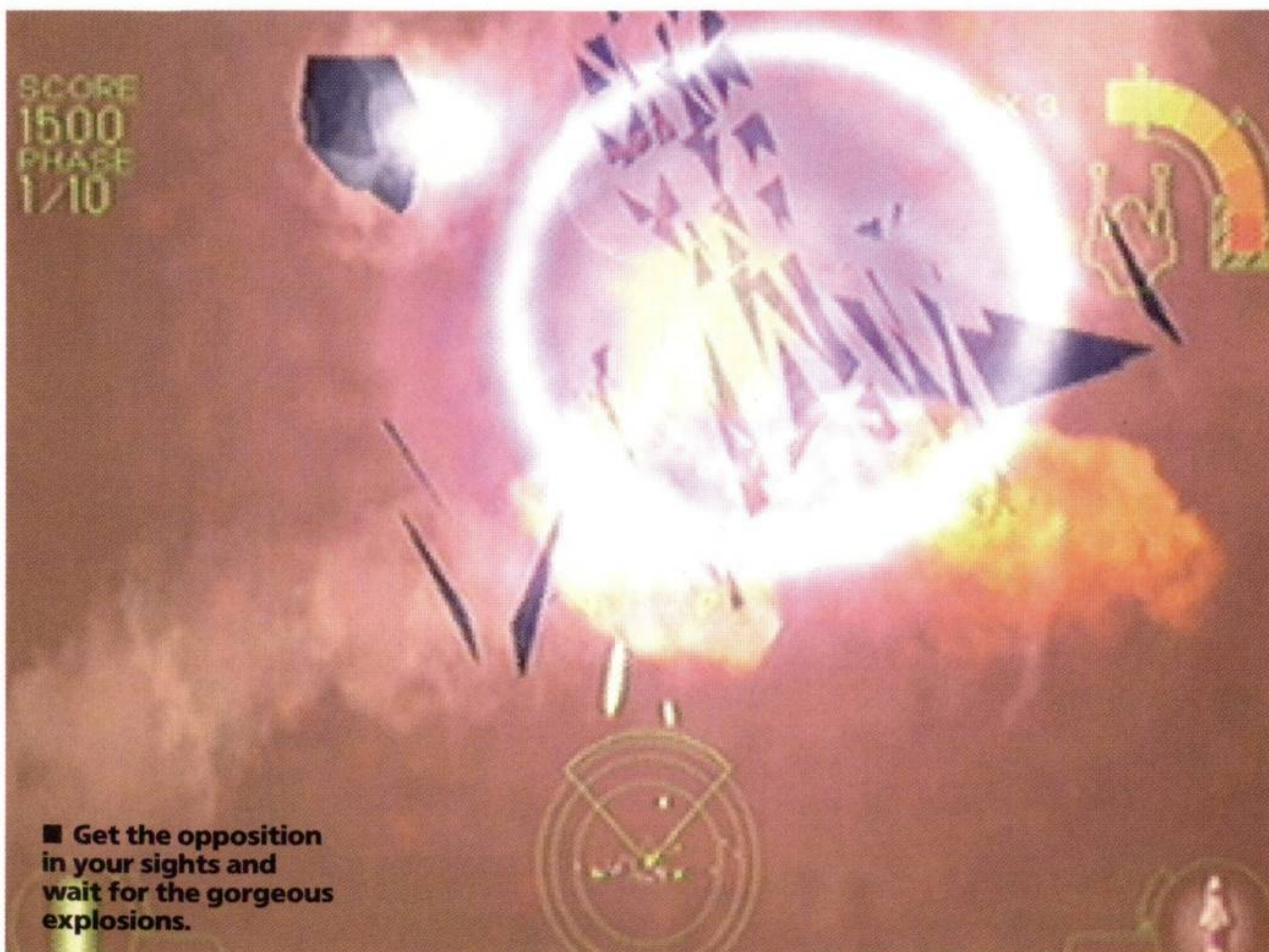
although you can't help feeling that the effect achieved looks rather like a high-spec PC game (not that this is a bad thing). What lets the whole shooting match down, however is the tedium of the gameplay.

The ground-based gun sections boil down to a huge game of clay pigeon shooting. The tank sections make you feel like you're on a milkround delivering bottles of death to the baddie tanks. As for the air-based missions, you are basically reduced to sitting on hovering roundabout, flying in circles gunning down everything that dares to appear over the horizon – it's just not at all involving. The split-screen two-player mode is no better; the whole thing feels like a poor game of cat and mouse where whoever can get behind their opposition first, letting rip with a wave of machine gun fire, reaps victory every time.

So, *Incoming* is by no means a complete disaster, but it is disappointing. Maybe it's because the Dreamcast is such a new, exciting piece of hardware that this predictable, brain-free, no-skill shoot-'em-up seems inappropriate. Or maybe it's because *Incoming* really is just boring. Couple this with the high level of Japanese-text in this import version, and it scores a double Bogie. ★★★ **Rich Pelley**



■ Sit on your saucer and take stock of the world.



■ Get the opposition in your sights and wait for the gorgeous explosions.



Tetris 4D

■ Publisher: **Bullet Proof Software** ■ Developer: **Bullet Proof Software** ■ Price: **£59.99 (import price)**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan)** ■ Players: **1-4**
 ■ Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

The world famous puzzle game gets ruined. Again.

■ We love Dreamcast's *Tetris 4D*. That's "love", of course, as defined by the Tennis Scoring System™, where "love" means "nothing", and *Tetris 4D* is knocked in round one: six-love, six-love, six-love.

Why would anyone shell out £400 for a brand new Dreamcast and then use it to play a ten-year-old puzzle game? It would be like buying a top-of-the-range microwave with a roasting facility and an automatic door, and then using it to heat up cups of coffee.

Of course, it might not have been so bad if *Tetris 4D* was a stroke of visual genius; if every block shone like a diamond as it tumbled from the skies, with texture mapping and 3D rotating effects like you'd never seen before. Actually, that would have been terrible. What made *Tetris* such a fantastic game was its simplicity – the best version of *Tetris* ever remains the black and white Game Boy original.

It's slightly suspicious, then, that the Dreamcast version looks as if it's been knocked up by a PlayStation programmer in a weekend, casually enough to leave time for a long lie-in on Sunday morning. It looks awful, and is hardly going to win the Dreamcast any new admirers.

Tetris 4D's only chance of redemption is the split-screen, four-player mode for which, obviously, you'll have to buy three extra joypads. But, next to the N64's four-player *GoldenEye*, this is as tame as a bunny rabbit with no teeth. The only argument for this game's existence is that every system should have a version of *Tetris*, to which we can only reply with a raspberry. Don't waste any money on *Tetris 4D* unless someone's pointing a gun at your head and your life depends on owning a copy. ★ **Rich Pelley**



Seventh Cross

■ Publisher: **NEC** ■ Developer: **NEC** ■ Price: **£59.99 (import price)** ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan)** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

Horrendously confusing evolution-'em-up.

■ There reaches a point when you're trying to undertake life's more difficult tasks – things like putting up shelves, or doing your own washing – when you have to take a step back and admit defeat. With this in mind, we've devised a new system to rate videogames according to how long they hold your attention (the Attention-Span Scoring System™), to compliment the alternative methods outlined in the two reviews to the left. Sadly, however, lack of room forbids us to fully explain the rules. Shame.

Seventh Cross will have you admitting defeat within minutes. The snag is that from the outset you haven't got the foggiest idea what's going on. The general gist is one of evolution. You start life as a single-celled organism. You swim along the bottom of the sea collecting blobs which, in time, turn you into what is supposed to be a slug but, in comic truth, actually looks like a big, er, "log". A bit more turding about and you'll gain fins, and then a proper, scaly body. The only challenge lies in avoiding the other marine wildlife. Unfortunately, most of the time this appears off camera and eats you without warning, and you have to start at the beginning again, with a huge disc access.

A large part of the game seems to involve messing around with your character's DNA: you get to release coloured blobs into a spinning picture of the DNA double helix, while some indecipherable Japanese text fails to tell you what's going on. There are also some evolution points scattered around the game where you get to diddle with your DNA by painting a grid with some funny colours but, with the lack of any English instruction, who knows what that's all about.

If *Seventh Cross* was in English and on the PlayStation (which graphically it could be), it might be worth investigating, along with the recent bunch of non-games such as *PaRappa the Rapper*, *Fluid* and *Music*. However as a £60 import game, it doesn't stand a chance. Avoid it like you'd avoid a man with the plague running through the streets offering free kisses. ★ **Rich Pelley**



COIN-OP

House of the Dead 2

■ Maker: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega AM1** ■ Release date: **out now** ■ Players: **1-2**

Does the sequel to House of the Dead offer anything new, or is it simply a shot-by-shot remake, like Gus Van Sant's "new" Psycho?

■ If the films of George A Romero keep you up at night, or you get a perverse kick out of decomposing bodies searching for "fresh brain", then Sega's *House of the Dead 2* is the game for you. Its predecessor was one of the best titles of last year; but is this sequel *The Godfather II* or *Jaws: the Revenge*?

It's a bit of both in fact. The success of the original game rested on a well conceptualised plot (which Sega "borrowed" heavily from the seminal *Resident Evil*), a superb atmosphere that had players backing away from the game when unexpected nasties popped up, and truly compelling gameplay.

HOTD2 has all this and... Well, not much more. The story is much the same, the monsters are much the same, the end-of-level bosses are much the same – you get the picture. So what extra does the sequel have to persuade you to part with your cash? The key difference is that the beasties are a lot faster and practically never go down after a single headshot.

Okay, so this makes the game tougher, but it also makes it bloody annoying. There's nothing worse than icing some green-blood-oozing-corpse with a well-placed .45 to the frontal lobe, only to have the bastard stand up and take a chunk out of you with a meat cleaver. And, more importantly, it can rip through your credits, leaving your pockets empty. Coin-op games rely heavily on the ability to generate repeat play, while taking as much cash as possible. *House of the Dead 2* may cost you too much.

As usual, Sega's graphics are right out of the top drawer and the gameplay is as good as the original's. It's just that *HOTD2* is almost an exact replica of its predecessor. This may be because *HOTD2* is one of the first games to appear on Sega's new Naomi port, so it can expect a port to the Dreamcast soon. In the meantime, *House of the Dead 2* may be far better than many of the other horror shoot-'em-ups around, but it adds little to the original. ★★★ **Alex Tanner**

CHAIN REACTION

IT JUST GETS BETTER AND BETTER

GAME BOY COLOR



■ Okay, it might not look much compared to *The Ocarina of Time*. But try sticking an N64 and a telly into your trouser pocket. (Rip.) See?

Zelda: Link's Awakening DX

■ Developer: **Nintendo** ■ Publisher: **THE Games**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Players: **1**

A troupe of monkeys, some magic acorns and a Wind Fish. It can only be GB Zelda again. But this time – in color! Colour. Gagh.

If you haven't already got a Game Boy Color, smash open that piggy bank, sprint to the shops as fast as your legs will carry you – or, ideally, faster – and buy one. Off you go! Now!

Isn't it simply the best thing you've ever seen? How can it be so small? And yet do so much? How can the screen be so pin-sharp and colorful... colourful... without a battery-eating backlight? It's inconceivable. "Escape into a world of exciting colour!" recommends the back of the box. And what better way to do so than with the fantastic *Zelda DX*?

Generally agreed to be the finest of the pre-N64 *Zelda* games, the six-year-old *Link's Awakening* crams an astonishing amount into its tiny, teabag-sized cart. The 256-screen map is only the start of it. Lurking beyond is a whole series of dungeons, hundreds of fiendish puzzles and a storyline more gripping than a Harry Potter book.

And superb as it was (and still is) in black-and-grey, the revamped colour *Zelda* is a miracle of Nintendo's art. Forests are lush and green, beaches are warm and yellow, and graveyards are scary and blue. Colour isn't the only upgrade, either: now you can go into one of the game's shops and have your mug-shot taken by a photographic mouse, and then print it out on your GB Printer if you've got one. And there are rumours of an extra dungeon hidden somewhere (although we suspect you've got to be significantly less crap than us to find it).

But it's the strength of the original game that makes *Zelda DX* such a winner. While other RPGs can be sprawling affairs that leave you wandering for hours in search of action, Game Boy *Zelda* scrunches everything down. Practically every screen contains someone to talk

to, or a puzzle, or a building to sniff around. The plot consequently rattles along, with each problem solved leading swiftly to another conundrum. There's an owl on hand with wise advice should you get stuck, and you can phone up Ulrira for extra tips.

Link gradually acquires abilities. To begin with he can't jump, so many paths are blocked by holes. But then he finds the feather that lets him hop over them, so you can zip around the map eagerly visiting all the bits you couldn't reach before. Apart from the ones blocked by boulders: they'll require the power glove.

The dialogue's excellent. "Welcome to Sale's House of Bananas!" says an alligator in a hat. "I'm Sale, this is my house! Actually, my hobby is collecting rare and unusual canned food." He's not joking, either – his pastime forms a vital link in an object-trading sub-plot.

The music's beyond compare – variations on the *Zelda* theme you'll be humming all day, and little extra tunes when you find the eight Instruments of the Sirens you're collecting to awaken the Wind Fish. Oh yes.

There are even side-on platform bits. Put them together, and the Game Boy Color and *Zelda: Link's Awakening DX* are as irresistible a combination as Morecambe and Wise, or cold sausages and pickle. So, no time to get your breath back – it's off to the shops again. Go, go, go! ★★★★★ **Jonathan Davies**

Or you could try...

Power Quest
Sunsoft ★★★
Even though it's not nearly as good.

Zelda in B&W
Nintendo ★★★★★
The same, but less colourful. And cheap second-hand.



Uppers & Downers

- Shigs**
- Tiny
 - Colourful
 - Gammed with enough goodies to keep you happy for weeks
- Pigs**
- There's nothing wrong with it. It's (sigh) perfect

■ The hidden dungeon's full to bursting with traps.



MACINTOSH

Future Cop: LAPD

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
 ■ Developer: **Electronic Arts**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Requires:
System 7.5, 120MHz 603e
PowerMac or better, 24Mb
RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive
 ■ Recommended: **3Dfx card**

Welcome to the Los Angeles of the future, city of crime lords, automated sentry guns, and rocket launcher-toting nutters (no change there then). You, a heavily armoured robotic vehicle, and a bucket-load of ammo are all that maintains the thin blue line.

■ *Future Cop: LAPD* is the latest comic strip to get the interactive treatment. The game is set in a futuristic Los Angeles, where organised crime has taken over and the city is held to ransom by eight powerful crime lords. Your job is to vanquish each of them with the help of your X1-Alpha, a heavily-armed mechanised walker that changes into a hovercraft at the flick of a switch. Hmm...

You progress through 12 levels of carnage, shooting practically everything in sight. It's all done in a 3D environment but, instead of a first-person perspective, your view is from a sky camera above you. The overall effect is like a cross between *Quake* and *Syndicate*. Each level is loosely based on a maze, and to progress, you must find switches to lower bridges, disable electric fields, and activate lifts. There are also platform elements which require careful jumping. At the same time, you use your mini-guns and rocket launchers to eliminate the bad guys. Your dispatcher gives you audio clues, although it's difficult to hear her over the cacophony that is exploding missiles, vastly distorted music, and insults from each crime lord whom you must face at the end of every level.

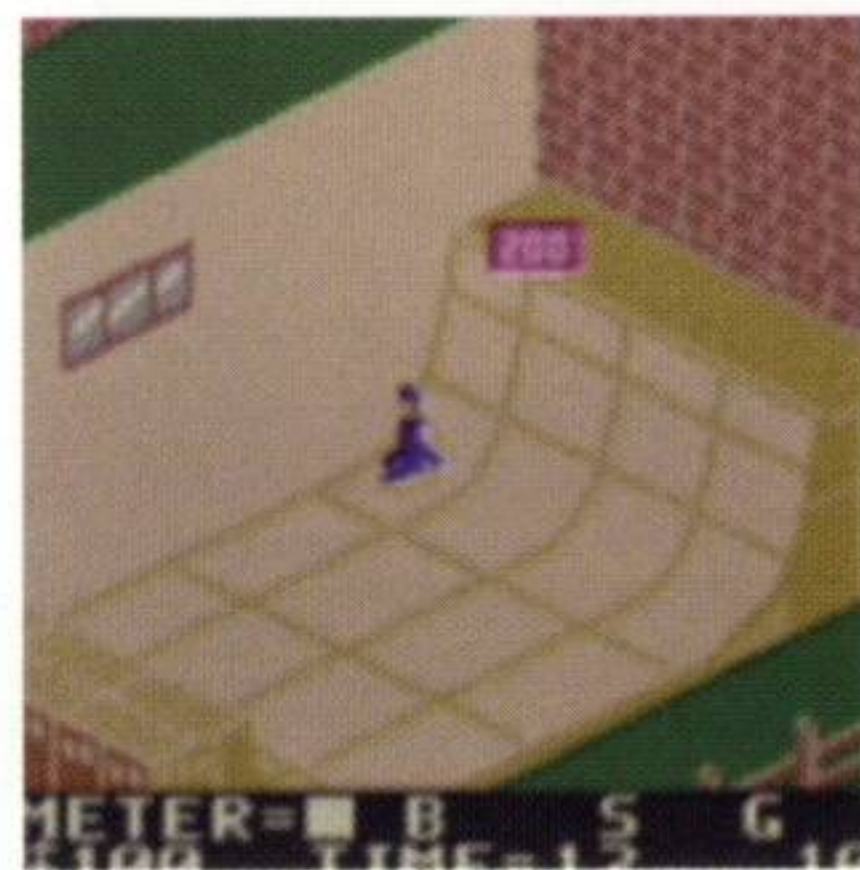
Simple? Is it hell. The controls are a bitch, especially in hovercraft mode. Once you've fallen off the same platform and gone back to the start (whenever you get blown to bits or fall off you get sent back to the start) half a dozen times, frustration sets in. What's more, the levels are ludicrously difficult and you can only save once the level is completed. And this is a crying shame, because *Future Cop: LAPD* is otherwise a brilliantly designed game, with lots of carefully-thought-out detail in an original format. ★★★ **Lindsay Bruce**

GAME BOY COLOR

COLOR VISION

NOT EVERYTHING IN BLACK AND WHITE MAKES SENSE

This month *Arcade Reviews* Editor Robin Alway found four new reasons why he hasn't got the time to make tea for the team...



720°

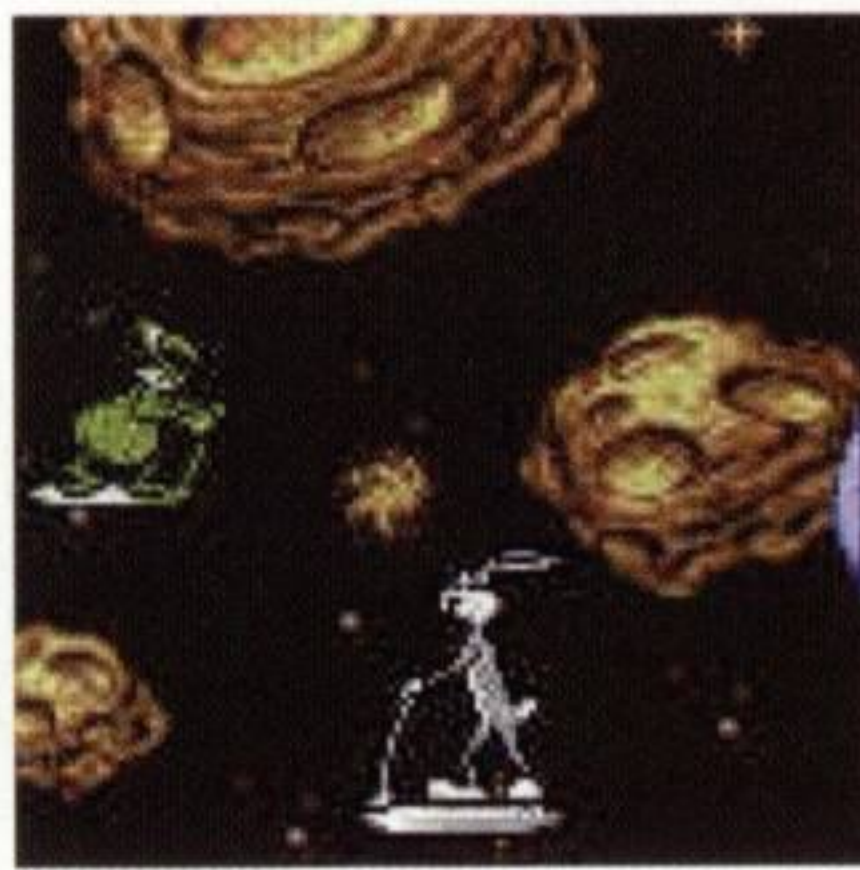
■ Publisher: **Midway**
 ■ Developer: **Digital Eclipse**
 ■ Release date: **March**
 ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Extras: **Game Boy-compatible**

Four whole protractors worth, for this version of the classic Atari skateboarding coin-op.

■ The last time you saw *720°* was probably over the shoulders of some bigger boys on a massive crystal-sharp screen in the arcades circa 1985. Set in Skate City, a boarder's dream version of the local shopping precinct, this is *Paperboy* for baggy trousered drop outs. You skate around town pulling off jumps and spins to earn bonus points, improving your abilities by buying new pads, boards, trainers and helmets. When the timer expires, it's off to one of four skate parks – ramps, downhill, slalom and jump – before you're knocked to the ground by, well, a swarm of bees. Your performance on each discipline is graded and the more points you clock up, the more skate-park tickets you're awarded.

And that's it, with the game increasing in difficulty as you progress. Trouble is, most of the fun in the original came from learning to pull off difficult spins and stunts. Here, some tricky D-pad control means you're hard pressed not to skate into ponds rather than leaping over them.

Graphically, *720°*'s weedy. It's also another Game Boy Color release that's a good few shades short of dazzling Technicolor, settling instead for a limited palette. But there's plenty of enjoyable skating here, at least in short bursts. ★★★



Bugs and Lola Bunny: Operation Carrotpatch

■ Publisher: **Infogrames**
 ■ Developer: **Infogrames**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Players: **1**

Bugged by the bunny...

■ Ah, the flick of the switch, the delightful ping as the rainbow logo appears. It's going to be a while before we tire of turning on our Game Boy Color, even if it's so often to play 2D platform games that fail to offer much innovation.

To be fair, *Bugs and Lola's* better than most. It's not quite as pretty as *The Smurfs' Nightmare* (reviewed just over there on the right), but still manages to out-dazzle most of the early Color releases with plenty of shades in its well-animated characters and detailed backdrops.

The cast is an all-star line-up of Warner Bros finest. You can switch between Bugs and his little-seen girlfriend, Lola as you move through the levels with Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and Yosemite Sam turning up to make a nuisance of themselves. Each level is split into three stages, with a well-envisioned boss encounter at the end and bonus games to be won if you collect enough of the right item.

It's straightforward-but-challenging, with a well-judged difficulty level that appeals to your platforming pride but doesn't see you stuck in one place for too long. There's nothing new on offer here and we'd put the lifespan at two-hours-per-go National Express journey levels, rather than 27-hour trans-Pacific in-flight entertainment. ★★★



Hollywood Pinball

■ Publisher: **Take 2**
 ■ Developer: **Tarantula**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Extras: **Game Boy-compatible**

Sure plays an acceptable game of pinball.

■ While we wait for someone to bring us a pinball game recreating the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... animated sequence from *Sesame Street*, we've been making do with this perfectly reasonable, top-down flip-'em-up for the GBC.

The Hollywood theme means the seven tables are designed as "tributes" to various blockbusters. You get Shark!, Terrodactyl, Double Agent, Robin Hood, Galaxy Wars, Motel Hell and Ancient Temple of the Aztecs.

The pinball is pretty standard stuff, whichever table you play. There's a smattering of bumpers, a few targets to hit and the now-compulsory evil channel to oblivion behind the flippers. The ball pings about acceptably, but it's a shame that more hasn't been packed into these aerially viewed tables. More bonus games, multiple balls, and whatever you call those little gates that spin round would have increased the amount of time you want to play each table. And, it might be asking a bit much, but proper 3D tables like you get on PlayStation and PC pinball games, shrunk down on a Color Game Boy screen would be truly magical, rather than tables that move a screen upward (or downward) with the ball. As it is, about the most you can say about *Hollywood Pinball* is that it doesn't break the Trade Descriptions Act. ★★



The Smurfs' Nightmare

■ Publisher: **Infogrames**
 ■ Developer: **Infogrames**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Players: **1**

Wrongly passed over as the figurehead for the Euro, *The Smurfs* return in full and glorious GB Color.

■ *The Smurfs' Nightmare* is one of a select breed of GB Color carts that actually bothers to use all the wonder machine's glorious selection of colours, rather than adopting half-hued measures to stay compatible with the old GB.

It looks great, kicking off with a parallax-scrolling intro, before settling into a vibrant and colourful 2D-platformer with sharp, well-animated characters. Just the thing, along with the likes of *Zelda DX* and *Harvest Moon* (reviewed last issue), to thrust in the face of lowly monochrome Game Boy owners.

But don't let them play it for too long, mind. This is another simplistic Game Boy platformer that falls a good way short of Mario's GB outings. You jump, collect and land on walking Frankfurters' heads until either your interest or the batteries give out. Your interest will probably give in first, but that's not to say there aren't some nice touches. Because the whole thing looks like a decent Mega Drive game done in miniature, you end up with a compulsion to see how nice the next level looks.

If you want to excite your liquid crystal display, *The Smurfs' Nightmare* is just the job, as long as you can persevere with the straightforward platforming on offer. ★★★



ShockHammer Dual Shock Pad

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£19.99**
■ Available from: **Thrustmaster on 01276 609955**

■ Few joypads ever take on Sony's official controller at its own game and emerge with their heads held high, but the ShockHammer succeeds where others have failed. Instead of just poorly replicating the traditional shape, Thrustmaster has gone for something entirely different. The ShockHammer is actually extremely similar to Sega's new Dreamcast joypad, in that you can get the heel of your hand right over the side of the joypad for a particularly intimate grip. This makes accessing the shoulder buttons a little more awkward – but for beat-'em-ups where they're not needed, the ShockHammer provides perfect control. The deep blue colour is also a great deal more classy than most of the hideous hues these joypads usually arrive in. The Sony pad may still be your first choice, but the ShockHammer is certainly worth a try. ★★★★★

Cyber Stick

■ For: **PC** ■ Price: **£7.99**
■ Available from: **Wild Things on 01222 755774**

■ Why is it that computers, keyboards and mice (to use the odd but unavoidable plural) are always a sort of off-white-grey colour – but when a joystick turns up in the same hue, we turn our noses up as though the product is an affront to our masculinity? Who knows, but if we're going to be flying or shooting, the joystick can be any colour as long as it's black. Wild Things' rather tamer product is admittedly aimed at kids, as its extremely cheap price point and consequent poor construction bear out. The loose buttons and frankly abominable control wouldn't get you very far through *Half-Life*, but then this joystick is really for people with a teeny-tiny PC who want to stick their kids in front of it for hours without the risk of getting fizzy pop all over the keyboard. It just goes to show, you get what you pay for. ★★

Assassin Automatic Handgun

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£39.99**
■ Available from: **Nu-Gen 01992 707407**

■ A third-party lightgun that's almost as good as Namco's original? You'd better believe it. Alright, Nu-Gen's gun isn't quite as flash as the Namco version, eschewing the silver finish in favour of an understated black-only design. Plus it's a little more expensive – but the no frills approach does make for a lighter gun and it's deadly accurate to boot.

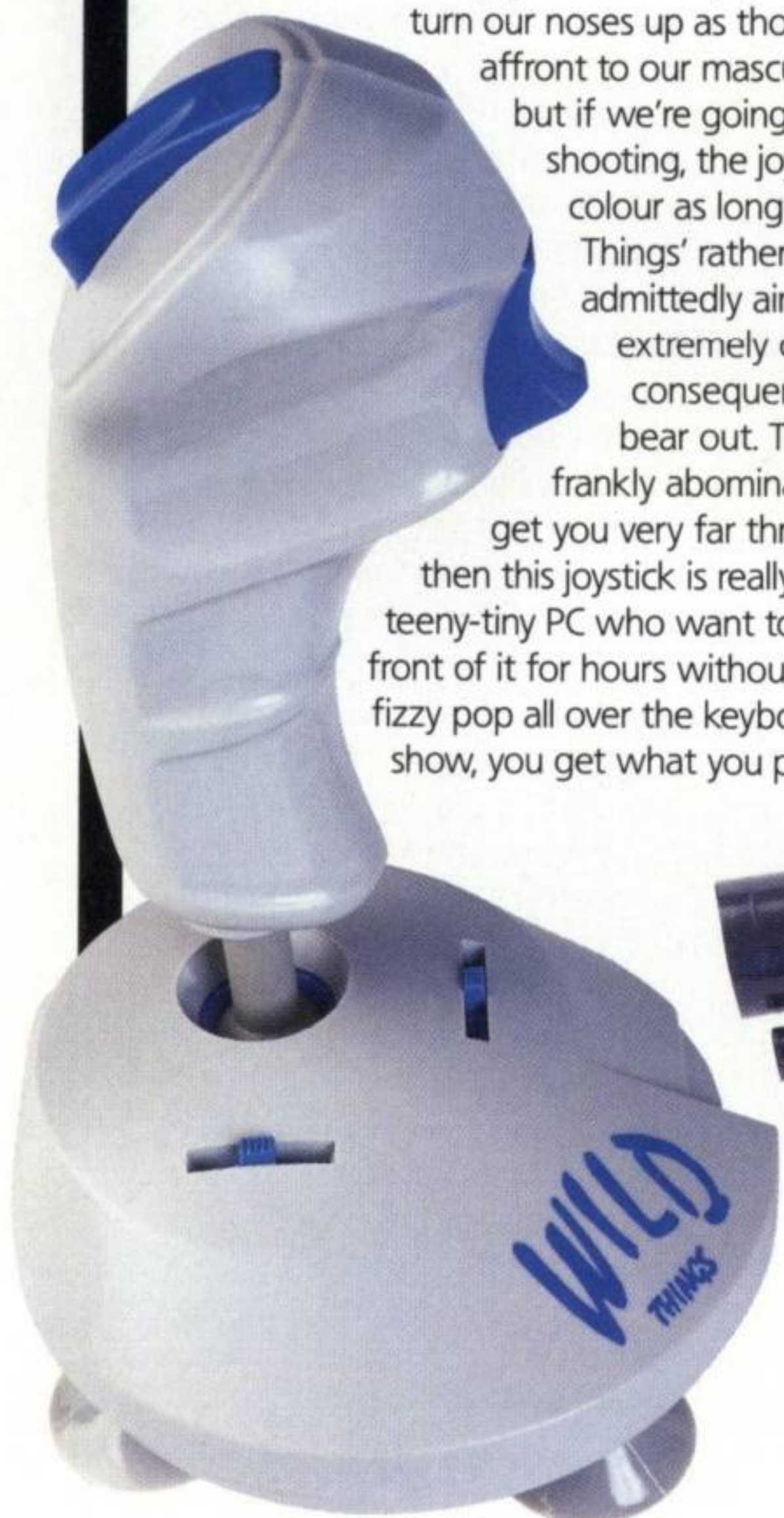
For your extra cash you also get a pedal that you can use as an extra button when those on the gun aren't enough (for ducking in *Time Crisis*, for example). Plug the guy in, and you'll also experience arcade-perfect recoil action. Perfect for all you armchair assassins out there. ★★★★★

Fazor Light Gun

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£29.99**
■ Available from: **Mad Katz on 01992 707407**

■ The people responsible for designing this joystick probably have a stack of Betamax videos, 3D0 games and digital compact cassettes at home, because they're trying as hard as possible to make this gun obsolete right from the start.

