Nintendo 64: First Turok 2 Review Inside!

NINTENDO 64 • PLAYSTATION • PC • DREAMCAST • ARCADE • ONLINE

Interviewed: Jeff Gordon on his new game

NEXT GENERATION

The world's #1 computer and videogame author[illegible] November 1998

RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

- The secret to **Namco's success**
- Will **Tekken 4** be on PlayStation?
- Where Namco is headed in **1999**

Sonic Adventure: the full story

Sega's new STAR WARS game

The game industry's defining moments

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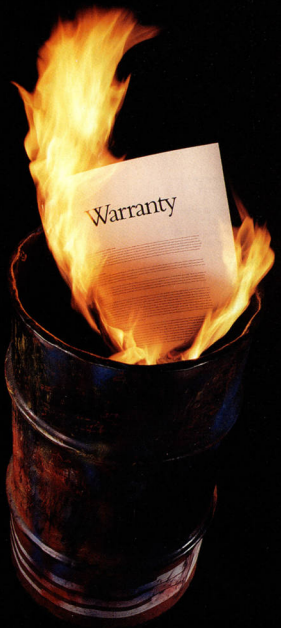
Racing toward the future

With the entire video and computer game industry gearing up for a record holiday season, and the release of Dreamcast happening in Japan probably as you read this, one company stands in the midst of the console war — aloof, patient, secure in its place as a market leader, and above all, quiet about it. Founded in 1955 to make, believe it or not, children's rocking horses, Namco has grown into a dominant force in videogaming. At least equal to (and sometimes surpassing) Sega as the number one arcade manufacturer in Japan, it has also contributed immeasurably to PlayStation's success at home and abroad with conversions of its *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* series — conversions that are arguably better than the arcade games they're based on.

But despite its success, Namco has also traditionally been very quiet about it. Other companies like Sega and Nintendo proudly flaunt their designers like rock stars, but can anyone even put a name, much less a face, to the genius behind *Tekken*? **Next Generation** was recently granted a rare, behind-the-scenes look at this gaming colossus, the very human people who work there, and what the future holds. Their story begins on page 26.

Namco, however, owes much of its present-day status to one game, *Pac-Man*, and in fact the creation of this simple but popular character was a turning point for the industry as a whole, paving the way for Mario, Sonic, and Lara Croft. Indeed, the history of gaming is filled with moments when something so seemingly small went on to change everything forever.

For a more complete look at these moments in time, turn to page 108.



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November 1998

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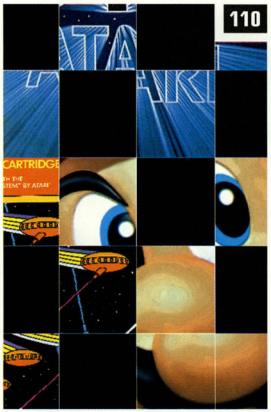
Next Generation shares editorial (and editors) with the U.K.-based magazine **EDGE**. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Letters may be edited for space, clarity, or so we look cool. Later days, Cathy. We'll miss you and your spunky attitude. Hope you have fun working with your #1 dude. Good luck at *Games Business*. Watch out Sven, she's good.

BPA

The **secret** of **Namco's success**

Few things represent Namco's success better than Reiko Nagase, star of the *Ridge Racer* series. In fact, PlayStation wouldn't be the powerhouse platform it is today without Namco titles like *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* to give it a boost. In this rare, behind-the-scenes look, **Next Generation** talks to the people who make the games and learns exactly why Namco is so damn good



Moments in **time**

The history of the game industry is dotted with pivotal events that were seemingly insignificant at the time. Here are the moments when things were never the same again

Jim Whims

He helped launch Nintendo in the U.S. in 1986, then did the same for Sony in 1994. Now an independent venture capitalist, Jim Whims has a few things to say about the looming console wars

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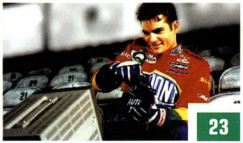

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Will an emulator kill an aging PlayStation before its time?
Moreover, can **Nintendo 64 survive without *Zelda*?**

INTELLIGENCE

Game industry news and analysis

PLAYSTATION EMULATION RAISES QUESTIONS

Could this change the future **of emulation — and games?**

Imagine playing off-the-shelf PlayStation games with perspective correction, filtering, and high-res graphics. The solution isn't a hardware upgrade or new console from Sony, but instead, something you probably already own: a PC. PSYKE is the most impressive of a recent crop of PlayStation emulators for PC that provide a promising look into the future of emulation — a future in which the emulator itself exceeds the quality of the original hardware it is emulating. Playing a game with PSYKE is as simple as placing a PlayStation CD into a PC's CD-ROM drive and starting the emulator.

How good is the emulation? At the moment, it's more interesting for its potential than for its actual performance. Compatibility is hit-or-miss, and so far, PSYKE can only run a handful of commercially available games, although it plays many demos and most Yaroze games just fine. Also, as yet, it doesn't support PlayStation audio (but it does handle CD Audio).

However, in spite of these shortcomings, the technology is still impressive. With the most compatible game, *Burning Road*, the software renderer produces graphics that look nearly identical to the actual output of a PlayStation, running between 12 and 50fps on a Pentium II 233. However, much more exciting is the early version of the 3Dfx Glide driver. The game comes to life in high-res — with filtered textures, sharp edges, and improved speed — looking as if it had been rewritten for a next generation console.

3D games (top) are improved by the Glide driver (above)

But with all the debate about the legality of emulation, the emergence of PSYKE begs the question: Is it legal? As with most emulation issues, the answer is more complicated than a simple "yes" or "no" (although, if you want to be on the safe side, go with "no"). Developed by two anonymous authors and a few program contributors, the emulator itself is only about 1MB and requires a ROM image of your PlayStation BIOS. In

***Burning Road* is the best example of how PlayStation games are visually improved. The actual game (top right) pales in comparison**

order to get a PlayStation game to run, you must either disassemble your PlayStation and have the equipment to read in the data from your BIOS chip, or download a copy of it from the Internet. Downloading the ROM is illegal. It is also illegal to distribute the ROM online. (Needless to say, there are already dozens of sites that offer copies of the BIOS ROM.)

Considering that the

emulator is written in Visual C++ and could conform to DirectX, it would be a simple matter to port it to Sega's Dreamcast. The BIOS calls could be reverse engineered to produce the same results with a completely original BIOS image, or a software workaround could be developed, either of which would eliminate the copyright issues that prevent the use of the real PlayStation BIOS. Would Sega be interested in such a possibility? When contacted, Sega was not prepared to make a statement. However, a spokesperson did suggest that Sega would have some official comment in the near future.

One might expect that Sony would have some comment on the implications of the emulator, but when **Next Generation** contacted several spokespeople for Sony, they were oblivious to the existence of PSYKE and weren't willing to make an official statement.

Even if it worked flawlessly, the emulator would do little to harm software sales, which produce the bulk of income for Sony and its third parties. Hardware has long been the least profitable end of any console's business model, and so, from a financial viewpoint, the emulator ought to have very little effect on Sony. However, with Sony firmly committed to the idea that the PlayStation still has life enough to last two more years, the real danger lies, not in losing dollars, but in losing consumers and consumer mindshare. The next generation of competing consoles could offer an emulator that runs PlayStation games better than the PlayStation itself, underscoring its obsolescence and luring away Sony customers.

So what's the long-term effect? With each successive system exponentially more powerful than the last, and the increasing sophistication of emulation technology, we may be approaching the day when every system can, with the proper software, run any other system's games. How this would affect brand loyalty and game development is anyone's guess, but it's a possibility that companies should consider sooner rather than later — for Sony and Sega, it could be critical. NG

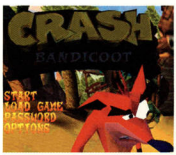
NINTENDO RELEASES RAM EXPANSION

Nintendo has revealed its plans for the 4MB RAM expansion for Nintendo 64. According to Howard Lincoln, president of Nintendo, the cartridge will be out in time for the release of *Turok 2* and will retail for about $29.95. The cartridge enables games like *Turok 2* and *Rogue Squadron* to run faster and in high-res by allowing textures and objects to reside in work RAM, limiting the processor-burdening task of swapping in textures and models into its current limited RAM space. Imagine *F-Zero* with a farther draw distance and textures, and the result is something similar to how future games will look when combined with the RAM expansion. The cartridge, which fits into the small hatch in the front of the machine, will no doubt extend Nintendo 64's life span, provided that future developments proactively support the new device.

WHAT IS IT?

The first CD-ROM game to ever be included in a box of cereal.

Very powerful PCs show off just how advanced emulation has become, enabling multiple sessions of *Crash Bandicoot*



DATASTREAM

Total market share for Sega Saturn in the first half of 1998: 1%. Nintendo 64's market share: 32%. Sony PlayStation's market share: 67%. Total software market share for Sega Saturn in the first half of 1998: 2%. Software market share for Nintendo 64: 39%. Software market share for Sony PlayStation: 59%. Leading Nintendo 64 third party: Midway (10.5% market share). Leading Sony PlayStation third party: Electronic Arts (21.1% market share). Total handheld market share for Game Gear in the first half of 1998: 8%. For Game Boy: 92%. Leading Game Boy third party: THQ (8.7% market share). Leading PC software publishers in the first half of 1998: Cendent Software (17.3% market share), Electronic Arts (11.4% market share), and GT Interactive (9.9% market share).

FAIR PLAY

Are women playing games?

Yes, and you **may be surprised where**

There's been a lot of talk in the industry about how to get more women to play games. No one's come up with the solution yet, but the answers may lie in something right before our eyes — the Internet.

