

THE UK'S BIGGEST MULTIFORMAT GAMES MAGAZINE

GamesDomain

O F F L I N E

PLAYSTATION | N64 | PC | DREAMCAST | GAMEBOY

AUGUST ISSUE 008



DIABLO II

HACK & SLASH COMES OF AGE

VIRTUA TENNIS

GAME, SET & MATCH TO DREAMCAST?

DEUS EX

ANOTHER SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

TOCA

OVERHEAT YOUR PSX

REVIEWS

Vampire: The Masquerade

Ferrari 355 Challenge

Bishi Bashi Special

Final Fantasy IX

Speedball 2100

Mario Party 2

Myst III

Vib Ribbon

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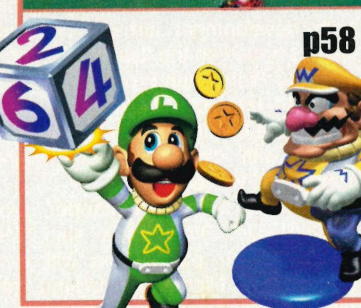
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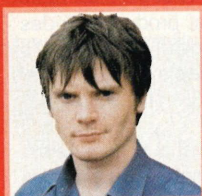
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WIN A DAVE MIRRA



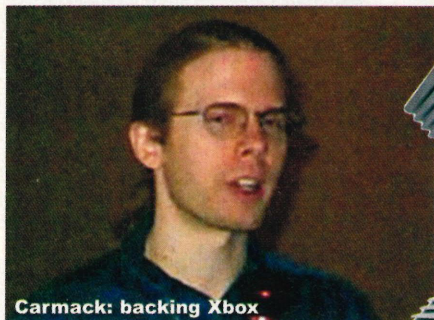
GDO note



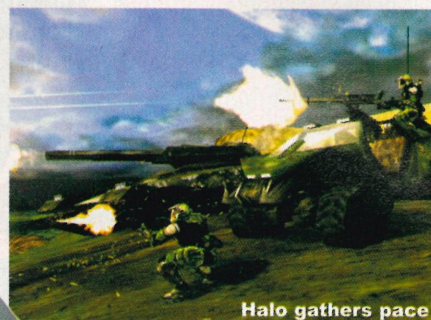
It has been a month of seismic changes at GDO's massive underground bunker, built under the vast urban plains of the industrial West Midlands. As a magazine redesign got underway (hope you like it by the way), Virtua Tennis stole the hearts and minds of the GDO staff, vanquishing previous lunchtime footie favourite, ISS Pro Evolution, to the cupboard. "You cannot be serious," I screamed when I discovered their shameless defection. My mood temporarily brightened by the arrival of Diablo II, but the title was immediately dispatched to one of our team of international reviewers, denying me of my chance to hack and slash my ISS demons away. In an uncomprehending daze I stumbled into GDO's 'weird games' annexe. Squinting into the gloom I spotted two of the strangest games I've seen: Bishi Bashi Special and Vib Ribbon. As I looked on, hunched creatures emerged from the dark, arms outstretched, pained expressions on their hideous faces. "How are the reviews going lads?" I asked. "Great, these games are both pretty good actually," they replied. Ho hum, another day at the office.

James Kelly - Editor

CODERS AWAIT GENERATION



Carmack: backing Xbox



Halo gathers pace

The head programmer of ID Software, developer of Quake, Wolfenstein and Doom, has given Xbox the thumbs-up.

John Carmack, who part-owns ID, said: "I'm pulling for Xbox. If you need to pick a feudal lord in the console market, I would take Microsoft over Sony, Sega or Nintendo any day."

ID is currently mulling over whether to do a version of the upcoming Wolfenstein 2000 on the next generation Microsoft console.

Carmack added: "The Xbox specs put it as a larger leap over PS2 than PS2 is over Dreamcast, but anyone with sense can see

that by the time it ships, the hardware gaming PC will already be a generation ahead of it in raw power.

"Xbox should be able to keep up for a while, because you can usually expect to get about twice the performance out of a fixed platform than you would when shooting for the broad PC space, just because you can code much more specifically."

Microsoft also took steps to bolster its own Xbox development team this month, taking the surprise step of acquiring developer Bungie.

Bungie, which wrote Myth and Myth II, is

presently working on action game Halo. Bungie's team is expected to begin work on Xbox Halo immediately but, as yet, no news has been made public about the fate of Halo on PC.

Most industry analysts are confidently predicting this move will not be the last acquisition Microsoft makes before the Xbox launches next year. Most major publishers have expressed support for the Xbox, including Electronic Arts, Activision, Konami and Namco.

SILVER SCREEN IS PURE GOLD FOR GAME MAKERS

Games publishers have signalled they are as keen as ever to get a piece of Hollywood movie action.

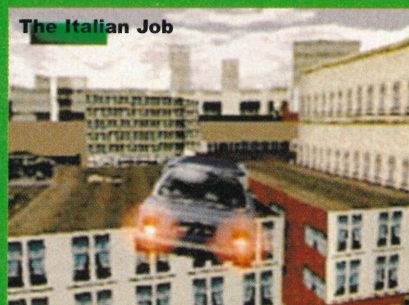
Movie licences are returning in a big way, with development already underway on games based on the Italian Job, The Matrix and The Blair Witch Project.

Kalisto, producer of 4 Wheel Thunder and Nightmare Creatures II, is to develop online games with licences from the Highlander films and TV series.

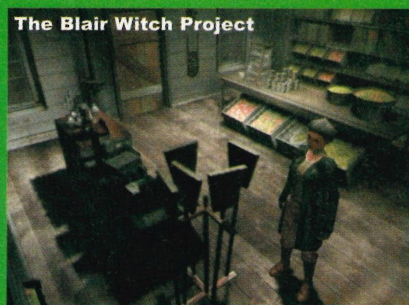
Peter Davis, of Highlander producer Davis/Panzer Productions, said: "We are confident our partnership will result in making the Highlander legend into the ultimate online gaming experience."

Battlefield Earth may have been one to miss at the cinema but that hasn't stopped director Roger Christian announcing a computer game based on the film is in the works. Based on a book by L. Ron Hubbard, the story is of mankind's fight against adversity as the planet is taken over by aliens.

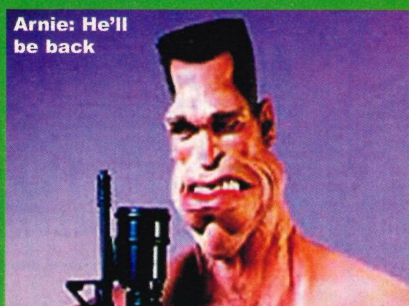
And Arnold Schwarzenegger will be soon back on the high-resolution screen with the news he is signing up for a new Terminator film. Part of the producers' plans is to make a game of the film.



The Italian Job



The Blair Witch Project



Arnold: He'll be back

SOLD OUT'S DOT NOW REVOLUTION

Sold Out Software, one of the UK's leading budget games specialists, has developed a new installer which gives consumers instant access to all the official cheats and walkthroughs.

The company's dot now (.now) technology provides users with seamless access to information on Sold Out's website.

Developers at the South London-based company, which has just released seven more budget titles onto the market, have produced the new installer which doubles as a browser.

Not only can gamers use the new program to grab cheats and walkthroughs, but it gives players instant access to technical information direct from Sold Out. Cue cards also help inexperienced customers through the installation process.

David Nye, Sold Out's technical director, said the new developments were about adding value to their products to give the consumer the best possible deal.

"Every new Sold Out product includes our unique .now technology which installs relevant game files, displays your player guide, and provides comprehensive off-line support," he said.

"All services are free and it's the fastest way to get support, software upgrades and patches, even your next game."

The new services will be implemented on software produced after August 2000.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4 TO BOAST ONLINE GAMING ABILITY



Championship Manager developer Sports Interactive is hoping to take the fourth game in the highly popular series online.

In an interview with GDO, Oliver Collyer, who started the series with his brother, said: "CM4 will hopefully be playable as both a single player and online game. The good thing about not releasing an online game right now, is we can look and see how



everyone else does it - many companies seem to be announcing them - and learn from their mistakes."

Collyer also revealed how he has avoided the legal challenges other publishers and developers of sports simulations are facing at present.

"The problems publishers have faced mainly concern things like club badges, kits, and player faces, i.e. visual stuff. Championship Manager has, so far, sidestepped these issues by only using text."

Check out www.gamesdomain.co.uk for the full interview.



PRE-ORDERS APPROACH 1.5M AS FINAL FANTASY IX RELEASED IN JAPAN

Final Fantasy IX has finally been released in Japan with nearly 1.5m pre-order sales already in the bag.

The eagerly awaited role-playing game was released last month and crowds of fans queued up in Akihabara, the electronics district of Tokyo, to get their hands on a copy.

Digicube representatives have reported that roughly 1.35 million copies of Final Fantasy IX have been pre-ordered in Japan. This is a drop compared to the 1.67 million copies sold before the release of Final Fantasy VIII but the fall has been put down to a lack of advertising - the Japanese TV ads only began running in the two weeks prior to its release there.

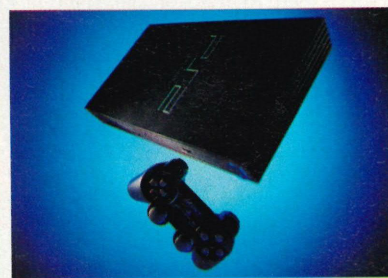
Final Fantasy IX follows a wizard called Zidane in a more traditional fantasy story than the previous two games.

This version of the long-running series is the last to ever appear on the PlayStation before its move to the PS2.

UK gamers will have to wait until Christmas for the game to arrive and the US will get the game in Autumn but you can see our pipeline on page 44.



The scene in Japan when FFIIX was finally released



PS2 SUPPLIES SURPRISE

The PlayStation2 will not hit shop shelves until after Christmas, it has been announced. Sony has decided to take a new approach to supplying retailers, using an order system for shop customers on a first-come, first-served basis.

The move means consumers will be unable to buy a PlayStation2 off the shelf until 2001.

The idea behind the system is to avoid a situation where the PS2 has sold-out in certain areas while other areas still have full stocks of the console.

Sales Director, Kevin Jowett said: "We feel that, with this system, we can offer our retail partners a level playing field to reap the rewards of being part of this successful launch, and also give our consumers the most fair and equitable solution." Sony UK will introduce the console to shop shelves only when the company can supply enough stock to comfortably meet the expected huge demand for the PS2.

FANTASY HOTLINE

Steve Jackson, co-creator of the popular '80s Fighting Fantasy game book series, is to develop a fantasy game for WAP phones.



The WAP game will be based on Jackson's 'Sorcery' books, which he considers his best work of the series.

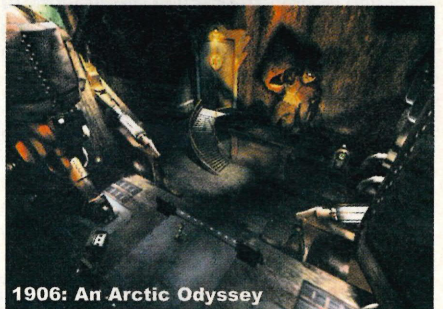
Jackson, who wrote the Fighting Fantasy books in partnership with current Eidos president Ian Livingstone, is now the director of Lionhead Studios and his string of successes include the Games Workshop chain of stores.

He said: "I'm very excited about this project, particularly the multiplayer aspect. Sorcery was originally a solo game, but WAP technology offers new horizons that were never possible with books."

Reluctant GDO misfits are persuaded to leave the bar of the King Edward VII, Aston, and go back to work



Orphen will soon find a home on PS2



1906: An Arctic Odyssey

STUPID INVADERS SET TO TAKE OVER OUR SCREENS

Ubi Soft is hoping to bring back the comedy adventure game with **Stupid Invaders**. The game will follow Etno and his alien pals as they crash land on Earth and have to escape the evil, mad and very naughty Dr. Sakarine. Look out for the **Stupid Invaders** on PC in September 2000. A Dreamcast release date has yet to be confirmed.

Other games in the pipeline include **1906: An Arctic Odyssey**. Darkworks, the maker of *Alone in the Dark IV*, is hoping to take players

back in time with this Jules Verne styled role-playing game which has a voyage of discovery theme. The game is headed for Xbox and PS2 but a date is yet to be confirmed.

Bugs Bunny and the Tasmanian Devil are headed for the PC and PlayStation with Infogrames' **Bugs & Taz Time Busters**. Players will follow the immortal cartoon heroes through time as they attempt to recover Daffy Duck and a precious gem. It is likely to appear in October.

Continuing the popular Sims series is the latest Maxis title, **Simsville**. The game will let players control a small town, in a mayoral position, rather than a city or as individuals. Town planning will still come into play as well as the personality of each citizen in the game. No date has been set for **Simsville**.

Orphen, an action role-playing game, is heading for the PS2. **Orphen** is set on the mystical Chaos Island and challenges players to escape by unravelling the island's many mysteries. Release date to be announced.

UK All Format Charts - week ending July 8, 2000

CHARTS CHARTS

TITLE	PUBLISHER
1 Pokémon Yellow	Nintendo
2 Perfect Dark	Nintendo
3 Diablo II	Havas Interactive
4 Colin McRae Rally 2.0	Codemasters
5 WWF SmackDown!	THQ
6 The Sims	Electronic Arts
7 World Championship Snooker	Codemasters
8 Pokémon Red	Nintendo
9 Pokémon Blue	Nintendo
10 Euro 2000	Electronic Arts



All information printed above is the strict copyright of ChartTrack Weekly Report. Contact ELSPA at Station Road, Offenham, Near Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 5LW. Tel: 01386 830642.

ChartTrack collects sales data from more than 4,000 UK outlets. Supporting retailers include Argos, Asda, Blockbuster, Comet, Currys Dixons, Electronics Boutique, Game Ltd, HMV, John Menzies, MVC, Our Price, PC World, Staples, Tempo, Virgin, WH Smith, Woolworths and a small selection of independents.

OXFORD REBELS SET TO UPHOLD THE LAW IN 2000AD

Oxford-based developer Rebellion has scooped the rights to 23-year-old world famous sci-fi weekly 2000AD.

The magazine has spawned many popular characters including Judge Dredd, Strontium Dog, Slaine, Rogue Trooper, and Nemesis.

At the height of its popularity, the comic (which has just published its 1,200th issue) sold more than 120,000 copies per week.

The new owner has promised no interruption in publication as it takes creative control of the magazine's content.

Rebellion chief executive officer Jason Kingsley said he had been a fan of the comic since it was first launched. But he was quick to point out this was a business before pleasure deal.

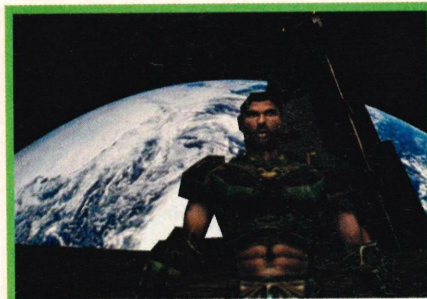
"I am only too happy to confess that I have always been an avid 2000AD reader," he said.

"However, that doesn't mean this deal was done for sentimental reasons. 2000AD is not



only a goldmine of intellectual properties, it is also a hugely enjoyable read. We are looking forward to helping this top quality publication achieve its fullest potential."

The acquisition of 2000AD gives Rebellion use of hundreds of characters, not only for computer games, but also for films, as action figures and in collectable card games. It is also possible some of the company's own characters and storylines - beginning with the forthcoming Gunlok (to be released by Virgin Interactive later this year) - could make it into the pages of 2000AD.



Unreal makes prime time

The BBC is making its first dedicated computer games show, called Bleeding Thumbs.

The show, which will consist of five rounds, is due to start in September. Two game-crazy celebrities will lead teams through the show.

The final round is based on a specially customised version of FPS favourite Unreal Tournament. The winning team will win a real-life experience that reflects their computer game of choice.

Jon Riley the producer of the show said: "Computer gaming has grown to be one of the UK's biggest leisure activities and makes for a brilliant spectator sport. This is the show for people who think with their thumbs."

EMPIRE BUILDING

UK developer and publisher Empire is set to raise £5m following the completion of its placing on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

The London-based company, founded in 1987 by Simon Jeffrey and Ian Higgins, will release just over 8.3m New Ordinary Shares at 60p per share.

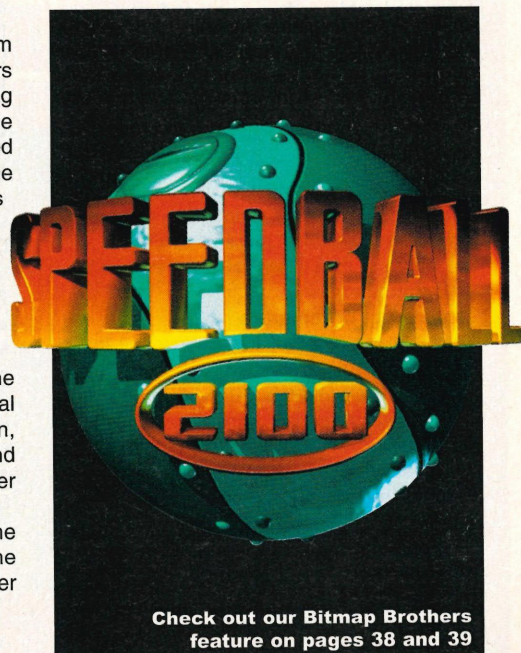
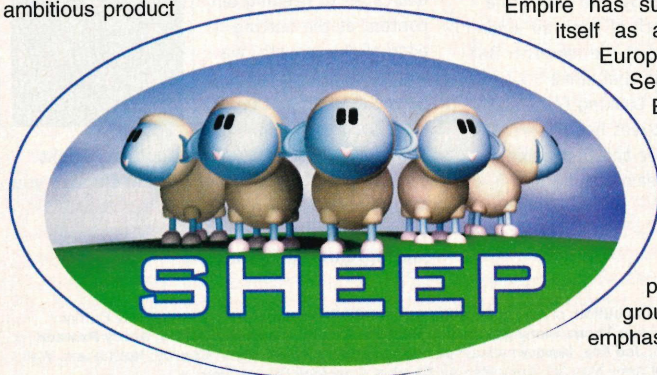
Empire's directors said the float would give the company the capital to support, "a more ambitious product

development programme."

Ian Higgins, chief executive, said: "I am delighted with the response of our investors given current market conditions. The placing and admission to AIM will enhance our profile with customers and the proceeds will be used to invest in development to maximise the opportunities available to us in the games software market, particularly with the advent of next generation consoles."

Empire has successfully established itself as a publisher throughout Europe with titles such as Sega Rally 2, Enemy Engaged: Comanche Hokum and International Cricket Captain, endorsed by England cricket captain Nasser Hussain.

The proceeds of the placing will enable the group to finance a greater emphasis on console titles.



Check out our Bitmap Brothers feature on pages 38 and 39

Star Letter

I had to laugh when I read the GD Note in July's Games Domain Offline (Are the Future's Gamers Grey?). I'm a 45-year-old granny and I've been playing games for nearly 20 years.

OK, I'm not grey yet, but there'll soon be plenty of grey gamers. Computer games aren't a new thing, they've been around for years.

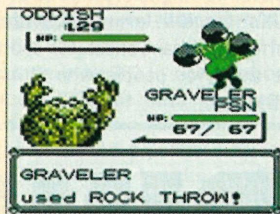
I started by getting addicted to Pacman, spent years playing things like Monkey Island adventures, platform games and puzzle games on my Amiga and Megadrive.

When the PlayStation came out, I was one of the first to get one. I got into Doom, Tomb Raider etc. I finished Driver in one week!

I've now started playing the Game Boy which I ignored for years, and have seven out of eight badges on Pokémon Blue! (How you get the last badge is beyond me.)

So don't laugh at the thought of your parents playing games - there are plenty of middle-aged and elderly players - they just don't shout about it as their peers don't always understand.

Jeanette Wilks, Ashton-under-Lyne.



A copy of Pokémon Yellow is winging its way to Jean who requested this hit title if her letter won star prize

Thanks for your letter Jean, and it's true what you say. We did a recent survey of our readership and we were, at first, surprised by the number of responses we got back from people in your age group and older. One lady replied who was approaching her 70th birthday!

However, on reflection, it isn't so strange at all. Computer games have been around for over 25 years and continue to grow in popularity, touching people who previously considered a square piece of cardboard and a couple of dice essential for their gaming entertainment.

And what of the future? When the younger generation grow up they will have been reared on games. Perhaps in the year 2050 old folks homes will echo to the sounds of explosions, gunfire, and blood-curdling screams. So no change there then.

Seriously, we think it's great GDO is read and appreciated by people of all ages. After all, that's the beauty of games - they cross boundaries and, like music, there's usually something for everyone.

Cheers, James

james@gamesdomain.com

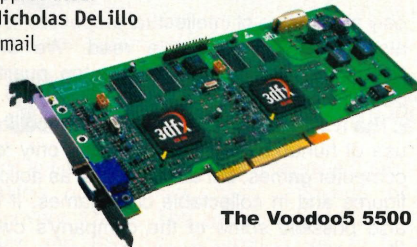
Every month we will give the reader who sends in the best letter a game of their choice* - so get scribbling!
Write to us at Letters, Games Domain Offline, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham B6 7SS. Or email gdo@gamesdomain.com (remember to enclose your address)

*prize games will be up to a value of £50 and subject to availability

CASH CARDS

I was wondering if you could help me out with a video card question. I need to upgrade my video card. I currently have a Rage Pro PCI 8MB card. I have about £100 to spend, and I was wondering what video card you would recommend for my computer. I have 64MB SDRAM, Windows 95, and because I am not in front of my home computer right now, I can't remember the other specs off the top of my head. Any advice you have would be greatly appreciated.

Nicholas DeLillo
Email



The Voodoo5 5500

No wonder you want to upgrade! Most of the latest cards will be out of your price range, such as the impressive Voodoo5 5500 (above) which retails at a cool £249. If you can stretch a little further than a ton, bottom-end Geforces are shifting for about £115 in some retailers. Remember you'll need an AGP slot on your motherboard to support these. Failing that, a TNT2 or TNT2 Ultra is probably the best choice - go for the Ultra if you can afford it, and 32MB versions are well worth having. Before you spend too much, make sure your processor is fast enough to make it worthwhile, and think about another 64MB. There's no point in having a kick-ass video card if the rest of your system just holds it back!

Cheers, Mike

mike@gamesdomain.com

SHATTERED GLASS

I was shocked to read about the sorry end of Looking Glass Studios in last month's GDO News section ('Designer Reflects on Looking Glass Closure'). Although I came to the PC games scene quite recently, I loved System Shock and Thief II - they're a real breath of fresh air among all the clones on the market at the moment. But my question is this: you said that some publishers were offering the Looking Glass staff jobs. Have any of the employees been successful? When will we see the first game from an 'ex-Looking Glass' team member?

Andy Slack

Email



Sadly there is no news yet. But the Looking Glass crew was so talented it would be naïve to think we've heard the last of them. EA has asked for their CVs, and if any company could benefit from some innovation and Looking Glass magic, it's EA. The PC community is going through some growing pains at the moment, and things will probably get worse before they get better. But the gap left by Looking Glass will doubtless be filled before long - the welcome return of the Bitmap Brothers and news of Peter Molyneux's efforts to provide investment to new development teams is already very encouraging.

Cheers, Mike

mike@gamesdomain.com

WAP NEXT?

After reading the news on your website I noticed that a lot of companies are signing deals to produce games for WAP phones. I own a WAP phone and can't wait for all the games to start appearing. I was wondering if you would be reviewing WAP games in future issues of the magazine or on Games Domain.

Richie Galloway

Email

WAP technology is looking pretty exciting and it could be that mobile phones become the Game Boys of the future. As we are dedicated to keeping our content at the cutting edge of the industry we will be reviewing the games as soon as they start beaming them down the wires. Who knows, soon you might even be able to get Games Domain through your mobile phone too!

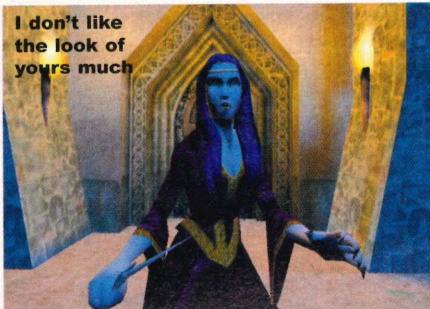
Cheers, James

james@gamesdomain.com



The winners of our Army Men Competition, printed in the June issue of GDO, are: Daniel Hughes, County Durham; Susanne Milward, Berkshire; Rosina Thorn, Birmingham; Mr C Bell, Ipswich; J Collierwebb, Jersey; Aubry Pearson, Chester; Ben Coughlan, London; Joe Fox, Newtownabbey; James Lovatt, Chichester; Ryan Conroy, Nottingham. Well done! Each winner gets a copy of Army Men 3D, Army Men Air Attack & Army Men Sarge's Heroes.

Games Domain 25:17 "Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of the games. For he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost codes. And I will strike down upon thee with great cheats and furious codes those games that attempt to be difficult and infuriate my brothers. And you will know I am the giver of cheats when I lay my codes upon you."

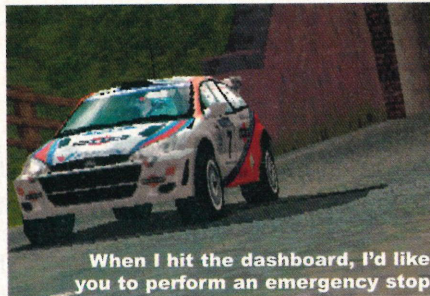


Vampire: The Masquerade - Redemption - PC

Start the game with the console using the run program, ie: "C:\Program Files\Vampire The Masquerade - Redemption\vampire.exe" -console

In single player mode, press ` (top-left, under escape key) to bring up the console. Type in any of the codes listed below (where there is a # insert a number or text for "")

Code	Result
god 1	Turn God Mode on.
cash #	Change money situation to #
xp #	Add to XP of your characters
addthing ""	Add item, ie: dagger
shapeshift ""	Shapeshift into creature
frenzyme	Put Christof into frenzy



Colin McRae Rally 2.0 - PSX

Enter the codes at the 'Create New Driver' screen.