What's the point of a lightgun that doesn't use the Guncon system and therefore isn't compatible with either *Time Crisis* or *Point Blank*? Perhaps the people at Mad Katz are just big fans of the atrocious *Crypt Killer*. Whatever, the lack of compatible games isn't going to be an issue anyway, because the gun itself is such a shoddy piece of workmanship that the minute you pick it up, you're instantly persuaded that you shouldn't buy it. ★





ASCII Fishing Controller

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **to be confirmed**
 ■ Available from: **ASCII on 01923 202097**

■ Forgive us for this one. It's more of a preview than a review, because the only game with which the Fishing Controller is compatible is ASCII's own *Bass Landing* – and that's not out until March, so we don't actually know if the thing works or not. But just the idea of a PlayStation fishing game with its own accompanying rod is too much to keep to ourselves.

So tell everyone you know and shout it from the rooftops – in a matter of weeks we'll all be relaxing on our sofas, waiting for a fishy friend to tug on our virtual line. We can then pull them to surface with the attached reel and cook them for our virtual tea. Right now, it's difficult to think of anything more satisfying. ★★★★★

Mirage Advanced Control Pad

■ For: **N64** ■ Price: **£17.99**
 ■ Available from: **Wild Things on 01222 755774**

■ This joypad isn't real gold, by the way, which is a bit of a shame since at least then we could sell ours and buy loads of sweets instead. Sadly, the Mirage isn't much use as a piece of gaming equipment; the buttons are loose and unresponsive, and the spring on the analog stick feels decidedly shaky. It's a more buxom shape than typical N64 controllers, which enables you to take up a different and not entirely uncomfortable grip.

However, it's a bit shoddy all round, a complaint not placated by the instructions which suggested we should not use this product beneath the sea or drive a steamroller over it. Stop the presses, it's a previously unsighted glimpse of humour in joypadland. ★★



Access Line Digital Station Shock 2 Pad

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£17.99**
 ■ Available from: **Guillemot on 0181 914 1940**

■ Help! There's been a robbery! Someone's stolen the analog sticks from this joypad and replaced them with flashing disco lights. So maybe that's the point, but its logic is questionable. Why would you want lights on your joypad? You spend the whole time looking at the screen anyway, and anyone acquainted with the astounding technological feats of *Gran Turismo* or *Spyro* is hardly going to be impressed by some flickering LEDs.

This pad also shares the lightweight, trashy feel of most non-Sony joypads, and you won't be surprised to learn that after only a few playtests, the D-pad was beginning to stick and we had problems turning right. While you can nab an official Dual Shock joypad for 20 quid, this piece of equipment is totally redundant. ★



Stingray 64 Controller

■ For: **N64** ■ Price: **£19.99**
 ■ Available from: **Thrustmaster on 01276 609955**

■ Nintendo is famously touchy about people copying the design of its official controller (unlike Sony who tends to shoot only the legal equivalent of a dirty look at every company who replicates its design exactly). Thrustmaster is dancing close to the edge with the Stingray, but at least it's not a shoddy product. In fact, the Stingray is a little sturdier and heavier than the official joypad, although not quite as comfortable to hold.

There's the usual (pointless) slow and turbo buttons, and all the normal controls are reliable. It may look a little *Deep Space Nine*, but you wouldn't feel embarrassed to have this plugged into your N64 when your mates come round. ★★★★★



Film of the Month

JUST YOUR TYPE?

COMPUTER ROMANCE WITH HANKS AND RYAN



■ Humour Therapy at work.

Patch Adams

- Director: **Tom Shadyac**
- Starring: **Robin Williams, Monica Potter, Bob Gunton**
- UK release: **out now**

According to Hollywood law, there are two types of Robin Williams movie: Those With A Beard and Those Without. Those With A Beard inevitably find a thatch-faced Robin playing a mature, touchy-feely type who will – often during the movie's climax – break down in a mess of '90s-man shudders and quaking emotions (*Good Will Hunting*). On the flipside, Those Without, inevitably find a clean-shaven Robin playing a rule-breaking free spirit who jabbars free-form, the improv-enhanced dialogue juddering with his trademark, coked-up, hyperactive muggery (*Good Morning, Vietnam*).

So we come to the cinematic novelty that is *Patch Adams* – dealing out equal doses of sentimentality and silliness, despite a lack of facial hair. It is a Robin Williams Moustache Movie.

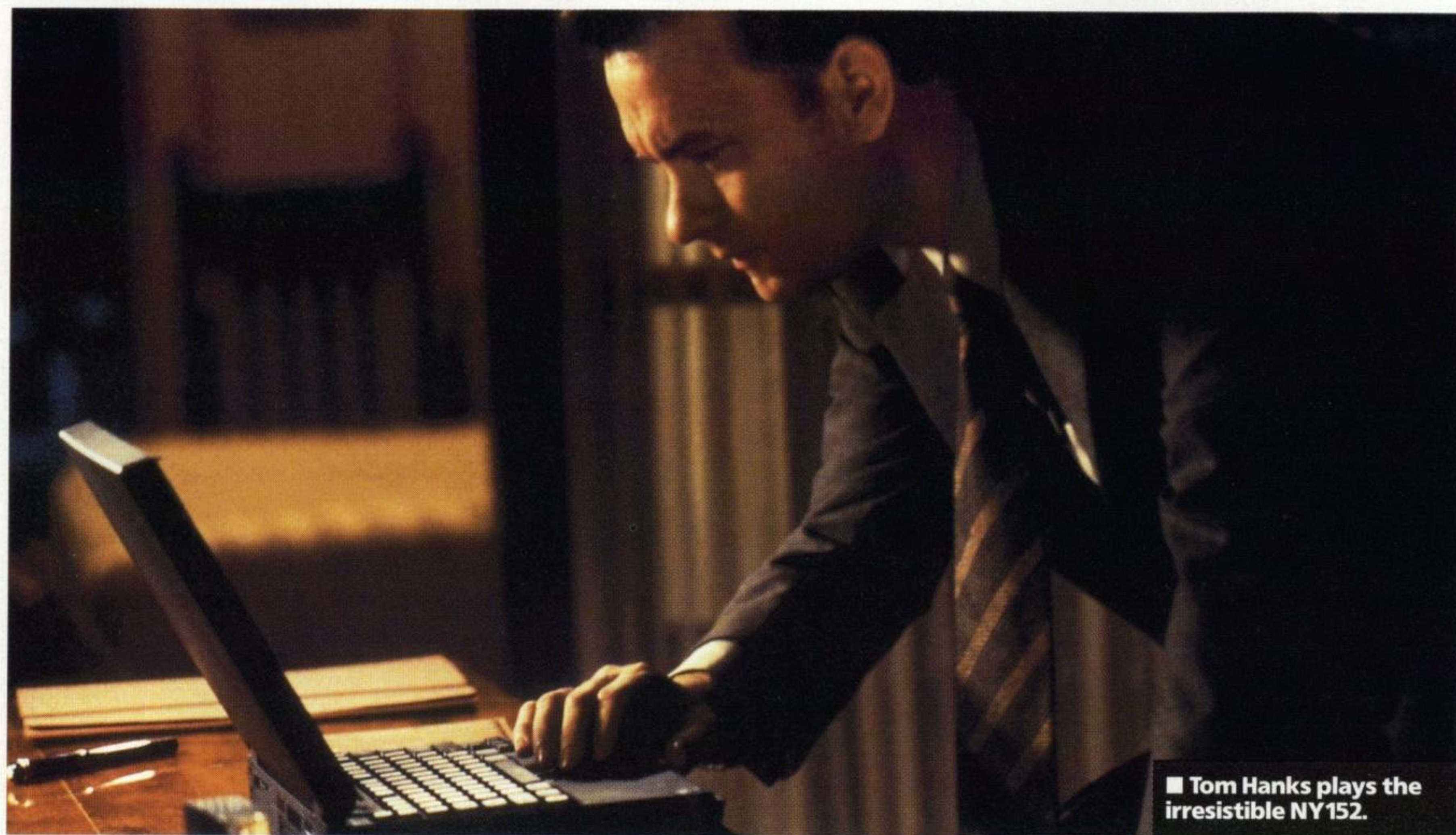
Based on a true story, Tom Shadyac's follow-up to *The Nutty Professor* sees Williams playing Hunter "Patch" Adams, a medical student who, having tugged himself out of a severe bout of depression, attempts to hawk his own form of Humour Therapy through his hospital wards. Convinced that laughter is indeed the best medicine, Williams' unconventional bedside manner soon prompts doc boss Dean Walcott (Bob Grunton) to ban Williams from the hospital for upsetting patients with his brand of "excess happiness", a move which makes Williams all the more insistent in bringing his medicinal laughing gas into the arena of the unwell.

Unrelentingly feel-good director Shadyac strikes an uncomfortable balance between straight-out comic schtick and sentimental slush, resulting in a movie so sickly sweet it's like having your brain injected with industrial-strength sherbert. Diagnosis? Poorly. ★★

Urban Legend

- Director: **Jamie Blanks**
- Starring: **Alicia Witt, Jared Leto, Robert Englund**
- UK release: **26 February**

■ Now here's an idea. A horror movie based on a psycho who copycats the killings from other horror movies, based on movies that copycat the killings from other movies. You could call it /



■ Tom Hanks plays the irresistible NY152.

You've Got Mail

- Director: **Nora Ephron**
- Starring: **Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Greg Kinnear, Parker Posey, Dabney Coleman**
- UK release: **out now**

Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan team up to re-ignite their on-screen chemistry as Joe and Kathleen, two unmarried book fanatics who bump into each other on the information supermotorway and sow the seeds of a virtual affair. Hiding behind pseudonym, neither has any idea what their lover looks like. A good job, considering capitalist pig Joe is about to buy out Kathleen's tiny bookstore...



■ Hanks' alter ego.

As anybody who's ever entered an Internet chatroom knows, the domain of the nerd is hardly the stuff of great romance. If randy teenage boys pretending to be double-D-cup strippers called Cheri and geeks jabbering away in Klingon-speak isn't bad enough, the crap spelling and smackable smileys are guaranteed to have you throwing your monitor out of the window after five minutes.

Of course, this being Hollywood and this being a Nora Ephron movie, e-mail has been given a substantial make-over and in its place

are two wire-crossed lovers, waxing lyrical and blowing kisses.

But then what do you expect when the lovers are played by Hanks and Ryan? Building on the promise of their Empire State Building moment in *Sleepless In Seattle*, Nora Ephron has convinced the two stars to shake up some more audience-friendly chemistry in this romantic rematch. And the results, though hardly the stuff of matinee classics, make for a sweetly seductive romantic comedy.

Updating the 1940 Jimmy Stewart heart-tugger *The Shop Around The Corner*, *You've Got Mail* adds a cybertwist to a familiar tale of unrequited love. Meg Ryan is Kathleen Kelly, a ditzzy owner of a children's bookstore whose bunch-of-flowers-for-a-brain comes up with phrases like a "bouquet of sharpened pencils". Already attached in the real world to boyfriend Frank (Greg Kinnear), her real kicks come from flirting with anonymous virtual darling, NY152. Problem is, NY152 is a virtual moniker for super-bookstore corporate raider Joe Fox (Hanks), who's currently in the process of buying out Kathleen's shop.

A veteran of romantic comedies, director Ephron knows which emotional buttons to push and when, and keeps things nice and light, right up to the feel-good finale. There may be far too many sub-plots for the movie's own good, but *You've Got Mail* is as polished and perky as they come. ★★ ★★

Don't Care That You've Seen I Know What You Did Last Summer, But, Using All Sorts Of Interesting Techniques, I'm Going To Kill You Anyway. Crap title, granted, but where else do you go after the uninspired hack-slashery of the latest Halloscream rip-off, *Urban Legend*?

Feel free to stop us if you've heard this one before. A bunch of American adolescents yanked from a variety of frothy, but alarmingly popular, teen soaps sit about chewing gum, chatter in *Scream*-patented in-joke speech, and slowly get picked off one by one, by a mysterious masked killer. One survivor susses who it is, reveals the psycho's identity after a lengthy fist-fight, kills 'em dead (or do they?), leaving enough loose ends to tie up during the depressingly inevitable straight-to-video sequel.

This time, the big twist is that our Murderer Of The Month is basing their slashing spree on the bulging bullshit archive of silly killings known collectively as Urban Legends. So, as sparky teen Alicia Witt plays Guess The Knife Wielding Loon, we get to see all our favourite friend-of-a-friend stories played out in grisly Slash-o-vision; decapitations from a madman crouching behind the back-seat of a car, microwaved pets – it's all here.

What sounds like a clever opportunity to explore the impact of these cultural Chinese Whispers soon flies out the window as the bodycount rises, gratuitous nude breasts flash across the screen and a shoal of red herrings are thrown in with increasingly random abandon. Robert "Freddy"



■ **Urban legends come true.**

Englund clearly has some sort of fun winking at the audience as the school's professor of Urban Legends, but even he can't rescue this derivative, stale, scare-free cheapo from a severe dose of the yawns. ★

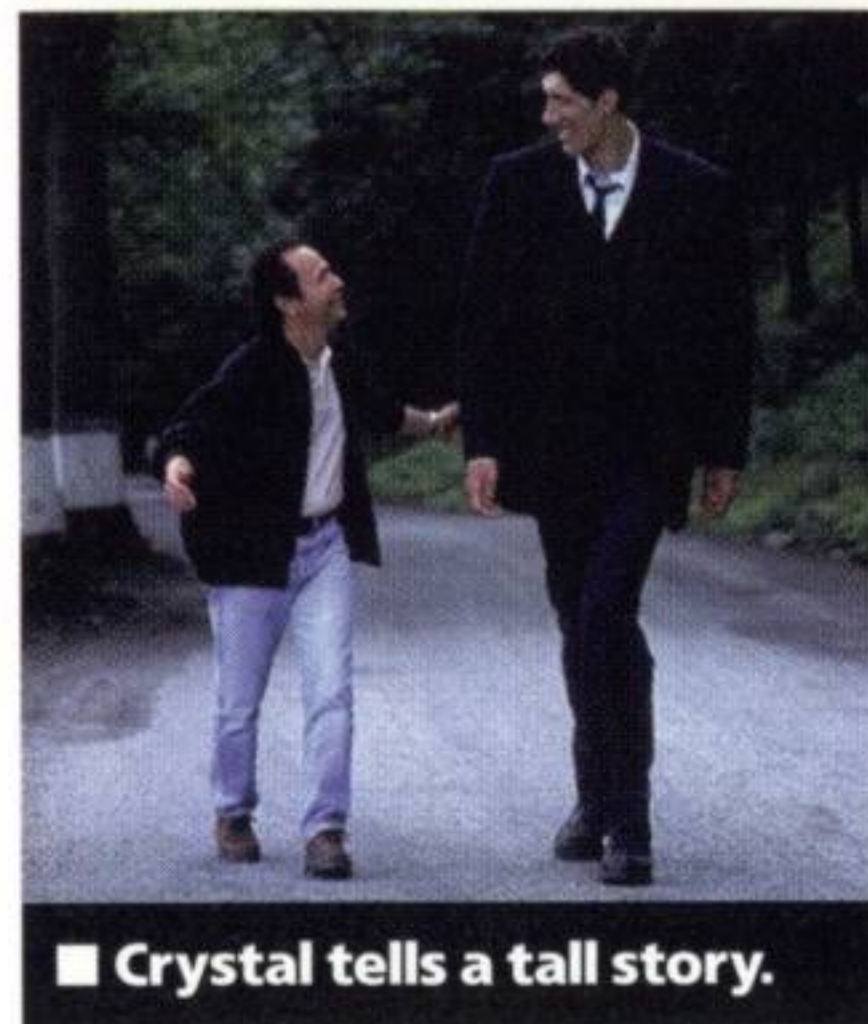
My Giant

■ Director: **Michael Lehmann**
 ■ Starring: **Billy Crystal, Kathleen Quinlan, Gheorghe Muresan**
 ■ UK release: **26 February**

■ In a month largely dominated by defiantly average releases, they don't come more defiantly average than *My Giant*. Crystal is rapidly becoming the Kevin Costner of comedy – a big draw in the late '80s, the could-have-been-huge comedian presumably lost a bet with God and has since starred in a string of turkeys.

Admittedly, *My Giant* starts promisingly enough. Impy Billy is cocky talent agent Sammy Cowman, who's rapidly approaching a mid-life crisis, thanks largely to an impending split with his wife (Kathleen Quinlan) and his one big client (obnoxious child star Rider Strong) sacking him on the set of a Romanian-based medieval action movie. Driving through the European roads in an attempt to clear his head, Crystal accidentally trashes his car, leading to a chance encounter with seven-foot giant, Max. At first, Crystal is perturbed by the human cliff – apart from being impossibly tall, Muresan's face looks like it was borrowed from a Transylvanian gargoyle. But, eventually, Crystal warms to the giant, who – *quelle surprise* – reveals himself to be a sensitive, educated, Shakespeare soliloquy-spouting softie, trapped in a monster's body.

With dollars spinning in his eyes and cracking wise, Crystal drags his novel friend back to America, where he attempts to introduce his newly discovered talent to the entertainment



■ **Crystal tells a tall story.**

industry, and subsequently drags the remaining hour of the movie into shameless, heart-tugging schmaltz. Just when Max's introduction to America gets interesting, David Seltzer's script takes a wrong turn into family drama territory as Crystal tries to rebuild what's left of his marriage.

That *My Giant* takes such an unexpected and unwanted detour appears to be solely down to Crystal's destructive obsession with mid-life crisis (all of his movies since 1992 have suffered from Crystal's insistent navel-gazing). While there's no denying *My Giant* has its moments (pony-tailed podge Steven Seagal turns up in a surprisingly self-deprecating cameo), its fondness for gloppy sentiment ultimately lets it down. ★★

Hideous Kinky

■ Director: **Giles Mackinnon**
 ■ Starring: **Kate Winslet, Said Taghmaoui, Bella Riza**
 ■ UK release: **out now**

■ After starring with Ladyboy DiCaprio in the biggest movie of all time, it's safe to assume that Kate Winslet could have her pick of budget-bloated, high-concept, event movies. So it's to her credit that she's snubbed Hollywood in favour of a low-profile, British-funded art house film.

In her first screen role since *That One With The Boat*, Winslet plays Julia, a mother of two who drags her daughters to Morocco

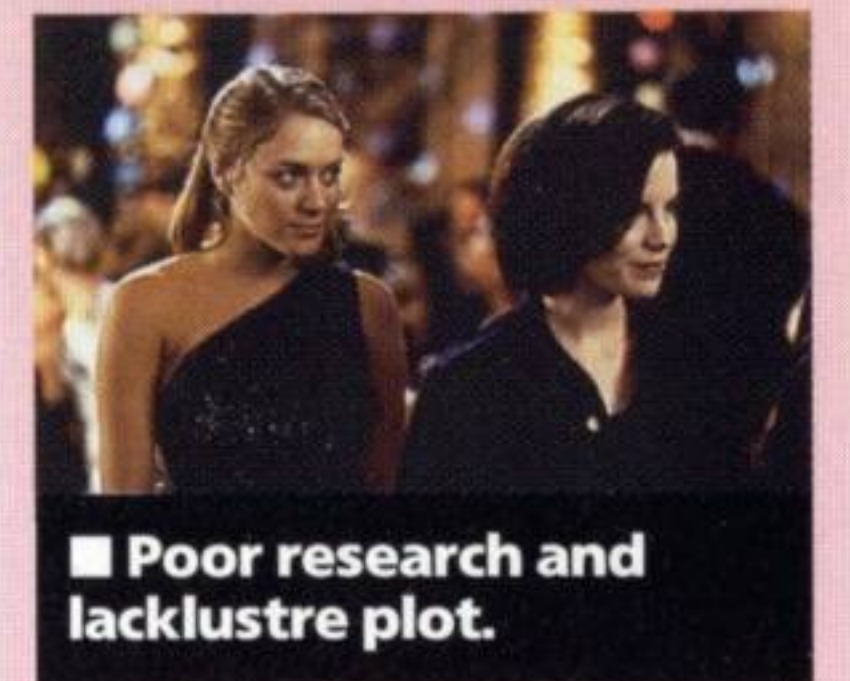
in the hope that the bohemian atmosphere can flash some spiritual enlightenment into her world-weary soul. However, her spontaneous jaunt around Marrakech soon lapses into financial hardship, leading to a chance encounter with Moroccan acrobat Bilal, who moves in with Julia and her two daughters. Desperately seeking something, Bilal's seductive techniques still don't satisfy the spiritual chasm that passes for her heart, leaving Julia as determined as ever to uproot to Algiers to engage in some New Age quackery with a world-renowned Sufi.

Hardly what you'd call top of the plots, but then *Hideous Kinky's* charms lie elsewhere. Director Mackinnon, who's helmed such diverse fare as Glasgow gang flick *Small Faces* and World War One drama *Regeneration*, appears to have raided David Lean's grave and borrowed his eye for sumptuous bazaars – from the bustling bazaars of Marrakech to the heat-hazed Moroccan desert, there's no denying *Hideous Kinky* is elegantly lensed. Less successful is Mackinnon's grasp of narrative, as the increasingly walkabout plot loses focus, nixing any chance of either an emotional hook or dramatic verve. Still, what *Hideous Kinky* lacks in dramatic drive, it makes up for in its performances. *Le Haine's* Said Taghmaoui oozes charm as Julia's Moroccan suitor, but it's the enigmatic Winslet who walks away with the movie as the spirited but misguided Julia. Here's a chance to see why Winslet is still this country's leading leading lady. ★★★



■ **Kate proves her worth.**

Videos to Rent



■ **Poor research and lacklustre plot.**

The Last Days Of Disco

■ **Warners**
 ■ An uninspired Manhattan coming-of-age drama with a contrived disco theme. A group of uni grads, including Kate Beckinsale, Chloe Sevigny and some interchangeable males are regulars at The Club where they exchange earnest philosophies and dance badly to disco music. Eventually, thanks to a drug-dealing owner and the general demise of an era, The Club shuts. Some directors have made young people sitting around and talking into a cinematic art form, but this is just dull. ★★

Burn Hollywood Burn

■ **Entertainment In Video**
 ■ Eccentric English director Alan Smithee (Eric Idle) makes *Trio*, starring Stallone, Goldberg and Chan, the biggest-budget movie of all time. Realising that the interfering, narcissistic producer (Ryan O'Neal) has turned it into a film "Worse than *Showgirls*", he elopes with the masters. This spoof documentary tells Smithee's story through a series of brilliant cameos. Especially amusing is the appearance of Chuck D and Coolio as the Brothers, the black directors of *Word Up Bitch* who keep getting mistaken for Spike Lee.

The satire is too obvious to really hurt Hollywood, but what could have been a sub-*Comic Strip* smugfest is actually rather neat. ★★★★★

The Avengers

■ **Warners**
 ■ There was always something more to the original *Avengers* series than kitsch charm, a fact which this film often fails to acknowledge. Ralph Fiennes and Uma Thurman are tepid in the roles of Steed and Emma Peel, struggling to recreate the sexual tension of the original Blackman-Macnee pairing. Thurman is straining so hard to perfect the accent, she's forgotten to act.

A storyline involving Sean Connery as some sort of uber-villain controlling our weather is mildly engaging, but the only real reason to keep watching is a couple of nice running gags involving tea. ★★



■ **The original TV series had so much more to it.**

Videos to Buy



■ **Chasing Amy: Love never did run smooth.**

Chasing Amy

■ **Miramax**
 ■ From director Kevin Smith (director of the cult classic *Clerks*), *Chasing Amy*, for all its surreal set-pieces and rapid, inventive dialogue, could almost be a traditional romantic comedy. That is until Holden, played by the ever-impressive Ben Affleck, discovers that Alyssa, the girl he's fallen in love with, is actually a lesbian.

Cue a hilarious scene where Alyssa's dyke friends greet this event with disgust – "Ugh, you went with a man" – and much goofy soul-searching from Holden.

Smith is unable to resist cross-referencing his previous films. Holden works for a comic based on the characters from *Mallrats*, and Dante from *Clerks* puts in an appearance too. But, even if you don't catch the

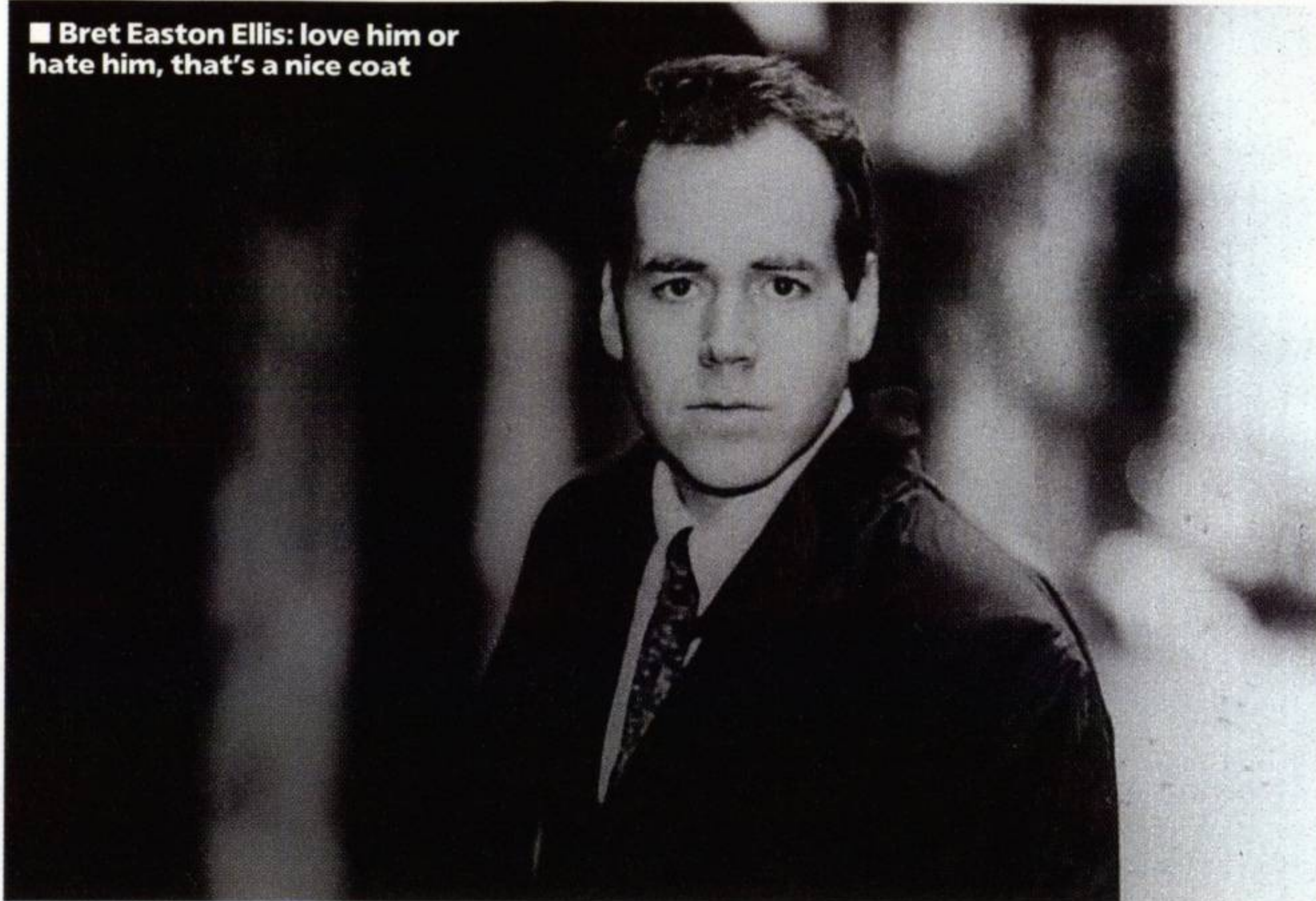
cleverness, *Chasing Amy* is a touching story cloaked in odd comedy. ★★★★★

Curdled

■ **Miramax**
 ■ A girl fascinated by murder joins a post-forensic cleaning agency (who specialise in mopping the blood from victim's floors) in order to feed her obsession. After some of the most tiresome foreshadowing in movie history, she comes face to face with the "Blue Blood" serial killer (William Baldwin). With Tarantino on board (as executive producer) the juxtaposition of knowingly silly storyline with lingering shots of bleeding women is no surprise. We're meant to be laughing, but while *Curdled* is sick and misogynistic, it's not funny, or even very interesting. ★

Book of the Month

■ Bret Easton Ellis: love him or hate him, that's a nice coat



GLAMOUR KIDS

A DIARY OF THE SUPERFICIAL



Glamorama

■ Author: **Bret Easton Ellis**
 ■ Publisher: **Picador**
 ■ Price: **£16.00**
 ■ ISBN: **0-330-37208-4**

Bret Easton Ellis' first novel, *Less Than Zero* (published in 1986 at age 20), saw him hailed as the voice of a generation for articulating the empty desires and corrupt values of privileged Beverly Hills youth. Five years later he wrote *American Psycho*, the dispassionate tale of a Wall Street whizzkid turned brutal murderer. It remains one of the century's most notorious novels and cemented Ellis' almost unique reputation as an author you either love or hate.