According to a recent survey by the Interactive Digital Software Association, females are more likely to play games online than males: 53% of online gamers are female. Other survey results may lend some logic to this statistic.

First, the survey found that 89% of people who play online games will not pay to play. This suggests that women like playing games but are not willing to pay for them. David Herschman agrees with this assertion. As president and CEO of Virtual Vegas, a free online casino site, he can tell you why 42% of the gamers who visit his site are women. "I think that women like to play games just as much as men [do]. However, I feel that women are less likely to go out and buy a game. When games are free, and you can win prizes, like in Virtual Vegas, we have seen that women like to play just as much as men."

The other appeal online games seem to hold for women is the community aspect. "For women, gameplaying is more of a social event," says Herschman. "Women like to play with their friends and compete against one another."

Julie Kanarowski's experience supports this idea. As associate product manager at Berkeley Systems, she can tell you how popular the company's *You Don't Know Jack* and *Acrophobia* online games are with women. In fact, *Acrophobia* is split almost 50/50 between women and men players, and *YDKJ* online has 33% female players. "I've spoken with some women who play *Acro* regularly," says Kanarowski, "and they enjoy the nature of the word game coupled with the community environment online. At the same time, these women rarely consider purchasing a CD-ROM."

The large number of women visiting sites like Virtual Vegas and *Acrophobia* is also partly explained by the IDSA survey, which found that females prefer quiz, trivia, and contest games, followed by card and board games. By contrast, men are playing action games and strategy and military simulations online, a finding upheld by statistics at online gaming services like Dwango (which offers games like *Quake II* and *Total Annihilation*), where the clientele is 95% male.

Obviously, the online game industry has a long way to go before it matures, but already it seems to have hit on a way to draw and keep one very large, untapped market. NG

Virtual Vegas and *You Don't Know Jack* online are just two Internet sites that draw women

IT IS ...

Chex Quest, a limited-edition CD that came with Rice Chex cereal. A waffle-armored hero battles Flemoids with his Zorch weapon. The game officially used Id's *Doom* engine and was unofficially programmed by Id, although it's not listed on the company's web site.

NEWS BITES

Eidos has once again scooped our award for Rumor Subject Number One. At press time, the firm is allegedly in negotiations to buy Psygnosis, Rage, and Crystal Dynamics. Who can possibly be behind these expansionist and bold rumors about the publicly quoted company? **E.O.D.'s Mike Wilson set sail for London** to set up a European version of his "people's publisher" operation at annual trade show ECTS. He said: "Setting up a G.O.D. office in Europe is very important to us. It's a big and complicated market, with lots of different accounts for each different territory, and we feel we need to be there." **Papyrus General Manager** Adam Levesque emerged from that operation's recent staff fallout to set up an independent development house. Said Levesque: "Our goal at Blue Fang will be to offer a unique gameplaying experience by bringing new ideas to the role-playing genre. We believe we have the talent and experience to do that." **Has there ever been a time** in game history when a new reworking of *Space Invaders* hasn't been in development? Now Activision has grabbed the rights to the dreary classic from Taito PC, PlayStation, N64, and Game Boy versions will be aimed at those of you who still haven't learned that it's never the same the second time around. **Absurdly self-important quote** of the month goes to the British magazine (monthly sales 27,600) that recently claimed: "Few doubt that the massive success of ... Sony's

TALKBACK

"Hacking is such a tantalizing plum of a puzzle. And a way to demonstrate intellectual prowess. It's the forbidden fruit. And some people are going to take a great big bite out of it. And I would have to see whether the hack they did was a good hack or a bad hack. But if it was a really clever one, I'd hire him in a microsecond."
— Nolan Bushnell's response when asked if he'd ever hire a young hacker on TheTech: Museum of Innovation home page

WHAT IF ZELDA SLIPS?

As Nintendo **64's most important launch** approaches, top brass at **NOA remain confident**

The product-poor holiday season of 1997 was a disaster for Nintendo, allowing PlayStation to gain crucial market share. But one title — *Zelda* — has the potential to turn all that around.

Zelda could be the greatest game ever released — if it ships. The game was supposed to ship more than a year ago. Another delay could prove fatal to Nintendo 64 in the U.S. **Next Generation** spoke to Peter Main, Nintendo of America's vice president of marketing, about the game and its rush to market.

***The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* could be the most impressive game ever, and will certainly give N64 a boost this holiday season — if it ships**

Take a good look. Who *doesn't* want to play this game?

NG: How important is *Zelda 64* to N64 this holiday?
PM: *The Legend of Zelda* is ... important for the entire industry. This game will show the dominance of this generation of console gaming. We're projecting to sell two million copies by the end of the year, which will put even more Nintendo 64s in American homes.

NG: With the game scheduled to ship in Japan just nine days before the U.S. release November 23, will the translation suffer?
PM: We have had people from Nintendo of America in Japan for the past several months translating the game, so the fact that the game ships in both the U.S. and Japan in November isn't a problem.

NG: Some gamers are worried that the game has gone too far to action and away from its traditional RPG roots. Might it be too *Mario*-ey?
PM: As with all games in the *Zelda* series, *Ocarina of Time* is a nontraditional RPG. The game is an epic adventure with RPG elements. The battles are in real time, as opposed to the text-window-based battles of traditional RPGs, making it much easier to comprehend and increasing its appeal to the casual gamer. This unique RPG feature is a primary reason why the franchise has always been so popular. Is it too *Mario*-ey? We hope so. Look how popular *Mario 64* has been!

NG: Because of *Zelda*'s delay last year, PlayStation got a jump on N64 for 1998. How do you expect N64 to compare with PlayStation in 1999?
PM: We expect a repeat of the 16-bit generation. We started strong, the other guys made a good run at us halfway through the race, and we made a good sprint at the end to beat them across the finish line.

NG: If *Zelda 64* slips, how much does that hurt the platform?
PM: *The Legend of Zelda* is not going to slip. NG

Gran Turismo would have been achieved without us leading the way in applauding the ... title." Readers, if we ever become that pompous, please let us know. **Highly imaginative idea of the** month: This issue we honor IcePick's Warren Weems. He is planning to include a sassy, sexy female character in forthcoming bank robbery game *Bankheist*. "There's a very bad character by the name of Stephanie," he squeaked. "She's a former police officer, whose self-indulgence fed her need for aggression." **And second place goes to** THQ for its acquisition of the *Danger Girl* licensed game from N-Space. According to the firm, this third-person adventure "will revolve around the bold exploits of an elite team of sexy, smart, and sassy women recruited by the top-secret Danger Girl spy agency and charged with fighting evil." There is, alas, more: "*Danger Girl* imperils its beautiful and curvaceous heroines in seemingly hopeless situations against menacing villains as they use their wit and charm to fight for the forces of good." **Interactive Magic is taking its online** multiplayer flight sims abroad. The first country to receive the World War II dogfight simulation is the place that offered so much in the way of historical inspiration on the subject — Germany. **The financial media have been suggesting** that Cendant is looking to offload its game businesses, including Sierra and Blizzard. Cendant is a strange, multibusiness hold-all with no natural affiliation with the game

CELEBRATING ATARI

Atari-philes show up to pay tribute to the company that **gave birth to the industry**

Public showings of unreleased prototypes stole the show

This past August saw the celebration of classic games, and the company that started it all, at the World of Atari show held in Las Vegas. A large group of Atari luminaries were on hand to share with the masses their fondest — and not so fond — memories.

During his keynote speech, Bill Kunkel, editor of *Electronic Games* (the first videogame magazine ever), called Atari at its peak "a giant city," claiming that no other company to date has even come close to equaling its size. Judging from the sheer number of diverse attendees, Atari had an enormous impact on many people's lives.

One big draw at the show was Atari memorabilia, including original prints of classic Atari box art. Some of the items, such as a *Space Invaders* handheld and the Atari 2600 Graduate computer keyboard, were one of a kind; they were being shown to the public for the first time. Other classic systems were on hand as well, from the Bally Astrocade to the Mattel Intellivision.

Elusive collectibles were also shown. Curt Vendel from the Atari Historical Society was on hand with interoffice memos, the Atari Laserdisc system, the playable 2600 prototypes of *Tempest* and *Sinistar*, and the controversial agreement between Atari and Amiga Corporation. Dan Kramer and Jerry Jessop, hardware engineers from Atari's classic era, brought some of the most impressive items, including *Computer Space* (serial number one), *Pong*, and *Cosmos* (Atari's prototype holographic game system). On the final day, many of these items were auctioned off.

Away from the chaos, a series of keynotes were given. Most notable were speeches by Don Thomas (curator of the I.C.When timeline), Scott LeGrand and Stephanie Wukovitz from 4Play (creators of *BattleSphere*), Rob Fulop (designer of *Demon Attack* and *Missile Command* for Atari 2600), John Harris (immortalized in the book *Hackers* as the boy who lost the *Frogger* source code), and Leonard Herman (author of *Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of Videogames*).

The show was also a venue for some new products. The long-awaited *BattleSphere* for Atari Jaguar debuted to an eager audience, and IcePick Games announced its first title, *Bankheist*, for PC and Dreamcast. Other members of gaming's elite, from Westwood Studios to Sony Entertainment, attended just to pay homage to the company that helped build their careers.