Code	Result
COOLESTCAR	Opens Ford Puma
JIMMYSCAR	Opens Sierra Cosworth
JOBINITALY	Opens Mini Cooper
OFFROAD	Opens Lancer road car
HELLO RAZU AND FLEA.	Title screen cat picture



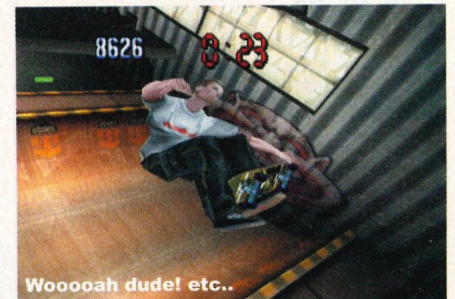
Micro Maniacs - PSX

At 'Secret Options' in the options screen, hold Select and press:

Square, X, R1, Circle, Up, Square, Down, Up, Down, X, Square - **to switch Tough Guys on/off.**

Triangle, Circle, Right, Triangle, Up, Right, Circle, Up, Square - **to switch motion-blur mode on/off.**

Circle, Up, Triangle, Circle, Left, Triangle, Square, Square, X, Down - **increase opponents AI on/off.**

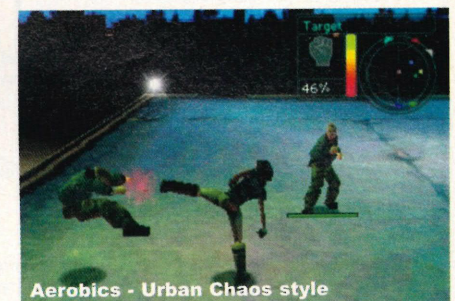


Tony Hawk's Skateboarding - DC

All Stats up to 13: hold L at the pause screen and hit A, X, X, Y, Up, Down

Big Head Mode: hold L at the pause screen and hit X, B, Up, Left, Left and then return to the character select screen.

Level Select: hold L at the pause screen and hit Y, Right, Up, X, Y, Left, Up, X, Y



Urban Chaos

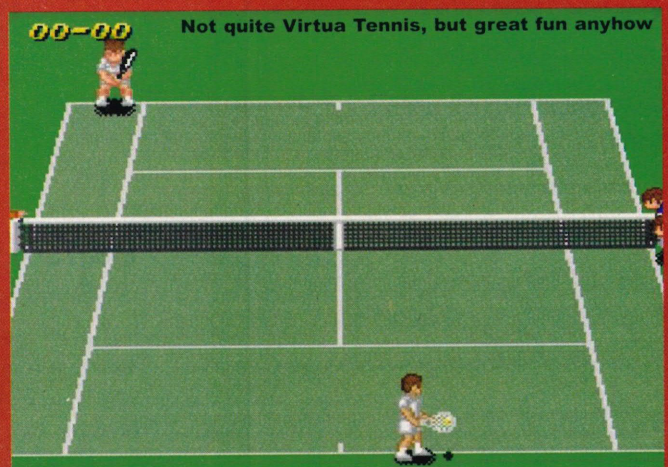
Level Select: To choose any stage hold R1+L1+Start+Select at the title screen.

REPLAY

Let me take you back to a time before Virtua Tennis on the Dreamcast, when one tennis game excelled above all others. Super Tennis on the SNES ranks as one of my favourite games of all time; it was the reason I bought the SNES system in the first place. Of course, as fate would have it, the day I got Super Tennis my console system was stolen in a daring daylight burglary - the beggars!

The reason for its supreme rating? Well, simple controls, clear graphics and a user-friendly approach to the summer pastime all combined to make a great game. There was a variety of competitions, a simple practice game or the championship mode, to play as either singles or doubles. Once a character had been selected you could be out on the court, spinning, backhanding and lobbing your way to victory.

The game just felt right and played like a dream. The only problem was the 'change court' transition screen that you couldn't skip through. Where it excelled was the two-player game that allowed you to insult your mates and prove yourself as worthy as the zen-like Pete Sampras, as fiery as an enraged John McEnroe or as lame as a limp-wristed Tim Henman. Tennis games - and the locks on my house - have never been the same since.



Welcome to GDO's latest monthly feature where we give you a guide to the mac-daddy of all games websites, and the founding father of this magazine.

Gamesdomain.co.uk, together with sister sites Consoledomain.co.uk and Kidsdomain.co.uk, make up the leading community of gamers in the UK. Between them, they have been entertaining our millions of readers since 1994, which makes us the oldest games-related Internet site in the world.

With over 50,000 pages of content, we have got something to suit all kinds of gamers and over the next few months we'll be taking a look at the different areas of the site to help you get the most out of the world's ultimate gaming resource.

First off is Gamesdomain.co.uk's brand new front page. We've been spending a lot of time recently redesigning the site so you can get to where you want to be in as few clicks as possible. And when you've got 50,000 pages to organise, this takes a bit of thinking about.

Gamesdomain.co.uk and GDO always put the reader first, so we would like your feedback on what you think we can do to improve the site. Take a look at our new design here, or log on to www.gamesdomain.co.uk, and email us at: gdo@gamesdomain.com with your thoughts.

Nav Bar

The nav bar on the left-hand side of the screen gives you access to all the different sections of Games Domain. Click here for news, previews, reviews, online games, what's new, downloads, freebies, development diaries, cheats, FAQs, walkthroughs and official game sites. There are also links through to our sister sites Kids Domain and Console Domain.



Reviews

Here you'll find the latest titles our team of reviewers have put to the test. The Reviews link will take you through to the GD Review, the independent magazine, written by gamers, for gamers.



News Letter

Games Domain's weekly newsletter will keep you up-to-date with everything that's happening in the industry and what new reviews we've been working on over the last seven days. All you have to do is register your email address and you'll get the letter delivered straight into your inbox.



Freebies

We are always giving away loads of prizes - at the moment one lucky reader could walk away with a Kawasaki jet ski. In this section you'll find the pick of our competitions.



Console Domain

Games Domain's sister site Consoledomain.co.uk is the best source of information on the latest and greatest games for your PlayStation, PS2, Dreamcast, Game Boy and N64. Not only have we got news, previews and reviews, but loads of movie clips of the latest games to download and watch on your PC.



What's Hot

The what's hot section gives you instant access to previews, reviews or demo downloads of the biggest games around at the moment. It's an opportunity to get our opinions on the top titles.



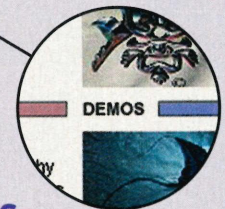
Search

The search box and help link appear on every page of Games Domain. Input key words or game titles to find exactly what you're looking for. The help section includes FAQs to guide you around Games Domain as well as help with downloading and installing our demos.

The screenshot shows the Games Domain website layout. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home' and 'What's New' links, and a search box with 'search here' and a 'Search - Help' link. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- WHAT'S HOT:** Features 'Reach For the Stars' (SSi's new 4X conquest game) and 'Shogun Total War' (Master not only battle tactics but all the necessary qualities of a ruler).
- REVIEWS:** Features 'Dark Reign 2' (Pandemic has made a worthy successor to the game that was overshadowed by Total Annihilation in 1997) and 'Warlords Battletcry' (SSG has managed the unthinkable - a successful port of their classic fantasy strategy game into real-time).
- DEMOS:** Features 'Submarine Titans' (Strategy First's submerged battle of the Titans is soon to hit PC), 'BANG-Gunship Elite' (You've never experienced anything like BANG-Gunship Elite), and 'Hired Teams' (The story behind Hired Teams is happening in the not very distant future).
- FREEBIES:** Features 'Win a Jetski!' (Games Domain is offering a fantastic first prize of a Kawasaki Xl Sport jet ski plus a PlayStation2) and 'Premier Titles' (Purchase the top 10 PC games at competitively low prices! Click here to start buying).
- NEWS:** Lists several items including 'Dukes of Hazzard details', 'Diablo with no Australian distributor', 'Freelancer journal update', 'Warlords: Battletcry goes gold', 'Vampire: The Masquerade patch delayed', 'Indy Racing 2000 on hold', 'Hunt for the Red Baron goes gold', 'Take 2 to publish Metal Fatigue', 'Internet Explorer 5.5 Gold?', and '82nd Airborne Invasion of Normandy on hold'.
- CONSOLE DOMAIN:** Features 'Ultimate Fighting Championship' (Come and have a read if you think you're hard enough!) and 'Ferrari 355 Challenge' (Arcade exterior, simulation interior - check out our full preview).

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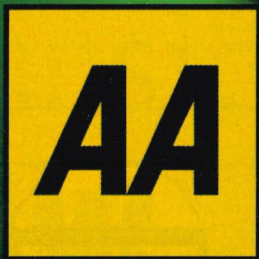
Demos

Games Domain hosts 16 Gb of game demos - that's over 25 full CD-ROMs. You should be able to find almost every demo available for your PC, from Championship Manager through to Evolva.

News

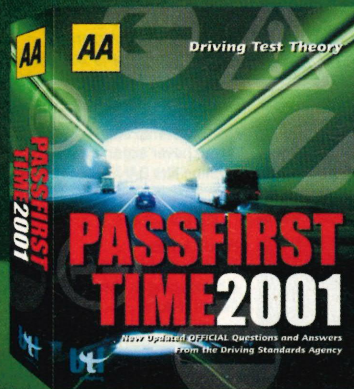
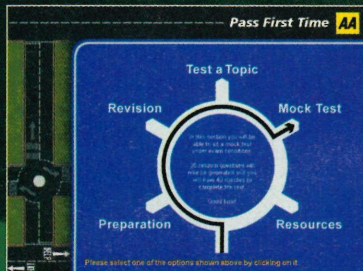
The Internet is the best source in the world for up-to-date news. Here at Games Domain we pride ourselves on giving our readers the latest news as it happens. News stories are updated throughout the day covering the biggest stories in the industry.



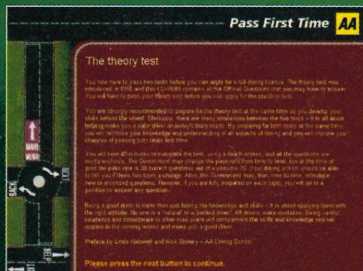


The Official Driving Test Theory
Questions & Answers CD-ROM

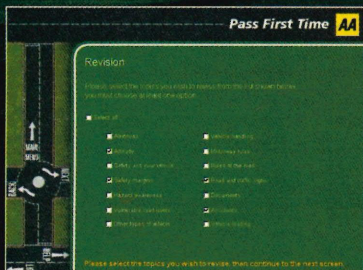
Learning to drive? Make sure you



- All the Questions
- All the Answers
- Test Yourself
- Practical Topics
- Revision
- Useful Links



PASS FIRST TIME 2001



From July 2000 to June 2001 1.4 million people are expected to take the Theory Driving Test. From January 2000 the Theory Driving Test was changed from being paper based to touch screen testing. The AA Pass First Time 2001 CD-ROM is the leading educational CD-ROM in this market with consistently high sales and brand recognition



RRP £19.99. Available from Gem, Centresoft, Koch, Interactive Ideas & Computer Bookshops OR call BTL Publishing on 01274 203259 for further information.

Minimum System Requirements Multimedia PC with a Pentium P90 Processor or higher, 16MB of RAM, 16 bit Colour Depth with 800x600 Screen Resolution, Quad speed CD ROM drive, mouse or keyboard, Windows® 95 or higher, Windows NT®

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PC games

This month sees some welcome good news for PC gamers. The normal post-Christmas slump has been unusually deep this year; publishers have been making some substantial losses and laying off staff, innovative Eidos looks like it is ripe for acquisition by an overseas firm, and a number of quality studios have fallen by the wayside. Much gloom and doom has been prophesied.

But things seem to be picking up in time for the holiday season. Two super-high-profile PC releases, Diablo II and Grand Prix III, seem ready to inject some much-needed life into the market; in an industry poll in trade paper MCV, 91 per cent of respondents thought so. Diablo II sold 2m copies worldwide before it was even released, through pre-orders, and GPIII ought to do nearly as well. We'll be reviewing it next issue.

On the horizon, established and successful development houses like Core, ID and Pandemic continue to work to their usual high quality standards; there is plenty to look forward to over the next few months.

Some will dismiss many of these titles as unoriginal cash-ins on successful franchises - but these cynics forget without the Tomb Raiders of this world, there would be no cash to fund the really innovative titles - the Deus Exs, Project Edens and Black & Whites. We will see the market change over the next twelve months, but there will always be a place for PC games. Email me your thoughts at mike@gamesdomain.com.

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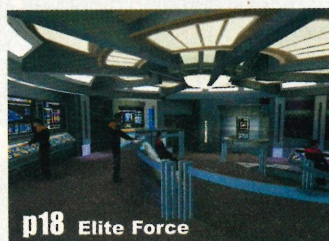
Project Eden

Mafia

Commandos II

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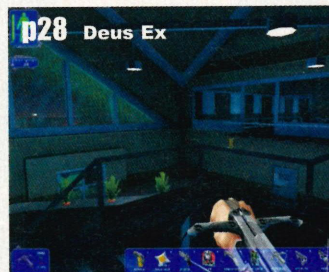
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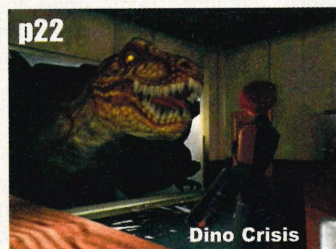
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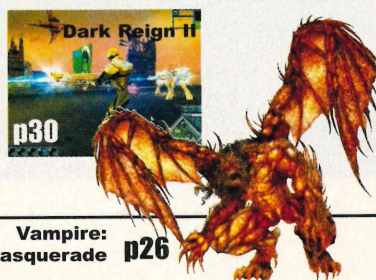


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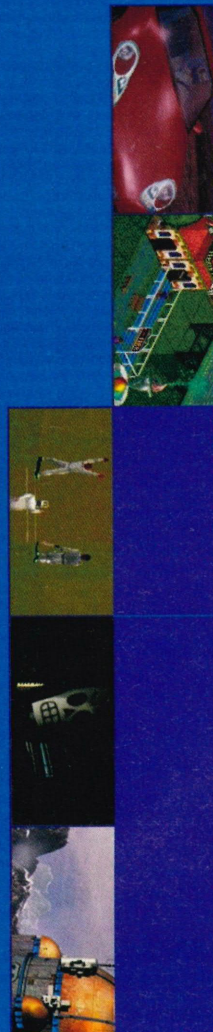
Vampire: The Masquerade

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move lists

6.4 MILLION PEOPLE GOOT EVERY MONTH



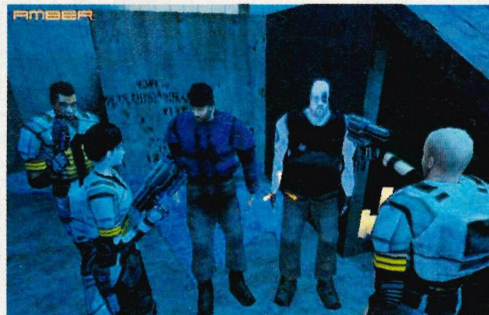
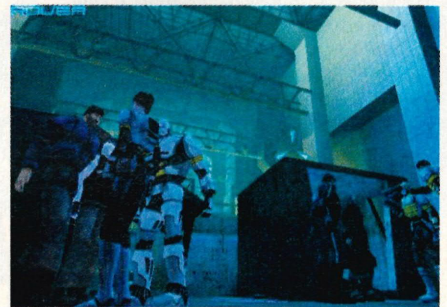


■ PUBLISHER: EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER: CORE DESIGN ■ FORMAT: PC & DC ■ RELEASE: AUTUMN

PROJECT EDEN



The Backstreet Boys groove on down in their latest hit video



Though it sounds strange in these days of endless third-person platform games, when *Tomb Raider* was released in 1996 it was considered to be highly original. Now the team behind Lara's debut has moved on to more ground-breaking developments, the first being a team-based action game called *Project Eden*.

Project Eden is set in the near future. Cities have evolved to resemble huge hives, with the affluent rising to live in the heights of the tallest buildings while the criminals and dropouts inhabit the lower floors. A group of engineering technicians has gone missing while investigating a malfunction at a meat factory. Your team of four has been called in to bring them home.

Each of the four team members has his or her area of expertise: Carter leads the team, Amber is a combat android, Andre is an engineer and Minoko is the computer geek of the pack. The viewpoint can be switched from first to third-person, and the advanced 3D engine features bump, light and environment mapping for a highly realistic look. Matrix-style slow motion playbacks can be used, and the characters are skinned for seamless motion, rather than the traditional jerky transitions of the *Tomb Raider* games.

Lara fans should not be uneasy about this development. Core Design recently confirmed a new Croft caper will appear in time for Christmas. *Tomb Raider: Chronicles* will revolve around the funeral of the heroine who supposedly died at the end of the *Last Revelation*. GDO will keep you posted on this one. Until then, look out for *Project Eden*.



Lara might have changed outfits, but she's still falling off things



■ PUBLISHER: TAKE TWO INTERACTIVE ■ DEVELOPER: ILLUSION SOFTWARES ■ RELEASE: EARLY 2001



As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster," as Ray Liotta once said. Now those of you who also yearn for a life of violent crime and close-knit families can join the ranks of Don Salieri's family business.

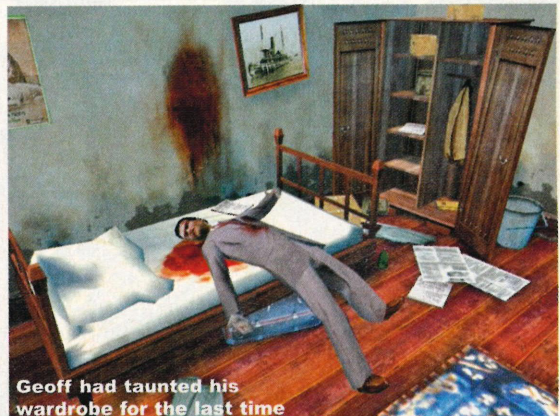
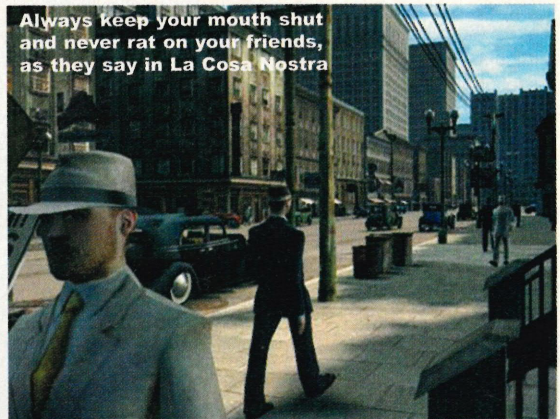
Talonsoft's new third-person action game lets players take a character from being a humble foot soldier to become a feared 'Made Man'. Don Salieri provides your hoodlum with 20 missions, complete with sub-quests, involving mob hits, shoot-outs and car chases.

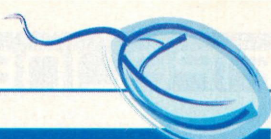
Over 12 square miles of 1930s American city has been recreated in detail for Mafia. Squalid hotel rooms, railway stations and bars all feature in an attempt to create an authentic Godfather atmosphere. And in common with Coppola's epic tale of the Corleone family, Mafia is heading firmly for a 'Mature' rating. Mob life can get messy.

Mafia has a realistic physics engine, as well as a selection of true to life weapons including Tommy guns, Colt 1911s, Magnums and pump-action shotguns. Your character can drive a selection of 60 vehicles, from Henry Ford's Model T to delivery trucks and roadsters.

Illusion Softworks is the brains behind Mafia. Responsible for Hidden and Dangerous, Illusion has used a highly evolved version of the already superb engine from this 1999 title to produce some very promising screenshots.

But fantastic graphics didn't stop Nocturne (another third-person action game set early this century) being a bit of a dog. We'll see how Mafia turns out in October.





COMMANDOS II



Pyro Studios' *Commandos* was extremely hard and impossibly addictive. It set new standards in top-down squad-based combat as you guided your elite troops through a series of scenarios set in World War II. The detail made it gorgeous to look at and the simple interface made it a joy to play.

Now the elite squadron is back again. *Commandos II* is going well and starting to look even better than its predecessor. The development team is including more character control, and many more manoeuvres and animations than in the original.

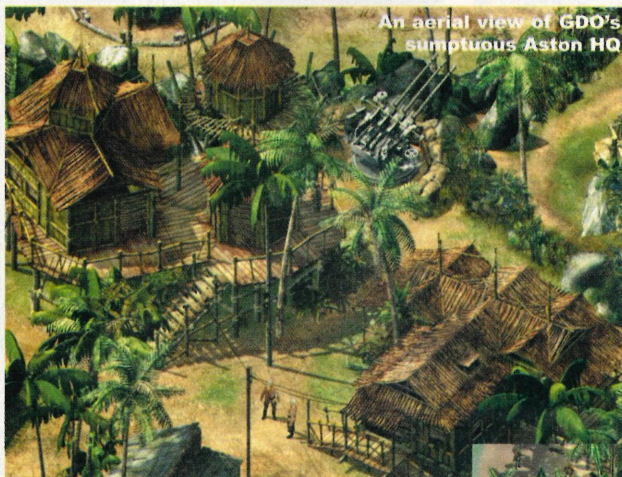
Things like swinging on cables, climbing short walls and vaulting over fences are all possible now. Even the animations for standard actions like crouching and lying down are more detailed and better looking. Once again vehicles will be able to be driven and blown up.

Buildings are to use fully rotatable 3D interiors so players will be able to get the clearest view possible.

There will be a streamlined interface for exchanging items and all characters will be able to attempt activities (in the original only special units could swim and drive). Each character will also have a special skill that makes them better than anyone else at that particular talent.

The game will include twelve missions set across Europe and Southeast Asia and you'll even be able to visit places like the infamous Colditz prison. Each level will have multiple tasks and goals to be completed, making them every bit as difficult as the fiendish ones encountered in the original.

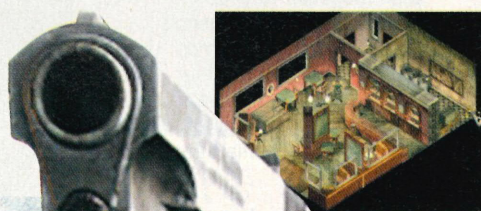
Expect *Commandos II* later this year.



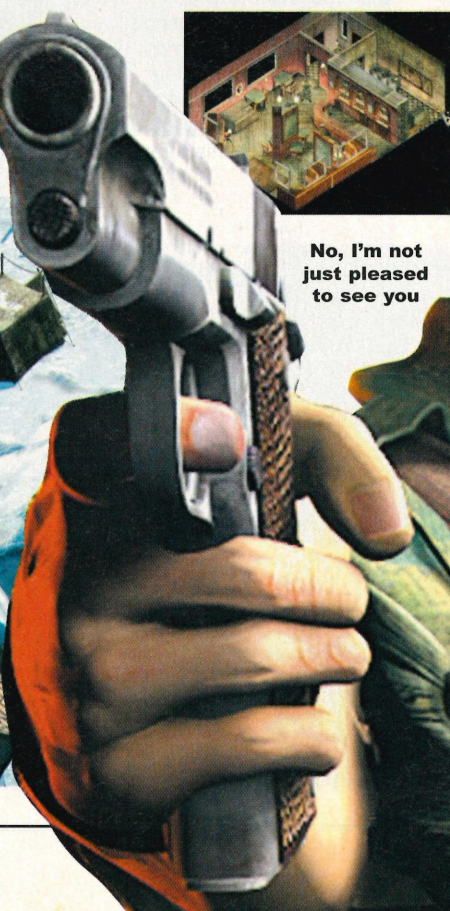
An aerial view of GDO's sumptuous Aston HQ

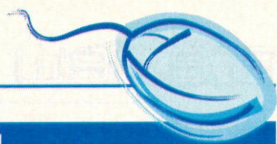


Are you sure this is Heathrow?



No, I'm not just pleased to see you





MYST III EXILE

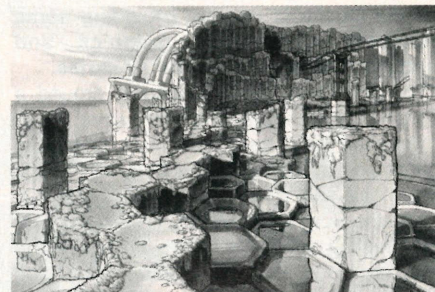
If you myst out (cue gales of uncontrollable laughter) when the original game was released, here's a little history for you. *Myst* shot to the top of the charts and stayed there, probably due to the game's crossover appeal. New users, who weren't usually interested in computer games, bought *Myst* and the hardcore faction was equally drawn in.

Amazing, when you consider that 3D shooters were taking off, that a game with static images should sell so well. Unfortunately, it was the last great breath of the adventure genre and, soon after, first-person shooters took over as the mainstay of computer games.

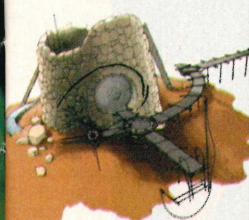
Myst III sees the saga of the series continuing, but this time Presto Studios is taking over from Cyan, the developers of the first two games. The surreal aspect of the game is set to continue as a new enemy, played by academy award winning Brad Dourif, seeks revenge for the destruction of his homeland.

The game is set to revolutionise the previous image of *Myst* as a static adventure with the introduction of a new 3D graphics engine. This new technology is designed to immerse the player in the world of *Myst III*. Players will now be able to look through 360 degrees at the wonderful effects, including swaying trees, flickering lights and lightning.

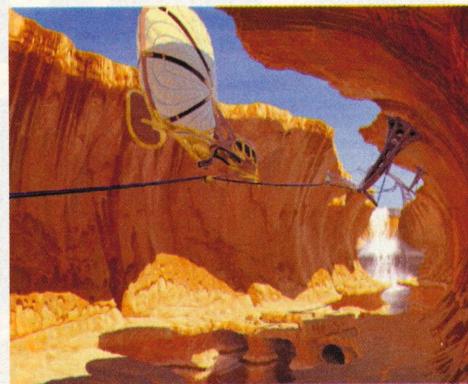
Five new ages (levels) are included to give *Myst* die-hards a new challenge as they uncover the truth about this new enemy. If *Myst III* does as well as its predecessors, which have sold over nine million already, then Presto Studios and Mattel Interactive will be laughing all the way to the bank.

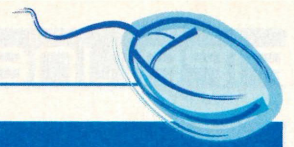


A game, or a slideshow?
Can nine million grannies be wrong?



Pretty, or just pretty dull - you decide





■ PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER: RAVEN ■ RELEASE: AUGUST

STAR TREK: VOYAGER ELITE FORCE

Flushed with the success of the recent ultra-violent combat game *Soldier of Fortune*, Raven is continuing its specialisation in first-person action games. *Elite Force* is based on the *Quake III* engine, providing some seriously high-quality graphics and features the actors from the TV series.