Glamorama, much like Ellis's other novels, is almost devoid of solid content. The majority of the text is dialogue (albeit fast, witty and painfully well-observed) and his idea of descriptive prose is to lay the ground thick with designer names. Soon you're drowning in the celebrity-obsessed world of Victor Ward, the model/actor/entrepreneur/promoter/stud/media whore/It Boy and *Glamorama's* narrator. Victor's immersion in his own superficial mania is suffocating. This is where you either find the novel tedious or fascinating.

Ellis acolytes have emerged from reading *Glamorama* muttering something about a plot. So Victor goes to London

and then Paris, but since to him these are just place names and opportunities to massage his (overestimated) fame, it hardly feels like travel. So Victor gets in over his head, he becomes immersed in something far more political and degenerate than the exclusive Manhattan clubs and gyms he's used to, and very, very gradually he comes to a realisation of the vacuum he's created for himself and cannot escape from dawn. But this doesn't make for a good yarn.

No, *Glamorama* relies on sensory power and a claustrophobic feel generated by Ellis's almost scholarly research into the minutiae of fashion, music, media and even games (Victor lazily invents a philosophy of life based on *Super Mario Bros*). Most of the cultural indicators are so readily recognisable that the novel paints a far more immediate and frightening picture of apocalypse than any sci-fi fantasy. The fact that life goes on when the novel ends only adds to the pervading sense of doom.

You really should try and read *Glamorama*, because sooner or later someone is going to ask you for an opinion on it. ★★★★★ **Sam Richards**

Simpsons Comics – Big Bonanza

■ Author: **Matt Groening and a cast of thousands**
 ■ Publisher: **Titan Books**
 ■ Price: **£7.99**
 ■ ISBN: **1-84023-058-4**



■ Everyone's favourite dysfunctional family rides again in this compilation release of four comic books, but sadly they seem somewhat muted by this change of medium. The Simpson family loses its edge when pressed between the pages of this Titan release, based on the Bongo Comics Group originals. The jokes are less snappy, the banter between characters lost between frames and the location switches – from home, to power plant, to Kwik-E-Mart – are disorientating.

The collection is saved from complete disaster by "Smitherses", a clone-based sideswipe at *Jurassic Park*, and Otto's list of Top 40 stuff (including "Big ol' gnarly tattoos of flaming skulls" and "Passive-aggressive babes of the female persuasion"), but just can't compete with the outright vicious energy of the TV original. Unless you're a Simpson's completist or comic obsessive, spend the money on Simpsons videos or a subscription to Sky instead.

★★★ **Emma Parkinson**

My Tiny Life

■ Author: **Julian Dibbell**
 ■ Publisher: **Fourth Estate**
 ■ Price: **£16.99**
 ■ ISBN: **1-84115-058-4**



■ It sounds like a sitcom, but there's precious little amusing about this geekfest of a book. *My Tiny Life* purports to tell the (true) story of a "virtual rape" and its consequences, perpetrated on a text-only MUD (Multi-User Dimension) some years ago.

The author was a regular visitor to just such a MUD called LambdaMOO when the "rape" occurred; some miscreant user employing a "voodoo doll" to make it appear as if female members were performing obscene and violent acts.

The incident itself is ignorably ho-hum compared to today's experiences on the Net and takes up just the first chapter of the book. The rest is a detailed, technical and tedious account of just how LambdaMOO came into being, the politics and ethics of "cyberspace," and other pseudy topics beloved of *Wired* readers.

Dibbell writes in flowery Late American Geek, bereft of humour or irony. *Tiny Life* might have been interesting five years ago; now, it's outdated, irrelevant and pompous. Avoid. ★ **Ed Ricketts**

Twelve Grand: The Gambler as Hero

■ Author: **Jonathan Rendall**
 ■ Publisher: **Yellow Jersey Press**
 ■ Price: **£10**
 ■ ISBN: **0-224-05149-0**



■ Picture the scene: a publisher says it'll give you twelve grand to gamble away in three months – you get to keep any winnings and write a book about your experiences. What would you do? Jump on the next plane to Vegas, aiming for a booze and drug-fuelled gambling blow out? Or keep the money and lie through your teeth about said bonanza? It's so obvious it hurts.

Cut to Jonathan Rendall. Who took the twelve grand and proceeded to write a half-arsed tale about the life of an alcoholic writer, throwing in the odd paragraph or two about his inept gambling. And then, heaping insults upon the reader, he develops this annoying writing style, where he leaves out vowels and begins to abbrev. wrds, s tht n th nd, y cn't ndrstrnd wht h's syng.

Yellow Jersey Press says it's not sure whether the work is true, or whether he really gambled the money. Whatever, it's a crock of shit. And £10 for the privilege? I think not. ★ **Clare Lydon**

Vienna Blood

■ Author: **Adrian Mathews**
 ■ Publisher: **Jonathan Cape**
 ■ Price: **£10**
 ■ ISBN: **0-224-05933-5**



■ Leo Detmers – a fat, obsessive computer nerd and broker – is dead, killed in a road accident. His heavily pregnant wife Petra believes he was murdered and gets in touch with Leo's only "friend," a man with whom he'd spent one drunken evening. That man is Sharkey, newspaper gossip columnist and the protagonist of this weirdly compelling novel.

It's set in Austria during 2026, giving Mathews scope to slip in some faintly embarrassing sci-fi inventions, but *Vienna Blood* is at heart a detective story. As Sharkey and Petra try to crack the secret of the inexplicable equation scribbled above Leo's desk, they're caught up in a complex and murky story of genetic engineering, Cold War-style agencies, racial tension and good old fashioned detective work.

The somewhat over-scientific style, the welter of German names and references, and the staccato pace, don't make for easy reading, but Mathews just about manages to overcome his *Red Dwarf*isms enough to keep you at it. ★★ **Ed Ricketts**

Various Artists

Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats
 ■ Label: **Tommy Boy**



■ As soon as you feel the collision of robot German electronica with New York B-boy style, you know you're hearing something special. That's Afrika Bambaataa's "Planet Rock", this album's opening track and the record that gave New York's Tommy Boy label to the world. The story since that auspicious beginning is documented here.

De La Soul was arguably the label's best catch, represented by the epic version of "Buddy", starring the entire Native Tongues posse. Digital Underground, Stetsasonic and Queen Latifah up the old-skool quotient with cuts that are still forcing themselves to the front of DJ boxes. Even "Gangster Bitch" by the long-forgotten Apache is worth a cheap laugh, although it may be harder to smile at the memory of faux-Irish loons House Of Pain. Instant party or hip-hop history lesson, *Greatest Beats* rocks the joint. ★★★★★ **Sam Richards**

Howie B

Snatch
 ■ Label: **Pussyfoot**



■ It's a busy man who only has time to record an LP for his own record label three years after its establishment. Still, when

you're U2's world tour DJ, producing Björk, remixing Tricky and fulfilling another record contract with Polydor, time is tight. Hence *Snatch*, a collection of melodies written by Howie B in borrowed time with a light head and a warm heart.

These are opportunist strikes rather than lazy lunges. The first few tracks are an ice-cream headache, held together only by "monumental sub-frequential existential production techniques" (or to put it another way, what Howie B doesn't know about bass you could write on the back of a postage stamp). "To Kiss You" and "Maniac Melody" cut up shuffling '60s soul beats and jazz piano into the kind of trippy groove only David Holmes can match. Another album of half-arsed instrumental electronica? "I Can Sing But I Don't Want To" is all the gorgeous defiance you need. ★★★★★ **Sam Richards**

Sebadoh

The Sebadoh
 ■ Label: **Domino**



■ As one of the most enduring cult bands this decade, Lou Barlow and his Sebadoh chums have stumbled prolifically through the years, gradually upping the tune count album on album and finally arriving at the point where strident, Northern Soul-tinged single "Flame" is demanding serious daytime airplay. It's a shame, then, that *Sebadoh* has decided to turn up the amps and grunge back into

obscurity just as opportunity knocks.

"Love Is Stronger", a beautiful, honest heart-wrencher in the manner of Elliott Smith points to the direction the band should have taken. The melodies are sophisticated, but the sound is too ragged and frantic to work. Barlow whines where he should at least wail. It's a decent rock record but cult followers, not to mention casual listeners, deserve better. ★★★ **Sam Richards**

The Stereophonics

Performance and Cocktails
 ■ Label: **V2**



■ This is only the second album, but the band already seems to have dug itself into a rut. The songs veer far too close to Bryan Adams for comfort. *Performance and Cocktails* delivers pretty much the same mix of belters with verbose titles ("Half The Lies You Tell Ain't True", "Pick A Part That's New") and chest-beating ballads as debut album *Word Gets Around*. The production has progressed, but it's still the singles ("The Bartender And The Thief" and "Just Looking") that shine the brightest among the bland selection of other album tracks. Liking The Stereophonics when you hear a track on the radio is one thing, being committed enough to plough through 50 minutes of such a performance is another. ★★ **Rich Pelley**

Album of the Month



■ A refreshing new mix of tracks.

SECOND BETH
IS IT MIDDLE OF THE ROAD?



Beth Orton

Central Reservation
 ■ Label: **Heavenly**

If every album captures a certain mood, then *Central Reservations* is very much one of a woman sitting on a stool in the corner of a pine-finished pub in Camden singing along to her guitar. Occasionally, the assembled drinkers – there as much for the atmosphere and conversation as the music – will glance across over the rim of their pint glasses and find themselves briefly lost on a midnight freeway. Beth Orton's songs are never in your face, and you always have to make the first move, but importantly, that's a move worth making.

"Stolen Car" drifts in on an uplifting, feel-good melody and instantly points to what a strong-yet-gentle and distinctive voice Orton has been blessed with. The formula remains much the same, but sly tempo changes readily distinguish the moody "Sweetest Decline" from the catchy title track which arrives mid-album. *Central Reservation* also gets an extra boost from Ben Watt (Everything But The Girl), whose remix is included as a bonus track.

While it's refreshing to hear a record that doesn't stray from its chosen path of lilting melancholy, the tone can get a little repetitive. Although you may regard "Blood Red River" as an acoustic masterpiece, there's a chance that you might – just might – be itching to hear Beth's voice mixed with something a little stronger. The Chemical Brothers' treatment of her vocal on "Where Do I Begin" (from *Dig Your Own Hole*) was a stroke of genius, but Beth herself seems reluctant to attempt anything similar.

Still, *Central Reservation* manages to take the simple winning formula of Brit-nominated first album *Trailer Park* and inject enough songwriting talent and passion to completely straddle the "difficult second album" hurdle, landing daintily the other side with a polite curtsy. ★★★★★ **Rich Pelley**

Comic of the Month

GRIM FAIRY TALES



Hellblazer

■ Writer: **Warren Ellis**
 ■ Artist: **John Higgins**
 ■ Publisher: **Vertigo (DC Comics)**

■ Vertigo, DC Comic's "For Mature Readers" imprint, is suffering falling sales at the

moment (no surprise considering the depressed nature of the comic market), so you can hardly blame its creators for sticking with what they know best. That means either flowery, borderline-twee magic stuff (such as the various

Sandman spin-offs), or heavy-on-the-disgust-factor horror, perhaps best exemplified by Garth Ennis' excellent *Preacher*, a comic so full of graphic mutilation and sexual deviancy we are constantly amazed that the American Right allow it.

Hellblazer – the relentlessly downbeat tale of London magician John Constantine and his battles with Hell – has always been in the "disgust" camp, but never more so than in its latest run, starting with issue 134. This Constantine is, as ever, the quintessential cynical loner, but new writer Ellis seems determined to outdo all previous tenants on the title in terms of sheer repulsiveness. You'll need a strong stomach to get through pages 18 to 21's

graphic autopsy report, that's for sure. The atmosphere – a grimy, brown-stained London fuelled by fags and booze – is very *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels*, but without the jokes, while the things-can't-get-worse (oh-they-just-did) intensity is reminiscent of the best of Jimmy McGovern's TV work.

This is a pretty good month for Constantine – he also stars in *The Trenchcoat Brigade*, a rather toothless new mini-series teaming him with other raingear-clad DC occult stars, such as Mister E and The Phantom Stranger – but for the full revolting monty nothing hits the spot like his home title, *Hellblazer*. It's like picking up a stone and watching the bugs squirm underneath. ★★★★★ **Matt Bielby**

Millennium Jukebox

Why do we write such nonsense? 'Cos we're listening to these:

De La Soul

Buddy
 ■ Not too skinny, not too chubby.

Orbital

Old stuff
 ■ So where's the new LP?

The B Sharps

Baby on Board
 Secret barbershop fans unite and sing along.

The Deadly Avenger

King Tito's Gloves
 It's the 5 o'clock disco.

Just A Minute

(on Radio 4)
Derek Nimmo and Clement Freud
 ■ Freud, we're fans.

Michael Peterson

You know you're in trouble when the bartender cries
 ■ Blame Neil for this.

Chemical Brothers

The Private Psychedelic Reel
 ■ The Chems meet the Rev. Yes.

Built To Spill

Keep it Like a Secret
 ■ The new sound of rock, for this week.

Neil Young

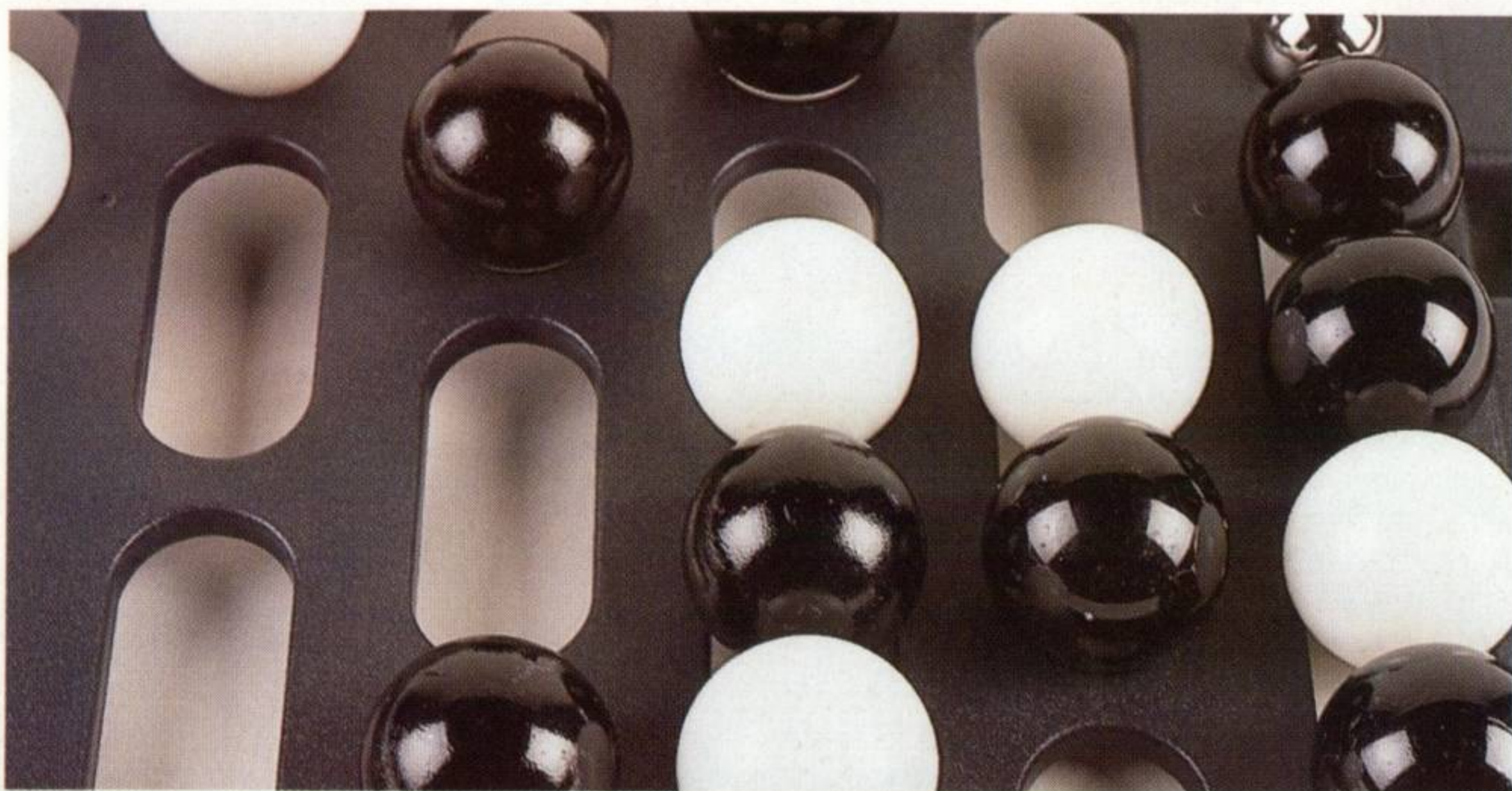
Harvest
 ■ Old man, look at my life.

Webb Brothers

Beyond the Biosphere
 ■ Like Neil Young, but a lot younger.

James Taylor

Hourglass
 ■ Sweet baby James.



BRAIN POWER LOSING YOUR MARBLES



Balanx

■ Publisher: **Fun Connection** ■ Available from: **Esdevium Games on 01252 326116** ■ Price: **£17.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **2**

Black and white. The basic, primal opposition of night and day, good and evil. All the greatest games of our time (*Chess, Draughts, Othello, Go For Broke...* okay, maybe not the last one) have obeyed the all-powerful force of monochrome. *Balanx* is not about to flout this tradition.

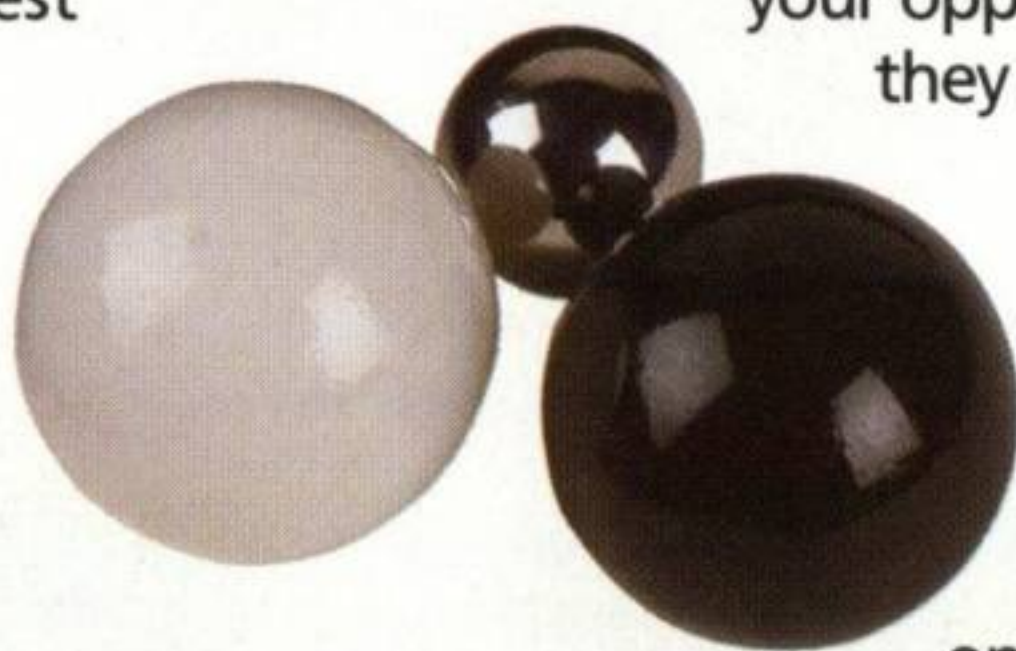
At first, the marbles and grey plastic tray trigger flashbacks to *Connect 4* or *Stay Alive*. Fight those comparisons, though, for *Balanx* is a game of mental dexterity with no gimmick. It's similar to *Solitaire* in the way you move marbles

forward by leaping over others but, instead of winning the pieces you jump, you simply have to wriggle into your opponent's start position before he wriggles into yours. The extra dimension is provided by the board which rocks back and forth, forcing you to view the play from two perspectives.

Tactics are generally about balancing your resources of attack and defence; it's important to hold marbles back to stymie your opponent's progress, but they risk becoming stranded in the closing stages. You'll soon discover some ideal moves, though you will need a lot of forward-thinking – even for the most timid one-space move – if you're to quash an experienced opponent.

However, once you know all the moves, *Balanx* can seem formulaic. It may not have enough depth to demand repeated plays. But then people probably said that about draughts. ★★★

Sam Richards



SECRETS AND LIES CUT THROUGH THE CRAP

The truth machine

■ Available from: **The Gadget Shop on 01482 871001** ■ Price: **£50** ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ Your girlie she says she loves you, but how do you know for sure? Well it's simple: get her to tell you in front of a Truth Machine. The see-through little plastic device is full of clever circuitry and – more

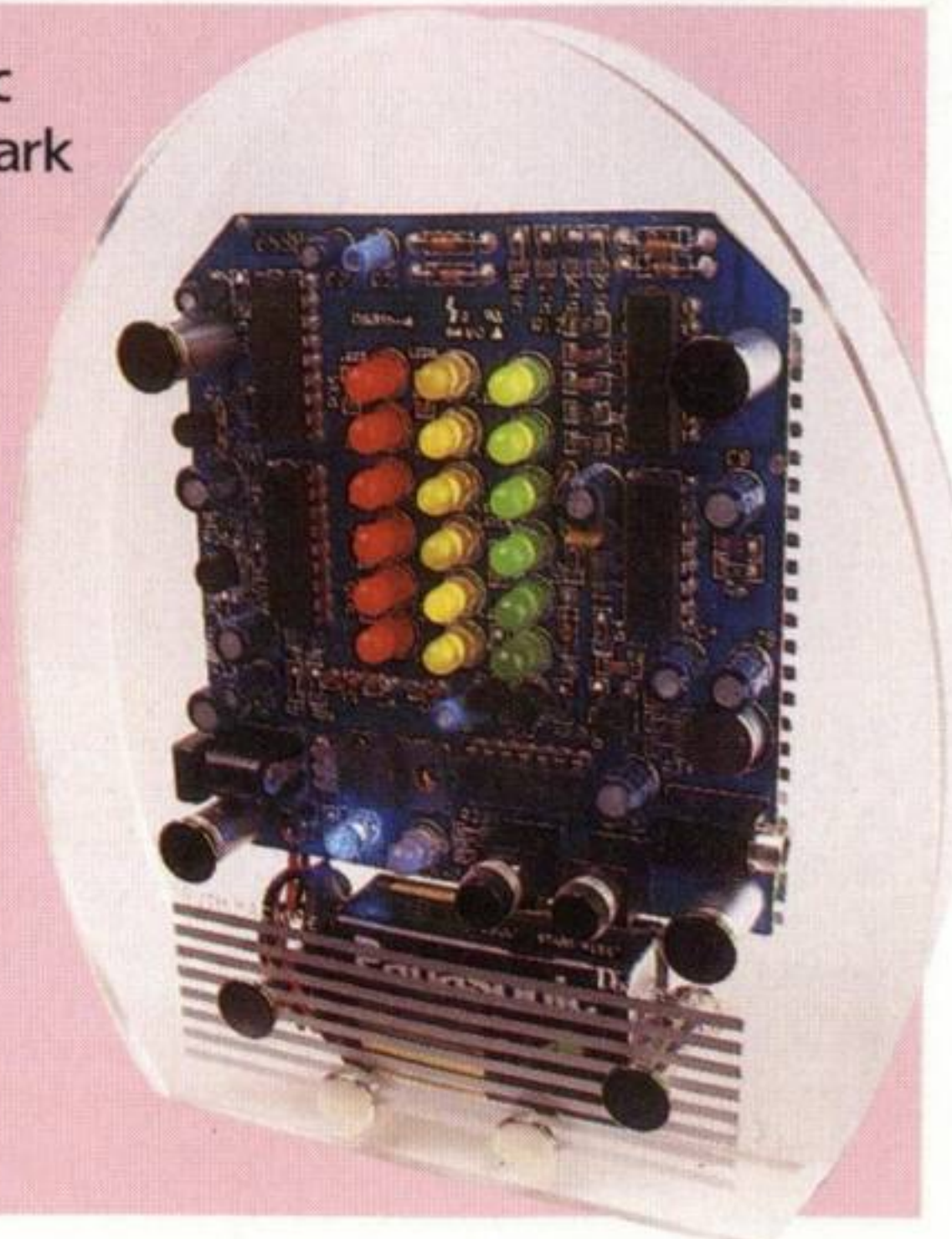
importantly – flashing multi-coloured lights that detect stresses in the human voice that appear whenever someone tells porkies. So if she's lying you'll know – the little lights will dance from green to red and you'll soon realise that whatever she told you, she's secretly snogging Simon from the Sanitary Department.

Or maybe not, because the Truth Machine doesn't work. An impromptu office survey revealed that,

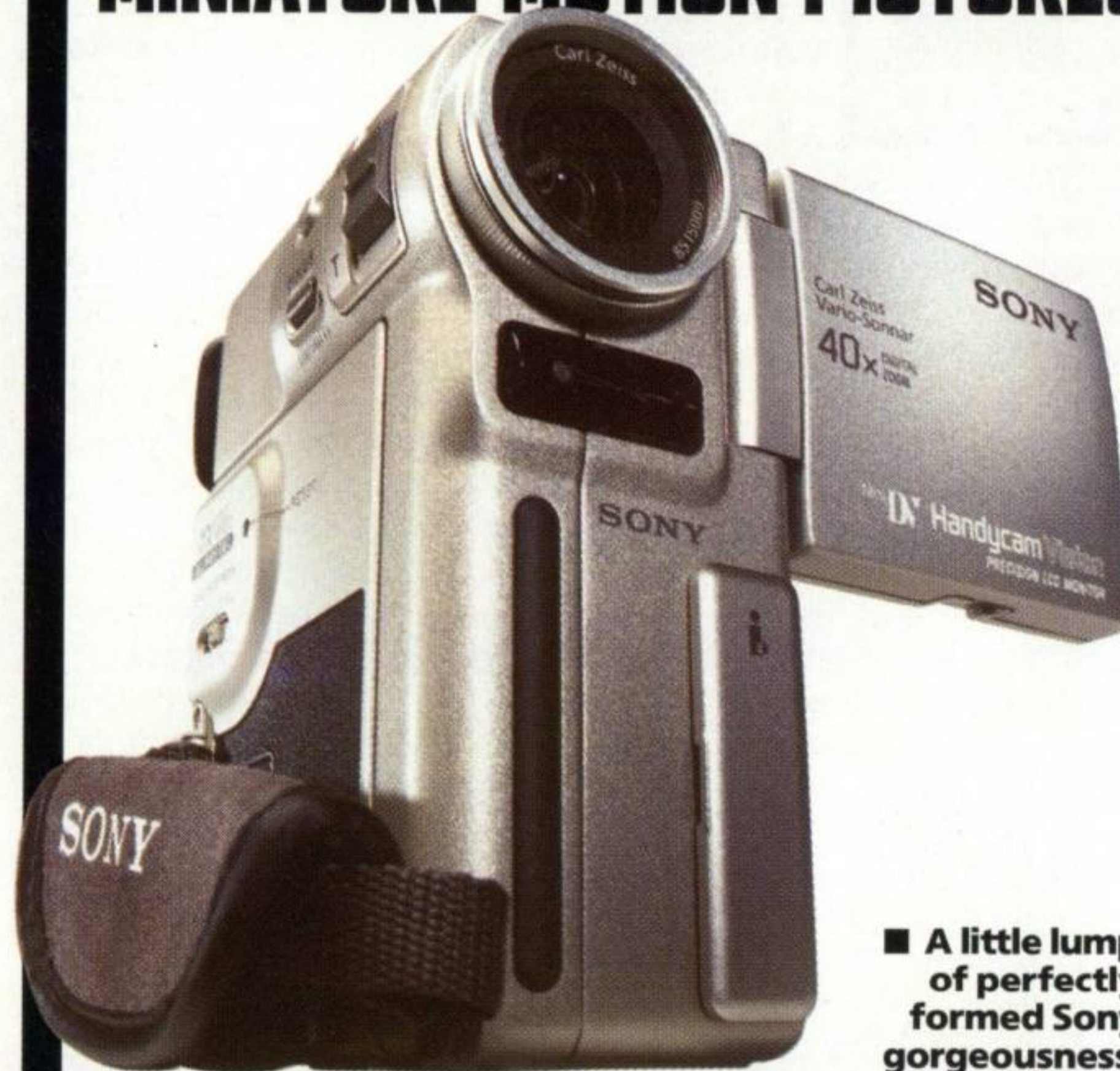
according to the plastic gadget, staff writer Mark Green has (not is) the biggest "knob" in the world and that Melanie Sykes is ugly and smells of wee.