The show was so successful that Keita Iida, spokesperson for the Atari Gaming Headquarters, is already rounding up support for next year's event, renamed The Classic Gaming Expo, in the hope of attracting even more classic gaming enthusiasts and company sponsors. NG

PROFILE

Name: Eric Fredricksen
Accomplishments: *Imperialism 1* and *2*

The first game Eric Fredricksen ever programmed was done on an HP programmable calculator. To do the programming, he had to set in magnetic strips and actually print everything out because there was no screen. He still managed to write a few games, however, including one resembling *Lunar Lander*. "There's not many games you can do with just a plotter, though," says Fredricksen. Things are different now, however, as he oversees the *Imperialism 2* project at his development house, Frog City. "The sky's virtually the limit — technology seems to have advanced five-million-fold since the early days." So what's Fredricksen's idea of the ultimate game? "A world where rules are set up to create a universe you can do whatever in — something more along the lines of defining the rules of interaction and physics, where the game designers don't even know what's going to happen."

Host Keita Iida poses with Atari alum Rob Fulop (top) while attendees exhibit Pavlovian tendencies over classic merchandise

GAME MUSIC TAKES A STEP FORWARD

As if Red Orb hasn't cashed in enough on the *Myst* and *Riven* franchises (although that didn't help them fend off the Learning Company takeover), Virgin Records has recently released soundtracks to both games. The *Riven* soundtrack came out last February, and the *Myst* soundtrack released last month, concurrent with the five-year anniversary of the game. These are just the first soundtracks to release in a trend that Tom Dolan believes will change game music forever.

As senior director of multimedia at Virgin Records, Dolan is tasked with finding the kinds of game soundtracks that will have mass appeal. But he also views this as a way to help game music evolve. "I think it will change game music and how it's seen," says Dolan. "I think you're starting to see right now the top gaming companies devoting more to music, and that the guy in the background with the DX7 isn't cutting it anymore."

Dolan says he wouldn't be surprised if eventually we start seeing game soundtracks featuring high-profile musicians or a compilation of 10 popular songs. After all, movie soundtracks only became mainstream in the last three to five years with the release of CDs like *The Bodyguard*, featuring Whitney Houston. Now, it's all but impossible to find a big-budget film that isn't accompanied by some sort of want-to-be-chart-topping soundtrack.

Whether this is something consumers are ready to eat up, though, is a story that can only be told over time.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

by **Colin Campbell**, *Next Generation*'s international correspondent

EA — IT'S THE REAL THING

New faces in the Electronic Arts marketing department — since the Ricotiello revolution — tend to hail from the big-brand world of fast-moving consumer goods. Cheese snacks, fizzy drinks, hamburgers — that sort of stuff. Products with life cycles counted in generations. They exist in our minds and in our affections from cradle to grave. Their images are crafted with incredible care. This is in direct opposition to most products churned out by the game industry, which stay in the mind as long as a Cheeto stays in your mouth.

EA is clearly planning to use some of its new expertise to market games the way it's done by the grown-ups. But, you cry, this is an outrage. Games are like movies or songs or TV specials. They are precious, creative flowers that should be marketed on their own merits. We cannot have sports people guzzling copies of *Alpha Centauri*. We must not tolerate chipper songs celebrating *Populous*.

The new thinkers at EA agree that not everything that's appropriate to a breakfast cereal will work for a racing sim. But a big brand is a big brand and needs to be treated as such. Let's try to refute the position: Name EA's biggest brands. OK. Now subtract the ones that you haven't known for at least three years. See what I mean? The long view is winning.

Even EA's acquisitions are ruthlessly streamed down to deliver lasting brands. Oh, you want to create a game experience that emulates the life cycle of a porpoise while addressing the issues of Rousseau's Social Charter? How novel! Perhaps after we've finished *NBA 2000*, OK sweetie?

Origin equals *Ultima*. Maxis equals *Sim City*. Even Bullfrog, despite being allowed certain freedoms, is clearly focusing on regenerating the *Populous* brand. I haven't even started on EA Sports and Jane's. And as for new or semi-new EA games, these are nothing but brands in waiting. *Moto Racer* is already on its second cycle, and who knows how far the little legs of *LAPD* can carry EA in its least favorite territory of arcade action games. This is why brand managers are being brought in — to take the 10- to 20-year view.

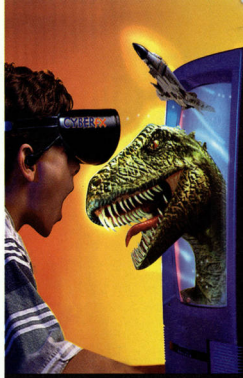
This would be grim news indeed if EA's games were crappy marketing vehicles or copies of the latest creative benchmark, but they're not. EA is a big company. It lets the little companies — owned by fellows who secretly dream of one day being bought by EA — explore the unknown, while it seeks to improve and refine. On the whole its games are solid and popular enough to deserve their place in the market and to bring you back for more, year after year. A bit like your favorite burger, snack food, or soft drink.

VIRGIN — THE SORRY REALITY

All this takes us to the miserable world of Virgin Interactive Entertainment. As I write, the unpleasant fallout of EA's takeover begins. This is where brand management and clear product lines hit home. Virgin never had much in the way of great games, let alone great lasting brands. All it ever really had was Westwood. And, if we're honest here, the only thing Westwood ever had to interest EA was *Command & Conquer*. Sure, there were others, but did EA really heave into view because Larry was wowed by *Blade Runner*?

So while we're going on about bad games and smart marketing and good games and crap marketing, let's spare a thought for the people who lost their jobs at Virgin. They're getting out their resumes not because they were bad at their jobs, but because their bosses let them down. I'll bet the PR department, the testers, or the sales team didn't make the decisions that made VIE a bad company. I'll bet it was managers fretting about stock options and moving for the best possible deal. I'll bet it was creative-team leaders allowing themselves to be drawn into the mire of politics that eventually doomed the company. And I'll bet it was fat-cat entertainment and game industry execs who were just plain bad at their jobs.

And then you wonder why we're turning to the guys from Coca Cola, Frito Lay, and Burger King?



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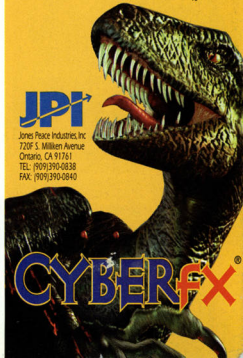

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IN THE STUDIO

***Bomberman* for Dreamcast?** Sure enough, Hudson Soft is currently working on five Dreamcast projects in Japan, one of which includes the company's explosive-throwing mascot. No word as to how many of these games are slated to come to the U.S.

Atari Games has killed its *10th Degree* project two months shy of completion. Originally titled *Juko Thread*, this 3Dfx-based fighting game was in development for nearly two years. Sporting a design heavily influenced by anime, *10th Degree* was obviously Atari's attempt to capture some of the quarters gobbled by Namco and Capcom fighters. Because the game was nearly complete, it wouldn't surprise **Next Generation** if Midway brought the product straight to the PC, N64, and PlayStation.

Considering the fair amount of cash Psygnosis spent last holiday season promoting *G.Police*, its PlayStation and PC shooter, it's no surprise that *G.Police 2* is in the works. The game was shown for the first time (behind closed doors) at this past September's ECTS, the London-based computer and videogame trade show.

MicroProse may have killed its 3D remake of *Choplifter*, but something certainly has survived. Expect to see a Game Boy Color version of Dan Gorlin's classic helicopter rescue game sometime in early '99.

ULTIMA SUIT GETS SERIOUS

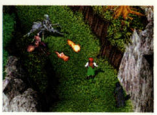
Fans will have **their day in court**

Although the *Ultima Online* lawsuit originally seemed spurious, a judge recently ruled that the case is legitimate and should go to trial. If the plaintiffs win, the legal ramifications for the industry could be huge. Among other complaints, fans charge that the game fails to take place in "real time" while it incurs unspecified costs and crashes often, cutting the 24-hour gameplay touted by Origin and EA.

The lawyer representing the group, George Schultz of Bauer and Schultz, has his own reasons for representing his clients: He himself is a self-proclaimed "gaming geek," with a four-PC LAN setup in his own home. The case has already passed its first hurdle, a claim for dismissal based on the frivolity of the suit. A judge threw out the dismissal claim and pointed out that the plaintiffs did indeed have a strong case.

"Compare it to a car," says Schultz. "It's equivalent to buying a car that didn't get the [claimed] 40 miles per gallon like they said, or didn't survive a crash, or you could only drive on 70% of the highways."

Schultz has another ace up his sleeve: Some of his clients are actually beta testers, so he should have little difficulty proving that Origin was aware of the game's flaws. But this case is tiny compared to the value-size can of worms it could open. Faulty *Ultima* software costs the user time and money, but how about a buggy Windows 98 crashing a computer and taking a day's work with it?



Although the first *Ultima Online* is still far from perfect, a sequel is already under way

The lawsuit touches upon qualitative issues as well, especially regarding packaging claims. Could, for example, a company be sued for claiming its (bad) game was fun and addictive? These matters are tricky, and probably impossible for a court of law to resolve; however, if the plaintiffs win the *Ultima* suit, it could be a wake-up call for the entire industry. Already Schultz claims to have been contacted by several developers who actually support the suit, citing that marketing and sales staff often destroy a game's quality and stability by rushing it prematurely to market.

So how strong is Schultz's case? If his talks with Origin are any indication, it's more solid than the software. "I had the head of marketing [at Origin], when I took his deposition, tell me, 'Well, we didn't think anybody would really *believe* [that the game could be played] 24 hours a day, seven days a week.'" NG

PLAYSTATION'S FUTURE?