The first level has you running around a Borg cube, attempting to save your colleagues from assimilation. At first, they ignore you; in the show, the Borg only attack what they see as a threat. Only once you swipe the Borg-killing Infinity Confusicator do they realise you're not there to sweep the chimneys, and attack. As they come at you their trademark red laser eye beams glint off your surroundings, creating some real cinematic moments.

Later *Voyager* is attacked by an unknown enemy and transported to a derelict spaceship graveyard by a mysterious blue swirly thing, leading to a level set aboard *Voyager* itself. As seems to happen on almost every *Star Trek* episode, the 'warp core' is about to 'breach', leading to much running about and arm-waving; it's your job to fix it and restore order.

As you'd expect from a professional group of actors, the voice-overs seem excellent, providing a welcome change from the plotless action of *Quake*. Will *Elite Force* be the first game to combine the excellent visuals of recent first-person action games with a compelling storyline? It certainly seems to have the required atmosphere, but whether Raven can sustain it remains to be seen.

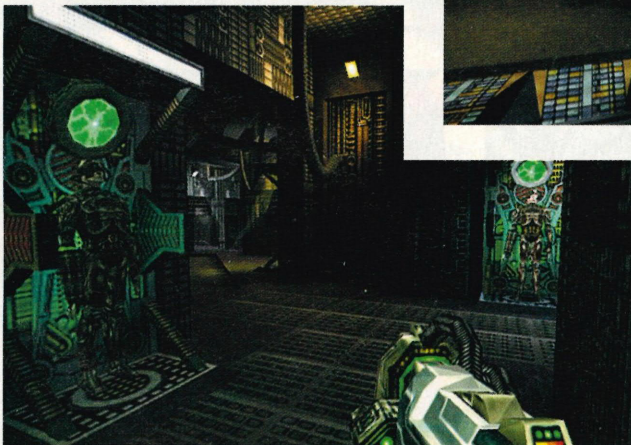
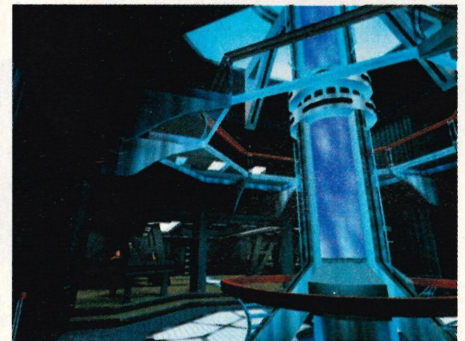
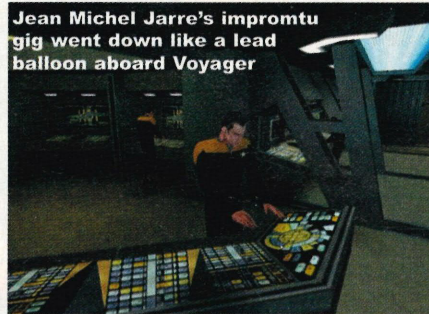
Elite Force isn't due until August, but if this preview has whetted your appetite, try downloading the demo from www.gamesdomain.co.uk.

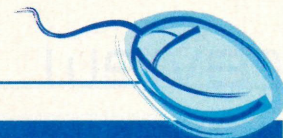


Set phasers on 'geek'



Jean Michel Jarre's impromptu gig went down like a lead balloon aboard *Voyager*





■ PUBLISHER: SIERRA ■ DEVELOPER: BARKING DOG ■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

HOMEWORLD CATAclysm



Space? Black? For wimps, that is. We're going to make ours yellow.

Homeworld Cataclysm is, unsurprisingly, the sequel to Homeworld. As with the first game, Cataclysm is set entirely in a three-dimensional space, using some very crisp graphics, and promises to have more of a story than your average real-time strategy game.

The original Homeworld took space games into a new world. Rather than using advanced 3D graphics to produce a high-speed, adrenaline-fuelled combat experience, it twisted the traditional real-time strategy archetype to place the player firmly in the commander's chair.

Set 15 years on from the end of the last campaign, Cataclysm enters a time where the Kushans - having reclaimed their homeland - have started to rebuild their empire. Unfortunately, the war you waged to regain the world has left the galaxy very unstable and even more dangerous than before.

The vast Taiidan Empire has split under the pressures of a civil war. The Republicans

have taken control of the old empire, but the remaining loyalists have regrouped and are waging vicious attacks on Hiigara and the new Taiidan republic.

The people known as Kushan in the previous game have become Hiigarans, inhabiting their original homeland following the destruction of Kharak. Against this scenario of political intrigue and the rebuilding of an ancient homeland comes "the awakening of an ancient evil".

The story, while intriguing, is the part of the game that has changed the most. The battles and strategy remain largely the same as they were in the original Homeworld, but new ships have been introduced, such as a multi-ion beam frigate and a mimic ship. The campaign will let you control two different fleets, one of which consists of Taiidan, Kushan and Pirate ships.

The interface has undergone an update as well, introducing waypoints and a sensor screen attack. The waypoints are a nice addition and setting them is as easy as it

could be. They especially come in handy in missions where you must search out lost ships, or otherwise cover a large area looking for something.

Homeworld Cataclysm will have 17 new missions to play through. It remains to be seen whether they are as dependent on each other as they were in the first game, where your result in the early missions would decide your chances of completing the final stages. A nuisance to many, this does seem to be a factor as your ships and resources still carry over from one mission to the next. Resources do, however, appear plentiful early on in Cataclysm.

Homeworld was an interesting game, but the crisp graphics can't wow us twice, can they? Either way, Cataclysm intends to give us a repeat performance of the three-dimensional universe, some intense battles and a new story. Meanwhile Relic, the developers of the original Homeworld, are working on their next revolutionary game, Sigma.

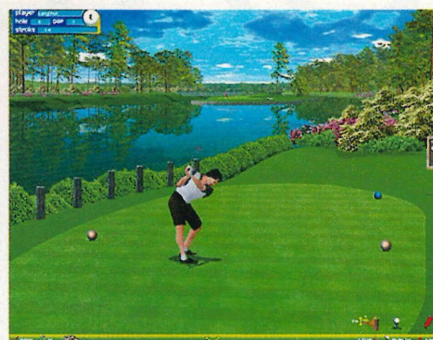
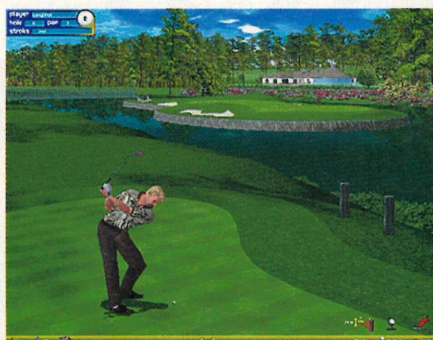
PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

As a child, I remember seeing a friend's father watching a golf tournament on TV and thinking that would be the most boring thing on earth to watch. I've always had this same sort of reaction to the PC golf genre. The tri-click and double-click swing simulating methods just never feel real, and most PC golf titles allow far too much aiming precision.

Another problem was the almost complete lack of a PGA Tour model in any of the games. Not being able to take on the pros, as in about every other sports simulation, was always a major disappointment. PGA 2000, however, is different.

Once you're ready to play a tournament, you can set up a game that lasts anywhere from 18 to 72 holes. You can also choose to play using one of the many multiplayer modes and challenge other golfers to rounds in cyberspace.

Season mode is where PGA really shines. You can create and tweak your very own pro tour, complete with your own field, qualifications for the events, courses included on the tour, and prize money. Everything from simple medal or skins matches to four-ball, scramble and even best ball Ryder Cup are included. In total, there are 12 different types of play. There's also a complete handicap



system and rules covering just about every golfing nuance ever.

You can create any tour you can think of (including NCAA tournaments and the European PGA Tour). Career statistics are compiled for your golfer during the seasons played, including money earned on the tour, making for a sort of pseudo-career mode.

Another powerful tool in PGA is the option-packed golfer editor. Here you choose everything from sex, skin tone and shirt to the style and colour of your shoes. Although the PGA sanctions PGA Championship Golf 2000, Sierra didn't arrange the individual licences necessary to include real golfers in the game. Thankfully, you can fashion your own list of 144 PGA Tour players complete

with realistic abilities that reflect how well they perform in real life. (An excellent PGA Tour player list can be found at www.coursedepot.com). Your golfers can also learn and increase their skills during seasons.

The third powerful editing tool provided in the game is the course architect. Five of the courses included with the game were designed by fans who created courses using the editor bundled with last year's game. You can even import the courses created for PGA Championship Golf 99 into the sequel using a course manager. All that you really need to provide more to this incredible mix is your own creativity and imagination.

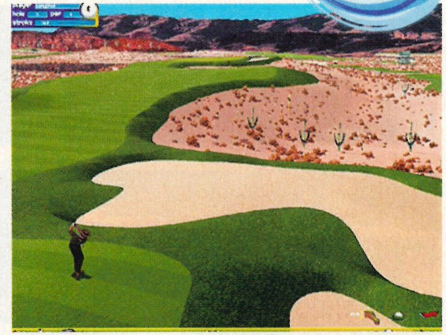
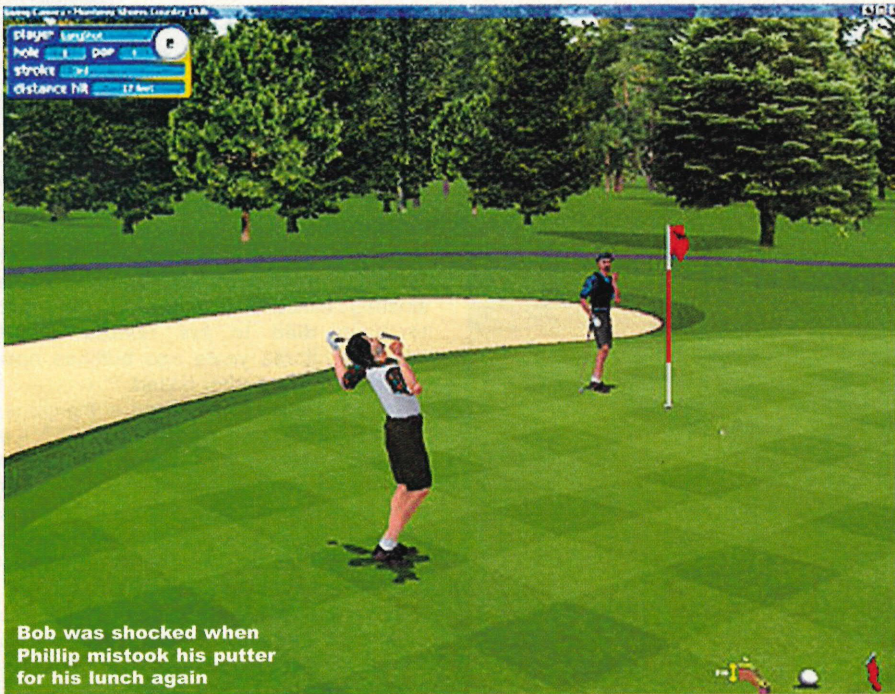
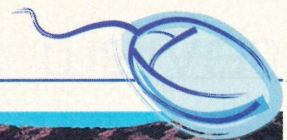
But the jewel in PGA's crown is Trueswing. The concept is pretty simple to describe: you use your mouse to move your golfer's club face through its arch. The orientation of the mouse will affect where your club strikes the ball and movement of the mouse is synchronised with your golfer.

Trueswing takes some getting used to but its level of realism is amazing. A tri-click method is included as an option for people who simply cannot live with it, but you should at least try to play the game using the mouse alone. If you don't take to it right away, keep at it. The extra effort is worthwhile.

PGA's ball physics don't disappoint either. Balls roll and bounce realistically. Fades look like fades and slices look like slices. You can set up and hit every type of golf shot that you can in real life. Course conditions are modelled accurately and the terrain can greatly affect your score.

The courses themselves are visually pleasing, although they do lack a bit of the photorealism found in the Links series and the detail in Golden Bear Challenge. These differences are more pronounced at lower resolutions, but at 1600 x 1200, the visuals are only slightly behind the competition. The interface is easy to use and provides all sorts





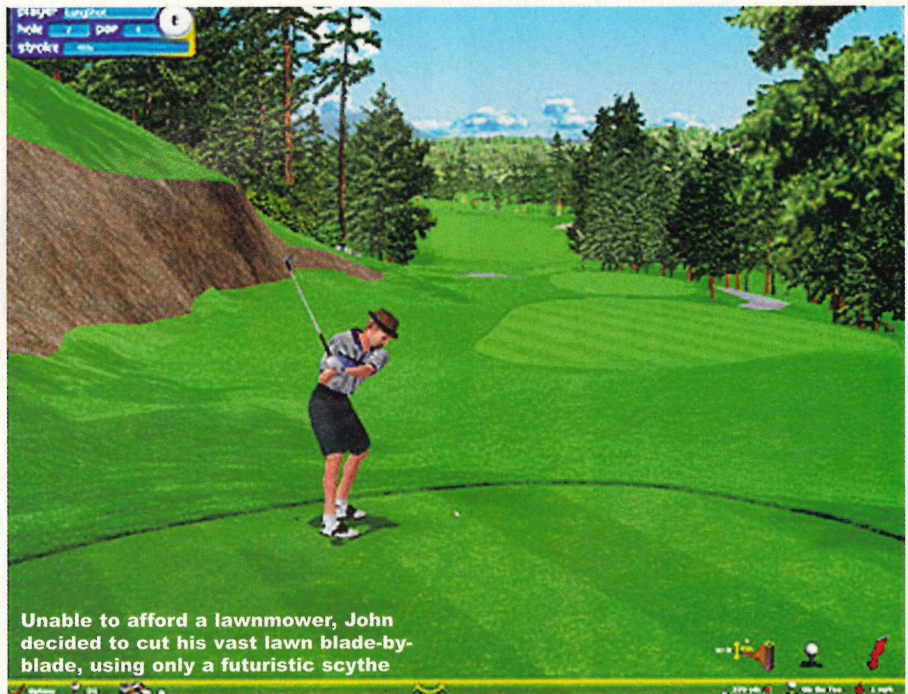
Bob was shocked when Phillip mistook his putter for his lunch again

of information in easy to read places. You can create an almost unlimited number of cameras to monitor your game. The sounds are very good, although the synchronisation of the crowd reactions can be a little off at times. Otherwise, birds chirp realistically and the wildlife sounds generally match the course environment.

But there are a few minor problems with PGA. When playing in season mode, the distances listed for average drives for the AI golfers are off by 100 yards - a cosmetic problem, but it should be fixed. Some people have complained the wind doesn't affect play as much as it should and weather effects would be a nice addition. Another minor complaint is the default view when you go to the statistics screen does not go to your golfer, so you have to scroll down a pretty long list to view your numbers. The caddie system is weak at times, especially when deciding iron choice, but eventually, you'll become comfortable making your own iron choices and swing types around the greens. Dropping the ball can also be an adventure; the drop area can be hard to find. Oh, and the crowds look like cardboard cut-outs.

None of the above problems are significant enough to tarnish the game much and can easily be fixed in a small patch. Setting up an Internet game is easy, and it only takes five minutes to create an account on the online server before you're in a chat room ready to go. The only multiplayer option missing is the ability to do a direct IP-to-IP connection.

PGA's main selling points are its customisability and realism. Other titles may compete in terms of graphics and ball physics, but no game provides the feel of a golf swing quite like this. Despite its flaws, PGA Championship Golf 2000 really is the finest golf simulation on the market today; no other golf game provides the purchaser with as complete a golf universe. It's a must-have for any fan of this genre.



Unable to afford a lawnmower, John decided to cut his vast lawn blade-by-blade, using only a futuristic scythe

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Min Req: P166, 32MB RAM
GDO Suggests: PII-233, 64MB RAM

PUBLISHER: SIERRA **DEVELOPER:** HEADGATE SOFTWARE
RELEASE: AUGUST 11

PROS

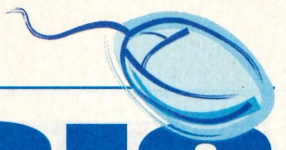
- + Excellent golf swing
- + Great ball physics
- + Customisability

CONS

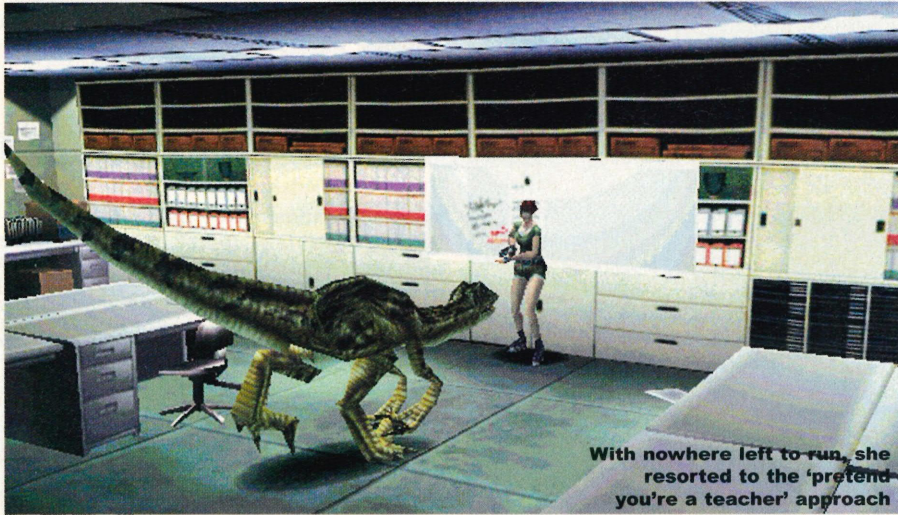
- Cut-out crowds
- Tricky to master

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

www.gamesdomain.co.uk/gdreview/zones/reviews/pc/may00/pgachamp2k.html



DINO CRISIS



Dino Crisis is a console conversion of the best-selling PlayStation title based around the survival-horror genre. The story is based on a team of Special Forces who go to repatriate a scientist called Dr Kirk who was thought to have died in his remote island laboratory three years ago but has now resurfaced on another island.

You play Regina, the heroine of the game, and along with the macho Gail and Rick - a man most likely to say "Leave me here to fight!" while mortally wounded - you must complete the mission. You might have guessed that not everything goes to plan. In fact as soon as you start out, you instantly lose a member of your team to a T-Rex.

The game plays exactly the same as Capcom's other survival horror games - it's the usual walk around, pick things up, take them somewhere and shoot a few things along the way. Sadly, while other PC titles demonstrate huge jumps in recent gaming technology, nothing so special is in evidence in Dino Crisis.

Lip-synching, curved textures, high resolutions and fluid animation have all made their way onto the PC, but Dino Crisis looks and feels as if it has come from the Jurassic era. The game stubbornly plays only at 640x480 and 16-bit colour. For any graphics card, that is a walk in the park. Annoyingly the developers have also left the stupid transition screens, of walking through doors, in the game. The jerky backgrounds also annoy - maybe they didn't realise a typical PC is a lot more powerful than a PlayStation.

The developers have made a bit of an effort though; at least the textures seem to have been worked on. Unfortunately, that's all I can say in favour of this release. The story and voice acting could have come from a schlock eighties action movies.

This console conversion is sloppy and poorly conceived. However, if you have dark console gaming fantasies you might forgive Dino Crisis for its ugly and simplistic translation to the PC.



SYSTEM Min Req: P133, 32MB RAM
REQUIREMENTS: GDO Suggests: P233, 64MB RAM

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
 PUBLISHER: VIRGIN RELEASED: AUG 11

PROS
 + Easy controls
 + Dino-fest

CONS
 - Jerky scenery
 - Low resolution
 - Poor storyline
 - Jurassic farce

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:
www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/DCrisisDemo.html

WORDS: KEVAN MANDER



DIABLO

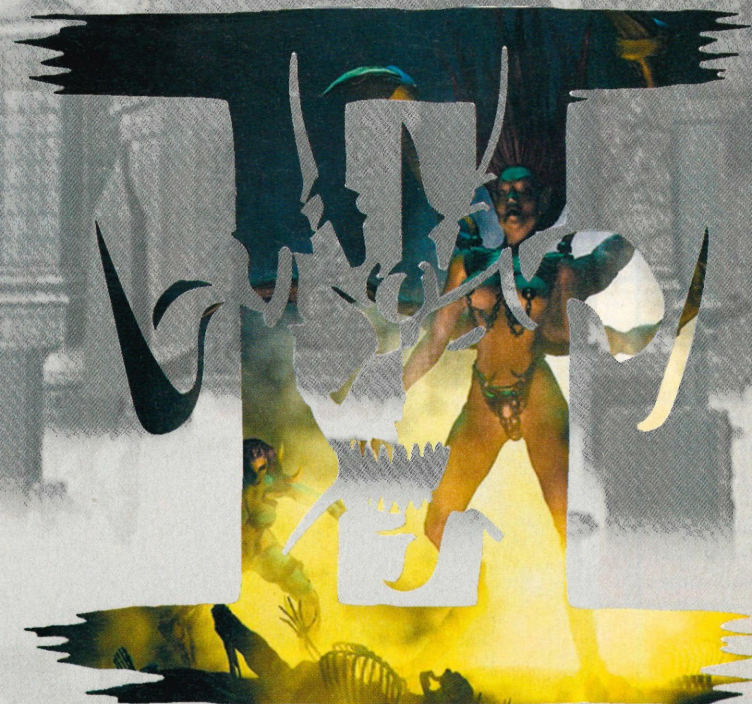
It's a stampede. Game fans of all walks of life are vacating their favourite online and offline games like water buffalo on migration. Lone players wander the empty, forgotten wastes of MUDs, Everquest and God knows what wondering where their friends have gone. After a three-year development period, far too long for some, Diablo is back.

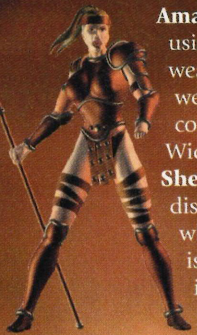
Diablo II is a rogue game in the style of its addictive predecessors, Moria and Angband, whose roots were deep in the RPG mythos. It also feels like other famous titles: Daggerfall for dungeon cleaning, Fallout for the top-down view, rats and other things dwelling in the caves (and Diablo, for example).

Don't be surprised at its simplicity - this is not an intellectual game. Taking Diablo's simple, proven gameplay, Blizzard has changed very little. The developers ignored superficial technical advances, and instead mixed the right elements together with a new 'evil has returned' story. The game plays like this: begin in town, run to dungeons, kill monsters and collect stuff, and use a portal or waypoints to get back to town. Sell your myriad of weapons, potions, and armour, transport back and repeat. Although there are quests, they are plot-driven sequences within each of the four acts making up the story. Reward comes in the form of enhanced equipment, attribute increases or just being able to move on to the next story section and kill more monsters.

Each of the four acts has a town where the character starts even after death. To avoid fighting all the way back to your last location, waypoints (or teleport stations), enable your character to return to your previous position. Upon death, all equipment and gold is left with the corpse at the place where the character died, but retrieval can be a very dangerous task, for the monsters that killed you will be waiting.

Blizzard has created two forms of multiplayer: open and realms. In realms games, found online at Battle.net, character information is saved on the Battle.net server and thus is less likely to be corrupted, hacked into or modified. These characters are restricted to the realms server and cannot be used in single player games. Open games have characters which are stored on the player's computer and can be used in both single and multiplayer games, taking the character back and forth from one to the other.





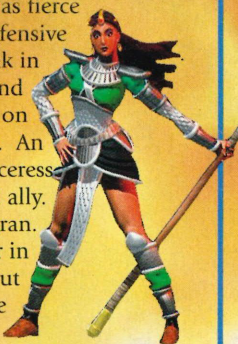
Amazon: Adept in using spears, thrown weapons, and bows as well as hand-to-hand combat. Wide range of skills. **She's like:** your distant cousin who lives in an isolationist enclave in Bolivia.

Paladin: Fantastic in multiplayer, this melee fighter can cast a range of protective spells and enchantments to benefit the entire group. **He's like:** your weird born-again Buddhist uncle who offended your mum by refusing her roast lamb at Easter.



Barbarian: Easy to play and powerful. Can acquire the ability to use two weapons at once for double damage potential. **He's like:** your older brother who used to beat you up when you were kids.

Sorceress: Has fierce offensive and defensive spells, but very weak in hand-to-hand combat and early on in the game. An experienced sorceress is a powerful ally. **She's like:** Your gran. You could take her in a straight fight, but you still don't argue with her.



Necromancer: A sorcerer specialising in raising the dead and summoning various creatures to do his bidding. **He's like:** that white-faced Goth bloke who comes to all your family get-togethers, but whom no-one ever talks to.



Death has been designed to be difficult and should be avoided if possible, as Diablo II uses an odd save system which has caused a great deal of confusion. It is identical to that of the original Diablo's multiplayer system - you have one character with one name, and only the character data is retained; the world information is not. Saving and exiting is the only way out but, on restarting, the world will repopulate with the monsters you already killed.

Blizzard has provided two solutions to alleviate difficulties. A personal stash or treasure chest in town holds almost a whole set of armour, a weapon, and a ton of cash. Picking up armour and weapons from the stash, you can just go charging right back into the action (sometimes purchasing the odd additional item in town). The other solution is to save and exit, then restart the game, when the character's equipment and gold will be scattered around town and can be easily gathered. Either way, there is a loss of continuity in the single player game, and we found it best to keep the game running until we completed an act in order to avoid the monsters respawning. Feel free to abuse this to gain levels and cash, since respawning monsters are good experience fodder!

Character progression is based on the experience you gain by killing monsters. When enough die, levels are gained and points can be distributed among five attributes affecting strength, dexterity, vitality

and energy. What each does is clearly spelled out - for example, dexterity affects the character's stamina and life.

That's not all, however. One skill point per level can be applied to a skill tree. Various skills broken up into categories become available with the character's level. Points can be applied multiple times to one skill, making it more powerful, or used to get through the tree to higher level skills. The only drawback is that skill points have to be wasted on useless skills to enable you to progress to the top of the tree. To attain the better skills one must go through five to seven other lesser skills, and those are points you'll want to use on the best. Regardless, the character can use only one skill at a time.

The most important aspect about skills and attributes rests with multiplayer. Paladins will be popular chaps on the online sever Battle.net, for instance. They have highly trained group skills or auras, such as fanaticism which increases the attack rate for all party members, or else lots of mana (from a high energy attribute) and a high prayer skill allowing the Paladin to heal party members.