So it's fun for five minutes, but at £50 a pop the Truth Machine is stupidly expensive. Want to know if she's lying for sure? Check if she scratches her nose.

★★★ *Rob Mead*



DIGITAL WIZARD MINIATURE MOTION PICTURES



■ A little lump of perfectly formed Sony gorgeousness.

DCR-PC1E MiniDV Camcorder

■ Available from: **Sony on 0990 111999**
 ■ Price: **£1,399**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

Camcorders have come on a very long way since the days of belt-packs the size of a briefcase and a two-foot-long cameras that weighed 17 tons. Take the DCR-PC1E: it's actually smaller than a VHS tape. It can be designed this way, of course because – like a lot of Camcorders these days – it doesn't use VHS tapes, but MiniDV cassettes. These little beauties are about the same size as audio cassettes but benefit from being able to store pictures on them as well as sound. Special magic moving pictures.

The DCR-PC1E is not only small, it's also incredibly light (just 530g). More importantly, your home movies will come out a treat – the sound and picture quality are great, and there's all kind of digital wizardry to spice things up (wipes, fades, black and white, and so on). It offers both a traditional viewfinder and a 2.5-inch, 180,000-pixel LCD monitor for lining up your shots, gives you up to 40x digital zoom, and comes with a Carl Zeiss lens. The only drawback is the fact that being so tiny it's a little bit fiddly to operate, but when it looks so cool, who's going to argue? ★★★★★

Russell Deeks

HOT ROD

TAKE TOTAL CONTROL

There's something about a radio-controlled car that's guaranteed to bring out the big kid in all of us. T3's Russell Deeks rounds up some of the hottest models on the market.

A OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 GTI Evolution

■ Available from: **Nikko on 01707 377767**
 ■ Price: **£80**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**



■ In real life, cars don't get much better than those turned out by Porsche (a certain personal fondness of BMW Z3s aside), and in the world of radio control, the story's much the same. The Blue Phantom's 24kph may be quick (see right) but the 911's 28kph is like shit off the proverbial shovel. It's a perfect replica of the real-life model, and comes with a sheet of stickers so you can customise it to your heart's content (assuming you want your car to be an advert for French tyre manufacturers). And what else can we tell you? It looks great and whizzes around faster than you can. It's the dog's, basically. ★★★★★

Mercedes SLK

■ Available from: **Nikko on 01707 377767**
 ■ Price: **£80**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ There are two schools of thought when it comes to radio-controlled cars. On the one hand, you've got the weird, way-out and wonderful models that remind you of those dragster Matchbox cars you had as a kid; on the other hand, there's the ultra-realistic types that are exact replicas of real-world cars. This Mercedes SLK falls into the latter category. The best thing about it is the convertible roof – simply flick a switch and it rises gracefully from the boot, just like in real life. It's top (if you'll pardon the pun). Finish playing with that (you'll get bored after the first, ooh, 30 or 40 times), and you'll be able to whizz the SLK around at a respectable 18 kilometres an hour. ★★★★★



Psycho

■ Available from: **Tyco on 01628 500000**
 ■ Price: **£80**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ At the other end of the RC car spectrum from the Mercedes SLK, you've got the Tyco Psycho – definitely not modelled on any vehicle likely to grace Top Gear in your or my lifetime (unless someone at Ford gets a sudden rush of blood to the brain). No, this RC motor belongs firmly in fantasy land – assuming your fantasies revolve around bright red dragsters with enormous rear wheels. And assuming they don't have anything to do with winning accurate driving competitions, because controlling this thing is virtually impossible – hence "Psycho", presumably. Flick either of the two levers on the controller (one for each wheel) and the car flings itself into a mind-boggling series of wheelies, sidespins and backflips. It bombs along on the straight, too. ★★★★★



Blue Phantom

■ Available from: **Nikko on 01707 377767**
 ■ Price: **£100**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ The Phantom falls between two stools of realism; it follows the same basic lines as a real-world racing car, but it looks more like something from the long-lost Mars Grand Prix episode of *Buck Rogers* than anything you're likely to see Schumacher damboring into. However, the Blue Phantom should satisfy your need for speed, capable as it is of a whopping 24 kilometres an hour (15mph: we're talking four-minute mile here). It's also especially good for wowing the girls down at Sainsbury's car park with lightning-speed handbrake turns. Be warned, however, that no matter how impressive your driving ability, and no matter how good the Phantom looks

(we reckon it's pretty fanciable), any backseat shenanigans with Kylie from Top Shop are definitely a no-no. It not being a real car, and all that. ★★★★★

Revolver

■ Price: **£33**
 ■ Available from: **Nikko on 01707 377767**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ If money's a bit tight, or if you just don't fancy spending a hundred quid on what's basically a toy (and let's face it, a ton's a ton), then you could do a lot worse than the Revolver – all the fun of radio control for the price of three take-away pizzas. It's not the greatest-looking machine, admittedly – it's a bit cheap and plasticky to start with, and then Nikko's gone and stuck what looks like one of those crappy little aerials off a portable telly on top of it. But that little aerial enables the Revolver to keep on truckin' even when you've crashed it into the wall at the other side of the car park and turned it upside down, saving you loads of running around. So at this price, who's grumbling? ★★★★★



Next Month

In April's
Arcade

Unmasked:
**Videogaming's
50 most
powerful
players**

That game you're hooked on. You know the one. That's the work of people. Behind the scenes, the videogame industry is a tangled web of business deals, strategic alliances and political muscle. Next month we unmask the 49 men and 1 woman who shape *all* the games you play.



“THE BEST GAME EVER MADE” — 10/10

OFFICIAL UK PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE



Plus...

Metal Gear Solid

Just how realistic is Konami's sneak-'em-up? *Arcade* tracks down a few shady characters who know all too well what it's like to be Solid Snake for real.

Tricks of the trade

Push your PlayStation to the max. Turbo-charge your PC. Get more out your Nintendo 64. Learn the insiders' tricks to getting the most from your videogame system.

Grim Fandango

Have you played it yet? LucasArts' noir skeleton-fest is as close as videogames have ever come to offering you the starring role in an "interactive movie".

Ridge Racer 4

It's the fastest PlayStation racing game ever. Take a look behind the scenes of Namco's classic to discover just how they did it.

**Arcade 5 on sale
Wednesday, 10 March.**



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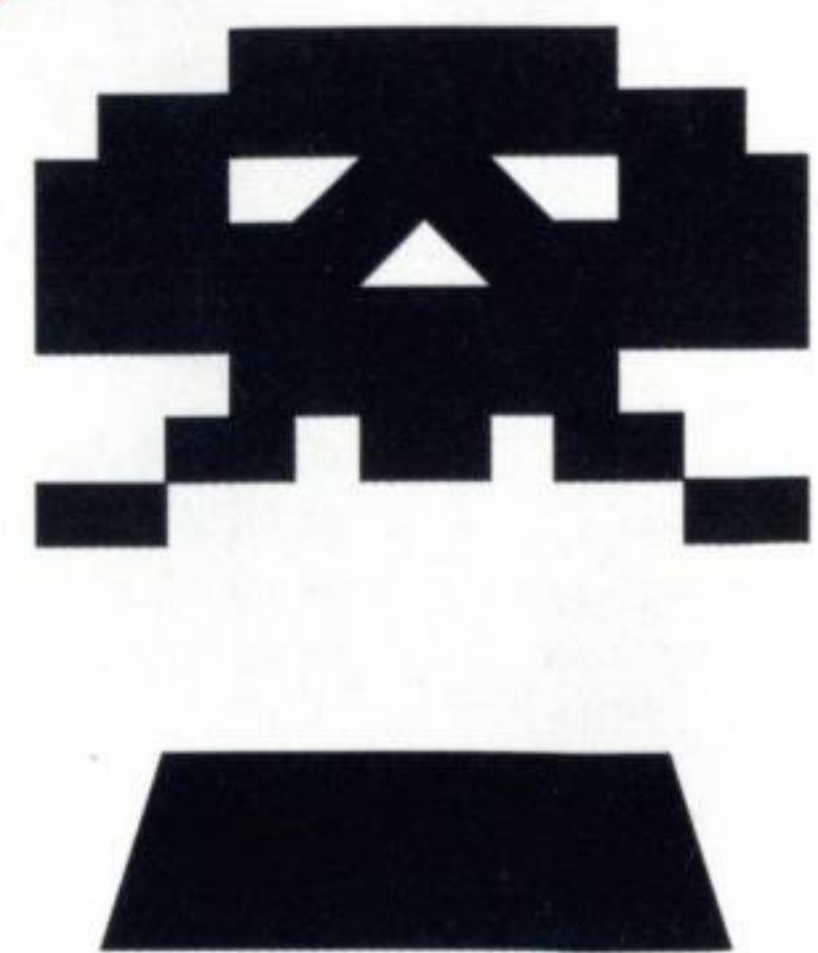
gameboy, printer, camera

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competition

YOUR
GUIDE TO OVER
300
GAMES



Games, games, hundreds of games. The shops are full of the buggers. But which do you buy? We're here to help. Over the following nine pages you'll find every game currently on sale in the UK reviewed and rated.

PlayStation

Actua Golf 3
■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin Interactive **Time for tee** Tee up with eight courses, a variety of one-player and multi-player tournaments, and some lovingly crafted scenery. *Actua Golf 3* doesn't offer anything new, but the slickness of it all, and Peter Allis' wonderful commentary, brings it in well under par. ★★★

Actua Ice Hockey
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin Interactive **Minority sport for psychopaths** Surprisingly slow and unresponsive, but *Actua Ice Hockey's* saving grace is its easy-to-pick-up control system. You'll have players bouncing off the ice in no time. ★★★
Or try: Wayne Gretsky's Hockey ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive ■ 3D graphics, but strictly 1D long-term appeal. ★★★

Actua Soccer 3
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin **Pigs bladder kick-athon** Pleasingly difficult and wonderfully fluid, *Actua Soccer 3* produces passes, long balls and bicycle kicks that flow together like a well-oiled Brazilian back-four. Only let down by the lack of special moves and occasionally ropery animation, but otherwise a solid – if largely unimproved – sequel. ★★★



Akuji The Heartless Platformer ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS Interactive **Voodoo-inspired puzzler** A haunting setting and plenty of graphical whizzes and bangs raise this *Tomb Raider*-style platformer above the usual dunes, but the tedious simplicity and inadequate camera system makes the lovely Lara a better bet if you want to push switches and jump between ledges all day. ★★★

Alien Trilogy
■ First-person shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Platinum **Doom-style antics with Ripley and "friends"** General monotony and aliens that look like they might fall apart at any minute (but are actually far too difficult to kill) make this a lot less scary than the movies. ★★

All Star Tennis '99
■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Ubisoft **Ball, net, bat thing, and all the rest** Not *Smash Court*-style comedy tennis, but a more serious recreation of Henman's hobby. It's nippy, and

What to look for in the comprehensive A-list this issue:

153 Home movies

Our guide to the five best movie tie-in games.

154 "I need to toilet"

How Rich Pelley took his *Time Crisis* mania to service stations across the UK.

156 Long-term test

Does *Little Big Adventure 2* still cut the mustard?

158 Stab in the back

It should have been oh-so-good, but *Battle Area Toshinden 3* falls at the first.

151 PlayStation games

Over 160 of the most popular games rated.

155 PC games

Over 130 of the most popular games rated.

158 N64 games

49 top games rated...

159 Game Boy

...and 18 carts of pocket joy.



Star ratings

- ★★★★★ Simply the best. A game you really should try.
- ★★★★ Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
- ★★★ Good stuff. Not exactly a world beater, but fine within its genre.
- ★★ Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
- ★ Really bad news. Avoid at all costs.

PlayStation

there's a decent range of shots, but the camera obscures things and helps to make the one-player game frustratingly difficult. Stick to the friend-thrashing multi-player and the brilliantly inventive "bomb tennis" sub-game, and you'll be happy you came. ★★★
Or try: Tennis Arena ■ 1-2 players ■ Ubisoft ■ Comedy tennis antics. ★★

Apocalypse

■ **Shoot-'em-up** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Activision Bruce Willis and some guns** Demi's hubby doesn't feature much except in the FMV, unless you catch sight of his face hilariously pasted on to a polygon body. But this is still a big, bold, futuristic shooter with a decent learning curve and not too many puzzles to interrupt the action. The controls and camera make things tricky, but otherwise it's solid, violent fun. ★★★

Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection 2

■ **Retro** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Midway Nothing to do with us, fortunately** *Millipede, Road Blasters, Crystal Castles, Marble Madness, Paperboy and Gauntlet*, in increasing order of importance. Unfortunately, none of them – not even the eminent *Gauntlet* – holds up well in an age when you need massive breasts to become a gaming legend. ★★★
Or try: Namco Museum 1 ■ 1 player ■ Namco ■ Galaga, Pac-Man, Pole Position, Rally X. ★★★

Asteroids

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Syrox Retro rock-blasting returns** Shoot, fly, shoot some more – the original concept hasn't changed, but a dollop of power-ups, bosses and eye-torturing effects has brought it up to date for '90s kids. It's still (repetitive) fun, but as a 20-year-old game with few actual improvements, it's also showing its age. ★★★

B-Movie

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player ■ **GT Interactive '50s-style shoot-the-alien game** An amusing shoot-'em-up with a mission-based slant and cartoony graphics. The ability to improve your ship over time is great, but the controls and levels conspire to make life far too much of a hassle. ★★★

Battle Arena Toshinden 3

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **SCEE The crazy old men return** A high for the *Toshinden* series, though still eclipsed by the shadow of *Tekken*. Improvements over the original are obvious, but it's limited in every respect when compared to the Big T. ★★★
Or try: Battle Arena Toshinden 2 ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ More of the same. ★★

Bomberman World

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-5 players
 ■ **Sony/Hudsonsoft Bomber bloke's debut on PSX** When Hudsonsoft suggested that it was going to turn the 2D *Bomberman* mazes isometric, the whole world screamed. The conversion's here, and in one-player mode offers endless tedious mazes, with nothing new offered over the first *Bomberman*. Inevitably, however, the multi-player is ridiculously addictive. ★★★

Breath of Fire III

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **Virgin Interactive Entertainment Turn-based isometric role-player** A genuinely interesting story-line (all about combining

genes to give dragons special powers) and a host of characters you'll really care about, make this genuinely involving. The pace gets ploddy at times, though. ★★★

Brian Lara Cricket

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **Codemasters Leather-on-willow simulator** This cricket sim is so realistic that you know it's your fault when you're losing. It's painfully hard half the time (literally – batting is much easier than bowling), but this is surprisingly playable and very well-crafted, with the commentary and graphics in particular standing out. ★★★



Bushido Blade

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Sony Pugilism for purists** Using trad weapons, and with characters who drop to the floor after just one hit, this is the beat-'em-up for purists. After other, more cartoony, scrappers it takes time to adjust to fighting this way, but there are rewards a-plenty if you persevere. ★★★

Bust-A-Move 4

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Taito Bubble-bursting brilliance** Match the coloured bubbles! This is as easy to pick up and painfully addictive to play as previous versions, especially in two-player. The bubble-link feature makes for faster and more frenetic play, and the story mode levels bring in some novel additions, too. Don't bother if you already own a version, though. ★★★
Or try: Bust-A-Move 2 ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim ■ You'll forget sleep exists! ★★★

Circuit Breakers

■ **Racing** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Mindscape Mario Kart + Micro Machines = not quite as good as either** The varied courses and a decent helping of speed add up to a fine comedy racer. The multi-player game will have you waking the neighbours with boisterous swearing. ★★★

Colin McRae Rally

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Codemasters Only his Mum's ever heard of him** A departure from the usual racing game, with time and damage your only opponents. The variety of terrain and responsive controls give real driving feedback. ★★★

Colony Wars: Vengeance

■ **Space shooter** ■ 1 player ■ **Psynosis Epic space battle** Looking absolutely gorgeous, this great sequel takes your spaceship through a variety of missions and all-out explosive battles. It's off-puttingly methodical, but it provides enough realistic space combat to make *Star Wars* fans wet their pants. ★★★
Or try: Blast Radius ■ 1-2 players ■ Psynosis ■ Space mission flying antics. ★★



Command & Conquer

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Virgin Interactive**

Entertainment Platinum

■ **The original real-time war simulator** Manage all your resources and send men to their deaths. It's extremely popular, solid and involving, but it's starting to date. The design of the levels and speed of the action make it a bit of a bargain. ★★★
Or try: Z ■ 1 player ■ SCEE ■ Robotic action strategy. ★★

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Virgin Interactive Entertainment And again...** The strategy sequel with improved graphics and a great link-up game. If you don't come to the massacre with a mouse, then knock a star off the score, but otherwise this is a very fine game with a massive number of missions. ★★★
Or try: Command & Conquer: Retaliation ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ An update of *Red Alert*. ★★★

Constructor

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Acclaim Build an urban empire** Feels like *Sim City*, but where else do you get the chance to control a sweaty builder rather than the city mayor? Pointing and clicking to build up houses while keeping your tenants happy is comfortingly challenging, and there's also a host of interesting enemies, rivals and mad hippie-types to contend with. Complex, comprehensive and cool. ★★★

Cool Boarders 3

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 player ■ **SCEE Snowboarding fun all over again** With a hefty collection of tracks, characters and boards, and looking a good deal better than previous episodes, PlayStation snow-fans should get their shivery little hands on this one. Smooth controls make careering down the trick and speed courses a breeze, and it's only let down by the iffy collision detection. ★★★
Or try: Cool Boarders 2 ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Snowboarding for the masses. ★★★

Crash Bandicoot 2

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **SCEE Pseudo-3D antics, again** Far better looking than the original, and with slightly more to do, but the level formats haven't been changed significantly and it's quick to finish. ★★★
Or try: Croc ■ 1 player ■ Fox Interactive ■ Lacklustre 3D crocodile adventure. ★★

Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **SCEE More maniacal marsupial merriment** *Crash* has gained some slow dinosaur-riding sections and a girlfriend who he lets you control, but otherwise this third version is just another crazed 3D race in and out of the screen. This time though, *Crash 3* has become the PSX's best platformer, thanks to the breath-takingly atmospheric worlds, and a longevity ensured by the host of time-challenges, bosses and secret levels. ★★★
Or try: Crash Bandicoot ■ 1 player ■ SCEE ■ Platinum ■ The first round of 3D antics with a mad marsupial. ★★

Crime Killer

■ **Racing/shooter** ■ 1-2 players ■ **Interplay Fuzz of the future** A mission-based shooter. Hunt "Burning Epoch" terrorists using the armed bikes, cars and wings at your disposal. It's fast, with good graphics, but constantly ranges in difficulty. And when it's difficult it's very difficult. The two-player option seems a bit tagged on, too. ★★

Or try: Felony 11-79 ■ 1 player ■ ASCII ■ Short-term driving mayhem. ★★

Dead Ball Zone

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **GT Interactive Rugby for space-age sadists** An attempt to update the sadly ageing classic *Speedball* for today's violence-eager audience. There's plenty of blood and vomit, but the stupidly fast play, a ball that's too difficult to see and the clueless, drunken computer players mean it never flows properly. ★★

Dead or Alive

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **SCEE Slick beat-'em-up** Barren-looking but with quick-as-you-like visuals, this makes for a slick deviation from *Tekken*-style fighting through its clever use of counter-attacks, and an emphasis on chucking people up in the air. Sadly, though, *Dead or Alive* is only really distinguished from the horde by its tragic "bouncing breasts" option. ★★★

Destruction Derby 2

■ **Racing** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Psynosis Platinum Smashing sequel** Making good on almost all of the faults of the original, this sequel is incredibly fast, includes varied well-designed tracks, and offers more crashes than your average PC. And it's a mere 20 quid, too. ★★★
Or try: Destruction Derby ■ 1-2 players ■ Psynosis ■ Platinum Early PSX racing. ★★



Devil Dice

■ **Puzzle** ■ 1-5 players ■ **SCEE Cuboidal conundrum** This beautifully presented 3D dice-based version of dominoes isn't designed to be picked up by the casual gamer, but get your head around the astonishing speed of the thing and the soul-numbing creepiness of the central evil pixie characters and you'll find it tough to put down. ★★★
Or try: Mr Domino ■ Puzzler ■ 1 player ■ JVC ■ Does what it says on the tin. ★★

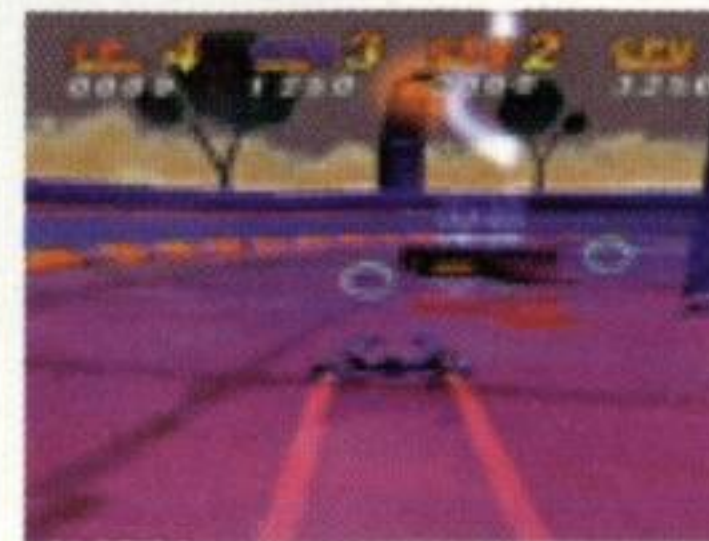
Diablo

■ **RPG** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **EA Goblins and sorcerers in old-skool role-playing** Far too simple, with little to do except just wander around medieval environments, engaging in both unimaginative fighting and chatting. The controls and graphics haven't had an easy transition to the PlayStation, but the innovative co-operative two-player game and random map generator pull it from the brink. ★★



Die Hard Trilogy

■ **Shooter/racing** ■ 1 player
 ■ **EA Platinum Three games in one** Excellent value for money, this triple bundle includes a *Tomb Raider*-style shooter, a *Time Crisis*-like and a driving game. Obvious effort has been expended on each part, both in the graphics and gameplay, and the three are difficult enough to last you for ages. ★★★



Dodgem Arena

■ **Driving** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Project Two Pucking average** A futuristic four-player battle to collect pucks and fire them off at hovering goal-mouths. It's fast, frantic fun, until the samey arenas start blending into one and the game itself starts to look a lot like the kind of sub-standard sport that you'd find on Channel 5 at three in the morning. ★★

Doom

■ **First-person shooter** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive In the beginning...** Superb conversion of id's breakthrough first-person shooter. The fact that the graphics are years out of date merely enables the excellent level design and the simplistic gameplay to shine. ★★★
Or try: Star Wars: Dark Forces ■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Shoot-'em-up with Stormtroopers. ★★

Duke Nukem

■ **First-person shooter**
 ■ **1 player** ■ **GT Interactive "You want some?"** An outrageously bad-taste first-person shooter, starring a crazed psychopath, numerous topless lovelies and several toilets. Strong gameplay, and with levels that are ingeniously designed around real-life locales, but it's all looking a bit dated already. ★★★
Or try: One ■ 1 player ■ ASC Games ■ Slick graphics, big guns. ★★★

Everybody's Golf

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **SCEE Cartoon-style stick-and-ball antics** Simplistic looks but complex gameplay, with an arcade slant that injects speed and a host of secrets to earn. Buy *Actua Golf* if you want realism, but this one's great if you don't take your golf too seriously. ★★★
Or try: Konami Open Golf ■ 1-2 players ■ Konami ■ One-course arcade stuff. ★★

FIFA 99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players ■ **EA Sports Long-running official footy update** It has the license and the visual frills, and it's nippier than a Scouse striker. But while *FIFA* is simplistic enough to cater for lightweights who find *ISS Pro* too demanding, scoring multiple goals is far too easy and there's the feeling that the programmers don't care about football. ★★



Final Fantasy VII

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **SCEE 150 hours of epic adventure** Incredible cut-scenes that mix seamlessly with the moving characters, exciting conflicts and a story-line that will have you emotionally involved throughout. The random battles and linear nature are minor faults, but otherwise, it's a near-perfect adventure experience. ★★★

Formula 1 '98

■ **Racing** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Psynosis Purportedly accurate driving sim** In an

astounding climb-down from the previous two incarnations, this is saddled with a ton of pop-up, inadequate views and horrendous handling. The wealth of options and feeling of realism save it a little, but not enough. ★★
Or try: Formula 1 '97 ■ 1-2 players ■ Psynosis ■ Vrooom... ★★★

Forsaken

■ **First-person shooter**
 ■ **1-2 players** ■ **Acclaim Entertainment Blast bikers** Battle to the death in a scramble to gain the last resources of a condemned planet in this tough tunnel-based hovercraft shoot-'em-up. The controls are tricky, but the sheer look of the thing will keep you persevering. ★★★



G-Police

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Psynosis You are the law** Mission-based shooter, with a series of interesting world layouts set in domed cities. Initially as easy to control as a three-year-old in a supermarket, but stick with it and a compulsive experience emerges, especially as it manages to slip some strategy elements in while you're not looking. ★★★

Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Take 2 Interactive Lizard-lover's platformer** It's after *Mario's* crown, but *Gex* doesn't feel as free-roaming as the Big M. You do have 125 moves at your disposal, and the level design is almost as good as Nintendo's. It's a barrel of fun, but thanks to its appalling sense of humour, not a barrel of laughs. ★★★

Grand Theft Auto

■ **Joy riding** ■ 1 player
 ■ **BMG Interactive Controversy ahoy!** The shoddy graphics and poor speed affect the appeal of kicking in civilians and driving whatever vehicle you care to perloit, but this is still an involving crim-'em-up. Just don't look at the graphics on the PC version, unless you want to be made green with envy. ★★

Gran Turismo

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **SCEE Probably the best racing game in the world** Take one measure of outrageously good graphics and near-perfect handling, throw in immediacy of play and limitless levels of depth, add a dash of replay mode, and you've a pleasure pie that can't be missed. A masterpiece. ★★★

Heart of Darkness

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Ocean Long-awaited 2D adventure** Four years out of date, this Gallic epic about a boy and his dog is frustratingly difficult, despite hints thrown up at various points, and descends into trial-and-error on too many occasions. It's saved by its size, though. ★★



Hercules

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player

■ **SCEE Cute-as-a-button platforming** Another 2D platformer from the ten-year-old Disney 2D Platform Factory. There's a few 3D sections to liven things up, but otherwise it's an old SNES game. A treat for the eyes, but too difficult, tedious and cliched to be any fun. ★★

Invasion

■ **Shoot-'em-up** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microids Back-to-basics shooter** Although the mission-based structure makes things a bit more exciting, this is the most run-of-the-mill shooter ever to grace our grey friend. The levels are nice, the weapons are okay, the baddies are fine, but it's all very forgettable. A real John Major of a game. ★★

ISS Pro '98

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Konami The best football game in the world** Konami sticks one up its desperate licence-toting rivals by beautifully honing its original killer title. Playability is smoother, tactics more subtle, graphics more well realised, goal-scoring more rewarding and that through-pass will send shivers of ecstasy along your spine. Plus Tony Gubba's commentary is oddly soothing. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Kick Off '97** ■ 1-2 players ■ Maxis ■ There's no prize for second place. ★★



Kensei

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Konami Block-rocking beat-em-up** Less flashy than Tekken and the like, but the range of characters and depth of play makes this as comprehensive as the bigger boys. The only thing letting the side down is the emphasis on deadly-serious

technical jiggery-pokery over eye-popping visuals and humour, but with challenges a-plenty and frightening opponents who actually learn your tactics, who's complaining? ★★★★★

Knockout Kings

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players ■ **EA Sports Boxing very clever** Very much a simulation of punch-uppery, with a powerbar system to make sure you don't just stab the "hit" button until your opponent falls. There's plenty of modes, a create-a-player section and you can meet a virtual Muhammed Ali at the end. Cripes! ★★★★★

Kula World

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **SCEE Indecently addictive puzzler** Ball-rolling-impossibly-on-a-floating-maze game. Hard to get into, but once you're sucked in you'll be hooked, mostly because of the well-designed controls and head-scratching levels. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Kurushi** ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Mind-twisting block-shifting. ★★

Lemmings Compilation

■ **Puzzle** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Psygnosis Save multiple midgets from hideous death** The latest instalment of this series steps back to the roots of the crazy little 2D suicidal maniacs. Click on little men to help them avoid traps and get safely home, scream at the screen in frustration and find it impossible to stop playing. Still, it's all looking very dated. ★★

Libero Grande

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players ■ **Namco Football starring the individual** Commendably original – you control just one player throughout the entire match – but, sadly *Libero* is glitchy and tedious. Your star player is lucky if he finds the ball at his feet twice per half, while the rest of your team are content to run blindly toward the goal and try to barge past the keeper. Nice try, but no cigar. ★★

Loaded

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Gremlin Interactive**
 ■ **Platinum Mass murder quest** Starring a whole series of unhinged nutters, this bloke-bloodbath has no pretensions about being anything other than mindless shooting, complete with gore-splattering explosions and weapons that would make Arnie blush. It's very difficult to see what's going on and the sheer number of similar mazes will have you very bored, very quickly. ★★



Max Power Racing

■ **Driving** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Infogrames Fun boy free-wheeling** This good-looking speedster for the boy racing crowd just can't compete with the *Gran Turismos* of this world. Global locations and fancy headlight effects are quickly forgotten in the face of over-long tracks and finger-drenching difficulty. ★★