Rugrats: Search for Reptar begins Sony and THQ's massive marketing coalition to bring children's games to the PlayStation. This would support Sony's plan to market the PlayStation as a multipurpose hardware device and perhaps be the first step in Sony corporate's "Bigger Picture." Sony plans to back the game with a Blowout TV advertising campaign, and this will be the first time that screenshots and demos of a third-party game will be allowed in Sony's hardware and software packaging. The game, based on the popular TV series, should appeal to seven- to nine-year-olds and will release by the holidays — just in time for the launch of Dreamcast in Japan. Sony has claimed that PlayStation has a long life ahead of it, and according to one inside source, "The group working on the next platform isn't in any hurry. In fact, they're smiling."

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by **Marcus Webb**, editor of *RePlay* magazine

WILL CONGRESS KILL INTERNET TOURNEYS?

In August, Congress nearly passed an appropriations measure containing language taken from Senate Bill 474, which was designed to regulate Internet gambling. Some of SB474's language probably would have outlawed the running of web-based videogame skill tournaments with cash prizes. That could kill the type of promotion that Incredible Technologies is already doing with its *Golden Tee Golf* videogame; the National Amusement Network and several arcade video factories hope to follow suit next year. However, the action was tabled at the last minute, giving the industry a chance to get its message to key lawmakers.

SEGA, NAMCO GO HEAD TO HEAD?

This fall should see the debut of both Sega's Naomi and Namco's System 14 arcade platform. System 14 uses elements of Sony's planned PSX2 technology (and most likely will feature *Tekken 4* as the lead title).

If so, the actual titles could play a pivotal role in sorting out the rivalry. New Sega arcade titles coming this fall include *Dirt Devil*, a new race-driving videogame from the same AM3 development division that brought you *Top Skater* and the *Rally* series. Partly inspired by the Baja 1000 off-road race, *Dirt Devil* includes more fantasy elements than we typically see in Sega simulators, such as spectacular jump ramps and midair flights, along with at least one intriguing "fictional" car called the "Euro Prototype," created entirely by Sega's own team. Also, Sega's reportedly got *House of the Dead 2* on tap.

SEGA BUYS BACK ARCADE SALES

Last August, Sega announced the transfer of its arcade game sales division from its joint venture, GameWorks, back to the parent company's American subsidiary, Sega Enterprises USA. Sega GameWorks had earlier assumed control of coin game sales from founding partner Sega Enterprises Ltd. as part of that company's investment package when the Sega GameWorks joint venture was formed in March 1996. The new corporate structure at Sega Enterprises USA has Al Stone as president and COO, and Howell Ivy as president of manufacturing and deputy COO.

"By selling our game sales division, we are in a position to truly focus our energies on Sega GameWorks' core business — that of creating and evolving location-based entertainment where people can enjoy a social experience around games," said Michael Montgomery, president and CEO of Sega GameWorks.

"Sega Enterprises' acquisition of the game sales division is a strategic and mutually beneficial arrangement for both companies," said Stone. "The more connected the sales function is with the game creation teams, the stronger we'll be at hitting the mark with the hottest new arcade gaming experiences that go beyond the consumers' expectations." This is another shoe dropping in the ongoing Sega reorganization; you can count on more to come.

MIDWAY WOOS ARCADE PLAYERS

Arcade videogame factories are increasingly concerned about home video eating away at arcade game profits. So, they're looking for creative ways to make these markets reinforce each other, instead of compete.

Midway Games (Chicago) recently executed two different methods to exploit the consumer game market and beef up the appeal of its new *NFL Blitz '99* arcade game (sequel to last year's *NFL Blitz*). The '99 version features a "create-a-play" option with which you can design a wild play on the Nintendo 64 version, then save it on a smartcard and take it back for play on the arcade sequel. (Last month's Arcadia implied the marketing pull was the other way around; our apologies for the error.) Result: Several million owners of Nintendo 64 game systems will soon be happily rushing from their living rooms back to the local arcade to pump more quarters into *NFL Blitz '99*, or so Midway hopes.

TRACKING

Keeping tabs on the **latest gaming peripherals**

Nyko plans to pay homage to classic gamers by releasing its Classic Trackball for Sony PlayStation. Based on an original idea by Atari 5200 trackball designer Dan Kramer, the new PlayStation trackball will retain a similar look and feel while providing owners of various classic game packs yet another reason to love their PlayStation (http://www.nyko.com).

New York-based Wizztronics unveiled its Lynx Vision at this year's World of Atari 98. The device enables gamers to connect their Atari Lynx handheld game system to a television for full-screen gameplay. The Lynx resolution holds up remarkably well despite being blown up to at least eight times its size (http://www.wizztronics.com).

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

November 1, 1984	Cornerstone, a database program, is announced by Infocom at a New York City press conference. It eventually fails and marks the end of an era of quality text adventures
November 17, 1992	Sega releases *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* on "Sonic 2sDay" in what will become one of the largest marketing promotions in the industry's history
November 1, 1994	**Next Generation** is born, with a staff of two (Neil West and Trent Ward)
November 24, 1994	Sega launches its second 32-bit system in Japan. The Saturn promises to be even more powerful than the 32X
November 27, 1995	**Next Generation Online** officially launches, with daily updates and news
November 22, 1996	Nintendo declares a 62% U.S. share of the next generation game market. The self-tabulated data is derived from the first six weeks of launching the Nintendo 64 videogame system in the United States. Many experts believe the figure includes the existing share of Super Nintendo systems, already on the market for years

Sources: **Next Generation Online** and Don Thomas' I.C. When (http://www.i4software.com/icwhen)

Map
I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.
I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.
I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.
I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.
I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.
SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?
I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.
I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.
I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.
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BIG IN **JAPAN**

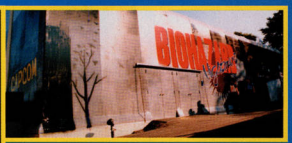
Next Generation reports from the Eastern front

Curiouser and **curiouser ...**

In what is becoming an alarmingly familiar scenario in the run-up to the Dreamcast launch, yet another odd-looking DC title has emerged from Japan. *Pen-Pen Tricelon* from General Entertainment will be released on November 20 in Japan, sitting alongside Sega's own launch titles for the system. The game is a neat (and odd) twist on an established genre — racing. The unusual-looking characters, which would clearly be at home in any one of Nintendo's *Pocket Monsters* titles, race over an extended track that requires them to run, swim, and slide as they make their way to the finishing line. It will also be possible to sabotage the opponent's progress. It's impossible to predict at this point whether *Pen-Pen Tricelon* will become the *Mario Kart* of Dreamcast or merely a super-cute graphics demo. Those who believe the latter might be interested in knowing that the team behind it includes ex-Sega consumer talent, whose credits include *Sega Rally* and *Panzer Dragoon*.

It looks weird, but this cuddly exterior belies what is, by all accounts, an impressive 3D racing title that makes good use of the Dreamcast polygon power

Who's in the house?



It's not the best job in the world, but for *Resident Evil* fans, it probably doesn't get much better than dressing up as a zombie and being paid to scare the living daylights out of hapless Japanese otaku, who are, thankfully, unarmed

Following the continued hysteria that has surrounded the release of *Biohazard 2* in Japan, Capcom decided to up the ante with a real-life *Biohazard* experience. Biohazard Nightmare opened July in the Expo-Land theme park in Osaka and features a two-story building filled with dark corridors, trap doors, and hard-up Japanese otaku dressed as zombies. Capcom has not said whether participants will be armed, but **Next Generation** would imagine not. After all, it wouldn't be long before a disgruntled zombie, realizing the depths to which his acting career had stooped, would wrest the weapon from an alarmed customer and pulled the trigger on himself.

Minitalk: Spikeout Producer Toshihiro Nagoshi

With the arrival of Dreamcast and its derived arcade board, Naomi, AM2's *Spikeout* will be one of the last Model 3 games and one of the first for the new console. After a year in development, Producer Toshihiro Nagoshi believes it to be the ultimate street fighting game. *Spikeout* offers 20 levels, requires a minimum of 45 minutes to be cleared by an expert player, and enables cooperation play on four linked Model 3-based cabinets. **Next Generation** met Nagoshi in Tokyo and spoke with him about his most recent creation.

NG: When did you start work on *Spikeout*?
TN: We decided to start the project in April 1997 — about 15 months ago.

NG: Who makes up the team?
TN: The team is different from *Daytona 2*. In fact, most of the staff comes from the *Virtua Fighter 3* and *Scud Race* teams, plus a few *Fighting Vipers* team members.

NG: There are three main stages in *Spikeout*: town, department store, and opera. How many sub-stages does *Spikeout* offer?
TN: In fact, multiple scenarios are offered. After you defeat the boss, different gates are opened. Of course, it depends on the stage. There are also some hidden doors, so players can enjoy different paths. In the three main stages, there are about 20 different "sub-stages."

NG: Some *Spikeout* animations remind us of *Virtua Fighter 3*. Did you re-use data?
TN: Yes ,we did, but the program content is almost completely new. We simply used some *Virtua Fighter 3* information for basic fighting moves.

NG: What was the most difficult aspect of developing the game?
TN: There were numerous things. The multiplayer feature was difficult to implement, and it was also difficult to deal with multiple enemies. For the previous driving games I was already familiar with multiplayer, but it was the first time both myself and Sega had worked on a multiplayer character system. I have to say that it was very difficult to build a four-machine network. When you have characters, you have much more data than you do for cars — cars do not have special moves! It was very difficult to deal with ...

NG: *Spikeout* is not an entirely original concept, owing much to *Final Fight* and *Streets of Rage*. Why has it taken this long to implement a 3D version of this genre?
TN: It is a problem of technology but also more a problem of development time. I think it's easy to imagine a 3D sequel of *Final Fight*, but the time you need to dedicate to the development is huge. It is not impossible to make, but you need to find an expert programmer to code everything. And also, because we are in a "nice graphics era," we need a good model designer. Apart from Sega there are few companies in the world who could make such a game.