Sadly, Diablo II's wilderness environments are not as far reaching as Baldur's Gate's; in comparison, they seem rather drab. And although the limited light in dungeons (borrowed from Nox) creates a tense, skin-crawling atmosphere, the monster types are repeated over and over again, just increasing in strength and abilities.



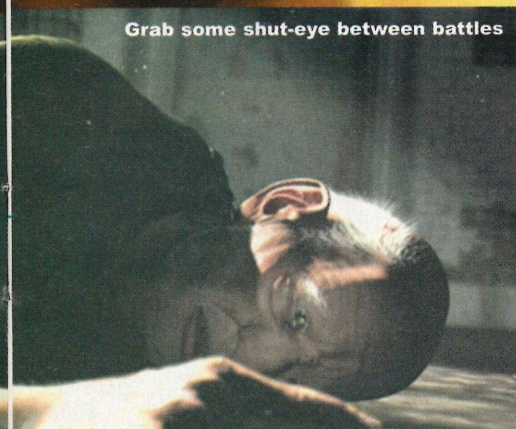
And the intelligence of the monsters is somewhat sad at best - many walk up to you for a beating, although archer skeletons do stand away and other ranged attack monsters run, stop, turn and fire when you chase them. Move the mouse over the monster, press the right or left mouse button to chose which attack, skill or spell to use, and hold. Repeat until they all die. But the strategy comes in dealing with hordes of the little fellows - much like the lice in Angband which multiply repeatedly, the sheer numbers can overwhelm a character.

Blizzard took its sweet time writing it, and yet Diablo II sounds like nothing amazing. We won't kid you - it's totally senseless. It sports sub-par 640x480 graphics, recycled music, simplistic click-fest gameplay and a bizarre and annoying save system. Compatibility problems with several graphics cards and CD drives have added to the frustration. And yet Diablo II will suck you in, like water on desert sand. Hours will go by without notice, coffee cups will litter the kitchens and yes, people will forget to relieve themselves. We haven't had this much fun since we weaned ourselves off Angband.

For all the madness surrounding the title, and all us poor addicted gamers who are suffering wrist and finger pain from pressing the silly mouse buttons, Diablo 2 is like a drug. And you probably already own a copy.



Grab some shut-eye between battles



SYSTEM Min Req: P-233, 32MB RAM
REQUIREMENTS: GDO Suggests: P-233, 64MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: SIERRA ■ DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD
 ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

PROS

- + Simple, extremely addictive gameplay
- + It's Diablo
- + You're going to buy it anyway...

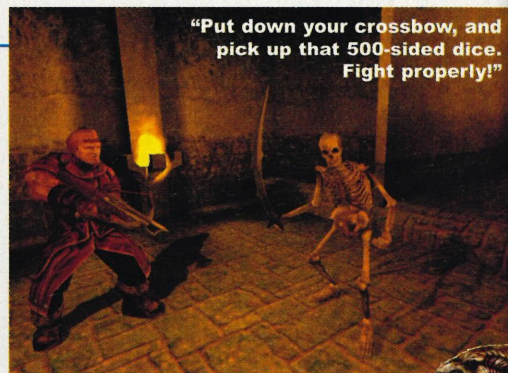
CONS

- Dated graphics
- Repetitive and simple gameplay

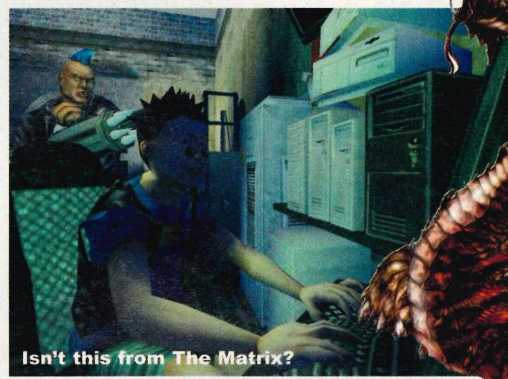
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www.gamesdomain.co.uk/gdreview/zones/reviews/pc/jul00/d2.html
www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/Diablo2.html

VAMPIRE THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION



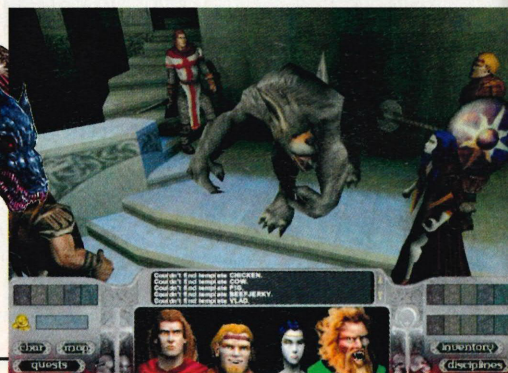
"Put down your crossbow, and pick up that 500-sided dice. Fight properly!"



Isn't this from The Matrix?



Hit Robert Smith!
Do it! Now!





Red Riding Hood realised she was trapped in an Anne Rice book

Most RPG fans have been subjected to the heated debates comparing the merits of pen and paper vs. computer RPGs and the wishful prophecies that one day, the meek shall indeed live up to the potential of their tabletop brethren. Behold, your redemption is at hand!

Redemption is the first computer transition of a popular RPG, Vampire: The Masquerade. What we have here is a combat-intensive title that (in single-player mode at least) plays a similar game to Diablo.

The action is usually presented in an over-the-shoulder view, which can be rotated around your character. Each "mission" consists of several sub-quests marked by cut-scenes initiated by arriving at a particular location and concluding in an advancement screen where experience is converted into new stats and disciplines.

Overall, the game is very straightforward hack and slash. Thankfully, halfway through the storyline, you are taken from medieval times to 1999 to fight in a modern setting with modern-ranged weapons, and things do pick up a bit. But soon frustration sets back in as you realise the implementation of ranged weapons leave a lot to be desired with constant ammo and efficiency problems.

The plot is largely devoid of twists and turns but the quality of the dialogue and voice-acting is a pleasant surprise. Quite a bit of effort has gone into the story and, perhaps consequently, both the story and the gameplay are truly linear. Regardless of where the story leads, the missions keep their "go to X, find Y, kill Z" structure.

Our hero Christof, a crusader of unparalleled valour, is badly wounded during a battle and is nursed back to life by nun Anezka. The two eventually fall for each other and readily cast away their holy vows, but unfortunately Christof's heroics soon attract unwanted attention and he is turned into a vampire to take part in the political struggles between the clans.

The graphics are beautiful and sophisticated with a substantial number of objects on screen and the character models are realistically animated. Their only real problem is that thanks to some clipping problems, it can be hard to tell whether you have made contact in combat or not.

You initially control only Christof but new members soon join your "coterie" to take it to its maximum of four. The disciplines (spells) are what make this game interesting. There are about 75 of them but many duplicate each other in effect, or otherwise serve little purpose in the game. Aside from the expected healing and damaging stuff, there are disciplines to mask yourself, gain control over other creatures and summon various minions to your aid.

Since physical combat is essentially point and click, the key to the battles are the disciplines. And there lies the attraction of the game: trying out various disciplines, coupling them for best effect and getting through to the end of the level in good shape to meet and kill the big boss.

The friendly characters usually get the job done when providing support in battle. Sometimes though, they forget about the 'intelligence' part of artificial intelligence (and this applies to friend and foe alike) and

characters will just sit there while others are locked in mortal battle about two feet away. The real problem is how your allies will waste away their precious blood by using disciplines at inappropriate times. Another problem is the inability to save on demand, which is both a tension-enhancing blessing and a hair-pulling curse.

Nihilistic will be releasing a patch to address some of these issues. Blood expenditure will be curtailed, a "save at any time" feature will be provided, as will a pause function to aid tactical combat. à la Baldur's Gate.

The single player game and the storytelling multiplayer game are truly split personalities. The multiplayer game allows one of the players to assume the role of the storyteller (i.e. dungeon master) and set up the story, the objectives, level layout and role-playing other characters for the others to enjoy. You are obviously constrained with the facilities provided, but regardless, the whole gameplay turns from a mechanical process into a social one. In theory, that is.

For starters, it is not easy for the storyteller to move around the world and react fast to unexpected actions of the players due to a clumsy interface. There is little you can do other than the aforementioned tasks with the built-in tools. Very extensive changes are possible using the released software development kit, but such coding will be beyond many would-be storytellers unless new modifications, incorporating more capable storyteller tools into the game, are released.

More importantly, the multiplayer interface is poorly featured. You cannot send private messages to players or ignore people. There is no way to ping other players, to search for other players or games, and no way to tell if a game is closed or not. To add insult to the injury, once you attempt to join a game, you have to log off the system and log on again just to be able to try another game. When a game gets going, lag may be a big problem, although this will also be addressed in the patch.

The single-player game may perhaps be saved yet. As for multiplayer, while currently there isn't a good environment for role-playing to prosper, with a game like this much depends on the community. With good tools, publicly available "skeleton" resources and an improved WON interface things could change very quickly. But for now, bide your time.

SYSTEM Min Req: P200, 64MB RAM
REQUIREMENTS: GDO Suggests: PII-400, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER: NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

PROS

- + Well-written background story
- + Revolutionary multiplayer mode
- + Looks good, sounds good

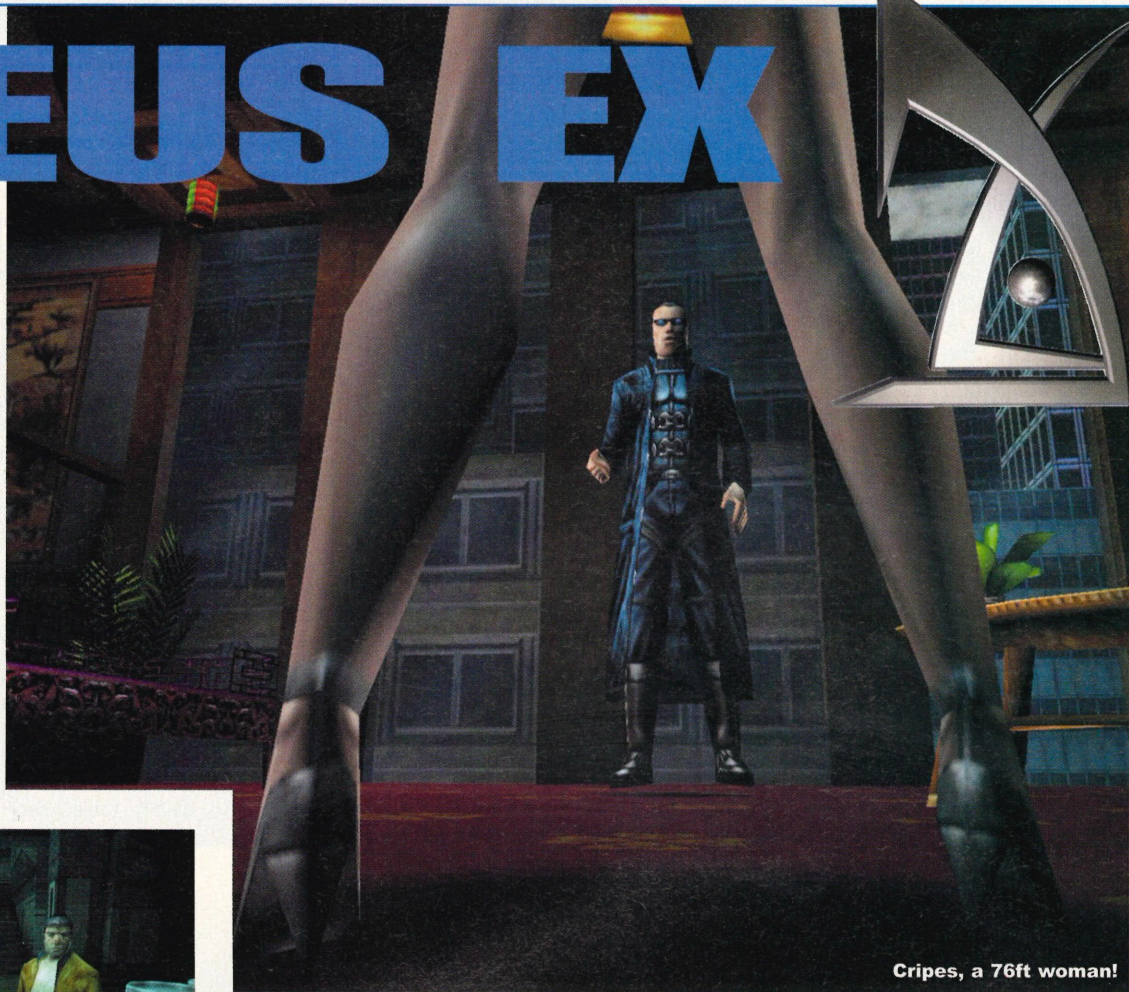
CONS

- Tends to drag on in places
- Chaotic combat mode
- Severe multiplayer problems
- Allies not too bright

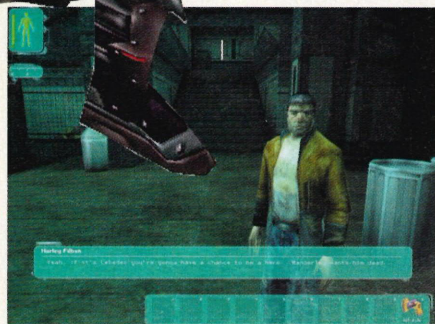
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www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/Vampire_Demo.html
www.gamesdomain.co.uk/cheats/PC/game12443.html

DEUS EX



Cripes, a 76ft woman!



After last month's dismal *Daikatana*, developer Ion Storm lost a lot of credibility. But no-one seriously expected *Daikatana* to be any good after the amount of dirty laundry it aired in public. That is not true of their latest offering, *Deus Ex*. Billed as a genre-busting "action role-playing" adventure, the anticipation surrounding it has been matched only by the derision surrounding *Daikatana*.

Deus Ex is an intriguing game. It takes traditional first-person action values, neatly removes the adrenaline-fuelled violent heart of such games, and transplants in a number of themes much more common to role-playing games. You take the role of JC Denton, mechanically-enhanced secret agent, as he joins the fight against an international terrorist organisation; cue standard Hollywood conspiracy-theory plot.

As you play, you accumulate skill points which can be spent to enhance Denton's abilities. A dozen or so categories are available - from skills in a variety of weapon types to hacking and lock-picking. The upgradeable weapons are so diverse you will need to play through several times to become fully proficient in their use.

Augmentations for your nanomechanical implants become available as you progress, making for new talents and abilities. By choosing your own strengths you can begin to change the way *Deus Ex* behaves.

Deus Ex's producer Warren Spector was previously responsible for *System Shock* (another first-person RPG with action tendencies) and those who play both will notice many similarities. This is by no means a bad thing - *System Shock* was fantastic, and fans of it will know what to expect from a Spector game.

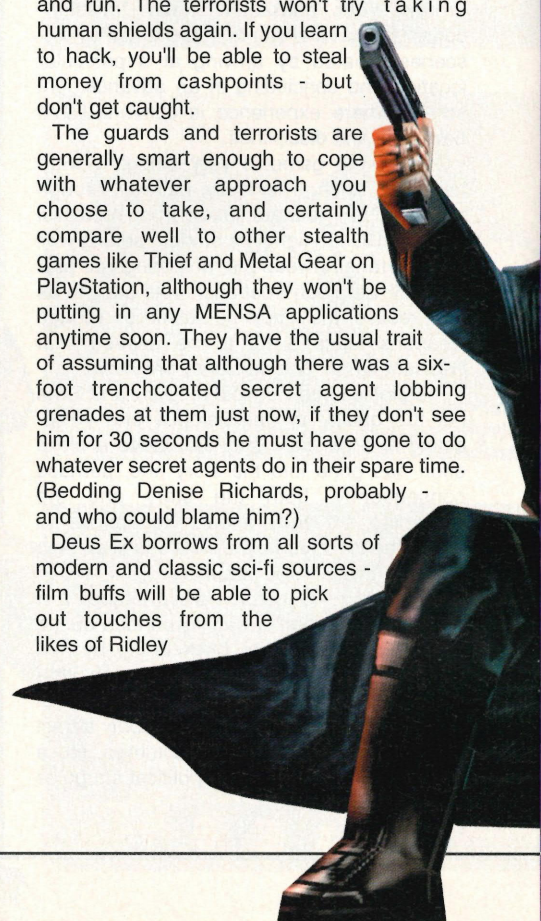
They won't be disappointed. As you move through *Deus Ex*'s expansive levels, you are free to approach each situation as you see fit. In one of the early levels, terrorists are holding hostages in a subway station. As you approach, you see the entrance is heavily guarded and receive a warning that the station is rigged to explode. Do you take a frontal assault with heavy weaponry and accept the risk of a stray bullet setting off the charges? A little scouting reveals a vent system leading down to the platform - perhaps this would make for a better vantage point to drop the terrorists. It is even possible, with gas, knockout darts and melee weapons, to take a non-lethal approach - but be prepared for some cold looks from your colleagues on your return. No-one likes a sympathiser.

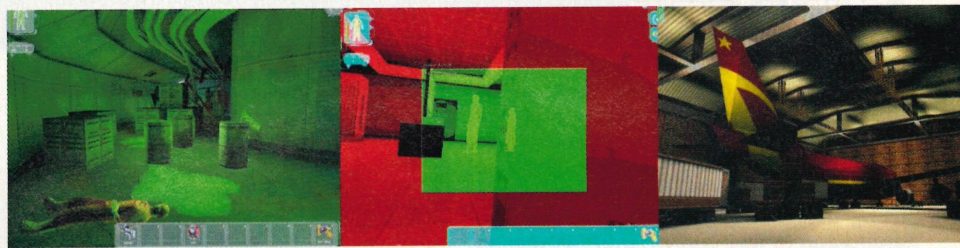
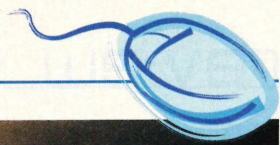
Refreshingly, *Deus Ex* will challenge your morality from time to time - so long as you achieve your objectives, any approach will

lead to progress through the levels. You want to blow up the subway and kill the hostages? Go ahead; throw a grenade down the stairs and run. The terrorists won't try taking human shields again. If you learn to hack, you'll be able to steal money from cashpoints - but don't get caught.

The guards and terrorists are generally smart enough to cope with whatever approach you choose to take, and certainly compare well to other stealth games like *Thief* and *Metal Gear* on PlayStation, although they won't be putting in any Mенса applications anytime soon. They have the usual trait of assuming that although there was a six-foot trenchcoated secret agent lobbing grenades at them just now, if they don't see him for 30 seconds he must have gone to do whatever secret agents do in their spare time. (Bedding Denise Richards, probably - and who could blame him?)

Deus Ex borrows from all sorts of modern and classic sci-fi sources - film buffs will be able to pick out touches from the likes of Ridley





Scott, Paul Verhoeven and John Woo, and gaming influences range from Thief to MDK and the plot twists and turns like a John Grisham novel. Derivative? Certainly, and why not?

JC's colleagues and friends can prove a little one-dimensional at times, though, and this is compounded by some deadpan voice acting. This fits surprisingly well into the film noir status quo, and through your choices in the game JC can either become the stooge of the government,

or, through questioning their actions, develop a more complex role. There is no 'correct' way to behave towards the other characters, no right and wrong approach to situations, and no one route leads to greater rewards than any other.

Deus Ex doesn't constrain players to a specific moral

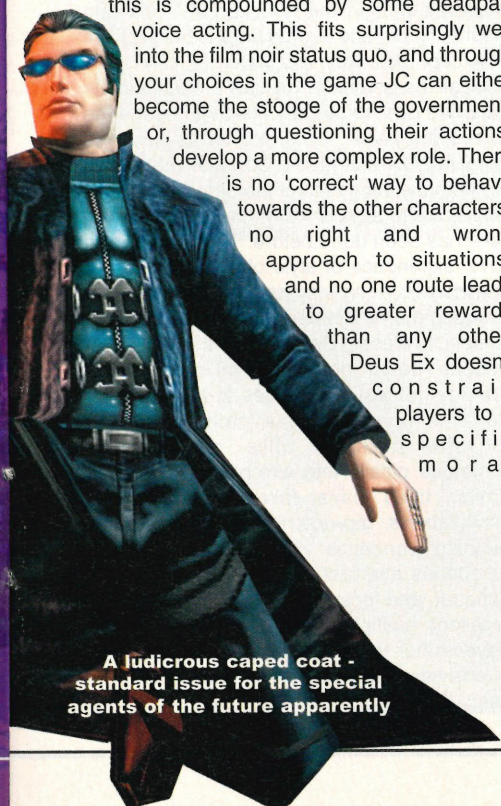
approach; rather like Messiah, it leaves players free to indulge their imaginations.

But don't think that this attitude means Deus Ex doesn't conform to the usual role-playing and action game clichés. Government agent JC finds most of his equipment and high-tech nanoimplants in wooden crates littering the levels. Passwords and security codes are left lying about on secretaries' desks for all the world to see. You can use the indestructible crates as shields. If this bothers you, steer clear.

The graphics are sadly a little on the basic side. Deus Ex is based on a modified Unreal engine and, while excellent in its day, it begins to show its age a little - although it compares well with Soldier of Fortune (which used a shined-up Quake II engine).

Nonetheless, you should not think the age of the engine means you won't need a powerful PC to enjoy it.

Deus Ex is what you make it. For some, it is a Metal Gear Solid clone; for others, a System Shock-style action-role-playing blend; for others, an out-and-out shoot 'em up. Deus Ex plays like watching a good action film, but in this epic you make the plot up yourself, determine the personality of the lead and carry out the stunts. Bring imagination, an open mind and be prepared to step into Keanu's shoes. For now, though it has flaws, Deus Ex is the ultimate in escapist entertainment.



A ludicrous caped coat - standard issue for the special agents of the future apparently



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Min Req: PII-233, 32MB RAM
GDO Suggests: PIII-500, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER: ION STORM

■ RELEASE: AUGUST 4

PROS

- + Unconstrained gameplay
- + Expansive levels
- + Massive variety
- + Compulsive

CONS

- Guards can be daft
- Clichéd
- Slightly basic graphics

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

www.gamesdomain.co.uk/gdreview/zones/reviews/pc/jul00/deusmenu.html
www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/deusexdemo.html

DARK REIGN II



The latest in Birmingham clubwear, trust us

It is 2506. Earth has become a wasteland, and is barely capable of supporting life. Vast bio-domes have been built, separating society's elite who can afford the inflated prices for dome living quarters, from the underclass who are forced to live in the barren wasteland outside. A series of seismic disturbances herald the end of the planet just as the disparate groups of outsiders unite, and not everyone will be able to escape the planet in time.

If that summary sounds familiar, it's probably because you read the Earth 2150 review in last month's GDO. Dark Reign II is superficially similar to Earth 2150 in a number of ways besides the plot. Both offer a 3D take on the traditional real-time strategy formula and attempt to weld tried-and-tested gameplay with next-generation graphics. We were mighty pleased with Earth 2150, so we were looking forward to seeing how Dark Reign II performed.

First impressions show Dark Reign II comes with a large portion of typical Pandemic Studios flair. Its option and menu screens are presented beautifully and this sense of style and panache is heightened when beginning a game. You will be struck immediately by the excellence of Dark Reign II's 3D engine which succeeds in working equally well in a



traditional overhead view and from a soldier's eye view at ground level - you'll need to use both to command your forces effectively.

Players of most other real-time strategy games will feel instantly at home. The interface is very intuitive and quick to learn and, while simple, it has a surprising amount of depth of control for those who are willing to involve themselves. Most of the traditional niceties are here - units can be queued for construction, many buildings can be built at once, and having defence emplacements automatically connected with electric fencing eliminates tedious wall-erecting.

Dark Reign II has a full range of ground, air and naval troops for both the JDA (the dome-dwelling police force-turned-army) and the ostracised Sprawlers. Commendably, the balance between each different unit is almost perfect. Larger tanks are slow-moving and although heavily-armoured are vulnerable to squads of smaller, quicker infantry or air attacks. For this reason alone mixed armies are a must. The cheaper, less powerful foot soldiers never become obsolete, and single-unit rushes - although possible - are made extremely difficult.

Major structures are built with one-use construction pods made in the ever-crucial command centre, and prove to be impressively imposing. The variety of base defences are expensive but, used carefully, are highly effective. Upgrading factories and facilities allows a greater range of more powerful units to be built. Later highlights include the versatile spies, who can disguise themselves as enemy units to infiltrate their bases, and the imposing Independence Day-style Sky Fortress which can eliminate entire buildings with one shot, albeit at a hefty price tag.

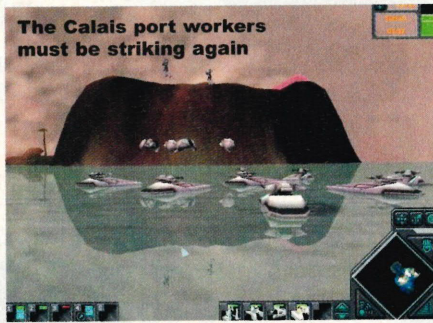
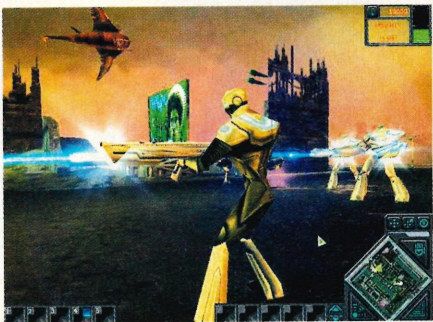
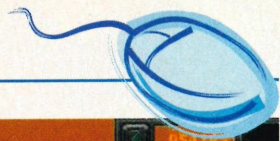
As Dark Reign II's missions continue, things only get better. The variety of special effects

and neat graphical touches serve to heighten the thrill of watching your painstakingly-assembled force raze the enemy base before them, and for once the game saves plenty of surprises for later. Dark Reign II has plenty to keep you playing.

Both the JDA and Sprawler campaigns are full of variety, and some excellent video clips advance the plot between missions. The computer proves a strong opponent and it is necessary to spend some time ensuring your base is defensible before beginning construction: if there is a weak point in your fortifications, the constant probing attacks of the enemy will find it. Terrain plays an important part in this procedure - hills and mountains provide a good natural barrier from all except the airborne units.

But all the graphics and slick presentation in the world can't raise Dark Reign II beyond the sum of its parts - it is, for all its flair and panache, Command and Conquer with knobs on. With the exception of the genuinely useful mobile camera, everything that Dark Reign II does has been done before. Those seeking a novel experience or style of play should look elsewhere.