Megaman Legends

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **Virgin Interactive RPG – Japanese style** The long-awaited 3D update of *Megaman's* '80s platform/shooting adventures. The addition of an RPG element has provided some depth, but the repetitive nature of the game – travelling around destroying big robot after big robot – could put you off. ★★

Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **EIDOS Not taking the Michael** Ooh, this looks bad, but you'd be hard pushed to fault it otherwise, because it plays like a dream. The finest details of footy

have been recreated with the Liverpoolian Boy Wonder in a starring role, and the intuitive controls, sexy combos and realistic difficulty level make this a fine interpretation. ★★★★★

Micro Machines V3

■ **Racing** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Codemasters** ■ **Platinum Tiny cars race around your living room** The old 2D game souped up into pseudo-3D for a modern audience, and it's a beauty. There are 30 innovative courses, based on kitchen tables and school desks, coupled with a multi-player game that's just beautifully designed and great overhead camera. And all of this for just 20 quid? We must be dreaming. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Motor Mash** ■ 1-4 players ■ Ocean ■ Old idea with a new twist. ★



Monkey Hero

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **Take 2**
 ■ **Adventuring monkey magic** Role-playing, fighting and puzzling are all huddled under this vast 2,500-screen umbrella, but the linearity and simplicity of it all seems to make it more suited to your hamster than your typical PSX owner. The depressing switch-flipping and object-moving will soon finish your patience off. ★★

Mortal Kombat 4

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **GT Interactive "Come and 'ave a go if you think..."** Although in 3D, this fails to take advantage of the extra dimension. The controls and characters look incredibly over-familiar, and it's not a patch on *Tekken 3*. Strictly for fans of the series. ★★
 Or try: **Mortal Kombat**

■ **Trilogy** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive** ■ Everything from the previous three. ★★

Music: Music Creation for the PlayStation

■ **Music creation** ■ 1 player ■ **Codemasters Custom-build your very own techno** Create your own toons and a psychedelic polygon video to go with them, using a system of manipulating little chunks of music and video. This fulfils its purpose – enabling anyone to create pumping dance – but it's too difficult for novices and too insulting for more professional deck-spinners. ★★
 Or try: **Fluid** ■ 1 player ■ SCEE ■ Interactive aquatic music. ★★

NBA Live 99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-8 players ■ **EA Sports That's a slam-dunk!** Silky motion capture, proper gurning faces, and Simulation and Arcade modes to satisfy proper basketball fans and normal people alike. With a massive number of stats, a wedge of tactical plays and the now-obligatory create-a-player mode, this should keep Rodman fans quiet all day. ★★★★★
 Or try: **NBA Hangtime** ■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive ■ Very competent but uninspired. ★★

Need for Speed 3

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players ■ **EA Sports I feel the need...** Plenty of modes to make the game last longer, great graphics and a good sense of speed (lucky, what with the name and everything). The chance to leg it from the police and the two-player mode make this the best *NFS* so far, but it has been overtaken on the inside by *Gran Turismo*. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Test Drive 4x4** ■ 1 player ■ EA ■ Racing for the tedious. ★★

NFL Blitz

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive US footy simplified and made fun** Abandoning the usual American football style (overloading on rules and stopping for a rest every other

minute) and moving to something more worthwhile (emphasis on speed, simple controls, usage of fists), this is top fun. It's slightly repetitive and looks glitchy, but that's easy to forgive. ★★★★★
 Or try: **NFL Extreme** ■ 1-4 players ■ SCEE ■ US footy simplified and made dull. ★★

NHL '99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **EA Ice hockey for mother puckers** Intelligent team-mates and all the stats you'll need aren't enough to save this disappointing take on the sadist's favourite sport. The puck finds itself in the net for most of the game, at the expense of proper action. ★★
 Or try: **NHL Powerplay '98** ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin ■ Sturdy but slow. ★★

Ninja: Shadow of Darkness

■ **Action adventure**
 ■ 1 player ■ **EIDOS Interactive Here comes the man in black...** A great range of punches, kicks and magic, coupled with a decent amount of switch-finding and the like, make this enjoyable enough. But, sadly, the odd camera system spoils the lovely graphics, and overall, the game is horribly difficult. ★★

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus

■ **Puzzle** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive Puzzly platform game with agile alien** Wander through screens of 2D platforms and rescue your friends, solving puzzles along the way. Often infuriating rather than tricky, but with a host of neat touches and graphics good enough to frame, this is a long-lasting and enjoyable challenge. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee** ■ 1 player ■ GT ■ Platinum ■ Save cute-but-ugly alien from the meat factory. ★★★★★

ODT

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Psygnosis Disappointing**

FIVE OF THE BEST

Movie tie-ins

You've eaten the popcorn and snogged the girl. Now it's time to get to the real movie action.



1. GoldenEye 007

■ **N64** ■ **Nintendo/Rare**

The N64's *Doom*-inspired licence is dripping in atmosphere, adheres to the movie plot and is as essential a purchase as three other joypads to make the most of the four-player deathmatch. Also the replayability value is absolutely huge.



2. Die Hard Trilogy

■ **PlayStation** ■ **EA**

Three games in one package to mirror the trilogy nature of the *Die Hard* films. A *Tomb Raider*-with-fighting scenario, set in the skyscraper from the first film; a *Virtua Cop*-style shooting epic, set in the airport from the second; and a thrilling car-chase driving game (where you have to diffuse bombs) from the third. And they are all fantastic. Exceedingly good value for money.

3. X-Files

■ **PC** ■ **Fox Interactive**

Lacking a little in playability, but making up for it in atmosphere, the *X-Files* game is treated as an episode of the TV show. It's been specially filmed and includes its own story line and episode number. Hence it's a must for any *X-Files* aficionado, but as a true gameplayer you might find a game that consists of lots of bits of joined-up film a little tiresome.

4. Apocalypse

■ **PSX** ■ **Activision**

Beyond some ropy FMV and a bit of a voice-over, the Bruce Willis element of this movie tie-in is particularly feeble, and the gameplay (a third-person, largely

sprite-style romp, replete with rendered backgrounds and plenty of shooting) is unfortunately imagination-free. The "puzzle" aspect is limited to flicking the occasional switch, and the control method is unwieldy. It's also really quite boring. Hence *Apocalypse's* lowly position down here at number 4. But things are about to get even worse...

5. Mission Impossible

■ **N64** ■ **Infogrames**

Eagerly anticipated and then bought by the thousand, *Mission Impossible* is packed brim-full of exciting, exhilarating and nerve-racking potential, but let down by some sloppy programming.

It's an into-the-screen blaster that relies more on stealth than killing; a kind of pre-*Metal Gear Solid*. The whole thing is highly reminiscent of the film, right down to the hanging-from-the-ceiling-by-thin-wire-to-avoid-the-security-lasers bit.

But it's so full of flaws that you'll spend half your time glaring at the screen through gritted teeth. Now, perhaps if games developers spent less money buying expensive licenses and more on actually making games...



PlayStation

third-person adventure

thing The first real *Tomb Raider* clone, with a sizeable slice of RPG chucked in and one-move-and-you're-dead tricks and traps. The sprawling levels promise much, but the controls are dreadful and the whole experience is too difficult to extract any fun from. ★★

Pandemonium 2

■ **Platformer** ■ **1 player**
■ **BMG Interactive** **It's chaos in there** Crystal Dynamics didn't take criticism of the original on board, and the augmented breasts of female lead Nikki are the only change here. *Pandemonium 2* still suffers from basic platform sins (like the leap of faith), and the lack of challenge and appalling camera will make you cry. ★★

Or try: Pandemonium

■ **1 player** ■ **BMG Interactive**
■ **Platinum** ■ Two sorcerer's apprentices jump about. ★★

PaRappa the Rapper

■ **Rapping** ■ **1 player** ■ **SCEE**
■ **Puppy love songs** It's time to join the the rapping dog with "attitude". A selection of fantastic tunes make this brilliantly funny and completely original. Rap "Good" and you're sure to finish *PaRappa* in an afternoon, but this said, it's still something you should have a lot of fun with. ★★

Point Blank

■ **Light-gun shooter** ■ **1-4 players** ■ **Namco** **Grab your gun** Only the Japanese could create a shooting gallery featuring ninjas and piranhas, stick in a four-player mode and still make it one of the most weirdly addictive gameplay experiences this side of

Time Crisis. ★★

Or try: **Crypt Killer** ■ **1 player**
■ **Konami** ■ Poor-man's light-gun fight. ★



Pool Hustler

■ **Sports** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Sunsoft** **Simming pool** There's little to fault Sunsoft's effort, with its faithful physics and a plethora of game styles to try your hand at (including a bizarre one-player mode). It lacks a little atmosphere, but is challenging and comprehensive, and limited only by the inescapable fact that snooker can never a classic videogame make. ★★

Or try: Pool Shark

■ **1-2 player** ■ **Gremlin** ■ A game "baized" on the popular sport. ★★

Premier Manager '98

■ **Sports management**
■ **1-4 players** ■ **Gremlin** **Interactive Football management for everyone** It's the most comprehensive simulation this side of Ruud's office, and yet it's also clearly presented and easy to understand. Would-be Hoddles (if there be any) will enjoy months of re-creating England's various spectacular World Cup crash-outs. ★★

Psybadek

■ **Racer** ■ **1 player** ■ **Psygnosis** **Cute snowboardy platformer** Put platforming and snowboarding in the same pot and you get this; a curious hotch-potch

of racing, shooting and jumping sub-games that doesn't really work. The controls are horrendous, the board unresponsive and the camera controls a joke. It might be varied, but it's far too difficult and ultimately pointless. ★★

Rage Racer

■ **Racing** ■ **1 player** ■ **Namco**
■ **Arcade racing in your house** The third *Ridge Racer* is speedy, moodily good looking and option-laden. This is the definitive racer if you like your cars a bit more "Woa-woah-woooooahhhhh!" than *Gran Turismo*. Let down only by the lack of a split-screen option. ★★

Rampage World Tour

■ **Smash-'em-up** ■ **1 player**
■ **GT Interactive** **Old-school bizarre building-smasher** An attempt to bring a very old arcade game up to date for a '90s audience. It was original and fun at the time, but now it falls at the first hurdle by being too simplistic, too easy and looking very poor indeed. Check out the three massive monsters, though. ★

Resident Evil

■ **Action adventure**
■ **1 player** ■ **Capcom** **Boo!** A decent interactive movie at long last. Genuinely frightening and the first game to achieve a proper film-like anticipation of the next scene, aided in part by brilliantly poor acting. Detailed backgrounds and a great plot. Keep a clean pair of pants handy, kids! ★★

Or try: Resident Evil: Director's Cut

■ **1 player** ■ **Capcom** ■ Added value version of *RE1* plus a demo of the sequel. ★★

Resident Evil 2

■ **Action adventure**
■ **1 player** ■ **Capcom** **Scary sequel to the original gore-fest** The two-character feature is a touch gimmicky, and the puzzles are similar to the first incarnation, but *RE2* is better than the original in all other respects. The improved script and acting, and the wildly increased zombie count, will scare your skin off. ★★

Rival Schools

■ **Fighter** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Virgin Interactive** **Teachers and students take to the ring** Absolutely mad *Grange Hill*-style fighter, featuring rival high schools, with over-the-top moves and a huge selection of modes and sub-games. It's not technically great, but it's a whole heap of fun, and its relative simplicity and easily pulled-off moves make it a good option if you usually steer clear of smack-'em-ups. ★★

Road Rash 3D

■ **Racing** ■ **1-6 players**
■ **EA** **Manx TT meets WWF** With four nasty gangs to get involved in, this is the racer for people who like the look of bruises on a man. The racing is supplemented by smacking other riders about, but unfortunately the two don't balance well in practice. It's got speed, though, plenty of cool bikes to choose from and it's certainly a bit of a looker. ★★

R-Types

■ **Shooter** ■ **1 player**
■ **Virgin Interactive** **Classic scrolling shooters** Classic shooters *R-Type* parts un et deux presented for your delectation; emulated rather than converted and therefore closer than close to the originals. The lovely level designs, the perfect power-ups and the sheer addictiveness of it all, squeezed into your little portable TV. Sweet. ★★



Rushdown

■ **Racing** ■ **1-2 player**
■ **Infogrames** **Multiple-downhill action** Three different race types on offer (snowboarding, mountain biking and kayaking), but the only discernible difference between them is the scenery. *Rushdown*'s main role is to throw up forgettable courses, enable you to ride through obstacles and feel like you're skating over a non-stick frying pan. ★

S.C.A.R.S.

■ **Racing** ■ **1-4 players**
■ **Ubisoft** **Cute racer** A faithful attempt at a *Mario Kart* clone, but rather less immediate. It has a rather difficult control system that rewards patience, and greater deviations in style and handling between the individual vehicles, but the multi-player game option – *Mario*'s strong point – is not nearly as enjoyable. ★★

Small Soldiers

■ **Platformer** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **EA** **Movie-based tin-men exploits** Despite the decent visuals and the responsive controls, running about and collecting objects isn't fun and you'll soon go back to playing with the cat. The deathmatch could have saved it, if it hadn't been an hour-long runabout followed by a five-second random gun-fest. ★★

Sentinel Returns

■ **Strategy** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Psygnosis** **Classic '80s tactics** Your aim is to absorb the Sentinel, who sits on the highest point on the landscape, and the attempt has lost little in translation from 8-bit to PSX, especially as the graphics have all been kept deliberately low key to maintain the feel of the '80s original. Eerie, massive and – praise the Lord – a successful retro game. ★★



Sensible Soccer: European Club Edition

■ **Sports** ■ **1-2 players** ■ **GT Interactive** **Old-skool soccer updated** The original footy sim of choice brought out, dusted off and spectacularly ruined for the PlayStation generation. Tasks like shooting, passing, tackling and even choosing options from the menu are all toe-curlingly difficult, with even the traditional ball-bending after-touch antics unable to rescue it all from the land of tedium. ★★



Shanghai: True Valor

■ **Puzzle** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Activision** **Snap drag-on** Perhaps playing matching pairs with Chinese tiles is way ahead of its time, but Activision is surely having a private chuckle as it asks you to fork out £35 for the privilege of playing snap with these very ugly, near-identical dominoes. A general awfulness and lack of things to do makes for a yawn-worthy experience. ★



Soul Blade

■ **Fighter** ■ **1-2 players** ■ **SCEE** **Big sword fighting** Replacing the fist-bleeding fights of *Tekken* with weapon-clattering scraps steeped in medieval folklore, *Soul Blade* caters more for the all-round gamer. The moves are more easily pulled-off than in Namco's other fighting series, but *Soul Blade* still offers some fast, spectacularly beautiful beat-'em-up action. ★★

Spawn: The Eternal

■ **Action** ■ **1 player** ■ **SCEE**
■ **Movie-based nonsense** Looking very similar to *Lara Croft*'s infamous adventures, but lacking the excellent level design, depth of gameplay or graphics, *Spawn* tries to marry fighting and dungeon exploration, but there're no prizes for failing so miserably. ★

Spice World

■ **Music/dancing** ■ **1 player**
■ **SCEE** ■ **Platinum** **The fab five... er, four** Looking a little rushed, this is the chance you've waited for. Choreograph cartoon Spices to their own music. There are so few moves and rewards for

success, that it's (inevitably) one for the fans, and liable to grate. Rather like the Girls themselves. ★

Spyro the Dragon

■ **Platformer** ■ **1 player**
■ **SCEE** **Platforming with a camp dinosaur** Starring a purple My Little Pony/dinosaur hybrid, this gorgeous 3D platformer is partly aimed at the kids, as the initially simplistic and dull early levels demonstrate. But the dragon-rescuing missions and platforming theme are well-crafted, and the worlds are huuuuge. ★★

Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha

■ **Fighting** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Capcom** **Another in the beat-'em-up series** Conversion of the first 3D *SF* coin-op, with loads of extra bits. Excellent speed and good backgrounds, as well as pleasingly familiar moves and style, make it just as intuitive as its great predecessors. ★★

Also available: Street Fighter Collection

■ **1-2 players** ■ **Virgin Interactive Entertainment**
■ **Missed opportunity for a history lesson.** ★★

Super Puzzle Fighter 2

■ **Puzzler** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Virgin Interactive Entertainment** **Superb Tetris-style puzzling** Mix *Tetris* and *Bust-A-Move*, add some *Street Fighter* kiddie characters and you have one of the best puzzlers of all time. It's insanely addictive in two-player mode, but try one-player and you'll have the family banging on your door, wondering where you've been for the past month. ★★

Tekken 2

■ **Fighting** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Namco** **Round two... fight!** Again, it used to be the best beat-'em-up... until *Tekken 3* arrived. The character models wouldn't look out of place in a pre-rendered demo, the one-player game is totally engrossing (uncommon for a fighter) and there are plenty of moves, bosses and secrets to get your teeth into. ★★

Tekken 3

■ **Fighting** ■ **1-2 players**
■ **Namco** **Round Thr... oh, never mind** Here they are again. Similar to *Tekken 2*, but a major improvement in almost every way – graphically flawless and the new moves give something for both newcomers and veterans. There's so much to do, that it's almost the *Mario* of fighting games. But no cute stuff. ★★

Tenchu

■ **Fighter** ■ **1 player**
■ **Activision** **Lara Croft and the oriental arts combine** Starring a bloke who gets about with the aid of a grappling hook, this hugely atmospheric kung-fu fighting/exploring game looks suspiciously similar to the *Tomb Raider* games. If the camera hadn't made things difficult and the graphics had been a little less glitchy, this could easily have been a five. ★★

Theme Hospital

■ **Strategy** ■ **1 player**
■ **EA** **Medical resource management** Much more of a geriatric hospital these days, and the lack of PSX mouse control can make it an absolute sod to play. It's okay, but this build-your-own-hospital-and-cure-diabolical-comedy-style-illnesses surgical strategy is looking a little bit Bloaty Head in today's age of *Command & Conquer* and *Warhammer*. ★★

THE GAME THAT RUINED MY LIFE

"Daaa-ad! I need the toilet"

Travel Scrabble for long motorway journies? Pah. Young Rich Pelley family had bigger fish to fry. Enter *Time Crisis*...

■ It was a very carefully tried-and-tested strategy. Openly drink three cups of tea before we left home, to add that element of authenticity. Then – just as we hit the motorway – "Dad! I need the toilet." Mum's weak bladder would agree and so we'd stop, at Leigh Delamere, Membury or Reading (but not at Chieveley, because there wasn't a machine there). While Mum was faffing and buying Murray Mints for the journey, there would just be time for a game of *Time Crisis*.

Blam! The first waves of enemies bought it, in a pixel-perfect shot. Plenty of practice saw to that. Careful past the guys with the riot shields, shoot out the explosives on the fork-lift truck and, with a huge metallic clang, the thing would topple to the floor. So, Area 1, clear with – on a good day – 59% accuracy.



On to the conveyor belt, but bound to lose some energy soon. Past the car and on to the chopper that mowed me down every time. Just time for one more quick go before Mum made it back from the lav. Need some change, though. Where's Dad? In fact, where's Mum gone? Hang on.

And so I was left stranded, Home Alone style halfway up the M4 while Mum and Dad decided to teach me a lesson for wasting all my pocket money on my *Time Crisis* habit.

They came back for me eventually. And I still hadn't got past the bit with the chopper.



Tiger Woods 99 PGA Tour Golf

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ EA Sports **Decent fore-play** Easy to pick up and with a plentiful supply of eye-pleasing real-life courses, *PGA Tour Golf* delivers a realistic, option-heavy simulation of the game with the grass. There's very little of Woodsy himself, and the mechanics of play leave a little to be desired, but it's still worth your readies. ★★★★★

Time Crisis

■ **Light-gun shooter** ■ 1 player ■ Namco **Go for your gun** The innovative "duck and reload" option is present, as is the G-Con 45 light gun. Both make for exciting, bloody and flowing play that relies on pure speed. With bonus levels as a reward for performance, don't worry about the longevity – just feel the power. ★★★★★
Or try: **Judge Dredd** ■ 1 player ■ Gremlin Interactive ■ Enjoyable 3D blaster. ★★

TOCA 2

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 player ■ Codemasters **Yet more touring car mayhem** A garage-full of cars that all handle differently and embrace accurate driving physics (whatever that is). If it wasn't for its intense difficulty, this'd be the perfect racer, with very accurate courses and speed, and a real smoothness that'll genuinely frighten you. ★★★★★
Or try: **TOCA Touring Car** ■ 1 player ■ Codemasters ■ One of the first proper sims. ★★★★★

Tomb Raider

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS **Indiana Jones meets Melinda Messenger** It made Lara Croft a global icon and shoved many positive images of computer games into the mass media, but it was the excellent level design and atmosphere that sold the game. *Tomb Raider* wiped off some of *Mario's* smile, and showed that a pretty face and great gameplay aren't mutually exclusive. ★★★★★
Or try: **Deathtrap Dungeon** ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS ■ Poor graphics and a worrying camera. ★★

Tomb Raider III

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS **The bitch is back** Hello, Lara. Back for a third time are you? I see you've brought a new hi-res mode and some more well-designed, good-looking levels for us to peruse. Oh, and you've made everything a lot more difficult, with some occasionally frustrating moments thanks to the controls and camera. But you know we still love you. ★★★★★
Or try: **Tomb Raider II** ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS ■ "Stop staring at my butt!" ★★★★★

Tombi

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player ■ SCEE **Porcine platform power** Relying on secrets and level design to carry it through, rather than visuals or elaborate controls, *Tombi* works a treat. A series of innovative tasks to carry out throughout the game makes it part platformer, part RPG and a bit special. And the downside? Too much hammed-up acting. ★★

Total NBA '98

■ **Sports** ■ 1-8 players ■ Sony **Get in the hoop** A sim which requires a degree of real

determination to both learn and succeed, thanks to intelligent computer-controlled opponents. A great create-a-player mode, a whole range of options and total control over your players mean that, once it's flowing *Total NBA '98* is as addictive and beautiful to watch as the real thing (a subjective opinion, obviously). ★★★★★

Treasures of the Deep

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player ■ SCEE **Underwater exploration** The lack of levels is compensated for by a sharply rising difficulty curve and a wide variety of both weapons and exploratory missions – from crashed jumbo jets to Aztec cities. The underwater aspect is a bit of a gimmick, though. ★★★★★

True Pinball

■ **Pinball** ■ 1 player ■ Ocean ■ **Platinum Flipping mad** One of the best pinball sims, but that doesn't make it an essential purchase unless you're too scared to go down the arcade. Across the four tables, the choice of 2D and 3D views doesn't help when the visuals are so poor, but the physics of the ball work well and there're the obligatory multi-ball and video displays. ★★★★★

Vigilante 8

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players ■ Activision **Destructive '70s-influenced driving shoot-'em-up** Blowing up buildings and cars using "crazy" '70s vehicles sounds great, but with just more destruction per extra level and no real "woomph" behind the explosions, monotony is hot on your heels. ★★★★★
Or try: **Twisted Metal 2** ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Futuristic first-person shooter. ★★★★★

V-Rally

■ **Driving** ■ 1-2 player ■ Infogrames ■ **Platinum Rally rather good** Since *GT* it's been difficult for other driving games to make themselves heard, but this age-old PlayStation rally simulation is a worthy contender, especially at a budget price. Even simply staying on the track is more difficult than you'd expect, but the addition of Dual Shock rumblings and another car make this new Platinum re-release a sensible purchase. ★★★★★
Or try: **Tommi Makinen Rally** ■ 1-2 players ■ Europress ■ 130 tracks, but still beaten to the flag by the competition. ★★

Wargames

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-2 players ■ EA **Action-orientated strategy game** The missions are simple and limited in number, but this is a very worthy action-based alternative to *Command & Conquer*. The wide range of vehicles you can control and the capture-the-flag two-player game, will keep you laughing as you watch men die. ★★★★★

Wild Arms

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ SCEE **Huge role-play adventure** Strong RPG, but eclipsed by the shadow of Square's seminal classic *Final Fantasy VII*. Suffers from *Final Fantasy's* random battle syndrome and the slick-but-retro-looking visuals strip away much of the feeling of involvement, but it's still very absorbing. ★★★★★

WipEout

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis ■ **Platinum The game that made PSX the console of choice** It boasts the soundtrack that helped made gaming "cool", but unforgiving controls and nasty opposing craft mean you'll need perseverance. Your reward sees you careering

down classic neon tracks at incredible speeds and throwing up your lunch. ★★★★★
Or try: **Motorhead** ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin Interactive **Furious racing action.** ★★★★★

WipEout 2097

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis **A sequel 100 years in the making** A better bet than the original for the casual racer, as the learning curve is more gentle, but the new, more difficult class should make the veterans weep. Comes with excellent CPU opposition, more weapons and the twistiest tracks this side of Alton Towers. ★★★★★

Worms

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-4 players ■ Ocean ■ **Platinum Sadistic invertebrates strap on weapons and cause death** Tries too hard to be cute and different, and subsequently has a very gimmicky feel. The shareware origins are all-too easy to discern and the AI will make you spit blood, so *Worms* is best played with a friend. On the plus side, you can customise the game to your heart's content. ★★★★★

WWF Warzone

■ **Wrestling** ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Lardy leotard lovelies fight it out** With moves and characters that make play interesting and a great create-a-player section that enables you to custom-build your own fighter. Unfortunately, it's a bit slow and sluggish, and there's little variety from fight to fight, but the range of modes, from Trainer to All-Out War, should help to keep you vaguely interested. ★★★★★
Or try: **WCW Nitro** ■ 1-2 players ■ THQ ■ Crazy men in swimming costumes. ★★

Xenocracy

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-2 players ■ Grolier Interactive **Mission-based space shooter** Strategy and tactics in this shooter turn out to have little bearing on the actual game you end up playing, and the mission briefings lead you to expect more than there is. There's plenty of shooting, but it's dull stuff with dismal graphics, difficult controls and weapons that are genetic clones of one another. ★★

X-Men Vs Street Fighter

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive **Fight!** Merges the X-Men into the *Street Fighter* universe, and maintains the control system and sprite-based characters that you've come to expect from the series, while adding fighters of a size to rival the Empire State Building. A bit repetitive, jerky and shallow to please true fighting fans. ★★★★★
Or try: **Zero Divide 2** ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Mad robot-beating game. ★

PC

Actua Ice Hockey

■ **Sports** ■ 1-3 players ■ Gremlin Interactive **Freezing fast-paced action** Likely to be overshadowed by *NHL 99*, but still the beauty of the ice hockey world, despite some glitchy graphics – especially since you get to play as any one of the world's top teams. The controls are tricky, but it all takes place at a decent pace, and the very harsh computer opponent and tactics will satisfy true bloodsport... er, sorry, ice hockey fans. ★★★★★

Actua Soccer 2

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin Interactive

Actually football Convincing graphics and a shedload of camera angles, but the latter seem kind of pointless when you will almost certainly be sticking with one. The play is frustrating, there's a very limited number of options and, quite shockingly, it's worse than its PlayStation incarnation. ★★★★★
Or try: **Jack Charlton's Soccer Nation** ■ 1 player ■ Attica ■ The worst football game ever. ★

Actua Tennis

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin Interactive **Strawbs and cream sim** Packed with stats and gorgeous motion capture, but introducing a power bar sacrifices the directional control that you really need in a tennis game. The fallibility of the computer opponents can make for annoying matches, too. And why on Earth is Barry Davies doing the commentary? ★★★★★
Or try: **Game, Net and Match** ■ 1-2 players ■ Blue Byte ■ Frill-free, networked tennis. ★★★★★

Andretti Racing

■ **Racing** ■ 1 player ■ EA Classics ■ **Budget Tarmac-burning driving sim** A rather dull race around several boring American ovals. Luckily, there's a stock car racing section and some slightly more exciting tracks to liven things up a bit. Although we'd only recommend this to arcade racing fans, there are nearly enough options to satisfy the more serious simmer. ★★★★★

Apache Havoc

■ **Simulator** ■ 1-8 players ■ Empire **Proper war flight sim** No story-based helicopter adventures here – you're in a war, which will carry on regardless of whether you're holding the joystick or making a cup of tea. The missions to get your teeth into are increasingly complex, tricky, and time-limited for added tension, and it's all wrapped up in some splendid visuals. ★★★★★



Asghan

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player ■ Grolier Interactive **Third-person hack-and-slash** There's nothing here over the usual *Tomb Raider* fare apart from the occasional switch to a first-person sniper mode. It looks wonderful, but the awkward controls make for random button-bashing and near-impossible long-range combat moments, while the tedious puzzles and awkward animation finish the whole woeful package off miserably. ★

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ Activision ■ **Budget Drac on your PC** This vampire-laden top-down *Gauntlet*-style RPG is as hammed up as a side portion of gammon, and as bad-taste as they come, with maiden's blood being gulped down all over the shop. But it looks abysmal and the linear, monotonous nature of the levels makes for abject tedium. ★★

Blood II: The Chosen

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-32 players ■ GT Interactive **More first-person bloodiness** Difficult, but a significant visual improvement over its prequels, and with some of the most violent and downright amusing blood-spillage this side of American wrestling. With a decent

amount of speed, a strong story and good variety in the layouts and means of getting killed, it would have been a classic had it been a bit more exciting. ★★★★★



Broken Sword

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player ■ Sold Out **Gallic adventures** Old-skool point-and-clicker that's one of the best examples of the genre. The puzzles are logical, the story involving, and the characters and conversations genuinely amusing. ★★★★★

Buggy

■ **Driving** ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin Interactive **Radio-controlled racing lunacy** The 16 teeny-weeny cars are heaven to handle, bouncing and skidding all over the shop, and have enough differences to make them lasting fun. But the tracks – indoors and out – while lovely to look at, are a bit confusing, and there's not the fun or hidden depth of *Mario* and friends. ★★★★★