NG: How many characters are displayed at the same time on the screen?
TN: There are a maximum of 12 characters on the screen at once.

NG: How detailed are the models in terms of polygon count?
TN: Well, we are not talking about one unique character. All characters and enemies have a low and medium model. We switch them depending on the distance from the camera and the place where the character is displayed on the screen. Essentially, each player character has four models — which gives us a total of 16 characters to design. For enemies, it is the same number of models, but less polygons. Character design was a very long and drawn-out process for *Spikeout*. Basically we use less polygons than *Virtua Fighter 3* [less than a third], and we use less textures than for *Virtua Fighter 3*. Having said that, *Spikeout* characters are visually not really different from *Virtua Fighter 3*, which is a major achievement. We developed a certain know-how for designing characters that we got from *VF3*, and we're happy with the results.

NG: For a good player, 45 minutes is required to complete *Spikeout*. Why did you decide to offer such a long gameplay cycle?
TN: An easy answer would be to say it is not really a fighting game in the traditional sense. Recent fighting games feature very short periods of play, with fights lasting just 20 or 30 seconds. *Spikeout* is a different spin on the genre. It is based on collaboration. You are not fighting against the person sitting close to you, but you collaborate with him against the CPU. You need other players to defeat the CPU, so we extended the game and created a more complex scenario. Players have to defeat so many enemies ... We wanted *Spikeout* to look like a movie and be as long as a TV program.

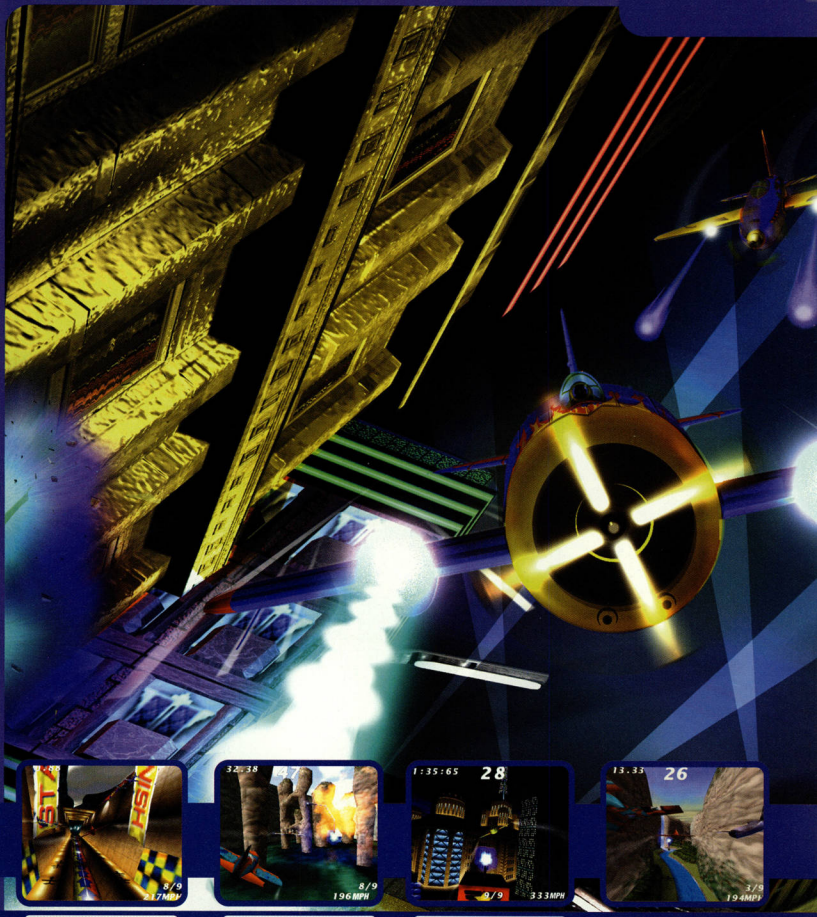
NG: Is *Spikeout* your last Model 3 board game ?
TN: Yes, I believe it is. But I cannot say for sure that we are going to develop on Naomi.

NG: *Spikeout* is a very long game, ideally suited to Dreamcast. Did you think about the possibility of a consumer version while you were designing *Spikeout*?
TN: No [laugh]. I did not think about a consumer version before, and I still do not think about it now. When the project is finally finished, the subject will surely come up. I wouldn't rule it out, that's for sure.

NEO GEO POCKET REVEALED

It's unlikely to be the next Game Boy, but the Neo Geo Pocket boasts a clear display and a fine selection of Neo Geo back-catalog titles to endear it to Japanese gamers

SNK released pictures of its Neo Geo Pocket system last month, but despite the shortfalls associated with a monochrome display, it largely succeeded in impressing. Though third-party support for the machine is likely to be relatively poor (a factor that could ultimately limit Neo Geo Pocket to Japan), it's hoped that the Sega VMS compatibility will boost sales. As expected, Neo Geo fighting fans won't be disappointed — the first title available will be the pocket version of the hugely popular *King of Fighters* franchise.



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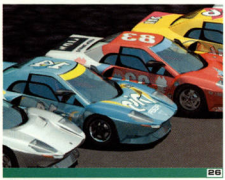
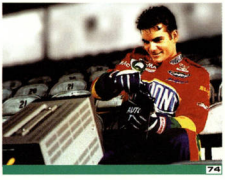
ALPHAS

In-depth previews of the games you'll be playing next





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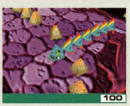

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AL RACING ROOTS '99

THE SECRET OF NAMCO'S SUCCESS

Next Generation gets an exclusive look inside one of the most renowned — and secretive — game firms on the planet. How did Namco get where it is today, and where is it going tomorrow?

Namco is responsible for some of the most innovative games of all time: *Pac-Man*, the first game to feature a character; *Xevious*, the first game with prerendered graphics; *Bosconian*, the first game with a continue; *Winning Run*, the first polygonal racer. Even when the company has followed rather than led, as it did when it released *Tekken* after *Virtua Fighter*, Namco has excelled, adding so much to the genre that the *Tekken* series has managed to stay fresh while the *VF* games have aged. In a world where today's stars almost always become tomorrow's has-beens, Namco has produced consistently excellent games throughout most of its history.

Most of the company's income still comes from running arcades, but the consumer software operation is

There will be four car manufacturers in the game and four racing teams for up to 16 car/team combos

the fastest-growing segment of Namco's revenues.

So as *R4*, the fourth installment of the *Ridge Racer* series, nears release on PlayStation, **Next Generation** traveled to Namco HQ in Tokyo to talk with Shigeru Yokoyama, head of Namco's consumer R&D division, to learn what makes the Namco way of creating games so successful. We also got some tantalizing hints about the company's console plans.

Most of the stars of the Japanese game world are easy to name: Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo. Hironobu Sakaguchi, Square. Yu Suzuki, Sega. Tetsuya Mizaguchi, Sega. Yuji Naka, Sega. But when the list comes to Namco, there are no names, just the bright red Namco logo. Why? Because at Namco, the watchword isn't star power, it's teamwork.

"Namco's philosophy," says Yokoyama, "is that games are created by many people, by the power of team play. You know, successful games really aren't designed by just a single star. That is one of the basic tenets of our design philosophy."

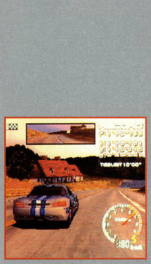
Most game companies recognize the value of teamwork, but at Namco the definition of exactly what makes a team is looser than most. "In terms of development," says Yokoyama, "probably the biggest difference between Namco and other companies is that while we do have discrete development teams, these teams can always cooperate. For instance, we have different R&D teams for consumer platforms and arcade platforms, but the arcade teams and consumer teams frequently work closely together, and in that sense, Namco's way of developing is more flexible than other companies."

The way teams work isn't the only difference at Namco. The definition of product success is also unusual. Unlike companies that strive to add features to gain bullet points for the back of the box or to increase the realism in a game or to use the latest technology, Namco takes a more basic approach: "Namco's philosophy is simply to make user-friendly games that are unique, fun, and easy for consumers to get into," says Yokoyama. Sure, that's a no-brainer, but the difference is that Namco actually does it. An analysis of *Tekken*'s combo system, for example, reveals an underlying logic to the button and

R4: RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

Can Namco's next racer steal back the crown from *Gran Turismo*?

After three comfortable years atop the PlayStation racing heap, the *Ridge Racer* series was bumped off by *Gran Turismo*, which provided a stunning combination of graphic splendor and intense realism. The *Ridge Racer* series, of course, has always been about fun, not necessarily realism. While other racing game makers boasted that their cars had realistic physics and that their AI didn't cheat, Namco was content to let players tap the buttons through



Even at only 50% complete, the game screens already look fantastic

FORMAT PlayStation

PUBLISHER Namco

DEVELOPER Namco

RELEASE DATE TBA

ORIGIN Japan

A NAMCO TIME LINE

1955
Namco is founded in Tokyo as Nakamura Manufacturing. It makes rocking horse rides for children. The first two are installed on the roof of a department store in Yokohama

1963
The company installs Roadway Ride on the roof of Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo

1966
The company expands operations, begins licensing Disney characters for rides

1970
Racer, a nonelectronic racing arcade game, is released

1972
The Namco brand is established

1974
Namco acquires Atari Japan from Atari Corp.

In a world where today's stars almost always become tomorrow's has-beens, Namco has produced consistently excellent games

joypad sequences based on punches and kicks, thrown from the left or the right, and at a given height. No matter what outrageous move the character may be doing on screen, the player can often sense the follow-up from body dynamics, and the control setup supports that. Compare this with the arbitrary sequences found in, say, *Killer Instinct*, and you begin to see the philosophy in action.