Among the new breed of real-time strategy games, however, Dark Reign II stands tall. Despite being derivative of many other strategy games, it manages to mix the best elements of each into a professional and cohesive package while avoiding the numerous pitfalls into which so many other similar titles have fallen. It has Total Annihilation's top-notch interface, typically stunning Pandemic visuals, the deep plot, cut-scenes and fast pace of Command and Conquer, and tops it off with a wide variety of excellent multiplayer options. If you have played other recent real-time strategy games extensively it might bore you - but if not, Dark Reign II is the pick of the bunch.



SYSTEM Min Req: PII-266, 64MB RAM, 3D card
REQUIREMENTS: GDO Suggests: PII-333, 64MB RAM, 3D card

■ PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC STUDIOS
 ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

<p>PROS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Interface simple and effective + Strong missions + Unit balance just right + Good use of terrain 	<p>CONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very unoriginal - Similar to many recent games
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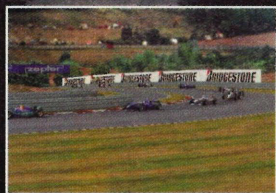
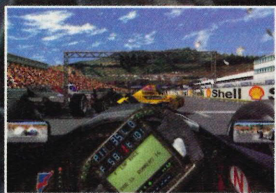
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WORDS: MIKE SMITH



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Introduction

Welcome to another Kids section. There's lots going on this month so we've brought you the news on the latest movies and games.

The Pokémon championships are well underway and you can find out where the roadshow will be appearing near you, so make sure you don't miss out. We know that most of you are totally Pokécrazy and if you can't get enough of Ash, Pikachu, and his Poképals, visit our brand new Pokémon mini-site at:

www.kidsdomain.co.uk/kids/pokemon

where you'll find everything you could possible want to know about those crazy little critters.

Don't forget to enter our competition for the chance to win one of 20 Rayman Activity Centres, and if you have any comments about the magazine or the site, drop us a line and let us know at: gdo@gamesdomain.com

Jokes

Patient:
Doctor! Doctor! I feel like a pair of curtains!
Doctor: Pull yourself together then.

Patient:
Doctor! Doctor! I feel like a pack of cards.
Doctor: I'll deal with you later.

Patient:
Doctor! Doctor! Everyone keeps ignoring me.
Doctor: Next please!

Patient:
Doctor! Doctor! I've lost my memory.
Doctor: When did this happen?
Patient: When did what happen?

Patient: Doctor! Doctor! I feel like a sheep.
Doctor: That's baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad!

Patient: Doctor! Doctor! I feel like a bridge.
Doctor: What's come over you?
Patient: Two cars and a truck.

We have a new look

www.kidsdomain.co.uk has been given a new look and a new way to get around it. On the redesigned, animated Kids Domain website you can find exactly what you want, really fast.

You'll still find the fun things - like our Pokémon mini-site, crafts, recipes and activities - but you can now keep up-to-date with all your favourite characters from Wibbly Pig to Harry Potter in the new book corner.

You'll be surprised by how different it is, so why not come and have a look and let us know what you think?

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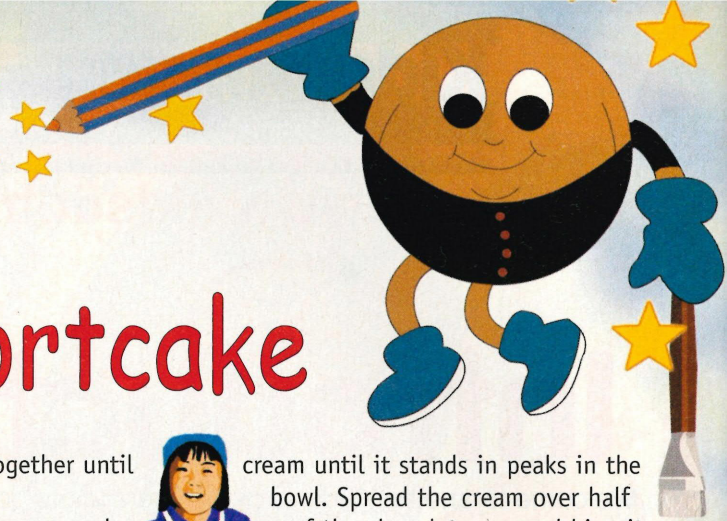
COMING SOON...

NEWSLETTER

TOY REVIEWS

DAYS OUT GUIDE





Strawberry Shortcake

This recipe is ideal for enjoying during hot summer afternoons. Remember: *always ask an adult for help when cooking.*

This recipe is rated easy/**AVERAGE**/hard to make.

What you will need:

- 175g plain flour
- A pinch of salt
- 115g butter
- 50g caster sugar
- 100g plain chocolate
- 140ml whipping cream
- 440g strawberries
- Icing sugar for dusting



What you need to do:

Preheat the oven to 150 degrees C / 300 degrees F / Gas Mark two.

Put the flour, salt and butter into a mixing bowl (it may be easier to chop the butter into small pieces before adding it to the flour).

Rub the ingredients together until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs. Add the sugar and knead the mixture until it forms a ball.

Put some flour on a clean surface and, using a rolling pin, roll the mixture out until it is about 1cm thick. Then cut out some circles (you could use a cookie cutter or a cup for this).

Place the circles on a greased baking sheet and bake in the oven for about 50 minutes, or until the shortbread is golden. Remove from the oven and leave to cool on a wire rack.

Carefully melt the chocolate in a microwave oven, and spread it on the cooled shortbread circles.

Leave these to set. Lightly whip the

cream until it stands in peaks in the bowl. Spread the cream over half of the chocolate-covered biscuits (keep a little back to use as decoration).

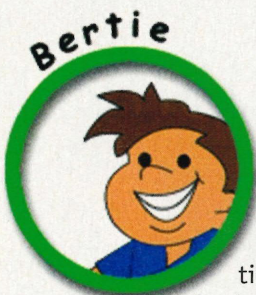
Wash the strawberries and cut most of them in half. Keep some whole to put on top of the biscuits for decoration.

Put the halved strawberries on top of the cream and put a non-creamed biscuit on top of this. On the very top put a dab of cream and a whole strawberry to decorate.

Finally, dust with icing sugar.



Your finished cakes should look like this



Bertie's Space Adventure

Bertie wanted to have another adventure and he knew just the one. Closing his eyes tight he wished as hard as he could that he could meet a spaceman. His nose tickled, and when Bertie opened his eyes again there was a little green man standing in front of him.

"Hello," said Bertie.

"Hello, earthling," said the alien, who was called Zap. "Would you like to ride in my spaceship?"

"That would be great," said Bertie as a door magically appeared in the side of the UFO.

Inside there were lots of little men who looked exactly like Zap. They pressed lots of buttons, the door closed and the spaceship took off into the sky. Bertie looked out of the window, and saw his house moving further and further away until he couldn't see it any more.

"Where are we going," asked Bertie.

"We are going to our planet," said Zap. "We're taking you to meet our leader." Bertie could hardly wait to get there. Lots of stars flew by as they turned left at Venus and headed straight past Pluto.

When the spaceship landed Zap told Bertie to follow him. The planet was bright pink and covered in green mist so it was a surprise when he saw a great big palace. Zap and the rest of his alien

friends walked into the palace.

"I will take you to our leader," said Zap. Bertie could not stop staring as he looked around. Zap showed him everything, but they could not find the leader.

"He must be out," said Zap. "He will be very sorry that he didn't meet you. He has been watching you."

"I'm sorry too," said Bertie. "But I have to go home now. It is almost tea time."

Zap took Bertie back to the spaceship and flew him back to earth. Bertie waved goodbye to his friend, promising himself that he would visit Zap again.

By Caroline Wheaton



Watch out for the Pokémon Championship Tour

Are you ready to be a Pokémon Master? From more than one million entries, 2,000 lucky people have been picked to take part in the Pokémon Championships and compete for the ultimate Pokémon prize - to be the UK's first and only true Pokémon Master. Regional qualifying heats began on July 14 but there is plenty of time to catch the rest of the action. The Nintendo Tour will be travelling throughout the country until August so you can watch with baited breath as boys and girls battle it out for the number one spot.

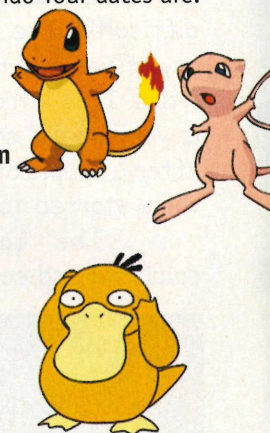
Battles will be held on Pokémon Stadium on the N64, using each trainers' chosen Pokémon from their Red or Blue games. The winner from each round will go on to represent their region in the championship finals which will take place in London in September 2000.

For those of you not competing in the championship, there will be loads of other Pokémon stuff happening on the Nintendo Tour to keep you amused. One highlight will be a

games arena where you can trade your Pokémon with other trainers and play all the games - including the yet to be released Pokémon Snap. And don't forget to bring your Game Boy because Mew - the rare 151st Pokémon - will be available for download at every single event.

Get ready for a Pokémon rumble; the Nintendo Tour dates are:

- 27/7/00 - Metrocentre, Gateshead
- 29/7/00 - Gyle Centre, Edinburgh
- 31/7/00 - Buchanan Galleries, Glasgow
- 02/8/00 - Castlecourt, Belfast Co Antrim
- 04/8/00 - Omni Centre, Dublin
- 06/8/00 - Queen's Arcade, Cardiff
- 08/8/00 - Bargate Centre, Southampton
- 10/8/00 - Trafford Centre, Manchester
- 12/8/00 - Broadmead Centre, Bristol
- 14/8/00 - Meadowhall, Sheffield



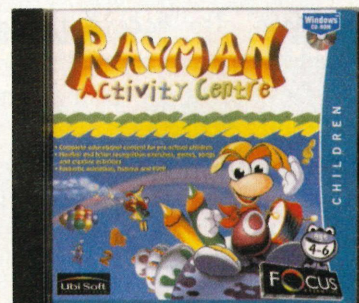
Rayman Competition



We have 20 copies of the Rayman Activity Centre to give away. All you have to do to win one is colour in this picture of Rayman and friends.

Send the finished picture with your name and address to: Kids Domain, Rayman Activity Competition, Games Domain, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 7SS. Closing date for entries: August 31.*

*The editor's decision is final.

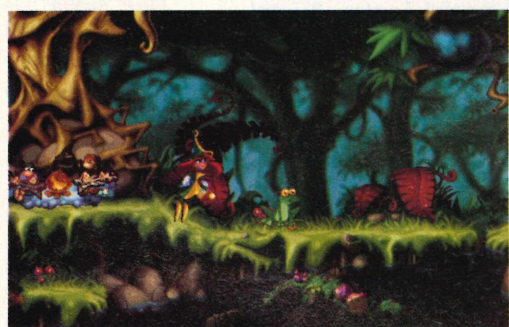


Rayman Activity Centre

Enter Rayman's world where all the characters have hands and feet but no arms and legs. Rayman and Betilla the fairy guide you through an adventure with lots of games to play along the way.

Rayman Activity Centre features ten individual learning games and three levels of difficulty. The characters will be familiar to any of you who have played the original Rayman titles. It is introduced by Betilla the fairy who is very sweet and very cute, but I found that after a couple of hours of playing this game her voice started to grate on my nerves.

The backgrounds are well drawn, colourful and contain a wealth of detail



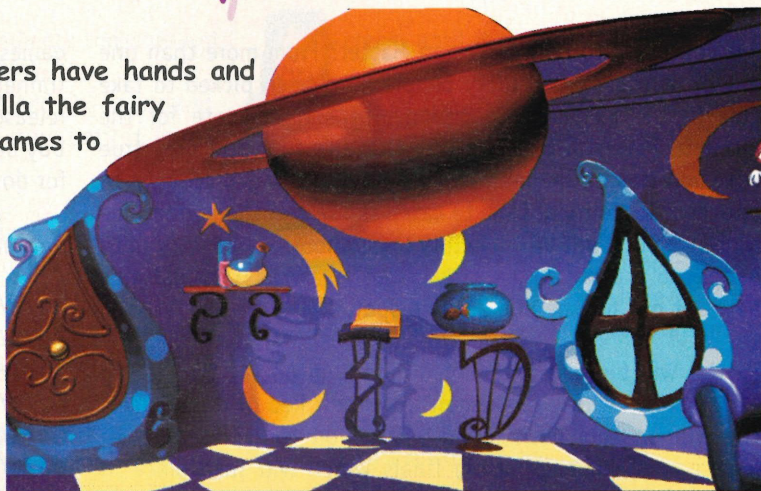
that helps to build up the cartoon atmosphere of this title. Many of the games included are multisensory with something for the ears as well as the eyes. Each game has its own set of sound effects, so none of them ever get too repetitive. Effects are particularly well used in 'The Echoing Caves' (a sound matching game) and 'The Clown in Love'. The instructions are very clear with the purpose of icons being fully explained straight away. If you forget at any time what each one is for, all you have to do is hold your cursor over it and it will be explained again. This will be especially useful for children who are just starting to use a computer independently. To help younger children, the explanations are backed up by visual examples that can be played as many times as they are needed.

The principles or models around which the games are developed are not new ones but they are certainly classics. 'Space Toons', for example, is just like Space Invaders. Original ideas or not, all the games are given an imaginative twist that is pure Rayman magic. After each correct answer, or completed level, a player is rewarded with a piece of animation. These are collected and can be viewed again afterwards from inside Betilla's house. Inside the house, parents can also access the guide that tracks a child's progress through the levels.

Developed by teachers and suitable for Key Stage One and early Key Stage Two, this game is very educationally sound. It aids in the development of hand to eye co-ordination, memory, reading, writing, listening and IT skills and allows parents to monitor children's progress. Rayman Activity Centre has also made the combination of education and entertainment seem effortless, making it incredibly fun to learn.

In short, it's great!

Reviewed by Caroline Wheaton



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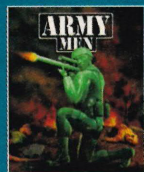
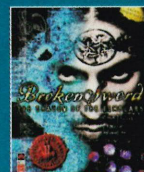
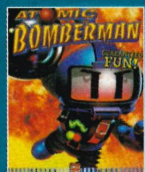
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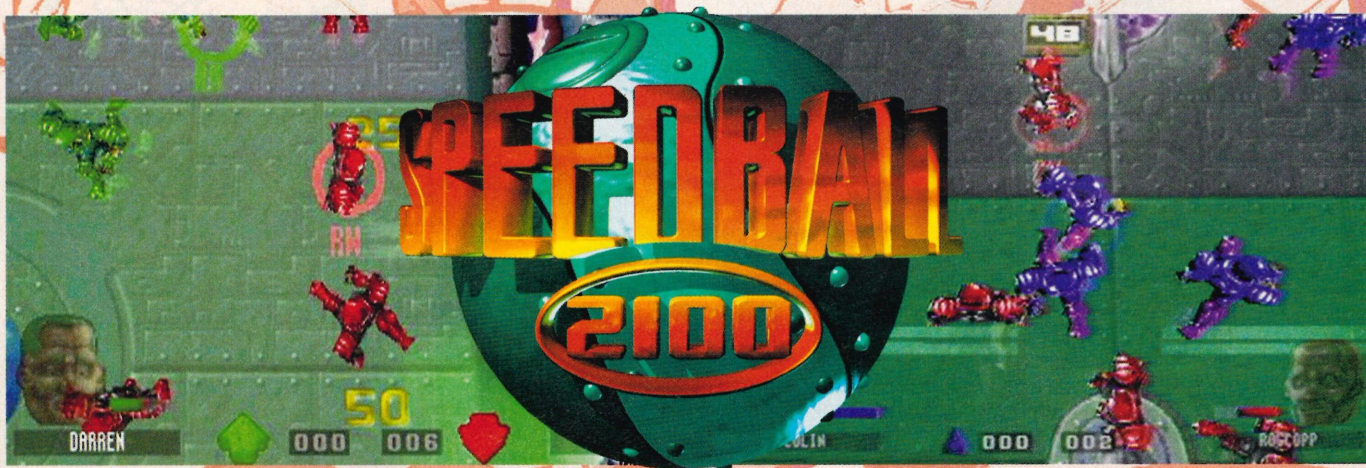
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BITMAP BROTHERS: "WE LIKE VIOLENCE!"

THE ORIGINAL ROCKSTAR DEVELOPERS TALK TO GDO ABOUT SPEEDBALL 2100, Z2 AND SMALL-SCREEN BRUTALITY



The Bit Bros relax in summer casuals



Say "Bitmap Brothers release" to any gamer over a certain age and watch their reaction. Time was, those words were an instant passport to sales success, and fantastic games. The Bitmaps still describe themselves as, "the original 'rockstar' developers, prizing quality over quantity and depth over glitz."

They were responsible for classic games like Xenon, Gods and Chaos Engine, all still imitated today. Sadly though, we haven't seen anything from the Brothers for some time. But that's all about to change. As Games Domain revealed back in September, the Bitmaps are hard at work bringing the superb, ultra-violent Speedball II into the 21st century.

For those who don't remember this immortal game - which was best known on the Amiga - Speedball was a tale of a future sport based on football, but with a twist. In this 'sport' the ball was held in the hands, and violence was not only allowed, it was encouraged. Players

took the reins of small-time team Brutal Deluxe in a quest for League and Cup glory. Winning matches resulted in cash bonuses, which could be spent on buying new players or upgrading those already in the team. If players took a kicking, they could be stretchered off and were unavailable for future fixtures.

But the best thing about Speedball was the fantastic two-player mode - responsible for many late nights and subsequent bleary-eyed mornings at school. The control system, too, was simple beyond the dreams of today's games - one button did everything, from tackling to passing to shooting. And some innovative pitch furniture was just the icing on the cake.

Speedball 2100 looks to be more of the same - only in 3D. We spoke to two of the Brothers, Steve Whittle (Head of Development) and Pete Tattersall (Studio Manager) about the dangers of risking such a successful brand. "We've been very cautious, and done a lot of work to make sure the change to 3D systems in 2100 has no effect on the playability of the game," they told us. The game retains its traditional top-down view.

So does the heritage of the game worry the Brothers? "We wouldn't be doing it if we didn't think we could do the game justice. It is because the game was so successful we have to overcome the fact that we are doing another version of a very successful game. People still ask how to buy Speedball II on the

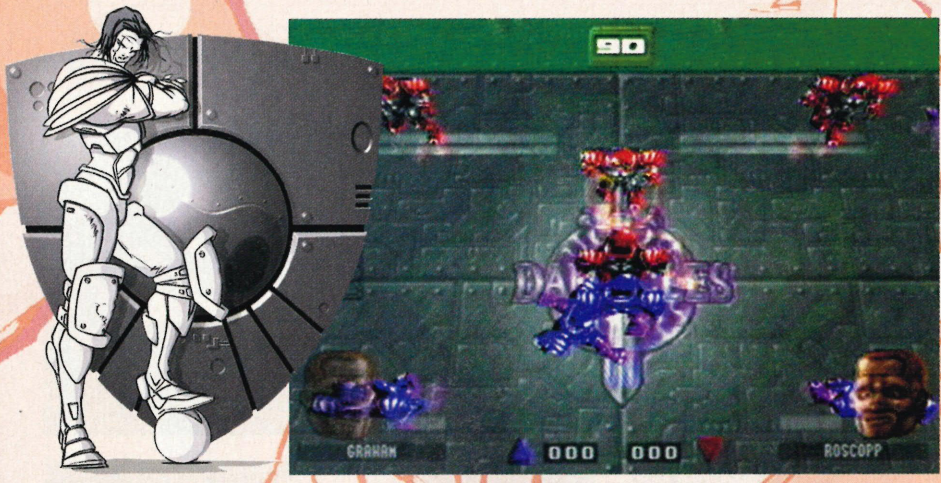
Amiga."

And that two-player mode? Is that still there? Of course the answer is yes, and in a Gran Turismo-style move you will be able to take your team, saved on a memory card, round to your mate's house to take on his boys.

In these days of censorship, do the team have any concerns about the content of Speedball 2100? "Personally I feel the violence that is in Speedball is a lot less than certain other games that aren't necessarily rated," Pete told us. "I think it being futuristic takes the edge off the violence. If it was an American football match where arms and legs were being displaced or broken or whatever, then maybe we'd be more concerned. But we like violence!"

Sadly the Bitmaps currently only plan to release the game on PlayStation, Dreamcast and PC owners are crying out for the game - but it is hard to blame the Bitmaps for aiming at the market with the greatest sales potential. Perhaps if the game is successful, conversions will follow.



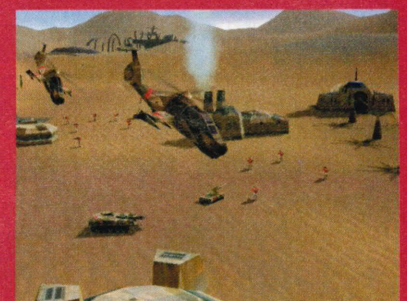


THE Z2 PROJECT

The Bitmaps' next project is Z2 - a sequel to robotic real-time strategy game Z.

Received with a certain amount of critical appeal, Z was described by Games Domain as "fast-paced and action-packed" when it was released back in 1996.

The sequel is to bring a more adult sense of humour to the already witty banter of Z, and although the 3D real-time strategy market is crowded at the moment, it will be interesting to see what innovation the Brothers' approach to the genre can bring. Z2 is due before Christmas.



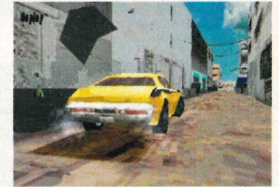
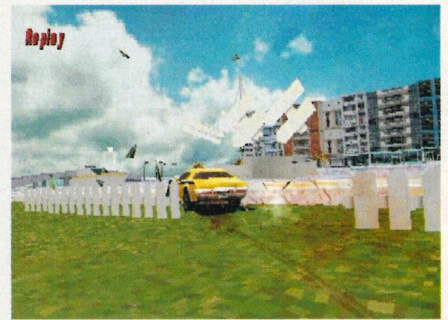
THE MISSING BITS

- GDO:** Before Speedball 2100 and Z2, you've been going through a bit of a quiet period. What have you been getting up to in the last few years?
- Steve:** We have spent five or six years developing a 3D engine. Pete has been working on using that engine in Speedball 2100. So the quiet period was because we were working on the engine between projects.
- GDO:** Why did you choose Speedball from your old titles?
- Steve:** People still enquire how to buy Speedball II on the Amiga. Speedball games have sold in excess of one million units - which is substantial. It was very, playable, exciting and enjoyable. I think the game's success was down to the enjoyment factor rather than the adrenaline and, as games progress, people still want that sort of fast-paced action game. The desire is there for us to do it, because these people are saying to us how much they want it.
- GDO:** Has Bitmap Brothers changed over the last few years?
- Pete:** The way we make games has not really changed.
- Steve:** The Bitmaps look at developing games as more of a passion than just a job. If Bitmap Brothers were not 100 per cent confident about a game they were developing, that would be the end of it.

■ PUBLISHER: SONY ■ DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW ■ FORMAT: PSX

DRIVER

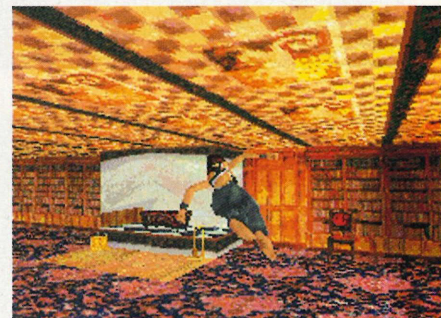
In *Driver* you take on the role of Bruce Tanner, a cop who goes undercover as a getaway driver for some of the hardest-hitting hoodlums in the 'hood. Set in the '70s, there's no comedy afro wigs or flares, but there is plenty of respect to be earned as you attempt to make it as the hottest driver in town, even if your motor does make a Morris Mariner look macho. Gorgeous graphics, gripping gameplay and masses of mesmerising missions make this a fantastic budget opportunity. Miss it and you deserve shooting!



■ PUBLISHER: SOLD OUT ■ DEVELOPER: CORE ■ RELEASE: AUGUST ■ FORMAT: PC

TOMB RAIDER

Bubbly buxom brunette babe Lara Croft was a school boy's dream come true when she first appeared on our screens back in 1996. The sexiest game character ever, she attracted many a gaming geek's glance. Oh, and the game was pretty neat too. Run, shimmy, leap and explore the hidden depths of the Himalayas, solving puzzles and exerting girl power onto unsuspecting baddies. Lara has since been treated to a full makeover and suitably substantiated assets, although some may find the four-year-old graphics look dated these days. But your chance to snap up the very first instalment at a bargain price of £4.99 is definitely an opportunity not to be missed.



WIN GAMES



To mark the historic inaugural GDO Budget page - all right, bit over-dramatic but you get the picture - we've got a whole bunch of budget titles to give away.

Thanks to Sold Out Software and Focus we've got a goodie bag the size of France, stuffed with classic games, all lovingly re-released at bargain prices.

All you have to do to become one of five winners who will pick up five titles each from our lucky-dip of games is answer this simple bargain-busting, supermarket sweeping question: Add up the cost of the following items. The closest five answers to GDO's till receipt will scoop the prizes.

1. One tin of baked beans
2. Six hotdog bread buns
3. A packet of sausages
4. Tomb Raider from Sold Out Software

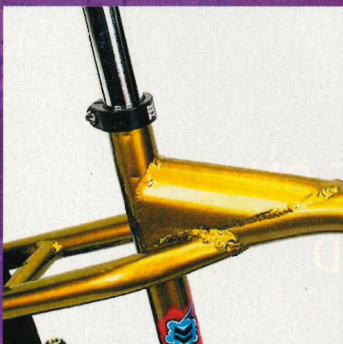
Answers must arrive no later than August 31 and should be addressed to: Budget Competition, Games Domain Offline, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 7SS. Editor's decision is final

WIN A DAVE MIRRA BMX

Bikers ready, pedals ready, go! In association with Acclaim, GDO brings you a BMX-ellent competition that will grab you by the FatHubs and kick you in the trick-nuts. Steady yourselves my friends, as you might find this baby a little bit too hot to handlebar. Here's your chance to **win a £360 Haro Shredder BMX, as ridden by Dave Mirra**, the most decorated X-Games athlete with eight medals - six of them gold. This gravity-defying stunt machine will put a wheelie big smile on the face of the winner and leave the unlucky entrants bunny-hopping mad. Among its many stunning features the Shredder boasts a super versatile frame which is at home in the dirt, street, vert and flat. It also has some other BMX-y stuff which sound like medical conditions to us. I mean, what's a Nuke Ring for Pete's sake? [*Sounds like a disorder associated with too many vindaloos - Ed.*] Anyway we're getting away for the point. The bike is obviously the dogs and you would be mad not to have a pop at winning it. To get you in the mood we have a preview of Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX on page 54 which is already shaping up to be a classy title. So don't get saddled with second-rate competitions, scribble the blindingly obvious answer on a postcard, or the back of a sealed down envelope, and bang it in the post to: **BMX Competition, Games Domain Offline, 435 Lichfield Road, Birmingham, B6 7SS.** Don't forget to include your age and address.