Bust-A-Move 2

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Match bubbles, go mad** One of the most addictive puzzlers since *Tetris*, bringing its bubble-colliding strategies to your screen in an explosion of rainbow-hued visuals. It's a simple idea, and provides much more of a challenge than you'd initially think, with the particularly addictive two-player mode highlighting the brilliance of the concept. ★★★★★

Caesar III

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ Sierra **Roman-based strategy antics** There's two to play this – either as a straight *Sim City* rip-off, or as a mission-based Roman Emperor-'em-up. It's complicated, and the amount of stuff to do may bring on a "Caesar", but stick at it and you'll find it involving and addictive. ★★★★★

Cannon Fodder

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ Sold Out **Soldiering on** A real-time-strategy title, reduced in scale and served up with a generous helping of tongue-in-cheek. The controls make guiding your little men across the battlefield intuitive, but not easy, and it's only hindered by its slightly dated feel. ★★★★★

Carmageddon 2: Carpocalypse Now

■ **Driving** ■ 1-6 players ■ Sales Curve **Bloody car action** The controversy added road-rager is back once again, complete with the UK's green-blooded zombies instead of red-blooded humans. With the game structure improved to include races and deathmatches, and a load of great cars, interesting power-ups and messy weapons, it's a pleasing way to pass the time. ★★★★★

Championship Manager 2

■ **Sports management** ■ 1-8 players ■ EIDOS **Interactive Be Kev Keegan** With *CM3* imminent, this prequel has appeared at a bargain price. Looking a little out-of-date now, and still far, far too easy, it's nevertheless engrossing and packed with neat details. ★★★★★
Or try: **Player Manager 2** ■ 1 player ■ Sold Out ■ Budget ■ Tedious footy coachmanship. ★

Conflict: Freespace The Great War

■ **Space combat** ■ Multi-player ■ Interplay **Sprawling, intricate, space shooter**

Escort this, protect that, shoot the other – *Conflict* might at first seem like a direct *X-wing vs TIE-Fighter* rip-off, but it's more the game that *X-wing* always should have been. Watch out for the superb explosions, cleverly designed missions and plenty of replayability. ★★★★★

Or try: **X-wing vs TIE Fighter**

■ Multi-player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Impressive *Star Wars*-based shooter. ★★★★★

Curse of Monkey Island

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player ■ LucasArts **Fantastic point-and-click adventure** Genuinely amusing, and with clever puzzles, *Monkey Island* scores well for its controls, which make exploring and examining as easy as possible. Great to look at and to listen to, if a tad frustrating and illogical, but mostly top notch. ★★★★★

Dark Reign

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-2 players ■ Activision ■ **budget Another futuristic battle sim** The future-bound setting of this real-time strategy title, the intelligence of the missions and the clear interface make for a pleasurable experience. At this price, you can't go wrong, even if the visuals and sounds leave a little to be desired. ★★★★★
Or try: **Armour Command** ■ 1 player ■ Take 2 Interactive ■ Tanks 'n' strategy. ★★★★★

DethKarz

■ **Racing** ■ 1-8 players ■ Infogrames **More space-age racing** A futuristic racer akin to *WipEout* and the like. The four worlds and 12 circuits are brilliantly designed in a rollercoaster vein, and there's tons of weaponry to get your sweaty mitts on. But the continual skidding off the road and steep learning curve will put you off eventually. ★★★★★

Destruction Derby 2

■ **Racing** ■ 1-10 players (turn-taking) ■ Psygnosis **Hit-and-run rivalry** Fine as a normal racing game, but better as an all-out smash-'em-up that gives edge-of-your-seat thrills, coupled with gorgeous visuals and images of your car as it disintegrates. Great tracks, genuine speed and smart computer cars, too. Yay! ★★★★★

Diablo

■ **Strategy/RPG** ■ 1-4 players ■ Blizzard **Hack 'n' slash adventure** A real-time strategy RPG that's incredibly intuitive, with hidden depths and complexity to be found if you delve deeper into its dark and sticky innards. A whole load of monster-killing and spell-casting to keep bearded types happy, absolutely massive and it looks like a dream too. ★★★★★

Dune 2000

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ EA **The granddad of strategy re-invigorated** The original *Dune* invented the real-time strategy game. This new version houses 27 levels and three "tribes" to choose from, but doesn't offer any further obvious improvements aside from the new visuals. It's too simplistic to be great and faces potentially better up-and-coming rivals. ★★★★★

Dungeon Keeper Strategy

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ EA Classics **Classic dungeon management** Run your own murky torture chamber in this strategy-laden epic. Difficult at first, especially with the mixture

PC

of game modes and cameras, but the sense of humour and finely-tuned gameplay will eventually hook you. ★★★★★



Fallout 2

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **Interplay**
Old-skool RPG antics Saddled with isometric 3D, turn-based combat and an overload of stats, *F2* nevertheless wins you over thanks to its simplicity and the fun that comes from building your characters and their skills. The intelligent unfolding of the plot merely adds to the pleasure. Try it – you might like it. ★★★★★

FA Premier League Football Manager 99

■ **Sports** ■ 1 player
EA Be Glenn Hoddle, but better Including both Scottish and English divisions, and giving you plenty of coaching and business matters to deal with, this is the most realistic football management title out there – your decisions really affect the games. The icing and candles on the cake are the commentary by John Motson and the lovely-looking 3D kickabouts. ★★★★★

F1 Racing Simulation

■ **Driver** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Ubisoft** **Driving for**

would-be Damons All the stats and tracks are here, and the handling and controls are perfect. There's a slight lack of realism and customisation options, but it's fast and offers a real challenge. Don't expect to be able to smash into verges without paying the ultimate price – your death. ★★★★★
Or try: Alain Prost Grand Prix ■ 1 player ■ **Ocean** ■ Similar but less realistic. ★★

The Fifth Element

■ **Puzzle** ■ 1 player ■ **Ubisoft**
Obscure futuristic movie tie-in Twenty three levels of *Tomb Raider*-style shenanigans, made to the usual recipe: an equal measure of running and jumping, and a big "knob" of shooting. The difficult controls and camera difficulties hamper the gameplay, though, and it bears less relevance to the film than you'd think. ★★

Final Fantasy VII

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **EIDOS Interactive** **Why shouldn't the PC have the best RPG ever as well?** It'll keep you up all night, it'll make you cry, it'll make your nose bleed, but only if someone hits you in the face with a copy of it. Which they ought to, if you don't buy it. A great story, lavish graphics and brilliant selection of spells. It's a little confusing, rarely allowing you to see your opponents before you get into a fight, but put this down to Japanese quirkiness and you'll be on to a winner. ★★★★★

Forsaken

■ **First-person shooter** ■ 1-16 players ■ **Acclaim Entertainment** **Almost Quake – almost certainly better** One of the most intense 3D experiences you'll have on your PC, *Forsaken* wastes no time at

all dumping you in a room full of droids, missiles, gun emplacements and whizz-bang special effects, and it features the best combat action and 16-player deathmatch since time began. ★★★★★
Or try: G-Police ■ 1 player ■ **Psynosis** ■ Compulsive, hard-to-control shooter. ★★★★★



Future Cop: LAPD

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-2 players ■ **EA** **Prophetic police drama** *LAPD* does at least transport you to an attractive futuristic scenario featuring satisfyingly large levels. Unfortunately, it's a little too instinctive – your guns lock – the simple controls offer little scope for challenge – and the emphasis on shooting and nothing else soon grates. ★★★

Gangsters

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-4 players ■ **EIDOS** **Married to the mob** This '30s-set mob-'em-up combines the best bits of *Sim City* and turn-based strategy games, with your motley collection of hoods able to go just about anywhere and do almost anything. The controls make it tricky, but the rewarding complexity and sheer look of the thing will keep you at it. ★★★★★

The Golf Pro

■ **Sports** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Empire Interactive** **Novel golf sim** Uses a new swing system rather than the usual power-bar, which makes play much more difficult initially, though it does simplify with practice. The scenery in both courses, although a pre-rendered cop-out, will make you want to bring a picnic to the game and the ball physics are superb. ★★★★★
Or try: Actua Golf 2 ■ 1-4 players ■ **Gremlin Interactive** ■ Realistic and fun golf simulation. ★★★★★

Grand Theft Auto

■ **Crim-'em-up** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Take 2 Interactive** **Drugs, death and driving** Notorious for its lack of scruples, encouraging killing bystanders and trafficking of drugs, *GTA* gives you a sense of freedom as you drive around massive cities. The graphics are disappointing, but the missions are enjoyable, even if repetitive. However, games where failure results in you being plonked back at the start of a level are asking for trouble. ★★★★★

Grand Touring

■ **Driving** ■ 1-7 players
 ■ **Empire** **Racing with cars and roads** Chasing after *Gran Turismo*, as most driving games do these days, *Grand Touring* can't match its astonishing visuals or finely-tweaked gameplay. The cars aren't even real, and the tweaking and customisation doesn't seem to make much difference to their performance. Add in an overwhelming sluggishness and it's curtains for this *GT*. ★★

Grim Fandango

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player ■ **LucasArts** **Death warmed up** The style, presentation and content of this odd, amusing adventure leave it towering head-and-shoulders above everything else. The puzzles are very difficult and often obscure, but you'll forgive it for its neat touches, absorbing plot and downright loveliness. ★★★★★

Half-Life

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-16 players
 ■ **Sierra** **The best PC game ever** A stunningly atmospheric first-person shooter, built around a believable environment and logical puzzles, as well as including a decent amount of gorgeous all-out alien-blasting. The blastable meanies demonstrate mind-boggling intelligence, and the narrative is both absorbing and seamlessly interspersed with the action. We like it. ★★★★★

Hardwar

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Gremlin Interactive** **Exciting mix of trading and combat** A step in the right direction – this unofficially updates the great 8-bit game *Elite* for the Labour-driven, Spice Girl-warbling, *Sunset Beach*-goggling late '90s. The environment is enormous, but the gameplay is hampered by too much waiting around and not enough doing. ★★★★★
Or try: Privateer 2: The Darkening ■ 1 player ■ **EA** ■ Dark and spooky. ★★★★★

Heart of Darkness

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Ocean** **Visually stunning runabout** It was five years in the making and, oh so very nearly worth the wait. Stretches the 2D platformer out as far as it will go without it snapping straight back and hurting your fingers. The backdrops are beautiful, and there are puzzles a-plenty. ★★★★★



Heretic II

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-32 players
 ■ **Activision** **3D Medieval marauding** Activision takes a very traditional three-dimensional shooter, sticks the main character on the screen, shoves in a set of offensive and defensive spell-casting, and makes sure that the controls, damaging weapons and graphics are all in place. As such, it's on to a winner and, after some initial confusion and frustration, it's immensely gratifying. ★★★★★

IF/A-18E: Carrier Strike Fighter

■ **Flight sim** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Interactive Magic** **Fly planes about** Simulating a craft that won't be flying for five years (but based on enough test data to ensure authenticity), for the most part *Strike Fighter* looks absolutely gorgeous. The missions are varied and convincing, and your success alters what you're offered to do in future levels. Unfortunately, you'll need at least a PII before you can run it properly, though. ★★★★★

Interstate 76

■ **Racing** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Activision** **'70s retro challenge** Taking its cue from the *Twisted Metal* games, this racer-come-shooter suffers from jerky and simplistic graphics and repetitive gameplay, although you're sure to find plenty of fun in just driving about, and shooting up scenery and other vehicles. The ongoing plot and huge candyfloss afros will satisfy all but the most obsessive '70s-phile. ★★★★★

Incoming: Lux et Rubor

■ **First-person shooter** ■ 1 player ■ **Rage Software** **Fancy, multi-vehicle blaster** A real triumph of conventionality over originality, *Incoming* features

every shoot-'em-up cliché known, but the gorgeous visuals, wide variety of vehicles and frenetic finger action prove there's plenty of life in the genre yet. ★★★★★

Jane's Combat Simulations: WWII Fighters

■ **Simulation** ■ 1-network players ■ **EA** **The FIFA of flight sims** Both the vehicles themselves and the ground below look sufficiently realistic, and there's a host of planes to crash. Damage and physics are handled realistically, and there's the chance to put together your own missions, making this one of the best value flyabouts out there. ★★★★★
Or try: Flight Simulator 98 ■ 1 player ■ **Microsoft** ■ Ultra-realistic aeroplane antics. ★★★★★



Jedi Knight

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-16 player
 ■ **Activision** **Classic Force-d 3D** A timely re-release for this involving and exciting *Star Wars* *Quake*-a-like. The Force itself crops up in a surprisingly meaty role, and the level designs and puzzles have had some genuine thought put into them. For fans and enemies of the film alike. ★★★★★

Jeff Wayne's War Of The Worlds

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ **GT Interactive** **No one could have believed...** Marrying the traditional C&C-style combat feel with a *Risk*-a-like map where you shunt your units around, this does away with individual missions as you scrutinise that single map. Unfortunately, the controls and the look and feel of the close-up RTS portions are tragically bad, and the chances of any fun coming from this are a million to one. ★★

Jimmy White's 2: Cueball

■ **Sports** ■ 2 players
 ■ **Virgin Interactive** **Entertainment** **Snooker loopy nuts are we** Superb snooker and pool sim, with a highly playable game engine and wacky darts, draughts and fruit machine sub-games. ★★★★★
Or try: Virtua Pool 2 ■ Multi-player ■ **Interplay** ■ Pool without the celebrity. ★★★★★

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **Cendant** **Third-person RPG-ing** A graphically-impressive third-person game which attempts to disguise the fact that it's an RPG by employing fancy graphical effects. But the combat – statistics-based and requiring you to select appropriate weapons – gives its role-playing origins away, and there's a strong traditional object-oriented puzzle element. Approachable, easy to use and fun. ★★★★★

Klingon Honor Guard

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-16 players
 ■ **MicroProse** **Pasty-headed Doom-style exploits** This is based on the excellent *Unreal* engine, which automatically makes it beautiful and speedy. A full complement of niggling factors, such as suddenly completing levels without even realising you were anywhere near the end of a mission, are negated by the sheer intensity of the big-weapon shooting action. Those crazy Klingon boys, eh? ★★★★★

Links LS '99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **EIDOS** **Golf for it!** The visuals are lovely, but it takes time to draw the scenery and – predictably – *Links* uses the same power-bar system as all other golf games. Still, with four courses, eight players at your disposal and 30 modes of play, who's complaining? ★★★★★
Or try: Microsoft Golf 1998 ■ Multi-player ■ **Microsoft**, motion-captured players and dodgy controls. ★★

Madden NFL 99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 player ■ **EA** **Sports** **Oval-shaped ball sim** A proper simulation, with all the options, tactics, bells and whistles included, and as such only really recommended to die-hard fans. It looks good, the controls do their controlling sufficiently well, but it's complex and strangely unsatisfying. Still, that Madden bloke, eh? Who the hell is he? ★★★★★

Magic & Mayhem

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ **Virgin Interactive** **Swords and sorcery in strategy shocker** Featuring knights, wizards and all the usual stuff, this real-time strategy gives you a surprisingly uncommon spell-casting, creature-creating environment. The main characters are well-designed, the story effortlessly sucks you in and the 30 maps are varied and realistic enough to make you feel like you're there. ★★★★★
Or try: Rival Realms ■ 1-8 players ■ **Titus** ■ Swords and sorcery. ★★★★★

MechCommander

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **MicroProse** **Real time strategy, management and big robots** Based on the *BattleTech* board game, but a strategical step away from the action of previous *MechWarrior* games, *Commander* boasts clearly laid-out logistics, intricate detail and superb level design. ★★★★★
Or try: MechWarrior 2 ■ 1 player ■ **Activision** ■ Huge, hulking exoskeleton robots. ★★★★★

MicroMachinesV3

■ **Racing** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Codemasters** **Top-down, miniature racing** Embrace a world where you race round table-top tracks in a mini car, boat or ice cream van, preferably against as many other human players as possible. As good on the PC as on any of the consoles. ★★★★★

Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator WWII Europe Series

■ **Flight sim** ■ 1-4 players ■ **Microsoft** **You sexy mother fokker** Fly as any one of a number of lovingly re-created historic planes, with guns a-blasting. The free-flight and quick-combat options cater for arcade fans, while the missions and campaigns will bring a smile to the face of the die-hard plane freak. Not much improved over the original, but still a very fine sim. ★★★★★

Motorcross Madness 3D

■ **Racing** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microsoft** **Motorbikes and dirt tracks** A huge array of racing modes and more tracks than you can shake a Kawasaki at. *Madness* offers enough of a racing thrill to deem motorbike racing games worthy of the PC. No two-player mode, though. ★★★★★
Or try: Moto Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ **EA** ■ More of the same. ★★★★★

Motorhead

■ **Racing** ■ Multi-player
 ■ **Gremlin Interactive** **Futuristic sports-car visual drooler** Nine cars, slick track

LONG TERM TEST

Little Big Adventure 2

Does EA's PC adventure still do it?



■ It's not until you step back from *LBA2* for the PC that you realise what a surreal experience it can be. Where else might you find yourself asking a sauna-ing elephant (in a lovely beach towel) for directions, hitching a lift from a moped-riding wolf or being chased by an insane fleet of security guard Peperami?

It was this insane world, inhabited by your character Twinsen, that made *LBA2* so good. Its true 3D meaning you could see something in the distance and then

actually go there – a feature that has since been mirrored by only *Zelda*, *Spryo* and *Sonic Adventure*.

LBA2 has stood up to Old Father Time rather well. The blend of puzzles still tickle the right parts of the brain. Getting to drive around in the car is as fantastic as it always was, and the "modes" you adopt (aggressive, sporty and discrete) still sound like the Spice Girls. If you've got any sense (and a spare £20), you should go get yourself a copy on budget.

design, a myriad of tiny road-side animations (like monorails and space craft) and the right difficulty pitch: a cinch to drive, but hard to drive well. Fast, too. ★★ ★★
Or try: Screamer Rally
 ■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Watch that scenery fly by. ★★ ★★

NBA Live 98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
EA Ball in the basket fun
 Although it is slightly too easy, mainly because of the limited computer opposition, *NBA Live 98* was never pretending to accurately represent basketball. However, it controls well, looks fantastic and provides a wealth of options, enabling you to tailor the game as you wish. ★★ ★★

Newman/Haas Racing

Racing ■ 1-8 players
Psynosis F1 drive-about
 Sixteen drivers, 11 full-3D tracks, the pits, smooth and fast racing, and everything else – so what's wrong? The sound is terrible, the crashes a non-event, the visuals have packed up and gone home, and the right-angled corners are someone's idea of a joke. ★★ ★★

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ GT
Interactive 2D platforming with puzzling chucked in
 Budget release of a pointless PlayStation conversion, with dated gameplay that involves moving your alien from one screen to the next. It's console fodder, converted for the sake of it – the PC doesn't need this kind of thing. ★★ ★★

Outwars

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
Microsoft Starship Troopers: the (unofficial) game
 Drop down a lift shaft in an overrun research installation, then try to raise a cargo lift as big as a *Quake* level. *Outwars* innovates, and breathes fresh air into this 3D shoot-'em-up/arcade adventure *Quake/Tomb Raider* cross-over. The over-zealous sudden-death routines do become irritating, though. ★★ ★★
Or try: Terra Nova ■ 1-12 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Got a spare brain? You'll need it. ★★ ★★

Pandemonium 2

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ UBISOFT ■ budget
Deathly dull running and jumping
 It looks like it's in 3D but actually *Pandemonium 2* is 2D in a very cunning disguise, so that your path is tediously restricted to one route. The characters are irritating, the cut-scenes crop up far too often and the running and jumping is at least ten years out of date. ★★ ★★



Player Manager 98-99

■ Sports ■ 1 player ■ ANCO
Mediocre management
 Chucks away the financial side of footy management to concentrate on tinkering with the players and teams. It's no fun, though – there isn't enough interaction between tactics and game results, the hidden characteristics are a bad idea, and there's too little variety in what happens on the pitch. ★

Pod Gold

■ Racing ■ 1-8 players
 ■ UBISOFT ■ Budget
Future

racin... again The circuits are designed to make life as difficult as possible, with dead-ends and intersections causing more crashes than you will be able to find swear-words for. Plenty of tracks and vehicles, a multi-player option and a budget price. ★★ ★★

Populous: The Beginning

Strategy ■ 1 player
EA Try your hand at omnipotence
 You're God! Build huts, breed warriors and braves, get new spells to alter the land, fight and conquer enemies, and all that. Essentially the original all over again, but it's a lot easier and, of course, it's all gone 3D. Feel the depth and learning curve, and you'll be playing for hours. ★★ ★★
Or try: Riverworld ■ 1 player ■ Cryo ■ Time-warping real-time strategy. ★★

Powerboat Racing

■ Racing ■ Multi-player
Interplay Watersports
 Close inspection of *Miami Vice* and James Bond will tell you that speedboats are cool. Thanks to clumsy, blocky, jerky visuals and stunted gameplay, *PowerBoat Racing* is not. ★★
Or try: MotorHead ■ 1-2 player ■ Gremlin Interactive ■ Futuristic, speedy, gorgeous. ★★ ★★

Power Racing Pack

■ Driving ■ 1-8 players
Sierra Twin wheels pack
Nascar Racing 2 and *Indycar Racing 2* bundled together for US racing fans. It's good value – both games are realistic, with the former being the more enthralling, but neither can make driving around an oval circuit for hours at a time seem like that much fun. ★★ ★★

Powerslide

■ Racing ■ 1-8 players ■ GT
Interactive Rough terrain driving
 Looking lovely and moving like a gerbil on speed, this racer takes in courses set in places like deserts, city walls and mine-shafts. But despite the cars reacting realistically, it can become frustrating and the relatively short championships mean that you won't get endless entertainment from this one. ★★ ★★

Premier Manager '98

■ Sports manager ■ 1 player ■ Gremlin Interactive
Football managerial action
 All dressed up but nowhere to go – there's an accurate database update, but the imperfections that bugged *PM's* previous incarnation remain and now stick out further than Jimmy Hill's chin. Still, it's only 20 nicker. ★★ ★★

Pro Pinball: Timeshock!

Pinball ■ 1 player ■ GT
Interactive It's a pinball game
 Only one table? Once the shock of this has worn off, the perfect ball physics and over-the-top range of flashing lights, bells and whistles will keep silver-balled fans happy for months. ★★ ★★
Or try: Pinball Soccer
 ■ 1 player ■ Pin-Ball Games ■ More themed pinball. ★★

Prost Grand Prix

■ Racing ■ 1 player
Infogrames Variable F1 sim
 F1 sim with a discrepancy in the difficulty levels that has you driving like a member of the McLaren team when you use the automatic gears and brakes, and like that woman from *Driving School* when you don't. ★★ ★★
Or try: Grand Prix 2 ■ 1 player ■ MicroProse ■ Geoff Crammond's absurdly accurate F1 sim. ★★ ★★

Quake II

■ First-person shooter
 ■ 1-infinite players

Activision Seminal first-person baddie-beater

Basically more of the same, but that's more of one of the finest games in the world. *Quake II* is undoubtedly best played over a network or on the Internet, and offers bigger, better (although not cleverer) monsters, massive guns, improved level designs and a fully customisable game engine. ★★ ★★

Or try: Rebel Moon Rising

■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive
 ■ Ugly and boring, unusual voice control option. ★

Railroad Tycoon II

■ Strategy ■ 1-16 players ■ Take 2
Thermos-em-up
 A great improvement on the classic original, with financial management and train direction given more of an emphasis at the expense of tedious railway construction. There's a potful of time zones and trains to play with, and the range of options leaves you with scope to customise the game to your choosing. Chuffing great. ★★ ★★

Rainbow Six

Strategy ■ 1-16 players
Red Storm Stealthy first-person hostage action
 Starring SAS-style combat heroes, this is a third-person shooter set in real-life terrorist situations. The healthy dose of realism works well and the overwhelming amount of strategy makes it more cerebral than your usual shoot-'em-up. A shame, then, that your highly trained team-mates often act like idiots. ★★ ★★



Redline Racer

■ Driving ■ 1-8 players
Ubisoft Motorbike madness
 Plenty of tracks and a pleasing number of opponents in this speedy, attractive superbike racer. Happily, the racing is more than just holding down accelerate, as staying on your bike requires a fair amount of skill. ★★ ★★

Rogue Squadron

■ Shooter ■ 1 player
Activision Star Wars-inspired gunfare
 This Force-laden outing mixes first and third-person, and enables you to pilot a variety of ships over an assortment of *Star Wars*-themed levels. Sadly, at heart it's nothing more than a simplistic blaster, with only the appearance of the film's baddies and robots offering excitement. And as it's so easy, those few thrills won't last long. ★★ ★★

Roland Garros 1998: The French Open

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
Grolier Interactive Accurate tennis sim
Garros's great strength (making sure you have complete control over where the ball will land as you hit it) is also its weakness (making it far too easy to beat the computer opponents). There are 50 players, each of the four courts look lovely and, despite the limited options and near-invisible ball, you'll be "love-ing" this one. ★★ ★★

Scotland Yard

Strategy ■ 1-6 players ■ Cryo
Simply criminal
 Based on a board game that only one of Planet Earth's citizens has heard of, the aim is to catch a semi-invisible criminal by hopping on various London transports. Unfortunately, the one-player

doesn't contain much excitement, and the multi-player is just the (boring) board game on TV. ★★



The Settlers III

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Blue Byte
Sim City-style strategy
 This threequel enables you to build cities for a variety of distinct races, and resource-manage until you're blue in the face. The combat isn't up to scratch, but it's beautifully designed and fine-tuned to an almost painful degree. With the challenge increasing as you go on, its longevity is assured. ★★ ★★

Shadows Of The Empire

Shooter ■ 1 player ■ Activision
Classic Star Wars hotch-potch
 An ill-advised mix of *Star Wars*-themed sub-games – including racing levels, first-person sections and all-out blasting bits – that adds up to less than the sum of its parts. It's got a lot to offer to your eyes, but your brain will be left twiddling its frontal lobes. ★★

Shogo: Mobile Armour Division

■ Shooter ■ 1-16 players
Microids Big robots shooting
 A first-person shooter distinguished by its animé stylings and the opportunity to dress up as a massive robot. Getting about in a hulking great metal suit is easier than you'd think and the striking visuals perfectly complement the intelligent level design. Not a very big game, but a good 'un. ★★ ★★

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

■ Strategy ■ 1-8 players
EA Classics Re-live obscure American battles
 Sid Meier turns out another historically accurate, yet genuinely fun, real-time strategy game. Here you get to take control of either side in the American Civil War and you get equal measures of both good, head-hurting strategy and all-out shooting action. ★★ ★★

Sin

■ Shooter ■ 1-16 players ■ Activision
Traditional shooting action
 Effectively the culmination of years of first-person shooters. The graphical feel and engine of *Quake II*, the mission style and gorgeous sniper rifle from *GoldenEye*, and the speech and big guns from *Duke Nukem*. Unfortunately, *Half-Life's* gone and done it all better. ★★ ★★

Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Gametek
First-person war sim
 Complete five separate missions where stealth and the need to learn tactics are vital. The graphics and AI are top-notch, and the ability to control two men via one set of controls is innovative, though it doesn't always work. You will need a high-spec PC and graphics acceleration. ★★ ★★

StarCraft

■ Strategy ■ Multi-player
Blizzard Entertainment Real-time strategy
 The same mix of building, research, resource management and combat as its prequel, but with enough intricacy and sidesteps to inject life into the genre. ★★ ★★

Stars

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ GT
Replay Inter-galactic

planetary Not designed for the mainstream gamer, *Stars* is an occasionally engrossing space-trading game where building your own ships, colonising worlds and researching weapons are the order of the day. Difficult to get into and very much an acquired taste. ★★

Star Trek Federation Compilation

■ Compilation ■ 1 player ■ Interplay
budget It's a compilation, Jim
 Ignore the *Next Generation* titles, enjoy the 25th Anniversary title for the self-indulgent fun that it is and then concentrate your efforts on *Star Trek Fleet Academy*, which provides you with the opportunity to sit in the Captain's chair and pilot yourself around the galaxy. May the force be with you! Oh, bugger... wrong film. ★★ ★★

Star Wars: Supremacy

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
Write your own plot
 Set after the destruction of the first Death Star, *Supremacy* gives you the chance to command the entire Rebel Alliance or Empire and re-write *Star Wars* history. An R2-D2-with-the-top-removed-sized bin full of strategies gets the thumbs up, but the over-complex gameplay may deter. ★★ ★★

Team Apache

■ Flight sim ■ 1 player
Mindscape Convincing chopper sim
 Few other flight sims introduce the novice in such a friendly way, before proceeding to let all hell break loose around them in such terrifyingly convincing fashion. Recommended. ★★ ★★
Or try: Total Air War ■ Multi-player ■ DiD/Ocean ■ Hey you! Up in the sky. ★★ ★★

Theme Hospital

Strategy ■ 1 player ■ EA
Classics Ailment-based real-time strategy
 Assume the role of hospital manager, in a quest to build the perfect emergency ward and cure your patients of comedy illnesses. Interesting at first, but gradually becomes more and more repetitive. Also, it just isn't funny. ★★ ★★

Thief: The Dark Project

■ Sneak-'em-up ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS
Medieval sneak-'em-up
 A first-person shooter with all the brazen room-crashing and gun-toting taken out, and replaced with *Metal Gear Solid*-style sneakiness and tip-toeing. Unlike *MGS*, the absence of all-out action has dealt the interest level a blow, but it's still atmospheric and absorbing. For a while. ★★ ★★

Tomb Raider III

Puzzle ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS
The intelligent girl with the gun is back
 A tendency toward sudden death, coupled with the same inadequate controls and frustrating, difficult puzzles. But it's *Tomb Raider*! You get intelligent level design. Gob-smackingly gorgeous graphics. And this time, there're pathways to choose from to help keep you up all night with Lara. ★★ ★★
Or try: Tomb Raider II
 ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS ■ A second outing for lovely Lara. ★★ ★★