This approach applies even to something as seemingly straightforward as a console conversion, and Namco has produced some of the best arcade-to-home game conversions in history. To Namco, the additions a game gets between arcade and home aren't just added value, they're absolutely necessary. "The home and arcade are totally different," Yokoyama says. "With the home version we have to let the users play longer than the arcade. In the arcade, the play length is not really important — you just want people to put in more tokens. In the home, once the consumer buys the game, we have to provide enough fun and features to let the users play a long time." Who makes the decision about what should go in the

1977
Shoot Away, a light gun game, is released

1978
Namco America is established. First game in U.S.: *Gee Bee*

1979
Galaxian is introduced

1980
Pac-Man is released

1982
Pole Position is released (distributed by Atari in the U.S.)

1983
Mappy is released

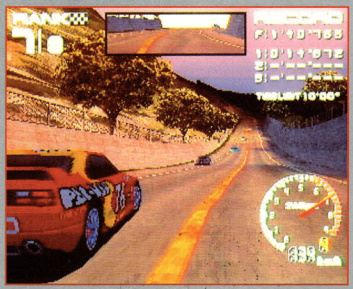
1983
Xevious marks the first use of prerendered computer graphics in a game

1984
Namco begins work on Famicom (NES) games

1986
Family Stadium, the first of Namco's dominant Japanese baseball

unrealistic powerslides, preplace cars wherever they seemed needed, and, in general, cheat like hell. The result? Most of those "realistic" racing games were as boring as real life, while the "cheating" *Ridge Racer* has proved to be one of the most enduring series on the platform.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Namco's response to *Gran Turismo* is not to embrace *GT*'s realistic racing model, but to strike even further out in its own direction. "*Gran Turismo* was definitely a good game," says Shigeru Yokoyama, head of Namco's consumer R&D division, "but while it can be classed as a racing game, our games are totally different. It is more of a racing simulation, and what we are developing



The color tone of the game is quite different from that of *Rage Racer*: More subtle, it enables players to enjoy the new sense of speed

are good and fun racing games. *R4* will have a totally different atmosphere."

That said, the company is quick to point out that *R4* will have more than 300 different car combinations and eight tracks — double that of *Rage Racer*. And just as *Rage Racer* introduced new elements to the console racing genre (the extensive car customization and mission structure), so will *R4*.

Most dramatic will be the additions to the Grand Prix mode. Although the goal is the same as in *Rage Racer* — to become the champion driver — players

As in previous games in the series, there is a replay mode, this time in high-res

home version? "The arcade R&D, the consumer R&D, and consumer sales and marketing departments carefully discuss the new features. They are basically discussed by everyone."

Marketing department? Aren't marketing departments anathema to creativity? That's another difference. Although Yokoyama is quick to point out, with a laugh, that "not 100% of the ideas from marketing are taken," he says that the teams try to get as much feedback as possible before starting work on a game. That feedback is especially important, since Namco typically only creates three or four consumer games a year.

"There are two ways of developing," says Yokoyama. "One is hiring many R&D people and making many titles. The opposite is keeping a reasonable number of R&D people, developing a reasonable number of games, and getting the profit from them. We do not want to compromise, you know, making too many games and shipping them all to market. We would like to keep a reasonable number of games and have every one be satisfying to the consumer."

Because of those standards, Namco has one of the harshest idea-to-development ratios in the business. Most of the 160 R&D employees submit game ideas on a regular basis. "We probably take one in 50 and develop it to the prototype stage," says Yokoyama. "From there, one in 10 is developed further and reviewed by sales, and probably just one title a year will be done this way."

In the past, Namco was asked to do launch titles for the two most successful home consoles in history: the Famicom (NES in the U.S.) and the PlayStation. In fact, without Namco and *Ridge Racer*, it is arguable that PlayStation would not have succeeded as quickly or as well. And today, *Tekken 3* is still a showcase title, and one of the most technologically advanced PlayStation games available.

What, then, is next for Namco and PlayStation, after *R4*? "In Japan," says Yokoyama, "I think that PlayStation has hit the peak in the market. However, there is still a growing software market, and in the U.S. and Europe, hardware sales are still growing, so

now will need not only to win individual races, but also to coordinate with a racing team and car manufacturer and to deal with the ebb and flow of the racing season. According to some sources at Namco, this element of the game may be as in-depth as some RPGs: Maneuver your way through race-team politics successfully, and expect to get a better car. To enable more control over the environment players face, Namco will not be licensing any cars or tracks, preferring to make its own.

Graphically, the game will use many of the techniques that were featured in *Tekken 3*, although some new traits will

In addition to the one-player Grand Prix, there will also be a split-screen, two-player version

games, is released for Famicom

1987
Final Lap, the first arcade racing game to feature separate-screen multiplayer capabilities, is released

1988
Namco goes public, listed on the second section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange

1989
Winning Run, the first arcade game to feature polygonal graphics, is released

1990
Namco begins distributing its own games in the U.S., acquiring Atari Operations, an arcade division, from Atari

1991
Stock elevated to the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange; Namco Europe opens

Without Namco and *Ridge Racer*, it is arguable that PlayStation would not have succeeded as quickly or as well. And today, *Tekken 3* is still a showcase title

we will continue to support PlayStation." And *Tekken 4*? He laughs. "Well, with *Tekken 4*, the arcade version is coming first, and so we have to decide what arcade hardware system it will be developed for. The *Tekken* home version will come after that, so it is too early to make any particular comments about what platforms it will be on."

Is there still power enough to do a game that looks better than *Tekken 3* on PlayStation? "There is potential to do more on PlayStation," says Yokoyama. "However, if we try to exceed *Tekken 3* in terms of graphics, we will probably have to put together many more people and take much more time, and given the probable life span remaining for PlayStation, that means we cannot really commit to saying all games will have far better graphics than *Tekken 3*."

And Dreamcast? "Very frankly, its success is really based on the launch titles. Technically it is a good machine, but we cannot really predict its success in the market." Could Namco support more than one platform simultaneously? "Definitely." NG

1992
Namco opens Wonder Eggs, an urban theme park in Tokyo

1993
Ridge Racer released in the arcade. Namco acquires Aladdin's Castle and becomes the U.S.'s largest arcade operator

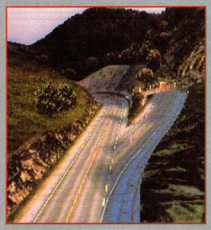
1994
Ridge Racer introduced for PlayStation in Japan. *Tekken* released in arcades

1995
Tekken released for PlayStation

1996
Release of *Namco Classics*, a six-volume compilation of classic arcade games

1997
Tekken 2, *Rage Racer* are released on PlayStation

1998
Tekken 3 is released for PlayStation



Much attention has been focused on making the background the most interactive and beautiful seen yet in a PlayStation racer

appear. As the screenshots show, the game should compete ably with *Gran Turismo* on looks alone. Specifically, Namco notes that the backgrounds, lighting, and shading have received special attention.

The most important element in driving will be speed, and Namco promises that the game will be the fastest-looking racer to date on PlayStation. Control, although not strictly realistic, has long been a strong point for the series, and *R4* should continue the tradition. It is not known at this point (50% complete) whether the game will feature graphical collisions or the same kind of bumping races as the previous games in the series, but Namco has made it clear that it will rely on racing, not extraneous elements like great crashes, to sell the game.

As legions of second-rate companies prepare games that they hope will "out-Gran-Turismo *Gran Turismo*," Namco is content to do what it does best: Extend the genre in its own way, always ensuring, in Yokoyama's words, "that the game will be fun for people to play. That is the most important thing." NG

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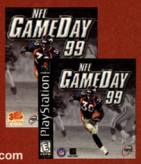

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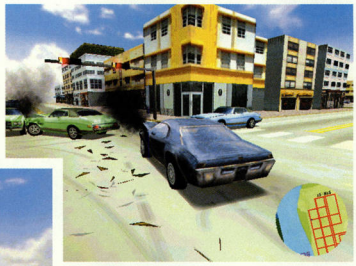
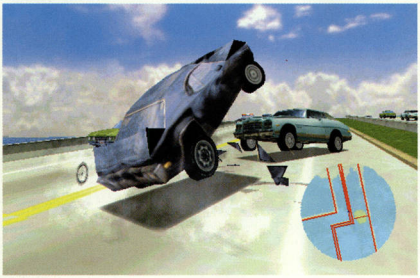
DRIVER

Reflections is emerging from the shadows into the spotlight with a string of new titles

When Newcastle-based Reflections was founded by Martin Edmondson 14 summers ago, it had two employees — including Edmondson. After writing games for the BBC Micro, the developer moved on to Commodore's Amiga, for which it created the *Shadow of the Beast* series. Its first 32-bit project, *Destruction Derby*, became Europe's biggest-selling PlayStation title of 1995. The improved 1997 follow-up faced tough competition, but nevertheless managed to break the million-sales barrier.





Smoke effects and leaves will be added to the final version, and both are affected by blowing wind

Now with 40 employees, Reflections is ready to bounce back into the videogame arena with three titles, all currently in production. One is still secret, the second is *Steam*, and the third is *Driver*. Most people would expect the latter to be some sort of racing game, but according to Edmondson, they'd be missing its ethos.

With *Driver*, Reflections is looking to achieve "the closest thing possible to filming your own Hollywood car chase as current technology allows," says Edmondson. "You're able to create all the situations yourself, have full control over the direction, and produce something that, when you look at it, is as close as possible to a real film."