The question is: What is a BMX? a) a bike b) a horse c) a fruit salad

The closing date for the competition is August 31 and the editor's decision is final.





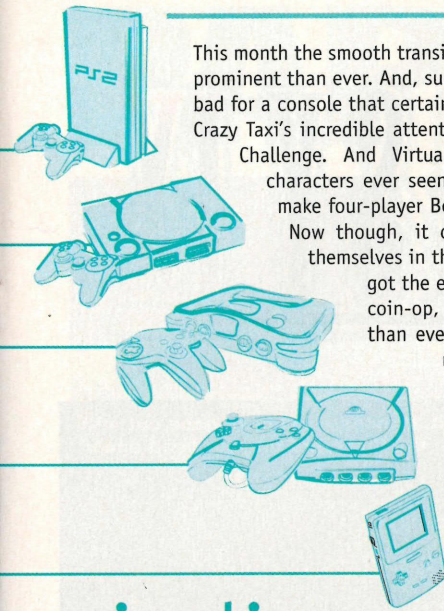
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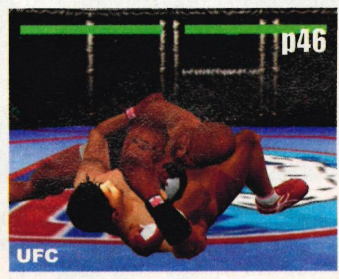
This month the smooth transition of arcade quality games onto home consoles is more prominent than ever. And, surprisingly, it's the Dreamcast that's leading the way - not bad for a console that certain people seem determined to write off! Take as examples Crazy Taxi's incredible attention to detail and the depth of gameplay in Ferrari 355 Challenge. And Virtua Tennis boasts some of the most realistic-looking characters ever seen in a video game, with gameplay addictive enough to make four-player Bomberman appear as enjoyable as pulling teeth.

Now though, it could be argued that certain companies are shooting themselves in the foot - why pay for that arcade experience when you've got the exact same game waiting at home? The answer: time. The coin-op, as we know it, is becoming more of a marketing tool than ever before - these are the games we'll be playing several months down the line. Now's your chance to try before you buy.

One aspect I can't see coming to the home in the near future is the joy of getting thrown about by GTI Club's hydraulic cabinet as you thrash around corners on two wheels. For this, I have to head out down to my local set of country lanes. Email me your thoughts: gareth@consoledomain.com

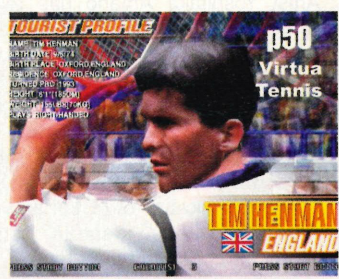
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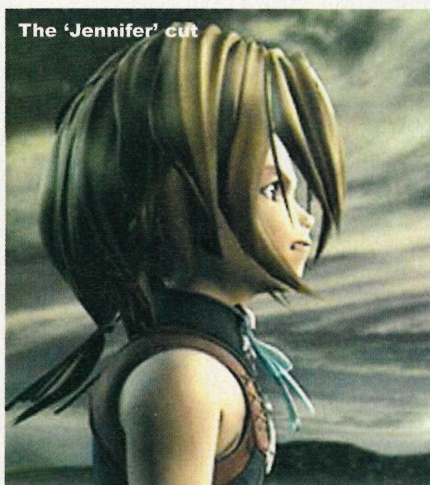
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■ PUBLISHER: SONY ■ DEVELOPER: SQUARE ■ RELEASE: CHRISTMAS ■ FORMAT: PSX

FINAL FANTASY IX™



The 'Jennifer' cut



Who'd have thought it? Following the two most recent Final Fantasy games each receiving sales of well over five million, Square has decided it might be a good idea to make another. There's nowt as queer as folk.

FFIX continues many of the themes players of the other games in the series will be familiar with. The plot is along the same general lines: a small group of individuals are thrown together by coincidence and caught up in a titanic struggle between nations - or something like that. They will probably end up friends, except one who everyone hates, and sooner or later two or more will fall in love with each other. Judging by Square's heritage, though, the plot will probably be developed just as well and be as compelling as the other games in the series.

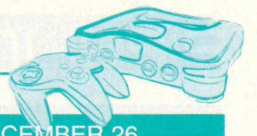
In a surprising move, Square took the decision to release the ninth game in the series on PlayStation, rather than PS2. Perhaps the lure of all those decadent Western gamers with money to spare proved too much for them. In any case, from the screenshots released so far, FFXIX seems to

push the ageing console even further than before - when Square's artists are finally let loose on Sony's new machine, they are bound to come up with some awe-inspiring visuals.

Artist Yoshitaka Amano has rejoined the team after a brief sabbatical and brings with him a return to the graphical style of older FF titles. Gone is the cyberpunk look of more recent games, to be replaced with a stronger fantasy element: expect heroes with tails, wizards, and giant airships rather than spacecraft and guns. Square has also listened to criticisms of FFVIII and shortened the spell and creature summoning animations, although long animated sequences will still play a major part in the storytelling.

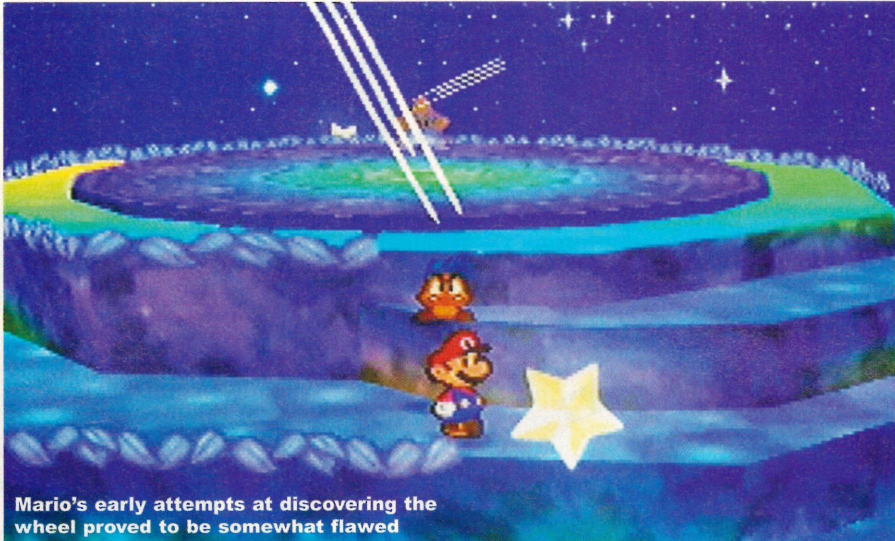
Final Fantasy IX has already received critical acclaim in Japan, and Far East pre-orders have passed the 1.3m mark. It has yet to be translated into English, but Square will be working hard to ensure it meets its Christmas release date. Should cheer up all those parents who can't afford PlayStation2s for their clamouring offspring, then.



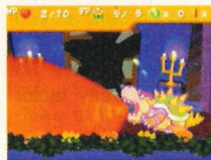


■ PUBLISHER: NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER: HUDSON SOFT ■ FORMAT: N64 ■ RELEASE: DECEMBER 26

PAPER MARIO



Mario's early attempts at discovering the wheel proved to be somewhat flawed



Nintendo's **Sleeper Christmas Hit?** Paper Mario, a unique little title from Nintendo, was easy to miss at E3 in May. Tucked off in a corner, far from the fanfare surrounding Perfect Dark, this unassuming little game didn't have much of a chance of attracting many a writer's eye. But despite its low profile, this title is definitely worth another look.

Paper Mario is an interesting blend of the classic 2D Mario action introduced ages ago in Super Mario Bros., with some seemingly incongruous role-playing elements thrown in. The look of the game, as the name suggests, is paper-inspired. Flat backgrounds fold and crease and have a rough texture to them. The overall feel is similar to that of Yoshi's Story, one of the best platformers of all time, though the gameplay is drastically different.

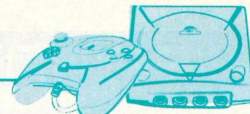
Players move Mario and his party through the mostly 2D world. There is a slight range of movement available in the 3rd dimension, but the perspective is strictly locked into place off to the side. As the tiny Mario runs around (looking very similar to the pre-flower Mario from the original platformers), he'll encounter lots of familiar enemies. Making contact with one will start battle.

In traditional role-playing game (RPG) fashion, the enemies line up on one part of the screen, facing Mario and his friends on the other. Taking turns, the two sides trade attacks. Mario has multiple attacks, as do his friends, and he'll gain more as the game progresses. Turn-based battle progresses until the enemies have been dispatched, or until you have.

Continuing the RPG theme, experience and items can be gained, and the members of your party can grow and shrink. Look for appearances by famous Mario allies Luigi (who is overdue for a game of his own), Yoshi, and Peach, amongst others.

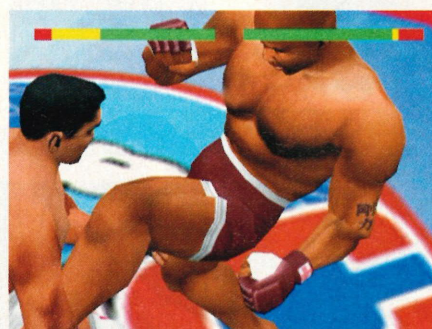
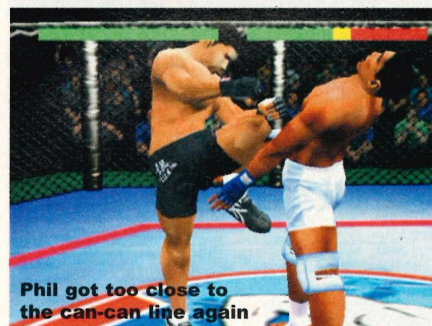
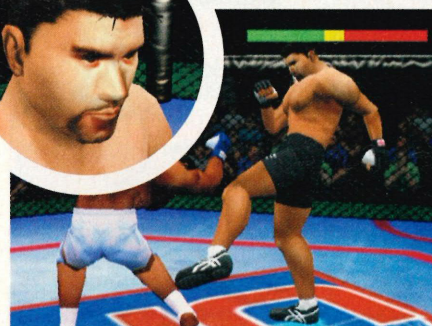
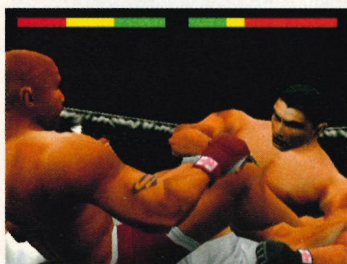
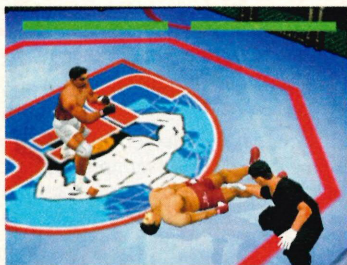
The N64 has mostly had slim pickings for RPG fans, but this game shows some promise. Sure, it's orientated for a younger audience, but so was Yoshi's Story, and that didn't stop it from being a great game. Currently set to be released around Christmas, 2000, expect Nintendo to get their translators working overtime to have this title out before then.





■ PUBLISHER: CRAVE ■ DEVELOPER: CRAVE ■ FORMAT: DC ■ RELEASED: TBC

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP



It's always embarrassing when you feel a sneeze coming on in the heat of battle

Do you like my tatoo buddy

Phil got too close to the can-can line again

Think boxing is brutal and barbaric? You ain't seen nothing yet! *Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)* pits two fighters against each other in the ring for a no-holds barred test of killer instincts. The idea: to beat the stuffing out of your opponent until he is forced to concede. Fighters from all martial arts disciplines take part in this sport which is so brutal that, in the UK, it's only possible to catch a glimpse of its barbarity via satellite television.

Crave has decided to snap up the UFC licence and is bringing this explosive power-packed, punch-fest to a PlayStation and Dreamcast near you. Players will be able to assume the role of one of the 22 different fighters. There's also the opportunity to create your own brute in the edit mode, where you can determine his physical appearance, attributes and fighting style, from a choice of 34 different disciplines.

Playable modes will include the UFC, custom tournaments, practice sessions and a two-player 'versus' mode. No doubt the UFC will be the highlight here, as you battle to improve your ranking with the aim of achieving the highly coveted UFC belt. Each round consists of three or five-minute bouts, although fights rarely go the distance before one of the fighters starts seeing stars. If you do manage to make it to the end of a round, your energy is replenished slightly, although your best form of defence is a good offense.

Spectacular entrances are prepared for each fighter, with pounding music and spectacular light shows to hype the crowd before the blood is spilled. After the referee starts the bout, you can steam towards your opponent and unleash a flurry of kicks and punches, although it's not possible to bite or head-butt. In all, a massive 3000 moves are available and are linked into a possible 1200 different combos, so there's plenty of moves to master. For each one that connects, don't be surprised to see claret spilled onto the canvas, while a fully-animated crowd cheers.

Like in the *Tekken* games, each button corresponds to a limb and combining button presses results in an attempted hold or forced submission. Once your opponent is pinned to the canvas, you can then club him about the head with your fists or attempt to pin him in an excruciatingly painful limb lock. Just be careful though - it's possible to get rolled over yourself and then find the punishment coming your way.

Initially you'll find bouts degenerating into slugfests and both fighters try to land as many punches as possible. However, the beauty of the game is that it allows you to block and then counterattack, making match-ups altogether more strategic encounters as you try to predict your opponent's next move. This should certainly help to ensure you'll be playing it well after the initial novelty factor wears off.



■ PUBLISHER: INFOGRAMES ■ DEVELOPER: INFOGRAMES ■ FORMAT: PLAYSTATION ■ RELEASE: SEPT

DUKE NUKEM: PLANET OF THE BABES



Hail to the King, baby

Interrupting a man's vacation is frowned upon and messing with his money is in no way kosher. Knowing this, a legion of evil extra-terrestrials have got to be out of their bloomin' minds messing about with the lady friends of The Man: Duke Nukem. Alerted by a time-travelling martyr that a planet filled with a bevy of bodacious babes is in danger, Duke suits up and heads out to kick some butt. Alien scum had better step lightly - when you dance with a cult PC favourite, you're a single brazen one-liner away from death.

Allow us to introduce Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes, a 3D action adventure follow-up to Time to Kill. Chip firmly affixed to his shoulder, Mr. Nukem has no choice but to open up a major can of whoop-ass on his humanoid foes and their rat-like henchmen this time around. A tough job to be sure, but the Duke's got the help of the Unified Babe Resistance (UBR) and a pair of special communications sunglasses on his side.

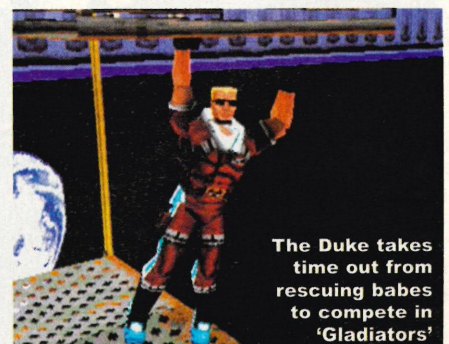
In the tradition of every Duke Nukem title that's come before it, the balance of play in Planet of the Babes leans heavily towards the action side. Hands-on experience reveals that shotguns, laser blasters, pipe bombs, sniper rifles and other unnecessarily heavy weapons are the bearers of bad fortune for the nasty buggers that lie in wait. Terrific explosions, showers of blood, gouts of flame and crimson stains on the wall are telltale signs that a certain bad-ass has passed through a level.

New to the game is an "ego" system that's been substituted for health. Damage is

removed from the ego total per normal, but points are regained by finding nearby females and asking for "a little sugar." High-tech gadgets like jetpacks, night-vision goggles and more exotic fare should help you avoid the embarrassing moments in which ego is blasted off of the main man.

Trash talkin' abounds in the form of cheesy zingers like "I bet that's going to hurt." Large, sharp-looking models are used for character animations and background scenery, most of which you'll be able to interact with. Nothing out of the ordinary presents itself in regard to puzzles, as they're of the hard-to-reach switch or locked door variety.

Blood-letting is a nonchalant affair, meaning that this is a mature title for immature gamers. Alone or with friends, there ought to be a lot of meat for you to sink your teeth into. Though Planet of the Babes isn't exceptionally original, it may well provide gamers with a suitable outlet for their pent-up frustrations. Look for it later this year.



The Duke takes time out from rescuing babes to compete in 'Gladiators'

■ PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS ■ DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS ■ FORMAT: PSX ■ RELEASE: AUGUST 25

TOCA WORLD TOURING CARS



With games like Gran Turismo II, Ridge Racer Type IV, Wipeout III and Colin McRae II sitting firmly on the podium of the PlayStation racing genre, it clearly takes something extra special to stand out from the pack. Following on from two massively successful TOCA Touring Car titles, masters of the circuit, Codemasters has returned with what looks to be a challenger for the very summit.

For those unfamiliar with the Touring Car

Championship, it extends back three decades and is believed by many to be the most challenging title to win in motorsport. Teams start with a basic factory production car, but then transform it to maximise circuit performance, resulting in high-speed nose-to-bumper racing at speeds of up to 140mph.

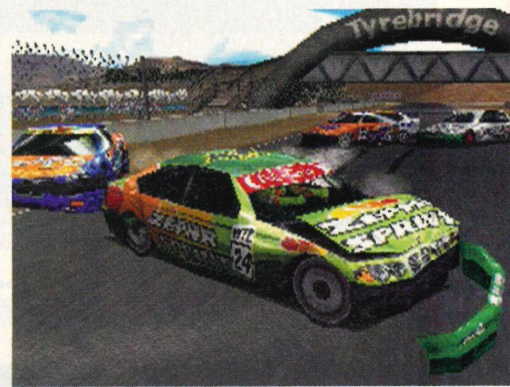
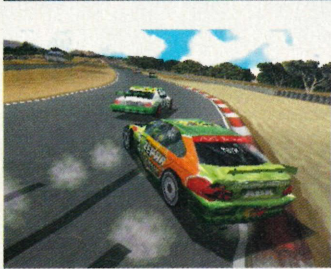
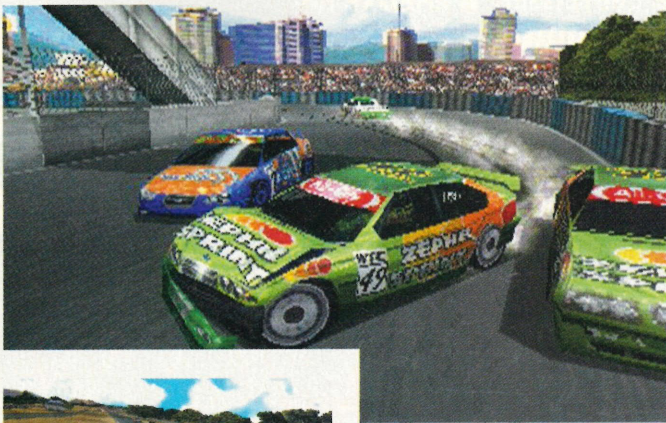
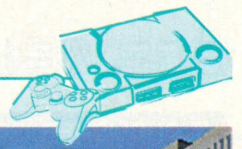
This time, instead of concentrating purely on the adrenaline-charged thrills of the British circuit, TOCA World Touring Cars now incorporates comprehensive action from across the five continents. Included are tracks

from as far afield as Vancouver, Mexico City, Bathurst in Australia and Suzuka in Japan as players compete in the different championships. Naturally, Codemasters has included loads more cars to race in, with Lagunas, Volvos, Peugeots, Vauxhalls and Fords from the British circuit joined by the likes of Dodge Vipers,

Subarus, BMWs, TVRs, Audi TTs and Lotus sports cars from the other international leagues. Each car handles individually depending on its drive system, and fanatics can even fine-tune details like suspension settings according to individual preferences and the changeable weather conditions.

As a single player game, drivers have to earn the right to race in the major events by embarking on a career path. Firstly, you are offered several opportunities by different teams and have to complete a lap within a certain time to seize your big opportunity to race competitively at national level. Having accepted the offer, you'll then be given certain objectives to fulfil for the season ahead: such as achieving a podium finish for five of the six races or beating a rival team on three occasions. As you complete each race, points are awarded and amassed towards your total for the entire season. Basically, you have to score enough points to qualify for the International league and then after that, the World Touring Car Championship. The beauty of this rests in the variety of ways you can progress by racing in your preferred championship, which could be British, German or American and - just like a real career - the high-flyers will go onto better things sooner.





As a standard feature to nearly all racing games, there's the opportunity to race a time trial, a quick race or a two player, split screen race. The most impressive feature here is the ability to race against a friend and a field of competitors at the same time, which is rare in PlayStation racers. What'll impress you even more is that the game still looks and plays incredibly well, with in-game graphics and speed retained to high standards.

Pulling up to the start line, you'll be amazed at how much the series has moved forward from the previous two incarnations. All of the visuals - from the smooth asphalt surface right down to the sponsors stickers and light shading on the cars - have been recreated with incredible accuracy. I'm even willing to put my neck on the line and say that in places, this looks better than the mighty Gran Turismo II. There is occasional distant pop-up on major details, like rows of trees and on spectator stands, but we've come to expect that from Sony's ageing PlayStation and it in no way spoils the thrilling gameplay.

What really makes this game for me is the nature of the sport itself and how well Codemasters has managed to capture the essence of it right down to the smallest of details. As you thunder down a straight section at 140mph, you really get the

sensation that the slightest of twitches will send you snaking off the circuit and into the gravel trap. As a result you'll constantly be checking your mirrors to block out opponents and the tense atmosphere rarely subsides. As your car incurs more damage, pitting-in will obviously play a strategic part in the race and a nice touch allows your pit crew to inform you of when your team-mate is in the pits and when you are clear to pit-in.

Collisions are frequent, especially on tight corners. Receiving heavy side-on impacts will crumple your doors and shatter your windows; lighter impacts may leave your bumper dragging along the track, complete with a trail of sparks. Of course you'll have to give as good as you get and if that means using the computer cars as a barrier to overshooting corners, then so be it. Much time has been invested into the computer cars' AI, so don't be surprised when you're jostled out of position or clipped and sent reeling off the track if you get too close to your opponents. Computer cars are even open to making mistakes and, often, if a car has just taken the lead, pushing to hold its position may see it overshoot a corner and then spin off, allowing a new leader to take-over.

The experience is completed when playing the game with a Dual Shock pad where the

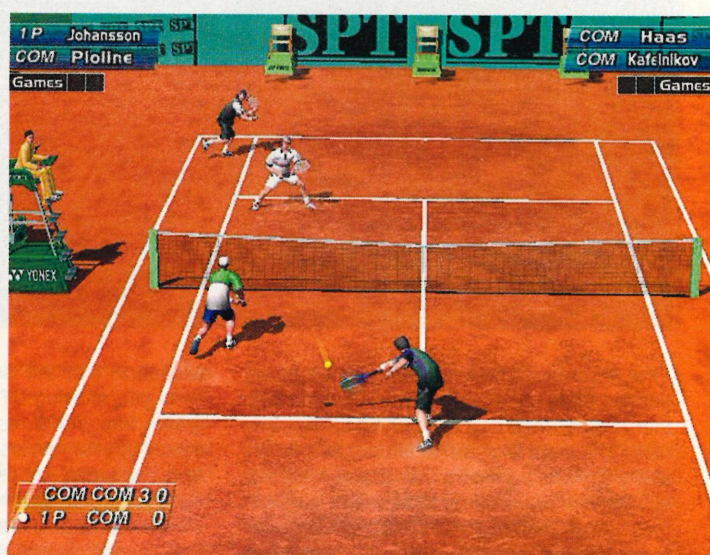
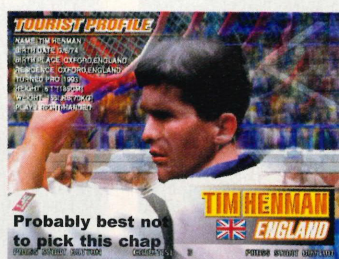
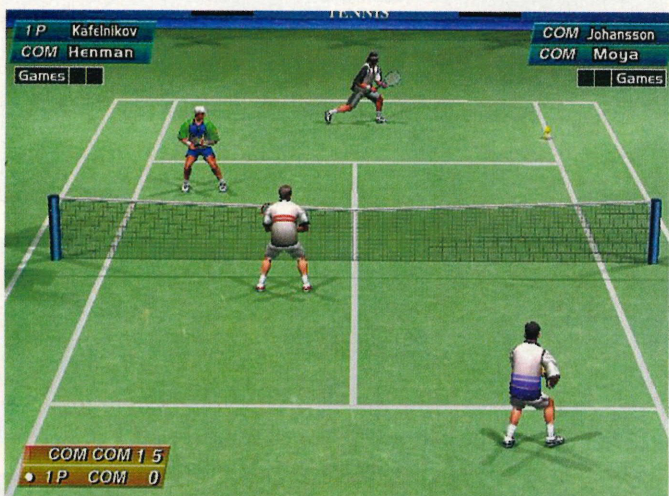


two analogue sticks can be used for precise acceleration, anti-skid braking and steering. Hurling around the circuits, utilising every inch of the corners to maximise speed, you'll even experience a rumble if you travel over the corners' bordering strips.

Although there is no official licence to use the correct Touring Car drivers' names, this is the only annoyance in an otherwise thoroughly fulfilling racing experience. Crisp visuals, tantalisingly addictive gameplay and sharp sonics of engine noises and your pit-crew's instructions make this game a dream prospect for fans of any racing game, let alone the hardcore Touring Car fans.

■ PUBLISHER: SEGA ■ DEVELOPER: SEGA ■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER ■ FORMAT: DC

VIRTUA TENNIS



It's amazing how effective Wimbledon is at drawing the nation's attention when the centre court takes centre-stage. With the off chance of radiant weather, British success and helpings of fresh strawberries and cream, it's not surprising to see why the crowds flock there every year. Oh and there's likely to be some tantalising tennis action served up too.