Toon Struck

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
 ■ Sold Out
Cartoon capers

A clumsy *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*-style marriage of cartoon graphics and real-time FMV (starring Christopher Lloyd), this point-and-click contains enough adult humour and inventive moments to grip for a short time. ★★ ★★

Total Annihilation

Strategy ■ 1-8 player ■ GT
Replay Futuristic strategy nonsense
 More intense than your *Command & Conquers* and the like, and as easy to use as an inflatable sheep. This manages to be easy for beginners and yet challenging for experts, the battles are great and there're plenty of patches and additions available on the Web, too. Buy this or feel stupid. ★★ ★★

Trespasser

■ Shooter ■ 1 player
EA Disappointing dino shooter
 EA has relied on the brilliantly realised real-world physics, but this is just not enough. The innovative new control system – you interact with the game world through the character's arm – makes moving about and hitting the dino boys trickier than it should be. Plodding, tedious, confusing and no fun at all. ★

Triple Play 99

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
EA Baseball for the fans
 Baseball isn't the most exciting sport in the known universe, so we commend *TP '99* for doing a fine job of translating it for the PC. With the option of a single game or complete 170-game tourney, Internet games and absolutely loads of players and stadiums to choose from, this is the simulation of choice for batfans. ★★ ★★

The X-Files

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
Fox Interactive Spooky cash-in tie-in? Sounds like a case for Mulder and Scully
 It may just be a pile of video clips stuck together with VirtualCinema glue, but the seven weeks of exclusive filming, FBI notebook-full of train-spotter references and relative freedom of movement elevate the *X-Files* above the standard of most point-and-click adventures. ★★ ★★
Or try: Blade Runner
 ■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ More film tie-in shenanigans. ★★ ★★

UFO: Enemy Unknown

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Sold Out
Budget Alien-filled brain-tickler
 Turn-based combat from the boys who invented Spectrum classics *Chaos* and *Rebelstar*. It might not look good, but the *X-Files*-style investigate-the-alien plot is very complex, exhaustive and easy to get sucked into, thanks largely to the easy-to-use controls and interface. ★★ ★★

Ultima Collection

■ RPG compilation ■ Player numbers vary ■ EA
Seminal titles collected
 Bringing together *Ultima* games from the last 20-or-so years, and presenting ten games from the series, this suffers the same fate as most retro groupings; yesterday's faves are, in reality, quite dull compared to today's delights. Criminally omits a couple of games (like *Ultima Underworld*). The shame! ★★ ★★

Unreal

■ First-person shooter
 ■ Multi-player ■ GT
Interactive Doom donestastic
 This has to be the fastest, most enjoyable *Doom* clone available for the PC to date. It's completely packed with luscious scripted moments, a fully pumped-up atmosphere, strictly intelligent denizens and enough eye candy

PC

to rot your lashes. The slightly poor weapons do sometimes give the feeling that you are defending your corner with nothing more dangerous than a pair of curling tongs, but with newbies such as the simulated deathmatch for those who don't know a modern from a moped, *Unreal* deserves all the attention that you can possibly give it. ★★★★★

Urban Assault

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
■ Microsoft **Post-nuclear skirmish** Battle alien scum in an adventure marred ever-so slightly by blurred textures, thin walls and some sharply polygonal structures. ★★★★★

Or try: **BattleZone** ■ 1-2 players ■ Activision ■ Boardgame-based strategy. ★★★★★

Virtual Karts

■ Driving ■ 1 player ■ **Sold Out Rubbish racing** A go-kart sim that gives you no option but to try and steer with the "aid" of a mouse, making wild spins into the nearest wall an all-too-common occurrence. There's the option to customise your kart and the races themselves, but you won't be playing long enough to care. ★



Warcraft
■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players

■ **Sold Out Wizards and warriors** Amusing, yet complex at turns, *Warcraft* has long been bettered but this budget release still provides some astonishingly challenging and atmospheric real-time strategy exploits, with all kinds of wizards and knights at your disposal. Check out the sequels too. ★★★★★

Wargasm

■ Strategy ■ 1-16 players ■ **Infogrames Ultra-realistic war sim** With graphics that'll have your family convinced you've taken to watching non-stop videos of the recent Gulf War-type incident, and the option to control battles from either the squaddies' boots or the commander's throne, *Wargasm* is a breath-takingly comprehensive death-'em-up. It's let down by your soldiers biting the big one if you leave them alone for a second, but it's so easy to control that you just won't find this to be a problem. ★★★★★



WipeOut 2097

■ Driving ■ 1 player
■ Psygnosis **Argentum Space-age racing** Hover vehicles scream over gaudy neon tracks suspended in the sky, and use fair means or foul to get to the front of the pack. It's since been superseded, but the range of intelligently designed tracks and the challenge that comes from racing over them make this worthy of 15 pound coins. ★★★★★

World Cup 98

■ Sports ■ 1-20 player
■ EA **Licensed kickabout** Judged by graphics and licensing (as football games often are), this one wins hands down. But, while improving a little on *Road to the World Cup*, it also enables you to play smooth and exciting games (with or without the easy-to-pull-off fancy moves), and there is even a limited strategy element. Goal! ★★★★★

World of Combat 2000

■ Simulation ■ 1-100 players
■ Novalogic ■ Budget
■ **Real-world combat sim** Fancy getting your hands on a military helicopter, jet fighter or tank? Of course you do, and this is the compilation for you. They're all based on genuine military specs, and the controls are easy enough to cater for you if you're just beginning, yet complex enough of you're an expert. The visuals suffer slightly, but that doesn't matter a jot. ★★★★★



Worms

■ Puzzler ■ 1-8 players
■ **Sold Out Budget Violent party fare** Classic multi-player puzzler that has nothing to offer in single-player, but provides a good few laughs if you can get some mates in. Taking turns to smack your opponent's little wormies with ridiculously high-powered weapons is simple

to pick up and amusing, if a little ugly-looking. ★★★★★
Or try: **The Full Wormage** ■ 1-6 players ■ MicroProse
■ Budget ■ Wiggly deathmatch compendium. ★★★★★

X-COM: Interceptor

■ Space strategy ■ 1 player
■ MicroProse **Latest in the long line** The combination of real-time strategy and 3D action is perfected just as smoothly and effectively as the mix of strategy and tactical infantry combat in the other games. And the result? Another corker. ★★★★★
Or try: **X-COM: Apocalypse** ■ 1-2 player ■ MicroProse ■ The prequel. ★★★★★

X Games Pro Boarder

■ Racing ■ 1-8 players ■ EA **Sports Funky frozen freestyling** The graphics don't look particularly special but there are enough crazy moves and tree-high flips to make keep you amused, regardless, *X Games* gives you the chance to snowboard all over an interesting mixture of courses and slopes. The multi-player suffers, but the chance to stunt and skid till the cows come home is a welcome treat. ★★★★★

N64

1080° Snowboarding Racing

■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **It's a snowboarding game** The *Wave Race* team does it again, with a brilliant range of modes, plenty of tricks to pull off, loads of boards and loads of courses for you to have a crack at. As well as looking absolutely gorgeous, this snow-bound board sim offers beautiful controls and brilliant replays, and you'll find the stunts are all suitably difficult to complete. ★★★★★

All Star Baseball

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim Entertainment **Realistic bat-on-ball action** Makes simple baseball seem like a beautiful sport, with smooth-looking players and gorgeous backgrounds. It's much more of a straight simulation than other titles, and so a lot more thoughtful and challenging as a result. This, coupled with the enormous range of statistics and options, means wide smiles all round for baseball fans. ★★★★★

Banjo-Kazooie

■ 3D platformer ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo/Rare **Bizarre bear-bird crossover** With beautiful levels that beg you to explore them, and genuine challenge and variety provided by the occasional transformation into other animals, this very nearly knocks cocky old Mario off his perch. And it's the first Rare game not to include an eye-wincing amount of cute. ★★★★★

Body Harvest

RPG/shooter ■ 1 player
■ Gremlin Interactive **Bug-blasting, B-movie invasion; lots of aliens** Loads of weapons, 100 vehicles to drive around in and five varied levels single out this interesting blaster. The graphics are ropey, and the character dialogue terrible, but the mix of RPG and intense, panicky alien shooting works a treat and it's so big you'll get lost more often than you'd expect. ★★★★★

Buck Bumble

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ Ubisoft **Honey-bee based shooting** Mission-based shooter with puzzle elements. There's a varied bunch of enemies, but the levels themselves aren't involving,

and the boring looks and copious fogging effects make you feel that a strictly limited amount of real thought has been put into this offering. ★★★★★

Bust-A-Move 3 DX

■ Puzzle ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Multi-coloured spherical fun** So very simple, and yet so utterly absorbing, this bubble-bursting sequel wipes the floor with most other puzzlers. There's a new four-player mode, and a ton of other options and challenges, although the story mode is a smidgeon too easy. It's not for everyone, but if you like popping coloured spheres and listening to the screams of crazy Japanese characters, you can't go wrong. ★★★★★
Or try: **Bust-A-Move 2** ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment
■ Addictive bubble-matching puzzler. ★★★★★

Diddy Kong Racing

■ Racing ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo/Rare **Comedy animal karting** Very nearly laps *Mario Kart* with its more complex and inventive one-player game and superb graphics, but the multi-player option is duller than a dull thing on a very dull day. And those super-cute characters – ugh! Take them away, they're bringing us out in a rash. ★★★★★
Or try: **S.C.A.R.S.** ■ 1-4 players
■ Ubisoft ■ Rough-terrain racing. ★★★★★

F1 World Grand Prix Racing

■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **Fancy yourself as Damon Hill?** Looking as good as the real thing, with all the real cars, drivers, stats and loads of other nonsense. There're plenty of modes, too, whether your an arcade racer or true F1 fan, and the two-player mode rounds off the whole gorgeous package. "Let's see that again!" ★★★★★

Fighters Destiny

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Ocean **Laydeez and-ah gentlemen, we present the world's best N64 fighter...** Well-defined characters and plenty of moves make this, by default, the N64's *Tekken*. As with so many N64 games, it's too easy, but the excellent range of challenges ensures longevity. Brilliant speech, too. ★★★★★
Or try: **Bio Freaks** ■ 1-4 players
■ GT Interactive/Midway ■ Arm-attachment beat-'em-up. ★★★★★

F-Zero X

Racing ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **Quick-as-you-like space-age racer** The fastest, smoothest racer in the whole wide world, largely thanks to a loss of graphical detail. The controls are sublime, the handling fantastic and the tracks horrifically difficult. The over-steep learning curve and cheating computer opponents spoil the experience a bit. But don't worry too much about that. ★★★★★

GoldenEye 007

■ First-person shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo/Rare **The world's first spy sim** The game that causes little green lights to appear in the eyes of PC and PlayStation owners. A believable and immersive 3D world, with 20 challenging missions taking you from a snow-covered wasteland to the mens' toilets. Four difficulty levels from Agent to 007, and the best multi-player game money can buy if you ever get bored of 1-player. Plus it's got James Bond in it. And Robbie Coltrane. And Sean Bean... ★★★★★

Gex 64: Enter the Gecko

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ GT

Interactive Rubbish reptilian roam-about Astonishingly simplistic platformer that proves far too linear. The camera hasn't a clue what it should be centring on, the graphics are laughable and the animation and level design have been devised by monkeys. Worst of all, it tries to be funny. Sigh. ★

ISS '98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Konami **Beautiful goalmouth adventures** Almost identical to the original *ISS 64*, and so you get the same silky controls and wealth of options, which mean beautifully smooth football. There are lots of subtle improvements – the referee is always on the pitch – and it's this, coupled with new camera angles, new kicks and better crosses and headers, that make it an essential purchase. Again. ★★★★★



Knife Edge

■ Shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ Microware **Into-the-screen gun action** A lightgun game without the lightgun, *Knife Edge* plops you into a helicopter and asks you to guide your sights over some ugly aliens and press the fire button until you get bored. Very bored. There's very little interaction, very little variation and the least enjoyable multi-player ever. Stay away. ★

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **The best game in the world ever** You can't write the word "Miyamoto" without following it up with "has created another masterpiece" – it's in the rules. Keeping all the traditional *Zelda* hallmarks and wrapping them up in a beautifully realised 3D world, this platformy RPG is worth buying an N64 for. The wandering about, talking, fighting and cut-scenes have been tweaked and fine-tuned until they're perfect. An absolute marvel. ★★★★★

Lylat Wars

■ Shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **Animal Magic in space** Loosely based on the SNES's *Starwing*, and intended to be a truly immersive movie-like experience, with cut-scenes that ape films like *Independence Day*. It's too easy, and it would have been nice to have a level select, but it's still addictive, well-crafted and frantic. ★★★★★

Mario Kart 64

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **Ol' Mario takes to the racetrack** The original comedy racer returns. The one-player game is a particularly lonely experience, especially when you're up against the cheating computer karts, but the time-trial mode adds longevity, and the great multi-player game is arguably the best that's available on any platform. ★★★★★

Mission: Impossible

■ Spy sim ■ 1 player
■ Infogrames **Tom Cruise in 3D roam-about** Not bad looking, with great ideas (such as disguising yourself as other characters in order to progress through the story) that should've turned this 3D stealth-'em-up in to a potential *GoldenEye*-beater. Sadly, however, it's turned out a little bland. ★★

STAB IN THE BACK

Alright Tosh?

PlayStation's *Battle Arena Toshinden 3* truly, truly stinks



■ It's probably easier to bugger-up a beat-'em-up than it is to trash any other type of game, because there are so many rights and wrongs of the trade. These days, no beat-'em-up is going to make it in the ratings without first accounting for all of the following check points: a) fluid graphics; b) likeable

characters; c) speedy 3D engine; and d) combos and special moves.

And although *BAT3* recognised all these vital elements, it still didn't make it. Its downfall was the addition of smart "Life" bombs and unblockable "Overdrive" attacks; both absurdly easy to pull off and near-fatal to your

opponent. Thus the game was reduced to a case of letting off Life bombs with the shoulder button and hacking away with a single fire button for Overdrive attacks, guaranteeing you a victory almost every time. Which, when you come to think about it, doesn't make for a very good beat-'em-up at all.

Mortal Kombat 4

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **GT Interactive** **Mad, bad blood-filled fist fight** The *Mortal Kombat* series has become synonymous with fighting that's simplistic but faster than its rivals, and number four is no exception. It's a whole load of fun, and the 3D looks good, while keeping up an amusingly frantic pace. It's a bit too easy to pull off complicated moves and there's no innovation, but this is still a laugh-a-minute fighter. ★★★★★
 Or try: **MK Mythologies** ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive ■ Beat-'em-up/RPG marriage. ★

Mystical Ninja

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **Konami**
Surreal adventure with a blue-haired maniac More of an RPG-platform game than anything – the fundamental unfolding of the story is coupled with a range of *Mario*-style platforming tasks, and is all the better for it. *Ninja* is mammoth, and the only real downer here is that once you've completed it, you're not likely to return to it. ★★★★★

NBA Jam '99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **Acclaim**
Option-heavy basketball sim Smacking a ball into a net isn't quite as much fun as in Nintendo's *Courtside*, but it looks good, plays fast and contains enough options to enable you to shape the game to your exact requirements. It's dead tricky – defending, in particular, is a nightmare – but a sports game that's realistically difficult is a refreshing change. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside** ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo ■ Great basketball ★★★★★



NFL Blitz

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive**
US footy arcade-stylee A simple and accessible version of *The Sport That Will Never Be Popular Over Here*. Cut-down teams, basic rules, lots of violence and an emphasis on action rather than stop-start gameplay, creates bloody, violent fun. It isn't particularly challenging, but it's a chuckle a minute. ★★★★★



NFL Quarterback Club '99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Acclaim**
Stateside soccer simulated Visually more detailed than the real thing and delivering a significant gameplay improvement over the '98 version. Tackling and defending are made as user-friendly as possible, with only the system for passing inviting the controller to be punched. It's a proper sim, though – not designed for beginners, but a dream for true fans. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Madden 64** ■ 1-4 players ■ EA Sports ■ American football series update. ★★★★★

Quake 64

■ **First-person shooter** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT**

Interactive PC owners have less to laugh about Nothing wrong with this version, but with no more than two players able to take part at any one time, the multi-playing that made the original such great fun is now taking rather a back seat to the monotonous one-player game. And 2D enemies? Please, put us out of our misery now. ★★★★★

Rakuga Kids

■ **Fighting** ■ 1-2 players ■ **Konami**
Pastel-based punch-'em-up As a host of 2D graffiti monsters lay into one another, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Konami has lost the plot. But the fighting that you'll discover hiding underneath these crayoned crazies is surprisingly solid, even if it's often rather difficult to work out whether you've made contact. There's lots to do, and it's brilliantly cute and cuddly. ★★★★★



Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA

■ **Racing** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive**
Rollicking racer An instantly playable arcade racer that takes you through a garishly-coloured and shortcut-laden series of American tracks, dispensing with any pretence of realism along the way. It's fun, it handles well, and it has enough different cars, customisation and clout to deliver some gloriously unpredictable racing. ★★★★★

Snowboard Kids

■ **Racing** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Nintendo**
Mario Kart for the snowboard generation This looks, sounds and plays very simply, but its packed full o' fun and liable to make you a load of new friends if you show them the multi-player game. The one-player game is challenging, if only for the games you get to play against the computer boarders, who have some kind of 2001-style hatred of humans. ★★★★★

South Park

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-4 players ■ **Acclaim**
Oh My God! It's rubbish! This TV-based first-person shooter is a particularly cynical cash-in at the expense of fans of the show. There's no variety in the characters you meet, the levels are tediously similar and nothing really happens. The speech and graphics are top notch, and the scenery isn't bad, but at heart this is the N64's least interesting shoot-'em-up. ★★

Spacestation: Silicon Valley

■ **Puzzle** ■ 1 player ■ **Take 2 Interactive**
Animal-control puzzler (with nasty side) Kill animals and take control of them to solve tricky puzzles. Graphics do their job well, the controls and puzzles are great, and the attention to detail is second to none. Inevitably, though, since it's a 3D game, you should expect some trouble from the camera. ★★★★★

Starshot: Space Circus Fever

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Infogrames**
Weird French 3D platformer As usual with 3D games, the unwieldy camera and over-fiddly controls are present and correct. Aside from that, the levels are large and the graphics almost too intricate, but there's too much wandering between one place and the next, and the

necessary between-platform jumping isn't helped by those damn controls. ★★★★★

Super Mario 64

■ **3D platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Nintendo**
If you only buy one game this century... The gold standard by which all videogames are judged. It was the first true 3D platformer for a brand new console, with the reputation of the world's number one game character at stake, and it's a total masterpiece. Huge levels, sublime controls and totally immersive gameplay. ★★★★★



Top Gear Overdrive

■ **Racing** ■ 1-4 players ■ **THE Devilish driving** The handling's a bit on the iffy side, and it's all slightly unfair – the computer cars are nigh-on perfect and the tracks have a tendency to weave up and down like Welsh landscapes – but the wealth of thought that's gone into the track design, visuals and vehicles means that *TGO* serves up you up a funky four-wheeled treat. ★★★★★

Turok 2

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Acclaim Entertainment**
Make dinosaurs extinct (just one more time) Even without the addition of the 4Mb RAM Pak, this looks stunning, and the game itself is helped by impossibly large guns and no more of the precision jumping nonsense that marred its prequel. The tasks will appear slightly familiar if you're already a fan of *Doom*, and the difficulty is sometimes off the scale, but otherwise this is fan-bloody-tastic. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Turok: Dinosaur Hunter** ■ 1 player ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Make dinosaurs extinct once more. ★★★★★

V-Rally 99

■ **Driving** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Infogrames**
Roads, revs and racers With your car skidding about and flipping into the trees if you don't use the brake, *V-Rally* is a tricky game, which makes it difficult to learn but pleasing to master. There's a wealth of challenges if you're willing to persevere, and the graphics and velocity are adequate, if not outstanding. Still, it's a decent N64 racer, so not to be sniffed at. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Top Gear Rally** ■ 1-2 players ■ Nintendo ■ The best real-car racer on the N64. ★★★★★

Wayne Gretsky 3D Hockey '98

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **GT Interactive**
Updated version of original ice hockey sim Fast and smooth enough to make for an accurate interpretation of the too-quick-to-watch sport, but you need to persevere if you want to feel like you're actually taking control, and there's a distinct lack of challenge from the N64 opponents. ★★★★★

WCW vs NWO Revenge

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **THQ**
Greasy blokes at it again A largely unimproved update of *WCW/NOW World Tour*, its main claim to fame being a slew of up-to-date grapplers. The graphics have been slightly improved, and it moves a lot quicker than its predecessor, but it's too easy to get to the end, despite the

individual matches being far too long. Satisfying for a while, but ultimately very samey. ★★★★★

Wetrix

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Ocean**
Build lakes and fry 'em with fireballs Much more of a successor to *Tetris* than it is to *Tetrisphere*. Initially as difficult as hell, but stick with it and the clear – if rather limited – tactics become obvious. A *Tetris*-like addiction will then take control of your life, and make your pets leave home. ★★★★★

WipeOut 64

■ **Driving** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Midway**
Funky futuristic face-flapper This conversion of the PlayStation's seminal racer seems perfectly suited to the Nintendo's analogue controller, helping to lessen the steep learning curve it offers. Plenty of weapons and sumptuous graphics are on offer, but the vehicles still feel floaty and temperamental, and there're better space-age racing games available for the N64. ★★★★★

World Cup '98

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **EA Sports**
A football game with a big cock on the box The FIFA license and dear old Des Lynam make this the public's football option of choice, but the sluggish controls and disappointing visuals mean you'll be left with a sense of bitter disappointment – not unlike that experienced by avid England supporters after this year's World Cup. And the one in 1990. ★★★★★

WWF Warzone

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Acclaim Entertainment**
Leopard-tastic Looks good, but boring in one-player – there are only so many times that kicking someone in the smalls is amusing (once). But get your wrestling-loving mates to join in (if you can find any), and you can enjoy four-men-on-the-floor action. A novel create-a-player section rounds it off. ★★★★★

XG2: Extreme G 2

■ **Driving** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Acclaim**
Space-age motorbike sequel Iguana hasn't done much to improve on the faults of the original – you never feel completely in control, and the frame rate still dips dangerously low. It's a visual and aural treat, but as you crash into the 15th barrier in a row and flip to face the oncoming traffic, you'll start to feel cheated. Persevere, and there are rewards – just not enough. ★★★★★

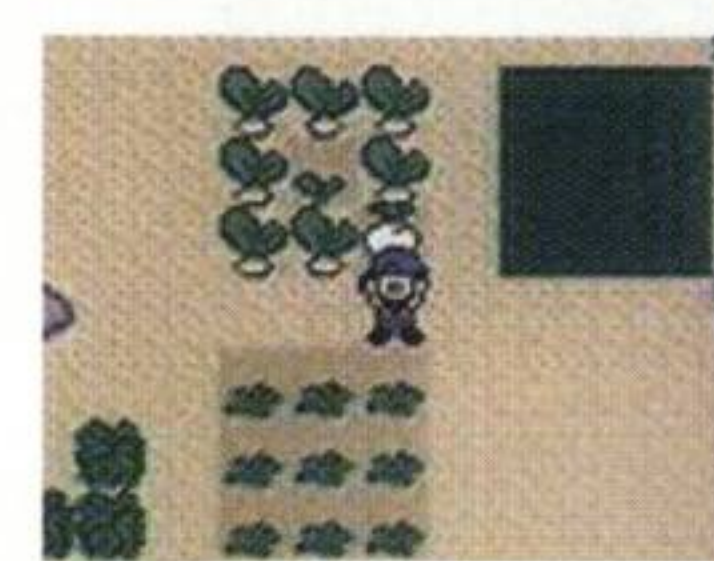
Game Boy

Cool Hand (Color)

■ **Card games** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Take 2 Interactive**
It's a load of card games, innit? Blackjack, solitaire and cribbage in one package, and the option to play to any country's rules. The graphics are nice enough, and the games are extensive, but why not buy a pack of cards and save your cash for the gaming tables? ★★★★★

Game & Watch Gallery 2 (colour)

■ **Compilation** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Nintendo**
Handheld retro collection '80s Game & Watch classics *Parachute*, *Helmet*, *Chef*, *Vermin* and *Donkey Kong*, bundled together in both classic and updated guises. They're all surprisingly enjoyable, especially the full-colour versions with *Mario* characters inserted, and there are ample rewards for beating your high-scores. ★★★★★



Harvest Moon

■ **RPG** ■ 1-2 players ■ **THE Games Down on the farm...** Clear your land, till the soil, plant some seeds – there aren't many farming sims out there, but *Harvest Moon* proves that they should be more popular than *Lara*. Managing the animals and crops is trickier than you'd think, the attention to detail is astonishing, but it's the amount of stuff to do that'll have you gluing the Game Boy to your hand. ★★★★★

James Bond 007

■ **RPG** ■ Nintendo ■ 1 player
Shaken or stirred? Nothing remarkably innovative about this top-down Game Boy RPG, but it's nice to see one set in the modern world, even if it is a tad simple. The sparse mazes that form the levels are rather short and somewhat disappointing, but the tough end-of-level bosses and emphasis on sneaking about means this gets 004 stars. ★★★★★

Legend of Zelda IV: Link's Awakening

■ **RPG** ■ Nintendo
 ■ 1 player
The endearing elf in B&W A truly involving plot, coupled with beautiful graphics (including plenty of cut-scenes) and a story where the emphasis is on engaging the player in the same way as *FFVII*. It's incredibly difficult, with a vast range of interesting challenges – can *Zelda* do no wrong? ★★★★★

Montezuma's Return (Color)

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Take 2**
Unknown quantity, Max, returns A little character jumping about, climbing ladders and collecting keys, just like the old days. The graphics are lovely, and it controls well enough over the numerous levels, but the '80s design and fall-too-far-and-die feature will have you chucking your Boy through a window. ★★★★★

Mortal Kombat 4

■ **Fighting** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Midway**
Disappointing fight-'em-up Whereas the next generation machines have been enjoying the latest 3D versions of this long-running bloody beat-'em-up series, sadly the Game Boy's been landed with the old-style, jerky feel that belongs to the very first instalment. And no blood? What's the point? ★
 Or try: **Street Fighter II** ■ Nintendo ■ 1 player ■ Classic small-scale beat-'em-up. ★★★★★

NFL Blitz

■ 1 player ■ **Midway**
Arcade-style US football With only seven players per side and no penalties permitted, this is a fast 'n' furious interpretation of nobody's favourite sport. The game you'll find underneath isn't too bad, and there's a surprising depth to the tactics and play-calling, but – incredibly – the players suffer from the early-'80s problem of "flicker", which makes tracking them impossible. ★★★★★

Power Quest (Color)

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Sunsoft**
Odd RPG/fight mixture Lots of talking and shops, just like in an RPG, but at heart it's a pure beat-'em-up. The ability to upgrade yer robot fighter is a welcome addition and the fighting has a bit more depth than some of the usual Game Boy

examples. It's a bit different, but generally only okay. ★★★★★

Rampage World Tour

■ **Arcade action** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Midway**
The classic smash-'em-up updated Control King Kong, Wolfman or Godzilla and smash up buildings. Unfortunately, that's it, and it isn't helped by the jerky animation and frankly boring graphics. Sadly, then, it turns out that knocking skyscrapers down all day isn't as much fun as it sounds. ★

Super Mario Land

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Nintendo**
The pipe man cometh One of the Game Boy's original releases, and *Super Mario* still excels in most areas, despite its advanced nine years. The graphics are simple, but the subtlety of control and excellent level designs have been carried over to the bijou Nintendo with aplomb. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Super Mario Land II** ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo ■ More, but with little originality. ★★★★★

Super R.C. Pro-Am Racing

■ **Racing** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Nintendo**
Dinky driving This re-release of Rare's frantic remote-controlled car racing game looks primitive, especially in shades of grey, but the races themselves are a joy, with the chance to use weapons against the ruthless CPU opponents and upgrade your car as you go. Yet another Rare masterpiece. ★★★★★

Tennis

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Nintendo**
Racquet fun Despite its simplicity, *Tennis* is one of the most enjoyable such sims on any platform. With an addictive two-player option, a hard-to-beat computer player and some very intuitive controls, this is a great game if you want to avoid real-life John McEnroe-style ill-placed-abuse nonsense. ★★★★★

Tetris DX

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Nintendo**
GB Color Brick drop return shock! The graphics, sounds and modes might have changed, but this is still the same old Game Boy *Tetris*, known worldwide as the most addictive version of the Russian puzzler. Stemming the rising wall of bricks is, in fact, all the better for being able to save your high scores at long last, but sadly the game doesn't work too well in black and white. ★★★★★

Turok

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Acclaim Entertainment**
Dinky dinosaur hunt Absolutely massive, and the high difficulty should prevent you from seeing the end sequence for quite a while, if ever. However, the quite shocking lack of game originality – nabbing bits from platformers left, right and centre, and dressing them up in fancy graphics – counts against it, as does its lack of fresh challenges per level. ★★★★★



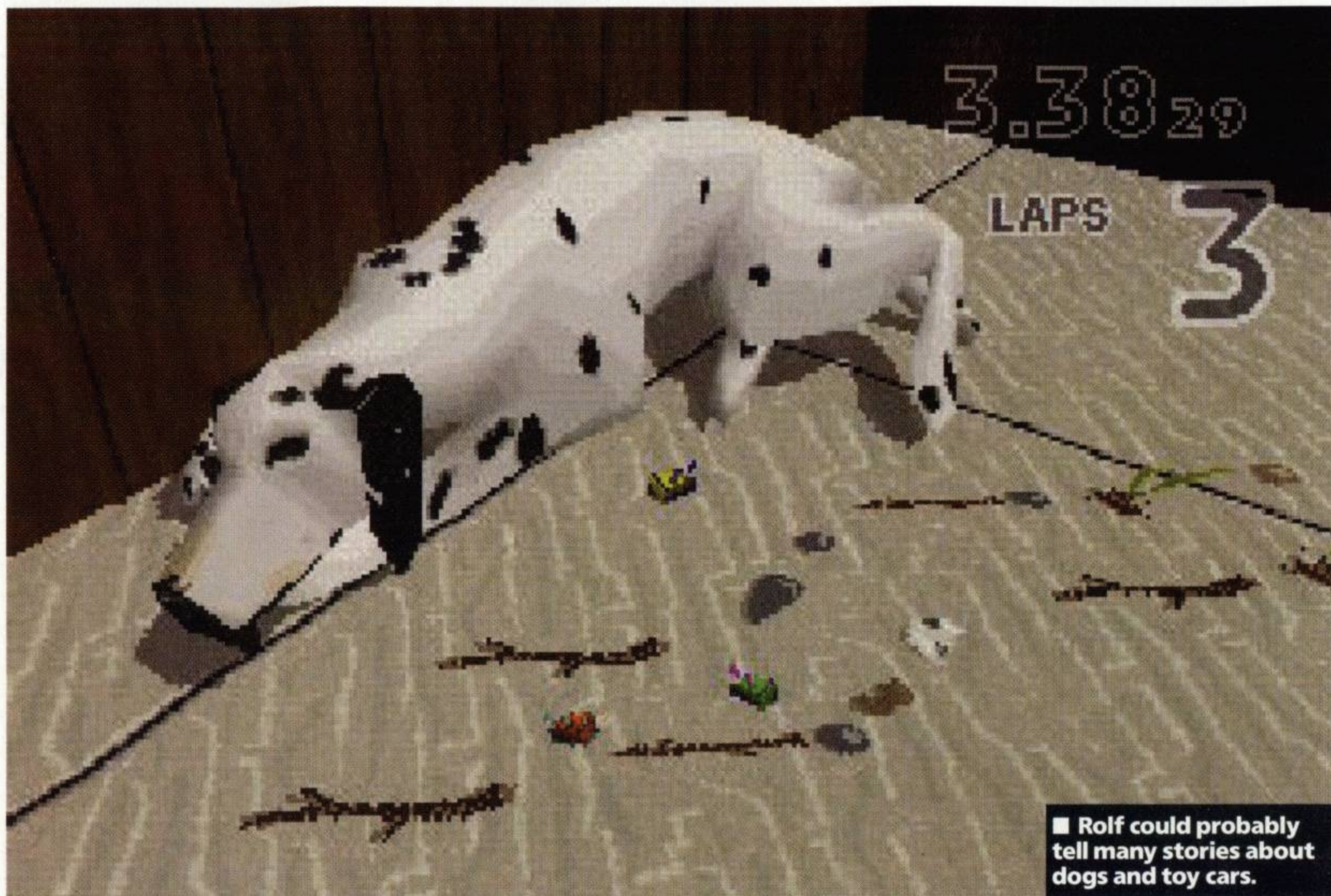
Tweety & Sylvester - Breakfast on the Run

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Infogrames**
Canary capers A disappointing interpretation of the cartoon classic. The visuals are impressive, but only survive in full colour for one level, while the 2D puzzle-solving is an insult to most gamers' intelligence. ★★★★★

Compiled by | Mark Green

March 1997

The time machine comes bang **up-to-date** (nearly) as we warp back two years.