To this end, the game will offer the most comprehensive replay mode around, including an impressive array of zoom and pan options and lens choices, as well as the ability to place cameras anywhere. The interface is surprisingly user-friendly, and there's little to stop a player from coming up with a sequence that many Hollywood directors would give their collapsible canvas-backed chairs for.

But *Driver* isn't just about interactive replays. There's a game in there too, and it could turn out to be a very good one. It's set in the '70s; players take the role of a muscle-car driver for hire and must decide whether to accept jobs offered to them via an answering machine. Jobs range from picking up a bank robber after a heist to tailing a rival heavy across town.

The game's cities are based on their real-life counterparts, for instance, San Francisco's Chinatown district, shown here

FORMAT
PC/PlayStation

PUBLISHER
TBA

DEVELOPER
Reflections

RELEASE DATE
Q1 1999

ORIGIN
U.K.

Sony's Performance Analyzer will be used to get the best results for the PSX version

Despite the loss of the more processor-intensive effects, the PlayStation version is remarkably close to its PC cousin

The four towns are based on their real counterparts, so players can, for example, powerslide their way around Miami's gridlike streets or test their car's suspension in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Reflections is looking to achieve "the closest thing possible to filming your own Hollywood car chase as current technology allows"

Martin Edmondson, founder, Reflections

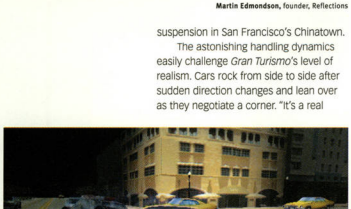
The astonishing handling dynamics easily challenge *Gran Turismo*'s level of realism. Cars rock from side to side after sudden direction changes and lean over as they negotiate a corner. "It's a real physics-handling model, so it is absolutely correct. Then you make sure that in being correct it is actually still playable," Edmondson explains. "The new dynamics engine allows you to throw a car onto its side or its roof, and it will stay there, rocking on its roof. There are collision points all over the car — not just a brick."

Cities also have a real-world feel. Cars stop at traffic lights and signal before they turn. When not chasing the player's car, police patrol the streets. Leaves swirl around in the vehicle-induced air disturbance, and paper and dustbins litter dark alleys. And, of course, fire hydrants are there to be smashed into during high-speed pursuits.

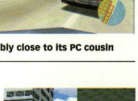
The inspiration came from "Hollywood car chases — *Bullit, Smokey and the Bandit, Cannonball Run*; all those films belong to an era in the '70s that has never been repeated," says Edmondson.

It's tempting to categorize *Driver* as a 3D version of *GTA*, but that would miss the essence behind Reflections' title. Reflections is unwilling to reveal too many gameplay elements yet, but *Driver* already exudes the '70s atmosphere of Hollywood films that Edmondson is so keen to capture, and the finished product should feel significantly different from DMA's crimefest.

After all, the Newcastle-based developer has a history of doing things differently. NG



In addition to the player-controlled car's headlights, *Driver*'s streets will be lined with lamps in the final version



Reflections is placing a lot of emphasis on the ability to create highly cinematic replays, such as these sequences

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DESTREGA

The 3D beat-'em-up continues to break out of the confines of close-range combat

Fighting occurs at both close and long range

They may appear to lack the finesse of the characters from, say, *Tekken 3*, but *Destrega*'s fighters boast a considerable level of detail

To the hardcore gamer, the Koei name is virtually synonymous with the strategy wargame. The company's output over the past decade has encompassed a number of formats — from MSX to Super Famicom — yet its creative focus has remained constant with its war "simulations" (as they are regarded) enjoying a considerable following in Koei's native Japan.

Destrega, then, is a diverse and left-field release for a company so long associated with a more cerebral style of gaming. Koei's new fighting game represents a logical progression for developer Omega Force, following previous work *Sangoku Musosu* — a weapon-based beat-'em-up that enjoyed favorable critical reception in its home market and modest acclaim in the West under the *Dynasty Wars* moniker.

Given *Destrega*'s open, notably 3D gameplay mechanics and multileveled stages, comparisons with Dream Factory's *Ehrgeiz* are perhaps inevitable. However, at this early stage, its development as a PlayStation-specific title appears to be paying considerable visual dividends. Its environments are lavishly textured, and videos that were presented at Koei's stand at the Tokyo Game Show suggested a crisp 60fps refresh rate. In a straight bout to determine which eye candy is the sweeter, Omega Force's title genuinely appears to offer aesthetic confectionery of a higher standard.

Intriguingly, *Destrega*'s combat system allows players to determine the speed and power of blows, often trading one attribute for the other. Although this is hardly innovative per se — *Street Fighter II* used the basic principle many years ago — it's certainly a refreshing alternative to the basic combo-oriented attacks made standard by *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter*. Furthermore, Omega Force is attempting to give each attack its own individual sound, allowing players to anticipate blows and react accordingly. With large environments allowing players to either fight at close range or snipe with projectiles from a distance, *Destrega* almost appears a union of attributes from *Bushido Blade* and *Toshinden*.

Pencilled in for an autumn launch in Japan, *Destrega*'s rather unusual features could endear it to the more dedicated PlayStation owner, yet ultimately limit its mainstream success. Nevertheless, **Next Generation** awaits its arrival with interest. NG

***Destrega* features a number of flash pyrotechnic effects**

FORMAT PlayStation

PUBLISHER Koei

DEVELOPER Omega Force

RELEASE DATE Fall 1998

ORIGIN Japan

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SONIC ADVENTURE

Sega needs a killer launch title for Dreamcast. Is this it?

Nothing has characterized Sega's fate since 1989 more dramatically than the career of Sonic the Hedgehog. On Genesis, he was brilliant — a character that perfectly embodied Sega's edgy, upstart image. But as Sega's fortunes declined, first with Sega CD and 32X, and then with Saturn, so did Sonic's. He was left out of the 32X "Sonic" game, *Knuckles Chaotix*, and replaced temporarily as system mascot entirely on Saturn by the terminally unhip Bug. When Sega finally did get around to putting Sonic on Saturn in *Sonic R*, it was the perfect metaphor for the system: too little, too late.

When Sega finally did get around to putting Sonic on Saturn in *Sonic R*, it was too little, too late

While cynics may argue that Sonic's — and Sega's — time has passed, they shouldn't underestimate the power of the blue hedgehog as a mass-market brand. Any company regrouping for a

The game's graphics are stunning and should reduce any fears that Dreamcast games will have a PC feel to them

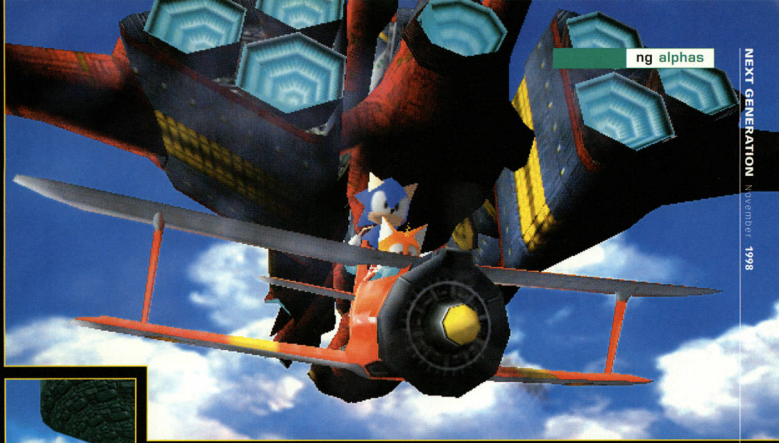
FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
Sega (Sonic Team)

RELEASE DATE
December 1998 (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan



The biplane is back, but in *Sonic Adventure* it transforms into a massive mechanized fighter

Tails, of course, is back, but now players can actually control him fully, unlike in *Sonic 2*

battle needs a rallying point, and Sonic is an obvious choice.

The head of the Sonic Team (which hasn't made a *Sonic* game since *Sonic 3*), Yuji Naka, was understandably disappointed with recent treatments of Sonic, including in *Sonic R*. He concedes, however, that the 3D elements of the title were part of the evolutionary process in bringing the character into the third dimension.

But that is where any similarities end. *Sonic Adventure* looks stunning. The game has been in development for 18 months, with the team disassembling every aspect of the series, pinpointing what has worked and what hasn't. In some ways, *Sonic Adventure* has been developed hand-in-hand with the Dreamcast hardware, and in this respect, the game gestation is similar to that of *Mario 64*, which bodes well for the game.

The results are hugely impressive, and as a showcase of what Dreamcast can do, *Sonic Adventure* is perfect. "We have pushed Dreamcast as far as we can at present," said Naka in a recent interview, "and we are particularly pleased with the high-resolution graphics it offers." As he said this, a demo screen showed a helicopter flying across an amazingly detailed cityscape before dropping a beautifully realized Sonic, who then ran full-tilt down the side of a skyscraper. The graphics are, quite simply, phenomenal: fast, high-res, and with a mind-boggling number of polygons on screen at once. Still, they look fundamentally "console" in nature: Those who think that Dreamcast might just produce PC-like graphics appear to have nothing to worry about.

The game uses a loose, third-person view and effortlessly shifts huge amounts of scenery as Sonic runs through a number of detailed locations, with a free-flowing camera system constantly offering the best view. "The game area is so big," said Naka, "that we have used the cameras to indicate where the player should go. They will move where the player should be heading, but it won't feel as if the player is being restricted."