Served up as the latest instalment in Sega's long-running Virtua series, Virtua Tennis brings arcade quality graphics and addictive gameplay into the home. This game looked impressive enough in the arcade, but to see it running on a Dreamcast is a sight to be treasured. Tennis games are often best remembered for having great gameplay but rather uninspired graphics (even though four players running about one court is hardly going to jam the processor of a powerful console). Games like Super Tennis on the

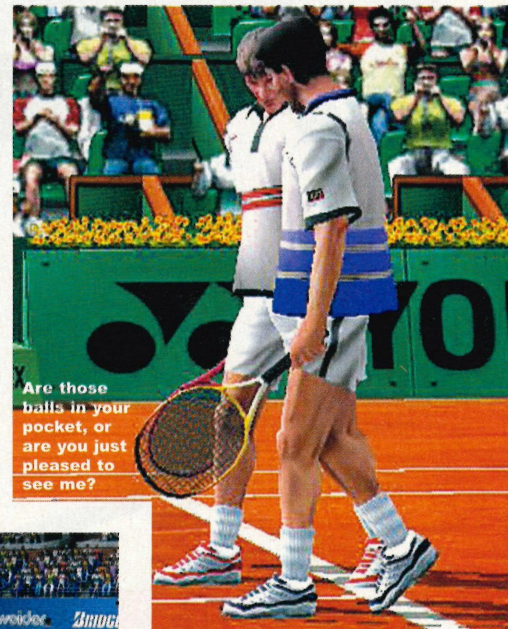
SNES and Anna Kournikova's Tennis on the PlayStation demonstrated this clearly. Virtua Tennis, however, looks set to deliver the best of both worlds.

So many accurate details have been built into the game that even if you're not a fan of the sport, you're still going to want a slice of the action. Players bear uncanny resemblances to real-life characters, right down to their physical attributes, flowing locks of hair and detailed facial textures. Initially only eight are selectable, including the likes of Tim Henman, Jim Courier, Carlos Moya and Mark Philippoussis, with eight more to be unlocked in the game. True to life, Philippoussis will rely on a huge first serve as part of his game, whereas Henman will opt for more skilful volley play and Kafelnikov will favour use of his strong backhand.

Available modes of play include the arcade knockout mode, exhibition mode and world

circuit. The beauty of the first two modes is that you can decide the length of each match - be it anything from one game to a full five-set thriller - which adds to the game's pick-up-and-play aspect. For me, this has been the only real problem with other tennis games of late, where you're compelled to playing for ages just to register one victory.

World circuit offers players the chance to play their way to the very top of the rankings, amassing a stash of prize money by winning the many different challenges on offer. Starting out, you have a selection of matches to compete in, a range of practice modes and a shop to spend your hard-earned in. Matches vary in length according to your acquired skill level and there are also doubles matches to be won. Training modes improve your skill levels by offering enjoyable challenges and the opportunity to win yet more cash. For example, you may have to

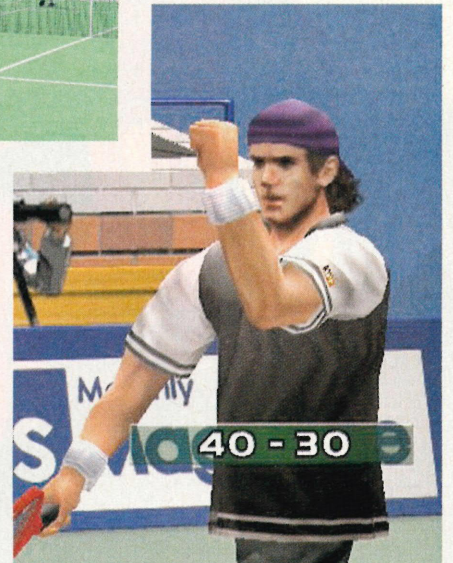


knock down skittles, or lob balls into oil drums placed on the other side of the court. The shop allows you to buy energy refreshments, new outfits, new strings or even strike a deal with a doubles partner.

In motion, the game performs beyond expectation. All of the correct playing surfaces are available and naturally, dust clouds and trainer squeaks occur on the appropriate courts. A fully animated crowd eagerly looks on, cheering after each point and gasping at tense moments within rallies. Player movement is unerringly lifelike, and a full range of shots is on offer, including forehands, backhands, drop shots, slices, smashes and lobs. It's even possible to dive to return the ball or entertain with a cheeky shot from between his legs. Either way, whichever player wins the point, you'll either get a motion-blurred replay or the camera will zoom in and focus on player reactions - the realistic models and animation never cease to impress.

As mentioned, Virtua Tennis is easy to pick up and play. This is surely the game's best feature and it makes multiplayer action fantastic fun - especially the four-player mode. Mixing lobs, volleys and smashes into the rallies, the game captures all of the thrills and spills of a classic doubles match. We especially liked the more advanced shots. For instance, if you hold down the button before a shot, the longer it's held, the harder the shot. You can also determine the direction of this type of shot at the last split second, which is great for sending your opponent reeling to the wrong side of the court.

From what we've played of this preview version, Virtua Tennis' realistic players and fiendishly addictive gameplay look certain to take both tennis and sports games in general to a new high.



WORDS: GARETH HOLDEN

■ PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM ■ DEVELOPER: AM2 ■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 15 ■ FORMAT: DC

F355 challenge™





Having already achieved several arcade-perfect Dreamcast ports, Sega's AM2 division looks set to deliver the goods once more with its breathtaking translation of Ferrari 355 Challenge. With Sega Rally II, Crazy Taxi, Sega GT and V-Rally II currently leading the pack, there's no shortage of quality racing titles for Sega fans. However, Ferrari 355 Challenge looks set to shed an entirely new light onto the genre.

True to the spirit of the arcade, the game is devoted to the beautiful piece of Italian engineering many of us can only dream of owning - the Ferrari 355. Quite why anyone would want to risk taking one of these masterpieces out into a competitive race is beyond me, but I suppose if you've got the bullion needed to buy one, hefty repair bills aren't a problem. Anyway, just like in the ideal world, it's not actually possible to sustain any damage to the vehicle and presumably Ferrari insisted this was part of the licence agreement. After all, seeing one of these beauties in a crumpled heap is enough to make any grown man weep.

Although our preview version only contained the standard arcade mode, this was more than sufficient to bring the whole office to a standstill. Just like the coin-op, its visual wizardry will encapsulate you in a state of total immersion; even spectators will be transfixed for the entire duration of the race. With six accurately modelled race tracks, including Suzuka in Japan, Italy's Monza

circuit and the picturesque Long Beach circuit in America, the amount of detail crammed onto the disc is simply phenomenal. Every spectator stand, row of trees and even pit lane has been captured true to life but, naturally, it's the cars themselves that steal the show. Although you only have a choice of the "through the windscreen" view, this makes the action appear faster and gives less of an impression that your car is an entirely separate entity to the track, helping to eliminate that familiar floaty feel. Slipstreaming and overtaking rivals may cause you to lose concentration and veer off the track as you gawp admiringly at the impressive eye candy. From accurately-modelled light reflections to sponsors' stickers and the cars' interiors, complete with roll bars and driver (or should I say 'pilot'), you'll be left flabbergasted at the sight of this in motion.

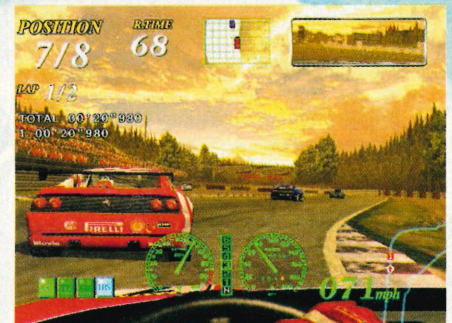
Besides the arcade mode, expect Dreamcast exclusive championship, single race, cable link-up and network link-up play to feature in the finished article, which should certainly answer the critics' questions of longevity. It's even possible to have split-screen battles with a friend, where both the frame-rate and graphical details are kept high to counteract the competing cars being dropped.

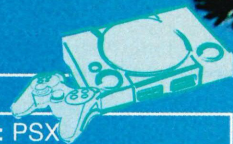
The nature of the game ensures that only quality, patient driving will be rewarded, as unique car handling and strong computer drivers ensures races are always closely fought battles. Eight cars battle it out in each race and only by driving immaculately will you be able to achieve first place. This is a true simulation of piloting one of the world's finest pieces of automotive engineering, so don't expect to be pelting round the circuits at full blast and then bouncing off walls as you overshoot each corner! If you give the right pedal too much power, you'll end up in a sorry spin in the bordering sand traps, much like in Formula One games. This is where the game

really comes into its own and your sense of achievement when roaring around each circuit using every last inch of asphalt, is currently unrivalled in any console racing game.

It's best to start off with the intelligent braking, stability control and traction control options turned on, which basically means you'll brake automatically and find it much harder to spin out of control. Ultimately though, you'll progress enough to turn off these options and experience the brute power behind the F355 as you try to squeeze every last ounce of energy from the engine as you push it to its limits. Although it always looks cool, skidding and power-sliding actually wastes valuable seconds and you'll find it much more efficient not to take corners sideways. If you do plough off the track, marshals step out and wave yellow flags, and it's not uncommon to see the computer cars piling off at tricky turns, where you can capitalise on their mistakes to improve your position.

This could be the game to satisfy the hunger of racing purists. Its initial arcade exterior hides much of the gameplay depth, which can only be appreciated when you do get behind the wheel. With so many modes of competing against other players, this looks like being a must-have title for all Dreamcast owners.





■ PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM ■ DEVELOPER: ACCLAIM ■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 15 ■ FORMAT: PS2

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

Extrême sport rides again. This time it's two-wheeled fun with ten times world champion Dave Mirra. After last year's craze for anything on a board, and the impending release of Tony Hawk: Pro Skater II, there couldn't be a better time for a new lease of life to enthral adrenaline junkies. BMXing might just be the way forward, so watch your knees guys and, oh, helmets aren't included!

Mirra and his sidekick Ryan Nyquist provided motion-captured stunts and falls for this game which sees you take part in a series of BMX competitions set across some of the world's most renowned tracks. San Jose Ramp Club, Eastwood Ramp Park and the infamous indoor park Camp Woodward's 'Lot 8' are just a few. Choose from Mirra, Nyquist or a plethora of other names on the circuit such as Leigh Ramsdell, Mike Laird and Kenan Harkin.

With a host of challenges, free ride and a whopping ten multiplayer games to choose from gamers are sure to have a lot to get through. The tricks you can pull off are equally as varied: try your hand at grinds, airs and wheelies and make your own slick moves using the modifier to develop basic stunts into classy manoeuvres.

The game handles well and apart from pre-release glitches (such as your rider ploughing through certain bits of scenery) the overall look is great. The stunts you can pull off are varied and you are able to knit them together to make some action-packed sequences to view in the replays. The way the bike moves is also astounding.

The levels are still being built and tweaked, but already show brilliant gaming potential. There are no pre-set routes around the tracks, so it is up to you as the rider to pick a run that enables you to show your talents to their full. The ramps, rails and boxes that are there for your riding pleasure are well placed and varied so that you can exploit all the stunts available. Dirt and street tracks add another dimension to the game - the bike handling differently on the two.

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX is sure to be the first in a long line of similar titles and it's set to be a great starting point. If you like Tony Hawk's, and are waiting impatiently for its sequel, then maybe you should get your tyres pumped in anticipation for this.





STAR WARS EPISODE 1 RACER

Following its launch on the PC, Episode I Racer is now available on the Dreamcast. So buckle up and get ready for some speedy galactic action.

Episode I Racer takes its theme from the pod racing scenes of the hit film. Your racing pod is powered at the front by two massive, independently attached engines that drag your pod along at terrifying speeds. Picture a modern day Ben Hur chariot - the only difference being the nearest looking things to horses are most of your competitors.

Options include choosing from a range of characters named in the film, including our hero Anakin and Sebulba, Anakin's arch-rival. With your character you get a specific pod. You can add to your pod by purchasing new equipment from Watto's shop or rooting through the scrap yard for some second-hand bargains. To do this you need to win races and prize money. Tactics come into play as you can hedge your bets as to how you are going to perform and change the prizes to winner-takes-all, skilled or fair. The more you risk and harder you try, the more money you win and ultimately the better pod you build.

The races are spread over eight worlds, each with over 25 different courses to work your way through. A map shows your progress as you fly around. All the courses have different landscapes and pitfalls: from the waterlogged Aquilaris, linked by underwater tunnels; to Oovo IV, a deserted moon with zero-gravity tunnels.

There are secret routes generously scattered throughout most of the courses and are worth looking for. Engine status, race status, lap and time are all conveniently placed around the screen.

Driving your pod is quite easy to master. It has basic accelerator, brake and steering controls. Alongside that you have flip positions to get through tight spots side-on and a boost facility which enables you to zip past tricky opponents. Handling the pod is well balanced and mostly good. Each pod handles differently so with trial and error you can find a pod that suits your driving ability and style.

The game has the usual tournament, free play (race around any unlocked track) and solo time attack modes as well as two-player and practice options.

Star Wars Episode I Racer's great attention to detail, stunning sound track and exciting race action is heaven-sent for big fans of the film. But if you're not a fan of the Force, maybe this is not the kind of intergalactic entertainment you're looking for.



"Maybe this is not the kind of intergalactic entertainment you're looking for"



■ PUBLISHER & DEVELOPER: LUCAS ARTS
 ■ FORMAT: DC ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

PROS

- + Great soundtrack
- + Strong graphics
- + Lots of detail

CONS

- Limited appeal
- Too easy

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE LINKS

www.consoledomain.co.uk/dreamcast/reviews/Star_Wars_Episode_I_Racer.html

WORDS: JAYNE BOWEN



Silent Bomber is one of those fast-paced third-person action games it is impossible not to like. Its main pull is the unusual, but very simple weapon system of dropping bombs that gives the game its name. Although, it's not that silent.

The story is very simple. You play Jutah, who was a lethal one-man army for the naughty commander Dante, who liked to go to planets and kill people. Of course, Jutah decided to jump ship after Dante forced him to kill civilians. Jutah teamed up with an attack force pledging to kill his former master. After a brief introductory video of the attack team being decimated by Dante's large fleet of ships, you go into the game and the bombing begins.

The control system is all very simple. As well as the standard bombs, special mines can be used ranging from gravity wells (black holes that suck the enemy in), paralysing electrical mines and napalm, which produces fierce flames around the detonation zone.

But what makes the game special is the way you can use the standard mines tactically: place them on walls and lure enemies over to you and then blow them up; stick a few mines on one enemy, wait until he groups with others then blow them up with a chain reaction of damage; plonk mines on destructible items, such as storage containers or utility booths to create larger explosions.

Thought can take you a long way in Silent Bomber but you still need a quick trigger finger and fast reactions as the enemies come thick and fast. At times it's a bit hard to see where you're aiming, which can lead to missed shots and blowing up things you didn't want to destroy, but the game can be

forgiven for this as it is rare.

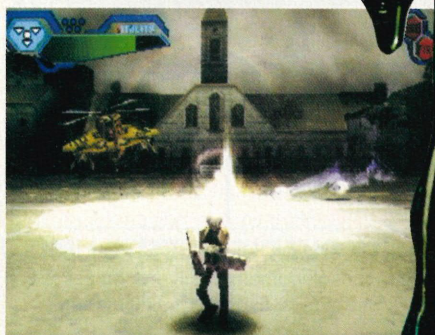
The game even has a two-player battle mode so you and a friend can take each other on in a virtual reality arena. The characters, like many fighting games, are unlocked through the single player game. As you defeat the bosses throughout the game they appear in the multiplayer character line-up. So once you have defeated the giant spider robot at the end of the game you can leap inside and do some arachnid damage of your own.

The two-player game isn't as much fun as the single player game but could lead to some exciting battles once you and your opponent know how to best use the characters.

Power-ups, like any classic game, are littered around levels providing more special mines, health and a little thing called an E-chip. These chips come in useful as they allow you to power-up Jutah. You can increase his mine-carrying capacity, the power of his protective shield or extend the range of your target cone. Of course, each costs a certain amount of E-chips and you can chop and change throughout the game.

Although not particularly clever, the enemies are at least varied, ranging from gun turrets, mini-flying ships, battle-suited mechwarriors to giant spider-tanks. There's also lots of end-of-level bad guys and tasks to complete, giving the feel of classic gaming, but without the dodgy graphics.

Okay, so Silent Bomber may not look like Tekken but that doesn't detract from the experience.





At least the graphics are solid, they don't have any noticeable clipping problems and animation is fluid and simple. The sound isn't important in a game like this - all you need are explosions and these are present in abundance. Just as well really: the voice-acting (when a bit of plot is thrown in to remind you what is going on) is absolutely terrible. Music is as weird as any other Japanese game. Do people really enjoy listening to these crazy whacked-out tunes?

The rendered movies don't look that great in the game; Squaresoft has spoiled us too much with their Final Fantasy series. The characters are a little too smooth-skinned to be veterans of war, unless there is a new skin cream in the future. Direction in the scenes is competent, but not astounding.

If fast-paced action and thinking on the fly amid a cacophony of explosions is your bag then Silent Bomber will shine up really nice in your games collection. However, if you prefer a more sedate game, go elsewhere. Fun, fast and furious; Silent Bomber should definitely be on your to-do list.



■ PUBLISHER: VIRGIN ■ DEVELOPER: STUDIO THREE
 ■ FORMAT: PSX ■ RELEASED: OUT NOW

PROS

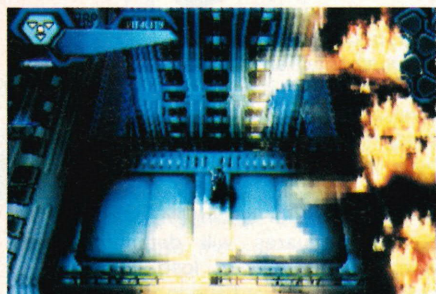
- + Fast, fun action
- + Simple controls, complex moves
- + Upgradeable character
- + Good multiplayer

CONS

- Doesn't look great
- Acting is a bit dodgy

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE LINKS

www.consoledomain.com/psx/reviews/Silent_Bomber.html



MARIO PARTY 2



'What more could a sequel possibly offer to owners of the original? Read on and you'll find out'



If you're strapped for cash and forced to spend a night in front of the box, you can't beat a top party game. In the past, titles like Bomberman, Track and Field, Mario Kart, Micro Machines and more recently the totally zany Bishi Bashi Special have been responsible for capturing many hours of gamers' lives. One of the better party games for the N64 is Mario Party, but what more could a sequel possibly offer to owners of the original? Read on and you'll find out.

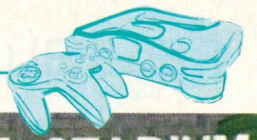
If you weren't fortunate enough to play Mario Party, the basic idea is as simple as playing a standard board game. Up to four players can take part and the computer will play the part of any remaining characters if you don't have either three buddies, or three spare controllers. Taking on the role of one of six of the usual suspects, including Mario, Luigi, Yoshi and friends, you take it in turns to roll the die and move around one of five different playing boards, based around varied locations. Your key aim is to collect more coins and stars than your opponents. Of course, the action is spiced up by over 60 different wacky sub-games for players to either steal or win even more coins from each other.

Staying true to the characteristics we love so much in Mario-related games, your progress around the board will be both helped and hampered by some familiar faces. Boo, Bowser and Mini-Bowser generally spell trouble; although if you can master their mini-games, you may actually be able to steal coins off other players.

Toad on the other hand is the fellow to find if you want to exchange 20 of your coins for one of the magic stars, which are vital to winning the game. Just like a game of snakes and ladders, there's plenty of short cuts to get you around the map. Each ties in well with its environmental surroundings too: the desert island-based level allows you to cross the stretch of water on a shark's back, while opting to use the bridge may see you fired at from a pirate ship.

Passing over or landing on different-coloured squares will determine whether you gain or lose coins, collect power-ups or have to take part





in one of the many enjoyable mini-games. You need coins to pass through certain areas and to play some of the mini-games. Power-ups, such as the golden key, can be used to unlock gates to access new areas.

The mini-games are simple, but yet widely varied, so it'll take ages before you start to become bored with them. Each has a variable degree of wackiness: anything from racing as penguins, then throwing fish; to winding up toy flying machines (with the aim of making yours fly the furthest) on offer. Thanks to a simple control system, complete with on-screen demonstrations, games are simple to pick up and are injected with enough humour to continually have you in a fit of giggles. With four humans at the controls, it can be especially amusing when three players have to team up against one in certain games. Often, just one mistake by the lone player will result in the opposing three gaining coins and him or her being left as the subject of some rather severe mickey-taking.

Graphically, Mario Party 2 is everything you'd expect from a Mario game, boasting a massive palette of colours and plenty of lively visuals. Although some may moan that this version is too similar to the first outing, true fans will no doubt revel in the new surroundings and challenges offered here. For those who are yet to sample its delights, we would definitely recommend trying before buying, as some may find it slightly too childish. Similarly, it will help if you plan to play the game in multiplayer mode as the computer's behaviour in the bonus games can be too predictable on the difficulty settings provided.

If we were to fault the game it would be to moan that playing each game can take a very long time, even when you opt for the shortest game setting. It's not possible to save mid-game either, which may annoy some. Just make sure you've got plenty of time to spare before starting each game because it's worth carrying over your winnings to enhance the game. Coins can be used to buy special items within other playing areas and there's a special bonus if you manage to collect enough stars, prolonging the game's longevity.

All in all, although some of the sub-games aren't as enjoyable as in titles like Bishi Bashi Special, Mario Party 2 is able to offer an equally, if not more enjoyable game outside of these sideshows. Ultimately, it will be whether or not you like the sub-games that will determine whether you'll be returning for more action in the months to come.



'True fans will no doubt revel in the new challenges offered here'



■ PUBLISHER: NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER: HUDSON SOFT
 ■ FORMAT: N64 ■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

PROS

- + Great party fun with four players
- + Nice Mario series references
- + Plenty of enjoyable subgames

CONS

- Each game takes ages to play
- Predictable computer players

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

www.consoledomain.com/n64/reviews/Mario_Party_2.html
www.consoledomain.com/cheats/N64/game12325.html

WORDS: GARETH HOLDEN

BISHI BASHI SPECIAL

Winning the award for the most bizarre game title, Bishi Bashi Special is surprisingly not a house dish at your local Cantonese take-away. It's probably best described as a cross between Track and Field and Parappa the Rapper, with a bit of those dancing games thrown in for extra spice. What this amounts to is one of the funniest and most enjoyable multiplayer games ever to grace the PlayStation.

Relying on pure simplicity, Konami has packed in hundreds of crazy mini-games that require a quick mind and even quicker joypad rapping skills. Without any dull options screens or unnecessary intros, all you have to do is select one of the many games and then observe the quick on-screen demonstration of how to play. It's then up to you to beat either the computer or a friend in the head-to-head challenge.



Players have a choice of either Hyper Bishi Bashi or Super Bishi Bashi. Each has a unique line-up of mad, but short challenges for up eight players. We preferred the games in Super Bishi Bashi mode, although there's plenty of variety to keep you occupied for ages. Depending on the game, you may have to hammer buttons as quickly as possible to build up a power meter, press certain buttons according to on-screen colours or hit certain buttons before your opponent when told to. Believe me, this will all make sense after describing a few of the wackier games on offer.

One of the events is comparable to the shot putt event in athletics, but instead of chucking iron balls about you have to toss custard pies. Basically, you play as a bride, who holds a pie in her hand ready to launch it down the church aisle; tugging at your dress is the groom. To play you have to firstly button-bash to gain plenty of speed for the launch. As you approach the first row of seats, you have to then hold down a different button to determine the angle of trajectory. Letting rip at



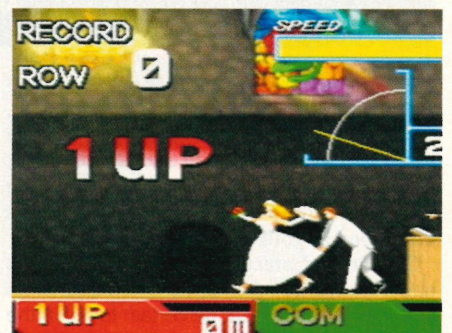
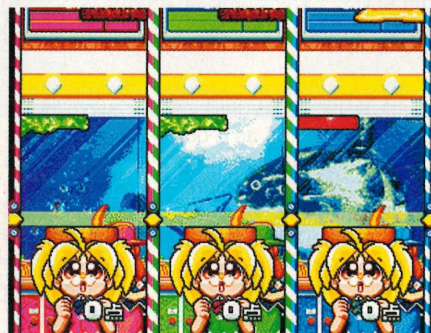
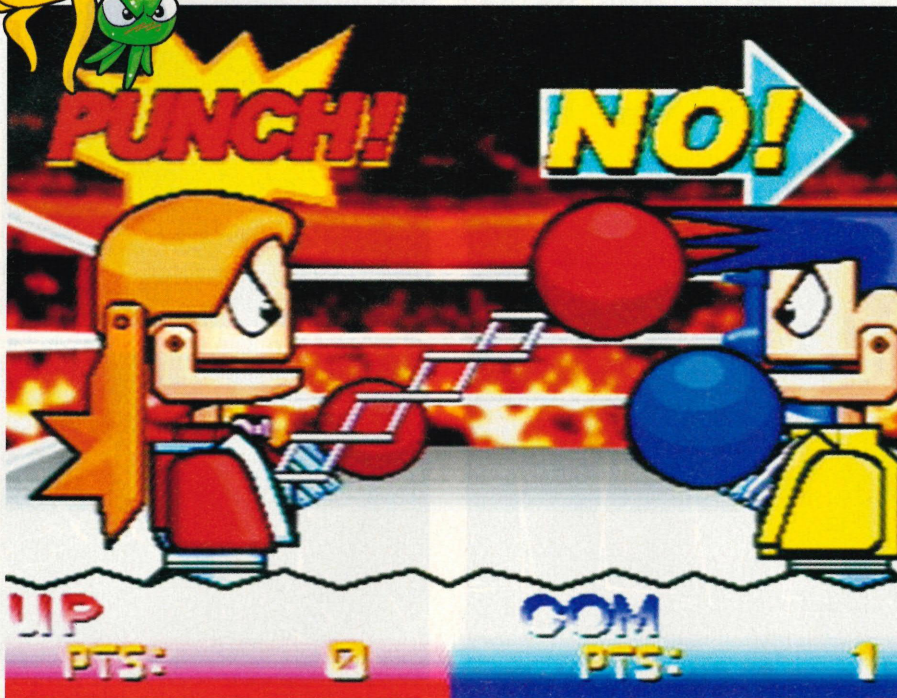
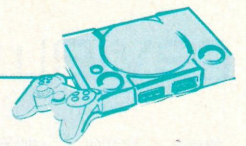
about 45 degrees, you can then sit back and watch the pie sail through the air before hitting one of the guests splat in the face. Quite simply, the winner is the bride that manages to clear the highest number of seat rows.