■ Rolf could probably tell many stories about dogs and toy cars.

An absolutely stunning piece of work. A ridiculous amount of tracks, masses of variety and a very jolly weapons system all add up the best MM game and one of the best PlayStation titles yet. **ANDY POWER**

■ The best PlayStation game ever. Again.

shunted off the screen. Thanks to a host of weapons, obstacles, sharp turns and drops, cars skidding about and up to eight players on screen, *MM V3* was a frantic, laughter-packed experience.

Richard Eddy, now at Rocket Media, was a Codemasters director at the time of *MM V3*'s launch. "The concept behind *Micro Machines* was so simple, but it was very complicated to actually create. The previous top-down *Micro Machines* games had been brilliantly designed, but the move from 2D to 3D in *V3* was quite a challenge.

Because the multi-player relied on players falling off the edge of the screen, the camera angles needed to be exactly right – not too close and not too far away – to keep it all fair. It was very tricky."

As the game missed its scheduled Autumn 1996 release date, the fervour surrounding *Micro Machines* became contagious. "There was a real buzz about the game," says Richard. "Sony saw it as a dream game and desperately wanted it out on the shelves, but the last chunk of coding and testing took five months. We were showing the magazines each new version, and it was getting better all the time."

Bizarrely, in an effort to ensure that the public got as worked up as the press, Codemasters made *MM V3* the first game to take advantage of new ITC rules about the length of TV advertising, which came into effect at roughly the same time. Fans of *Coronation Street* and other mainstream ITV pap were treated to innovative, teasing five-second glimpses of the game, inserted between the usual adverts. It worked – not only did this help the game sell to existing PlayStation owners, but it also roped in a new legion of PlayStation devotees.

By March, the hype had reached fever pitch, and *MM V3* shifted 40,000 copies in its first two weeks of sale, despite the launch price of £50. *GamesMaster* echoed the sentiments of most magazine writers by calling it "The best multi-player game on the PlayStation", and giving it 91%. *V3* has since gone on to help the *Micro Machines* brand tot up a total of one million sales, and with the release of *Micro Machines Turbo* imminent on the N64, you can expect many more friendships to be shattered in the future as *Micro Machines* virgins battle it out with itsy-bitsy toy cars. **A**

Shrinking down the racing action

The history of videogames is littered with awful game names. *Final Fantasy?* Rubbish. *Crash Bandicoot?* Terrible. And then there's *Californian Beach Buggies*, a generic top-down racing game that would have appeared on the Nintendo Entertainment System, had its developers not entered into a deal with American toy manufacturer Lewis Galoob Toys. The agreement gave Codemasters permission to incorporate Galoob's range of toy cars into its game,

and from there came the idea to change the courses from beach burn-outs to kitchen tables, school desks and the like. With these alterations, *Californian Beach Buggies* became Codemaster's phenomenally successful *Micro Machines*.

The *Micro Machines* series scaled new heights of popularity with the release of the PlayStation version, *Micro Machines V3*, two years ago. Ask exactly why it was so successful, and most people will point you toward the multi-player game, with every player's car crammed on to one screen. The aim was to drive so fast and so well that your opponents were left behind, and eventually

Games of the month | Ridge Racer 4 not enough for you? Take a look at these two-year-old beauties...



International Superstar Soccer Deluxe

System: PlayStation
Publisher: Konami
■ *ISS Deluxe* brought silky smooth footballing to Sony's 32-bit marvel. It was a cynical cash-in, having been copied wholesale from the Super Nintendo version, but it was the first step on the road to the beauty of today's *ISS Pro*.



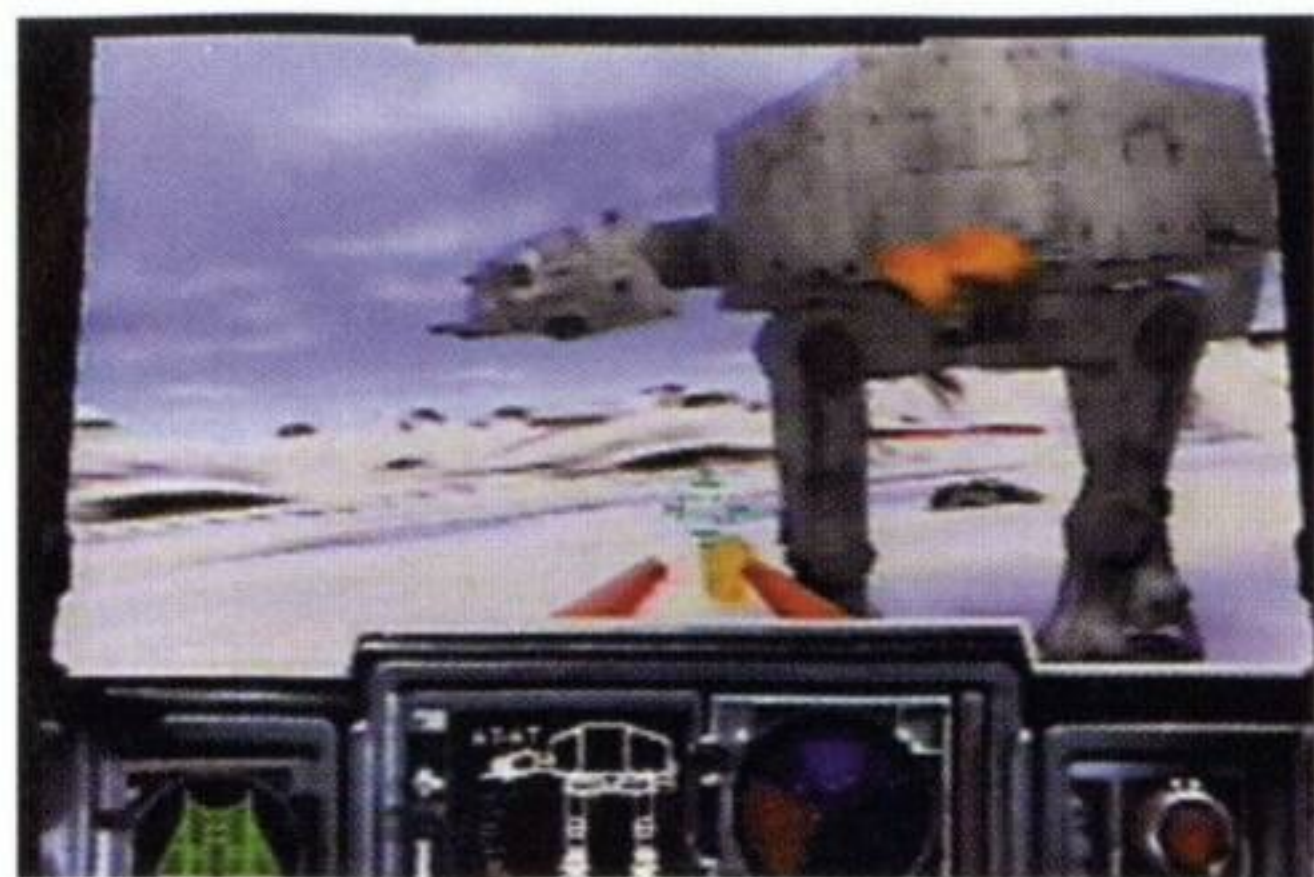
Manx TT

System: Saturn
Publisher: Sega
■ A commendably accurate rendition of the popular arcade motorcycle racer, and one of the few games to take proper advantage of the Saturn's own analogue joystick. Unfortunately, only four people in the whole of Britain owned a Saturn and liked motorcycles. Thus: RIP Saturn.



MDK

System: PC
Publisher: Interplay
■ From the *Earthworm Jim* team came this astonishing shoot-'em-up. Set in a nightmarish open-air 3D world and starring a bloke with a gun for a head, MDK invented the Sniper Mode, which was subsequently nicked by Rare to use for its own devious ends in *GoldenEye 007*.



■ Turok proved that Nintendo games don't all have to be cute.

Why Nintendo failed

It had taken years of furtive rumours, leaked details and innumerable heart-breaking delays, but Nintendo's 64-bit wonder-machine, the N64, finally dropped into the hands of eager UK gamers on 1 March 1997, with every one of the first batch of 20,000 machines selling out in the week of release. This was very good. One month later, Sony's PlayStation was still sitting pretty as Britain's most popular console, and headlines rued Nintendo's stumble and the apparently inevitable death of the N64. This was very bad.

The N64's price was part of the problem. Today, five crisp twenties can be exchanged for a bag stuffed with an N64 and a game to go with it. In contrast, the kids of 1997 had to shove £250 into the shopkeeper's hands before they could have a Nintendo, adding another £60 before they earned the right to play *Super Mario 64*. To make matters worse, the next big-name title – Acclaim's *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* – arrived in some stores a month later with a £90 price tag, prompting some retailers to remove it from the shelves in protest.

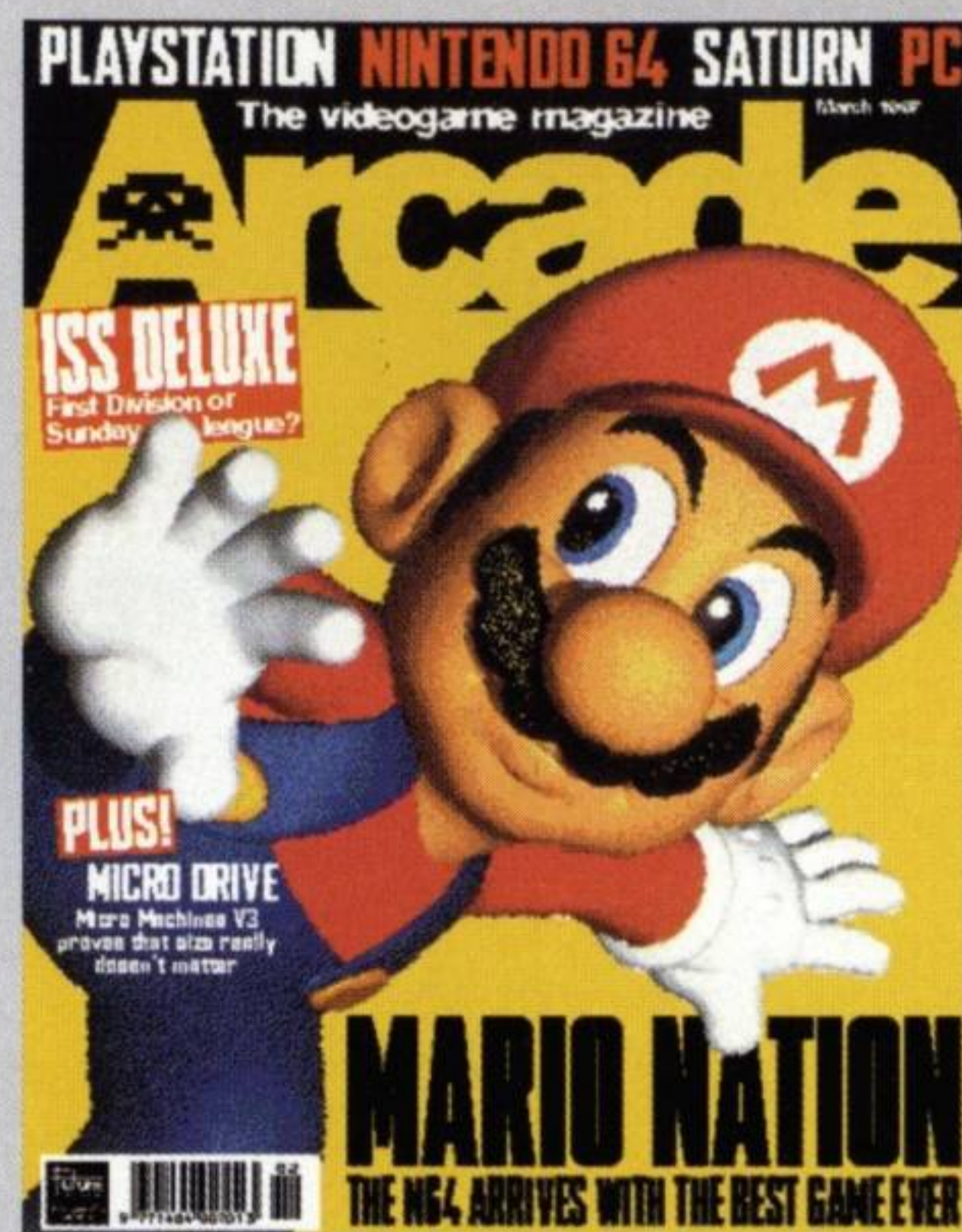
Despite the extortionate price of Nintendo's goods, however, there were plenty of people willing to part with their cash. Hundreds braved the harsh English springtime conditions to queue outside unsuspecting stores from as early as 7am on the day of launch, only to go home with their bank balance unaltered. The shelves were as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard – Nintendo had supplied the whole of the UK with a mere 20,000

machines, most of which had been pre-ordered. Sega wasn't impressed. "They always limit their supplies to create an artificial demand," claimed a Sega spokesman, "it's almost laughable."

Of course, the real reason why the Sega spokesman was laughing was because he'd watched as the disappointed punters were lured to the Saturns, heaped up next to the empty N64 boxes. The last laugh, though, went to Sony, who unexpectedly exploited the situation with a last minute price-cut, making the PlayStation an enticing £129. With a one-year head start over the N64, and games such as *Final Fantasy VII*, *Rage Racer* and *Tomb Raider II* on the way, the PlayStation began to sprint ahead of the N64.

In the event, Nintendo almost destroyed itself, as it disastrously failed to secure enough titles to follow up the launch. *Star Wars* cash-in *Shadows Of The Empire* was disappointing, half-hearted fighting games *Killer Instinct Gold* and *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* were no match for Namco's *Tekken* games, and *FIFA '64* emerged as the least playable football simulation in history. *Mario Kart 64* and *Wave Race 64* were the jewels on the horizon, but gamers were becoming impatient.

Fortunately, things picked up. Nintendo slashed £100 from the price of its console in April 1997 (enraging everyone who'd already bought the machine), decent games arrived more frequently from 1998 and the N64 began to give Sony a run for its money with titles such as *Zelda*, *Turok 2* and *F-Zero X*. Unfortunately, it's too late for Nintendo to catch the PlayStation, but there's still the battle between PlayStation 2 and Nintendo 2000 to look forward to...



■ If Mark had his way, every *Arcade* cover would look something like this. Except that Mario wouldn't have any clothes on.

■ News began to trickle out about a successor to the Saturn, code-named Black Belt. According to Internet rumours, the machine would be developed in conjunction with Microsoft, and launch with *Virtua Fighter 3*. "We deny the current rumours because this is inaccurate information," said a Sega spokesman. The Dreamcast arrived in December 1998, featuring elements from Microsoft Windows CE and including *Virtua Fighter 3*. Well done, Mr Sega.

■ More conjecture and rumours, this time based around Sony's mysterious "Highlander Project". According to Internet gossip, the sequel to the PlayStation would be based around normal CD technology, using Argonaut-developed software. PlayStation 2 is now rumoured to be using a DVD drive, and Argonaut is writing

software for the N64. Well done, Mr Internet.

■ The death throes of Nintendo's doomed 64DD disk drive began, as the forthcoming *Legend of Zelda* game moved to a cartridge-first launch. Although a 64DD version was still planned and apparently in development, with

Super Mario 64 2 and *Super Mario RPG* also in the works, doubts began as to whether the N64 double-D add-on would ever see the light of day.

■ The launch of Channel 5 (see also "World News Headlines") brought agony to gamers. With the new channel transmitting on a similar frequency to the signal from home consoles and computers, the communication between TVs and games machines went haywire. Lucky that there was a thoroughly entertaining new TV station to watch instead, then.



■ What a fine looking chap Link is.

World News Headlines

Away from the digital world

■ Amidst a blaze of hype and the Spice Girls dancing their little socks off, Britain gained a fifth terrestrial TV channel, innovatively called Channel 5. It's since lived up to its name, achieving a maximum of five viewers at any one time.

■ The Oscar ceremony in Hollywood town saw *The English Patient* scoop a record-breaking nine statuettes, prompting another one of those blink-and-you've-missed-it British movie revivals.

■ All 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult in America first constructed goodbye messages in print, on video and on the Internet, before carrying out a meticulously planned mass suicide in a San Diego mansion.

■ John Major, apparently Prime Minister of the country at the time, called a General Election for 1 May. He was later quoted as saying, "In retrospect, I really wish I hadn't done that." Probably.



■ Oscar as a ventriloquist.

Music Charts

24 March 1997

- (3) Who Do You Think You Are?/Mama *The Spice Girls*
- (-) I Believe I Can Fly *R Kelly*
- (-) Don't Speak *No Doubt*
- (-) Anywhere For You *Backstreet Boys*
- (-) Flash *BBE*

■ Information © CIN

Film Charts

March 1997

- Jerry Maguire
- The English Patient
- Mars Attacks
- Ransom
- The Crucible

■ Information from Total Film

Gamesmaster console top 10

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Tomb Raider | PSX/SAT |
| 2 | FIFA '97 | PSX/MD/SNES |
| 3 | Destruction Derby 2 | PSX |
| 4 | Cool Boarders | PSX |
| 5 | Sonic 3D | SAT |
| 6 | Command & Conquer | PSX/SAT |
| 7 | Die Hard Trilogy | PSX/SAT |
| 8 | Alien Trilogy | PSX/SAT |
| 9 | Worms | PSX/SAT/MD/SNES/GB |
| 10 | Crash Bandicoot | PSX |

Playstation Power /Our Price Playstation Top 10

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Legacy of Kain | BMG |
| 2 | Cool Boarders | SCEE |
| 3 | Tomb Raider | EIDOS |
| 4 | Destruction Derby 2 | Psygnosis |
| 5 | Jet Rider | SCEE |
| 6 | Die Hard Trilogy | Fox Interactive |
| 7 | FIFA '97 | EA |
| 8 | Crash Bandicoot | SCEE |
| 9 | MechWarrior 2 | Activision |
| 10 | Formula 1 | Psygnosis |

■ PHOTOGRAPHY: PA NEWS



Rage Racer

System: PlayStation
Publisher: Namco
■ Okay, so it was only available on import, but the sequel to *Ridge Racer* and *Ridge Racer: Revolution* was a shining example of how arcade racing should be done. Winning races earned you money to buy better cars, and it featured more speed than *Police Camera Action*.



Theme Hospital

System: PC
Publisher: Bullfrog/EA
■ This was nothing more than the real-time management title *Theme Park*, updated and shoe-horned into a hospital setting. Packed with "amusing" *Carry On*-style animation and "funny" diseases, it's since been overtaken by *Command & Conquer* and friends.



X-Com: Terror From The Deep

System: PlayStation
Publisher: MicroProse
■ Converted from the PC original, this turn-based strategy took you beneath the waves to a sinister underwater world populated by scary aliens. The blend of research-based weapons discovery and alien butt kicking hasn't been bettered since.

Great Gaming Moments

Over the Rainbow

Remembered by | Mark Green

But is it art? One look at the work that went into **Super Mario 64** will convince you...



This was it. With a stab of the Jump button, I sent Mario plunging into the hole in the floor that led to *Super Mario 64*'s 15th level, "Rainbow Ride". I couldn't help but feel a slight twinge of disappointment, this being the last stage that Shigeru Miyamoto's masterpiece had to offer. Having spent hours soaking up the sights and sounds of *The Best Game Ever*™, I was about to be confronted with the last of its delights. But what delights they were.

In some ways, the structure of the final stage wasn't surprising. The desert area had been and gone, and the watery worlds and slippery ice-levels had put in their obligatory appearance. The only theme left was the level suspended in mid-air, where my reflexes would be all that stood between

Mario and a humiliating 200ft drop to his death. Rainbow Ride did indeed stick to that theme, but in the most eye-goggling, spine-tingling way imaginable.

Arriving for the first time, my natural first reaction was to gawp in amazement. The whole world consisted of platforms, mazes, bridges and lifts, all suspended impossibly in a clear blue sky with the ground nowhere to be seen. Transparent rainbow-coloured trails wove their way across the heavens like multicoloured paper streamers. A granite maze stared coldly from afar, its distant feel bringing home its sheer size. And, most remarkable of all, an enormous flying boat was suspended in the air, the sound of its steadily beating wings just audible from the platform where Mario stood.

It was breathtaking, as though Miyamoto had reached into the most magical of his dreams and plucked out the best bits. He hadn't simply transported 2D platform ideas into a 3D environment, he'd created a living, breathing world. A world that could re-create the strange mixture of excitement and fear that you get when you arrive somewhere unfamiliar. The sight that stretched before me created an awe-inspiring feeling of space, distance and

Wanna play?

■ The *Super Mario* series is the videogame equivalent of the *Godfather* films. Over the course of 15 years, every instalment – from *Super Mario Bros 1* in the arcades to *Super Mario World* on the Super Nintendo – has represented a huge leap forward for games. *Super Mario 64*, the N64's launch title, transported the little man into a 3D world for the first time, and did it brilliantly. It's available in the shops now – you can get a copy bundled with the N64 or buy one separately for £40.

freedom. It was impossible not to long to explore and lose myself in this mystical place.

And it was as I began to explore that the level revealed its last surprise. It was called Rainbow Ride for a reason. The only way to get about was by using a network of floating carpets, which crept slowly along the psychedelic roads created by the rainbow trails. This final world would present its attractions in a seductive, leisurely tour – nothing would be allowed to ruin the dreamlike state that it had conjured.

Perhaps I got carried away. Perhaps others arrived in *Mario*'s last level and set about collecting the remaining six stars without a moment's thought. But as soon as Rainbow Ride appeared, I became completely absorbed in what was nothing more than a collection of polygons, arranged on a portable television screen. That's the magic of Miyamoto and – for me – the Greatest Gaming Moment of all. **A**

Miyamoto reached into the most magical of his dreams and plucked out the best bits.

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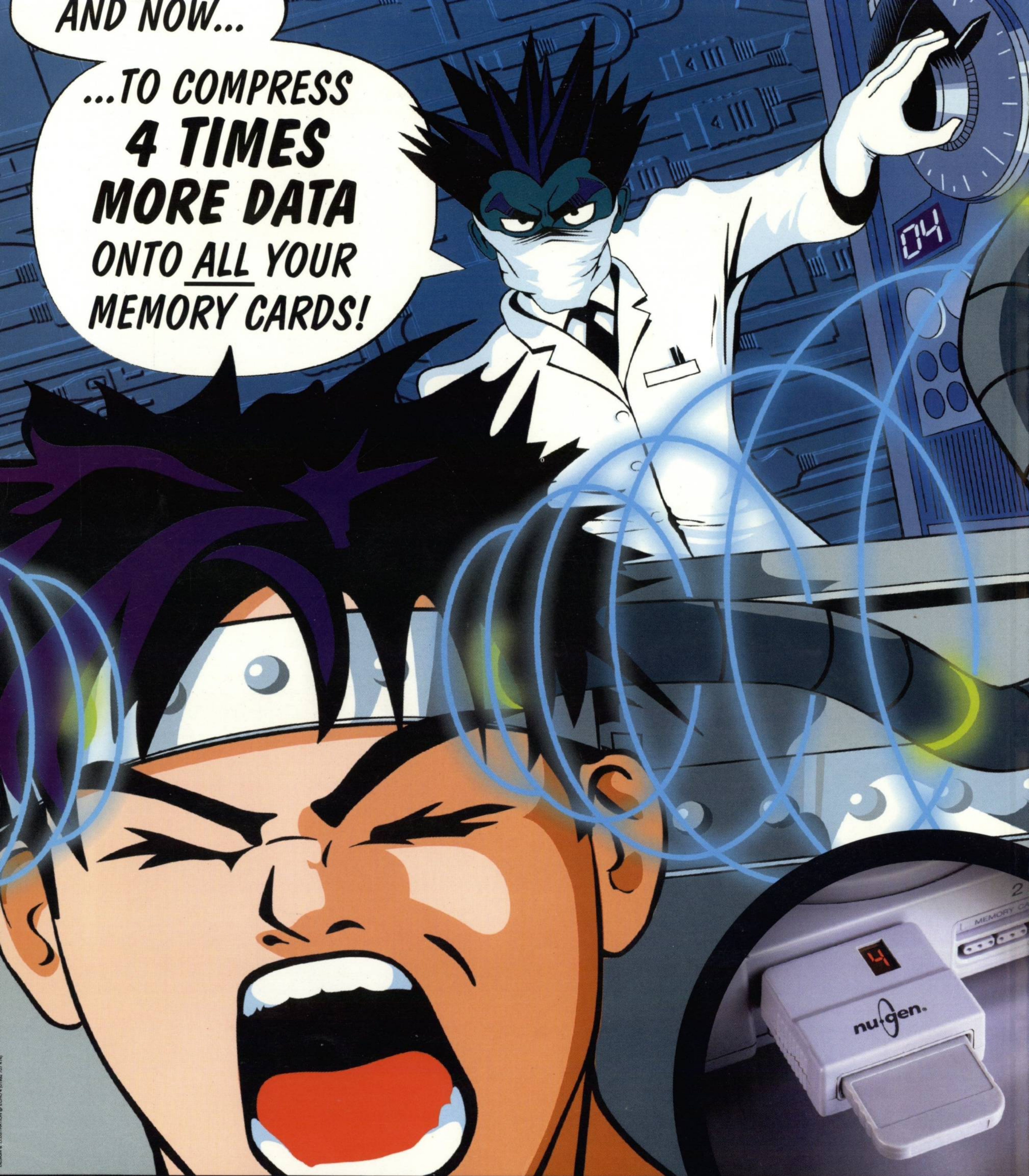
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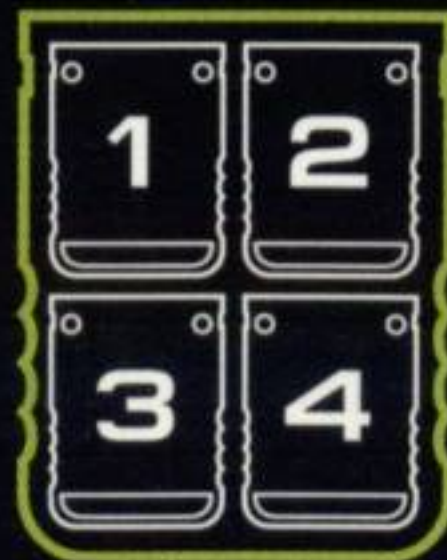
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