Another superb game sees you down the local dojo, trying to learn some useful martial arts moves from the grand master. Fans of Parappa the Rapper will instantly feel at home here with a series of quick button-pressing sequences. Each time the instructor performs a set of moves, amusing chimes compliment each action, so that a small section of a tune is played. For example, pressing the X button moves your character's

leg and produces a low tone. Pressing the square or circle button respectively corresponds to an arm movement and a higher tone. Being successful sees your 70s afro wig expanding in size, until it covers up the whole screen and you can't even see the instruction bar. The trouble is, as you get better, the instructions get faster and faster until all you can hear is a series of high pitch squeaks, which create a tune that we guarantee will have you in stitches. As you can probably tell, this was easily our favourite game.

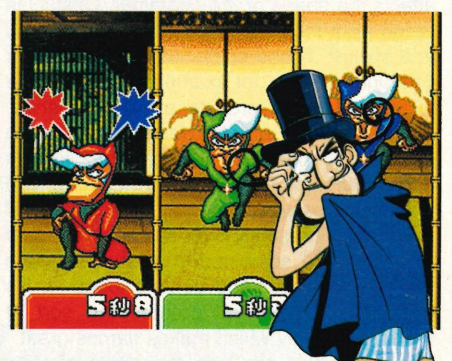
Many of the challenges will have your brain spinning in confusion, as you try to convert what you see on the screen into pressing the





right buttons as quickly as you possibly can, before your opponent beats you to it. Strangely though, there is never a hint of frustration and it's much more likely that you'll just giggle even more, as the on-screen mayhem literally sends you around the twist. All of the games are very short and snappy, lasting roughly about 20 to 30 seconds, which is just enough time to leave you wanting more and more as the bout finishes. Should a tiebreak ever occur, the two characters will lock hands and begin spinning each other around. The competitor who can rap the buttons fastest, will send the other one flying off the screen and therefore win. Once again the humour factor makes you adore this game even more.

With such a comical variety of short games, it's hard to fault a title which has been designed purely for party play. If you're only going to play this alone, then it's definitely recommended that you try before buying. However, if you bought Parappa the Rapper, then this certainly deserves a purchase. Admittedly, even on the very hard difficulty setting, we were able to complete the game first time, but that didn't stop us coming back for more. It's certainly a must-have title, if you plan to make full use of the multiplayer madness.



■ PUBLISHER: KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER: KONAMI
 ■ FORMAT: PSX ■ RELEASED: OUT NOW

PROS

- + Superb fun in multiplayer mode
- + Colourful and simple gameplay
- + Guaranteed to make you laugh
- + Hundreds of games to choose from

CONS

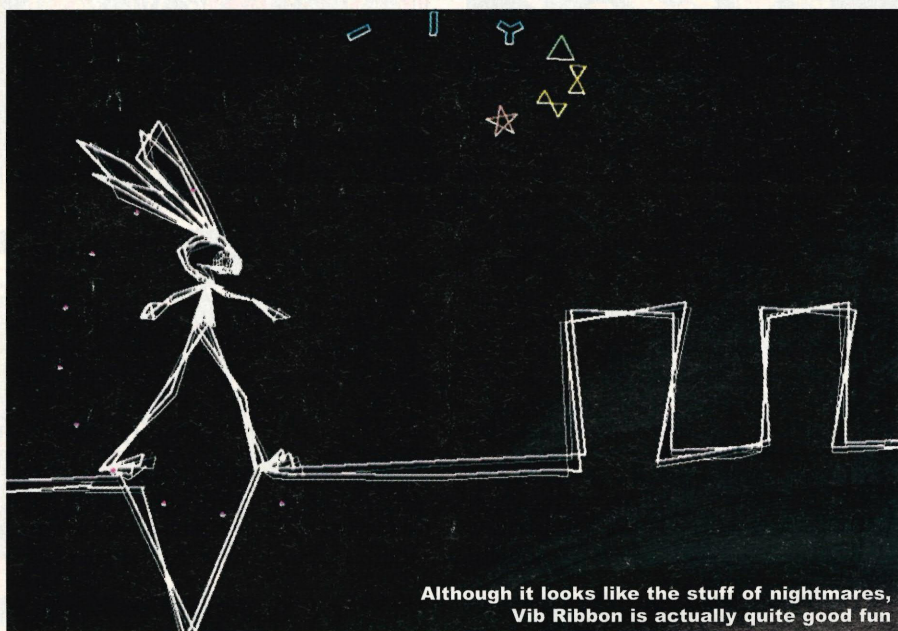
- Can get tiresome in 1P mode
- Too simple for some?

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

www.consoledomain.co.uk/psx/reviews/Bishi_Bashi_Special.html



VIB RIBBON

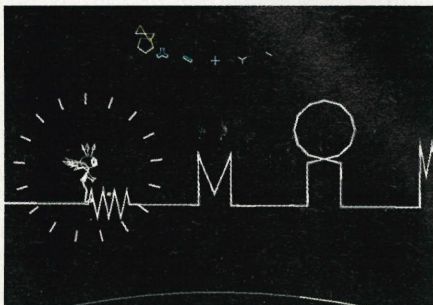


Although it looks like the stuff of nightmares, Vib Ribbon is actually quite good fun

Somewhere on Earth there is an evil genius trying to take over the world. This is the only explanation for Vib Ribbon and its insanely simple premise: guide a stick bunny (Vibri) along a white line and press buttons to dodge the obstacles in your way.

Of course, in practice, nothing that simple is easy. The game relies on music to create the line. Obstacles appear as certain tones in the music are reached and the speed of the beat affects the speed of the character. Obstacles range from loop the loops and pits to jumps and spikes. These obstacles are sometimes combined to form, for example, spiky loop the loops and these provide a real challenge. There are only four buttons to press and each one corresponds to an obstacle. Pressing the right shoulder button will take you through the loop the loops while pressing the X button will negotiate Vibri safely over spikes. When two obstacles are combined you have to press the two corresponding buttons together. It's beautifully simple, yet creates the sort of frantic gameplay which makes games great.

As you travel the line, the angle of view changes and the line occasionally shudders when you fail to take Vibri cleanly over an



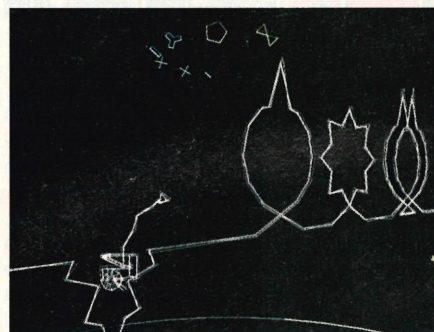
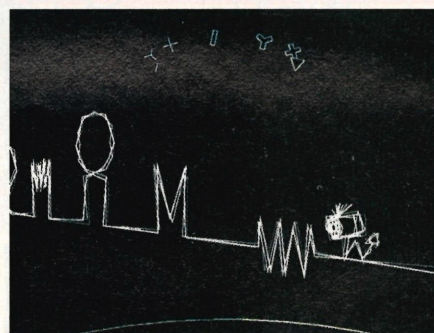
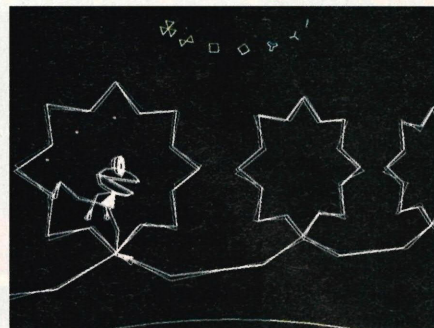
obstacle. Gradually, as Vibri receives more damage he slides through the evolutionary scale. Starting off as a bunny, damage takes him through an ape, frog and finally some kind of snake-like creature. Successfully pass an obstacle and you gain a dot, which will circle around Vibri. Collecting a full circle of dots will transform you into a more positive evolutionary direction until you turn into a little fairy with wings and a crown. Ahh! That is, until you get damaged again.

Whereas games such as Beat Mania had only built-in tracks to play along with, Vib Ribbon allows you to insert any CD you like to provide an alternative to the weird Japanese music which comes with the game. Absolutely any music disc will play with the game, so you can stick in B*witched to NWA. We did and quickly discovered B*witched's C'est La Vie provided a tougher challenge than NWA's famous track expressing a controversial attitude to the police force.

Vib Ribbon is not without problems though. For starters, playing your own CDs seemed to have little effect on gameplay, with obstacles rarely matching the beat of the music. Also the wireframe graphics will be a little too basic for some people, despite the wonderful animation.

Vibri's squeaky voice could also annoy - imagine Andi Peters on helium. And, of course there is no multiplayer - a big drawback when you've got your mates around the house.

Vib Ribbon is one of those games you either buy into or don't. But until someone invents a new music media that isn't shiny and circular it has an almost infinite life-span. Simple and effective like aspirin, the game certainly does the trick.



- PUB & DEV: SONY
- FORMAT: PSX
- RELEASE: AUGUST 4

PROS

- + Crazy idea
- + Addictive
- + Simple controls
- + Infinite levels

CONS

- No multiplayer
- Inaccurate

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

www.consoledomain.co.uk/psx/reviews/Vib_Ribbon.html



INFESTATION

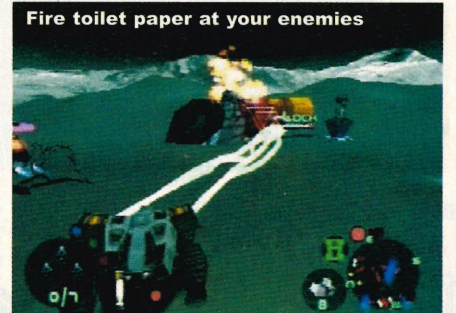
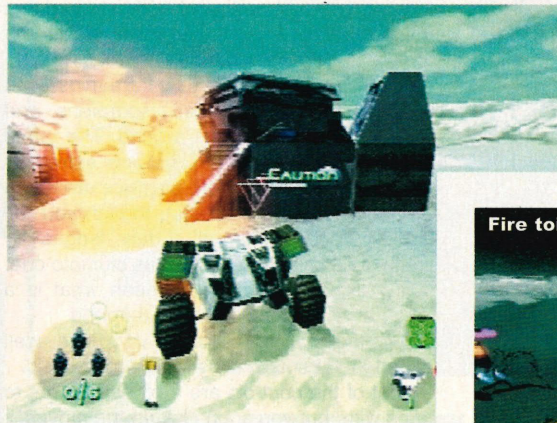
Worrying about trench foot is the last thing on the mind of tomorrow's soldier. Radiation, aliens and keeping your futuristic tank afloat all need to be addressed if you plan to save the world from a dubious end. Infestation unleashes all these concepts and gives you some mighty weaponry to boot. Fail your mission and the world will be riddled with an alien lifeform; succeed and you'll be the toast of Infestation's barracks.

This mission-based combat game is set at an undisclosed time in the future, when humans have harnessed the use of 'warp-gates', enabling them to colonise the universe. Unfortunately, aliens have also noticed the power these gates hold and begun to invade your territory. Your mission is to get rid of these little blighters, upgrade your weaponry and research the alien intelligence by dispatching scientists to root out valuable information.

You begin your task in a 4x4 tank, and quickly pick up the ability to change into a monster truck-type vehicle.

There are 22 missions in total, across 24 environments, ranging from desert encampments to ice prisons. A great selection of weaponry - including cannon, smoke bombs and a flame-thrower just to start with - ensures hectic firefights are made more challenging by the necessity to choose the best weapon to deal with a particular enemy threat. Enemies fight in groups, and even proficient gamers will struggle to dispatch them easily. However proceedings are eased by the power-ups, up-grades and hidden goodies hidden in crates scattered around the levels.

Infestation has all the hallmarks of a good game. The range of missions is great, the concept and mission briefings are detailed and imaginative and overall the plot (although nothing that we haven't seen before) is interesting and gripping. Unfortunately, the weak points shine through. Uninspiring



visuals and holes in the game's structure completely overshadow the initial feeling that you are able to go anywhere you like. The graphics are blocky and vehicles can even get stuck in the scenery! When the action picks up, the screen jolts and jerks, making it difficult to pinpoint a target and control your vehicle. Given that this is the essence of the game, smooth action scenes are essential. The sound is also poor: a techno din accompanied by a range of squeaks and clicks which are supposed to pass as effects.

Ubi Soft has another release of the same vein this month. Terracon has a similar premise to Infestation, the only difference being you are a hot-footed alien. This title will hopefully be the one that stands out of the two - all Infestation left me with was motion sickness.



<p>POOWA</p>	<p>SPIRAH</p>	<p>ICHNEU</p>	<p>MYDON</p>
<p>HOVERBOT</p>	<p>ZIFBOT</p>	<p>Erm...not sure what this is</p>	<p>Or this...</p>

PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT
 DEVELOPER: FRONTIER
 FORMAT: PSX RELEASED: OUT NOW

<p>PROS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Huge play area + Great weapons + Diverse tasks 	<p>CONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made me sick - Disappointing - Limited controls - Awful sound
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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE LINKS
www.consoledomain.co.uk/psx/reviews/Infestation.html

WORDS: JAYNE BOWEN

■ PUBLISHER: THQ INTERNATIONAL ■ DEVELOPER: CORE DESIGN ■ FORMAT: GBC ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

TOMB RAIDER

Core Design, developer of the hugely successful Tomb Raider series on PC and PlayStation, has at last created the first handheld outing for Lara Croft on the GBC.

Before play begins you instantly have to click through lots of linear navigated visuals. We immediately thought the worst: "Oh dear, here goes another childish cartoon-style Game Boy game." Fortunately, these thoughts didn't last long.

Set in the dry heat of Peru, you (as Lara) make your way to an ancient lost temple to find The Nightmare Stone which, in

the wrong hands, can be used to destroy the world.

The stone holds the spirit of an evil Aztec ruler which had been laid to rest forever, or so it seems.

Being the top investigator and hard bird that you are, you smash your way inside the temple to discover what has been going on.

It is up to you to ensure Lara avoids such things as deadly snakes, scorpions and falling rocks as she runs around. The game captures the original PC version extremely well for a Game Boy. The graphics are about as good as you can expect, though you will find yourself falling off a few ledges by mistake as some of the textures blur into one. It is hard differentiating between what is a ledge and what is just the background.

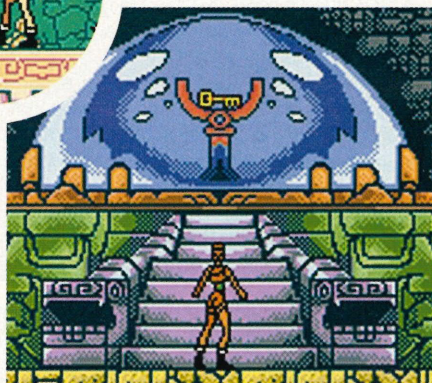
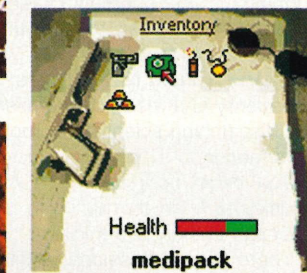
The music fits the style of game well although the sound effects are pretty basic.

Most of the controls are a bit hard to get to grips with, but you soon pick up the moves.

The animations are pretty good considering the small screen, especially Lara's leg swaying movements when

she is hanging off ledges.

Overall this is an addictive game and a must-have for all Game Boy Color owners and Tomb Raider fans. If you like hunting for weapons, keys and levers, performing physical tricks, going for a swim and killing lots of creatures on your way, this is definitely the game for you. It has plenty of depth and Lara looks even better because she doesn't have unrealistically-sized boobs. In short, it's simply the breast!



WORDS: LIESL BROOKES

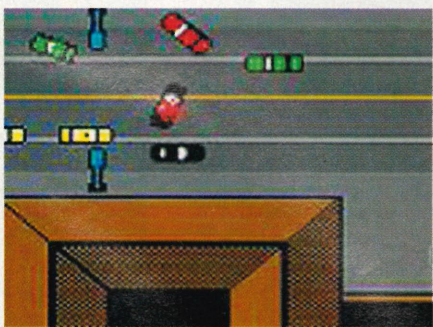
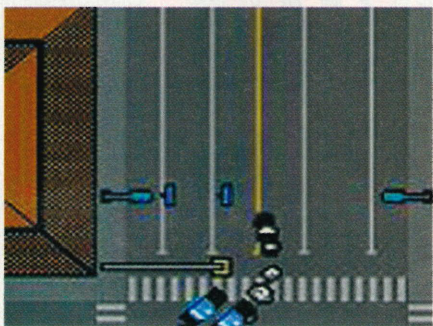
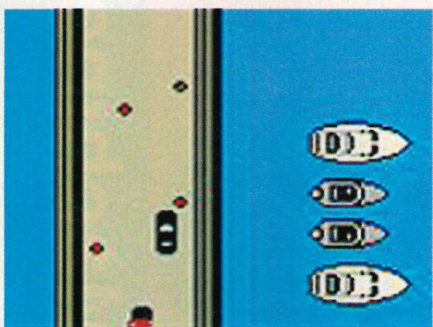
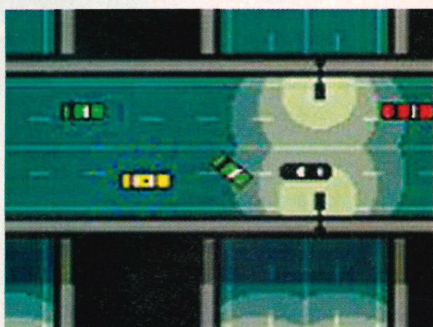
Win Gamester Yellow Essentials

Yellow: the colour of custard, bananas and jaundice. Coincidentally, it's also the hue of the fantastic prizes we are about to give away. But don't worry, this competition won't discolour your skin; but it might turn your friends green with envy if you win.

Radica UK, the creators of the market leading Gamester brand, has launched a dazzling range of bright yellow gadgets and gear for the Game Boy, the nation's favourite gaming portable. And GDO has five to give away!



■ PUBLISHER: INFOGRAMES ■ DEVELOPER: CRAWFISH ■ FORMAT: GBC ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW



DRIVER

Infogrames has published a title that will either *Driver you mad* (guffaw) or send you on a virtual joy-ride. A hit on the PlayStation and later the PC, it has now skidded its way on to the Game Boy Color minus the fancy 3D graphics. But, who needs amazing visuals when you have got awesome gameplay?

Like the original PSX version you take the role of undercover cop Tanner; given the task of infiltrating a notorious criminal organisation run by the kingpin of the underworld: Castaldi. To do this you need to complete one mission at a time, ranging from stealing a police car to ramming the cars of selected victims.

Extra features are available: the take a ride mode allows you a free drive around the cities you've visited in a car of your choice; there are also four driving games where you need to complete missions and set best times.

The layout of the game, visually, reminds me strongly of *Grand Theft Auto* - right down to the top-down view. All that is different is the limitation of not being able to hop out of your damaged car and flag

down another potential victim, from who, you can car-jack a new vehicle. Sounds are satisfying when you take a corner or while avoiding traffic at a good pace (plenty of screeching tires). Incoming cop cars become a problem once you hear a siren start up and then it's foot to the floor as you try to avoid them.

If you do not impress in any of your missions you will inevitably be dropped from your position as head driver (if you are lucky), or 'dealt with' (if unlucky). Fail to complete the task in hand (e.g. wreck your car) and you are given the option to retry. A useful password is supplied upon completing a job, so you don't need to start from the beginning if you switch off.

Unlike the PlayStation and PC versions, the mission structure in this title is very linear as you get no choice as to which job you get.

But despite this annoyance, *Driver* has to be one of the most addictive titles on GBC to date. The same high-risk screeching turns and the ever-constant coppers, bent on destroying your four-wheeled pride and joy, are all there - just minus the 3D.

WORDS: DAVE O'DONOHUE

Pack for Game Boy

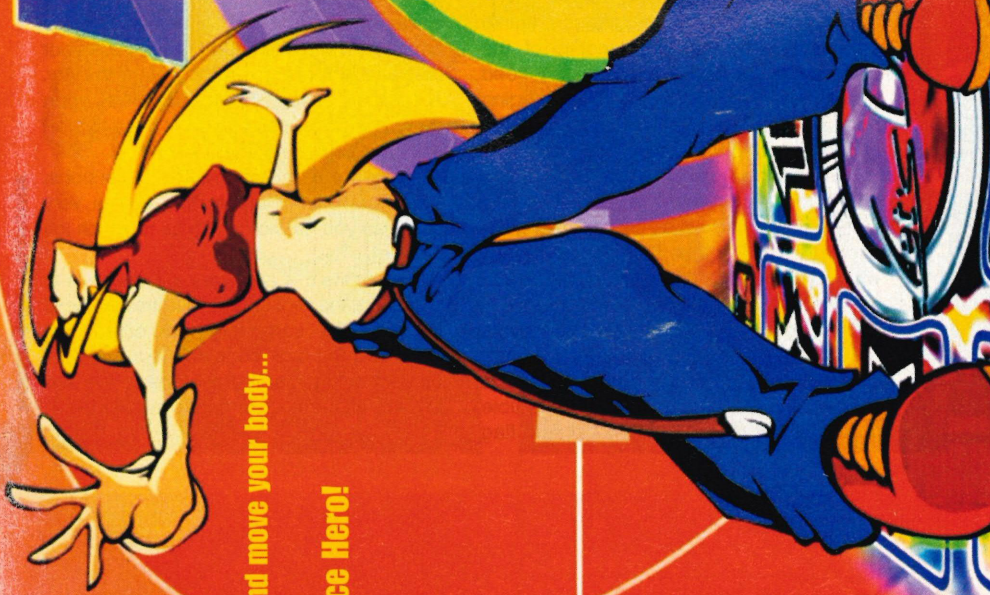
The Gamester Yellow Essentials Pack includes a yellow mains adapter, a rechargeable yellow power pack (providing up to six hours of play on a single charge) and a protective yellow wallet. To enter, answer this question: What's yellow and dangerous? a) a banana with a flick-knife b) an apple with an Uzi c) a pear with a stare. Answers on a postcard to Essentials Pack Competition, Games Domain, 435 Lichfield Road, Birmingham, B6 7SS.



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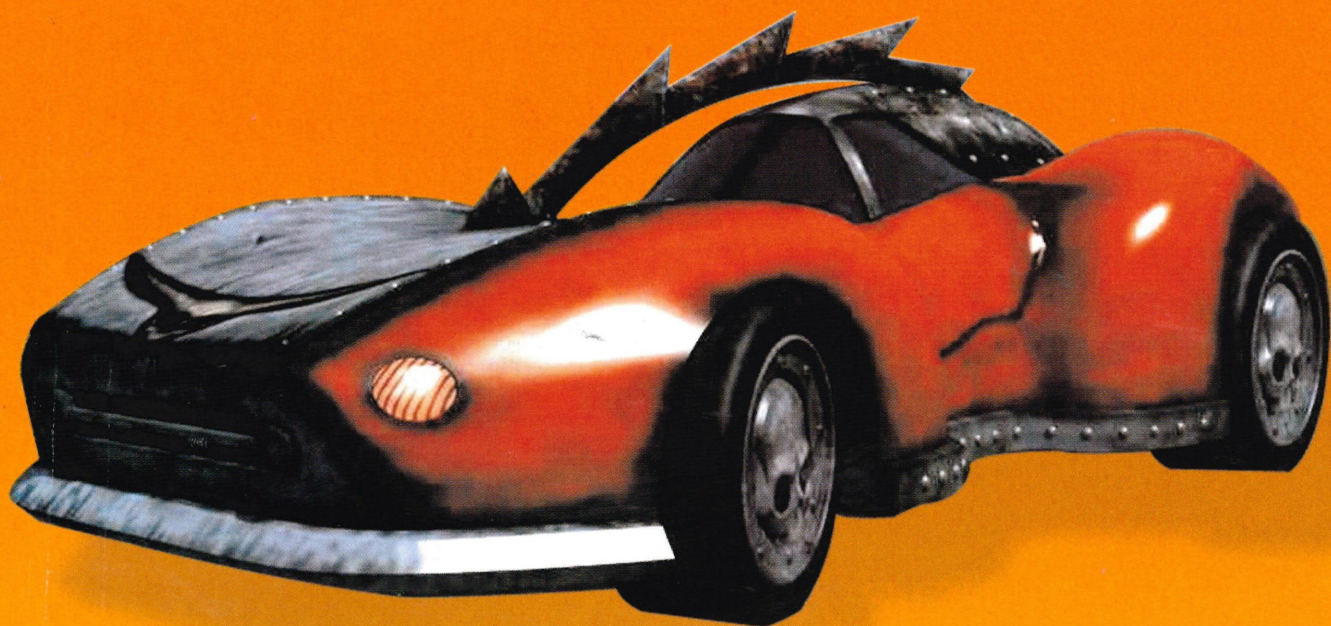
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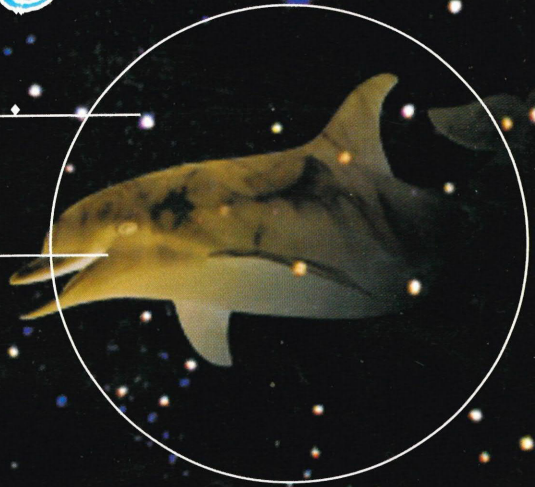
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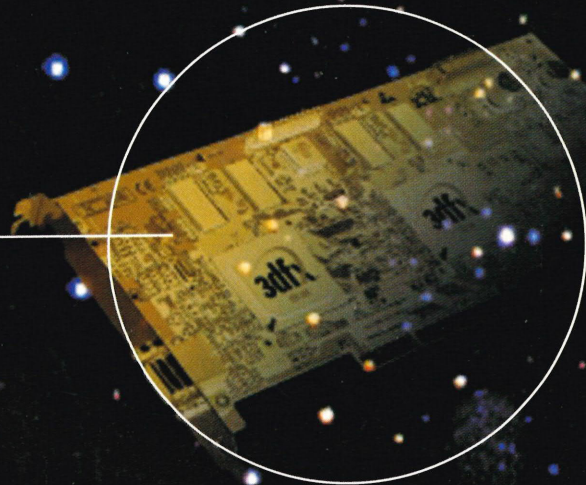
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