Naka's 30-strong team is keen to take the series back to its roots,

There are several new ways to experience Sonic's trademark speed. This snowboard is just one of them

The graphic effects of the PowerVR second generation chip are shown to good effect in these shots

Knuckles also returns, and again he and Sonic have an acrimonious relationship

and Naka feels the series ultimately owes its success to outright speed. The final build of the game will run at 60fps, and despite its sprawling game maps, it's undoubtedly a member of the Sonic family. All the running and somersaulting of the past games have been re-created, but the freedom offered by the open play area makes old favorites like loop-the-loops appear refreshed. The team is aware, though, that more is expected of games today, and as the title suggests, there will be more to *Sonic Adventure* than simply running, jumping, and collecting rings.

"We've added puzzle and arcade elements," explained Naka. "Sonic can now talk to other characters, and each of the six heroes has individual skills essential to the game." The result may

As the title suggests, there will be more to *Sonic Adventure* than simply running, jumping, and collecting rings

give an almost RPG-like feel to the game, with swooping cameras highlighting conversations and key linking scenes.

Although the traditional Green Hill Zone is gone, it has been replaced by Mayan ruins, dense jungles, and the already mentioned cities. The massive fog- and pop-in-free levels have plenty of room to run in — they were designed so that at full tilt, it may take Sonic five minutes to get from side to side. But running isn't the only thing to do in the game. There are *Mario 64*-like 3D exploration areas, as well as some wide, *Crash Bandicoot*-like paths that feature a mixture of running and puzzles. In addition to the main quest, the game will provide several replayable mini-games and the inevitable PDA keychain game as well.

The massive levels enable the addition of other characters, three of which are familiar to fans of the series — Tails, Knuckles, and Amy — and two new ones: Big the Cat and E-102. Each possesses unique abilities and maneuvers through levels differently, and the plot — involving defeating Robotnik again — is told from each of the six heroes' perspectives. Another nice thing about the design is that each level seems to have a mixture of running and exploration areas, which would seem to give players a significant amount of freedom to decide how they would like to proceed.

In short, *Sonic Adventure* has been designed by Sonic's original creators to be nothing less than the ultimate expression of everything the hedgehog stands for.

Failure, if Sega is to survive, is simply not an option with Dreamcast. Although the system still faces many challenges, based on what we've seen so far of *Sonic Adventure*, having a stellar, marquee launch title will not be one of them. NG

Amy (top) returns as the love interest, although she looks even less like a hedgehog than Sonic

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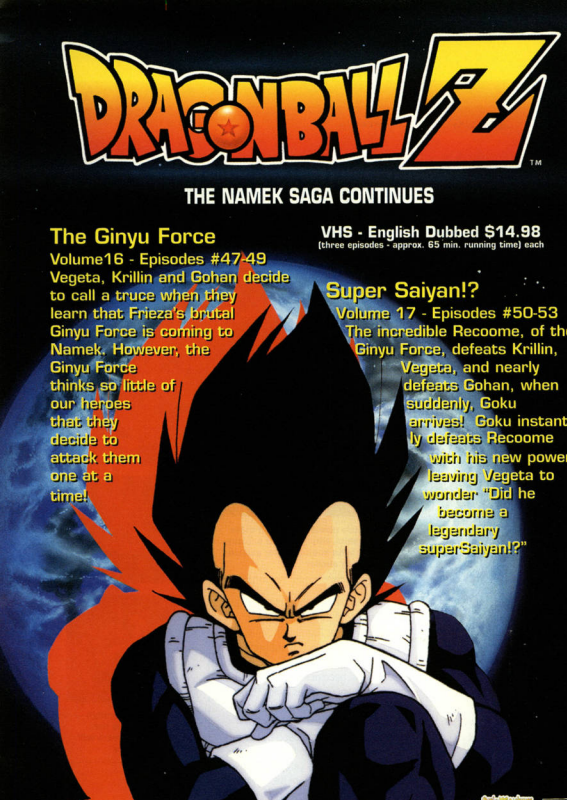

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DRAGONBALLZ #11 NAMEK

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

Vampires abound in this 3D sequel to the original *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*

The often long loading times of the first *Kain* are gone, as the world continuously streams and loads from the disc

Playing the first *Legacy of Kain* was not unlike playing *Gauntlet* inside the massive fantasy world of Nosgoth. But the addition of the vengeance-bent, anti-hero Kain gave the top-down epic a deeper sense of character than the game's 2D graphics first revealed. The sequel to *Legacy of Kain*, however, is more comparable to *Tomb Raider* than it is to *Gauntlet*. This begs an interesting question: Will the followers of *Kain* get more of what brought them to Nosgoth in the first place? In a word, yes.

"The main similarity is the soul-sucking or soul-devouring mechanic," says producer and director Amy Hennig, who produced the first *Kain* as well. "Basically you stun or damage an enemy and then you have the ability to draw its soul out of its body, the same thing Kain was doing with blood."

However, the player does not return in the role of Kain, but rather, Raziel, Kain's firstborn vampire son. At the end of the first game, Kain has a choice to sacrifice himself and save the world, but "we assume he refuses," says Hennig, explaining that the world is subsequently thrown out of balance, and 1,000 years later, Nosgoth becomes a land overrun with six races of vampires. When Raziel grows wings and evolves beyond Kain, Kain kills Raziel in a jealous rage. But Raziel is raised from the dead by the underworld king to collect vampire souls and ultimately seek his vengeance on Kain. The plot unfolds from there within approximately 15 areas. Hennig estimates that this makes the game about as large as *Tomb Raider II*.

"We've tried not to create scads and scads of layout because it's very time-consuming and very shallow," Hennig says, addressing one of the criticisms of the original *Kain*. Instead, Crystal Dynamics is attempting to create a world that entices players to revisit areas when

There's little pixelation within these environments, which Crystal explains has to do with keeping color palettes meticulously similar

No text to click through — and Crystal insists the character voice-overs will be "Disney quality"

The fluid, new camera is based on interpreting player intention. It detects where a player is facing and moving, and at what velocity

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
TBA

DEVELOPER
Crystal Dynamics

RELEASE DATE
January 1998

ORIGIN
U.S.

Turning these designs into characters should prove an interesting challenge

they've gained new abilities. For example, when Raziel gains the power to scale walls, unreachable areas in earlier levels become accessible.

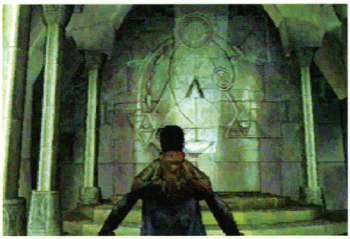
The elaborate architecture within these 3D environments is some of the best **Next Generation** has seen on the PlayStation. On top of that, it morphs in real time. "The idea is that the world exists simultaneously in two dimensions," says Hennig, "the real world (the physical world) and then its nightmare flip side, the spectral plane, which is sort of a dark, funhouse-mirror version of itself."

As Raziel cannot die, he reverts to the spectral plane when he runs out of energy to exist in the physical plane. Players can then continue playing in the spectral plane, only their goal is to recoup the energy necessary to return to the physical plane. Also, since the switch between physical and spectral planes morphs the landscape, plane-shifting will be key to solving several puzzles.

And the combat? Like the first game, it drives the gameplay. Yet, instead of collecting an arsenal of traditional weapons, Raziel will be limited to the Soul Reaver, Kain's all-powerful sword from the original game. This title weapon has taken on spirit properties and can be powered up at elemental forges to incur a variety of damage. Also, combat will require some puzzle-solving as well. As the vampires are immortal, players will need to stun their opponents and then find some means of finishing them off, be it impaling them on a nearby object, like a lightning rod or fence post, or exposing them to sunlight or water.

The elaborate architecture within these 3D environments is some of the best Next Generation has seen on the PlayStation

At the time of this writing, the combat was barely present in the game, and the Soul Reaver itself was nowhere to be seen. Still, Hennig feels the January 15 shelf date the team is shooting for is possible; however, given Crystal has been extremely late with a number of projects in the past, **Next Generation** wouldn't be surprised if it slipped as much as six months. And if extra time is needed, so be it. This team of 26 has the potential to polish up and ship the best internally developed game at Crystal yet. NG



The 3D architecture in *Kain* is so elaborate, the simpler character models suffer by comparison

The morphed, twisted look of the spectral plane was not inspired by Tim Burton's film *Beetlejuice*, but rather, the same 1920s German expressionist films that inspired Burton

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PC CD-ROM

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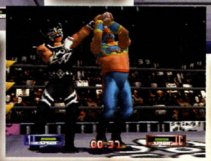

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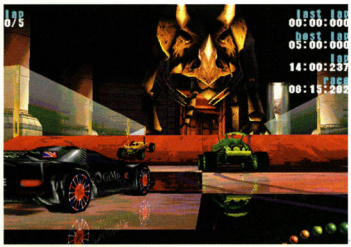
RC RACING

Can a radio-controlled game draw a crowd for Acclaim?



The moody museum track presents plenty of obstacles, like these full-size dinosaur skeletons

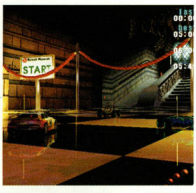
The most common mantra used by racing game developers over the past year has seemingly been "better physics model." And seeing as smaller, remote-control vehicles are the perfect place to show off these models, it's no surprise that Acclaim's *RC Racing* comes hot on the heels of Shiny's *RC Stunt Copter* and Fox's (admittedly terrible) *Team Losi Racing*.

Crossing three platforms, *RC Racing* pits 28 varied cars on 16 tracks set in eight different environments. One early playable track is set inside a museum, the other inside a toy world. Early versions of these environments display the developer's desire to make the worlds visually sparkling as well as highly interactive. The museum's glossy floor offers a perfect reflection as well as a slippery surface to race on. The toy world is a lighthearted course, littered with beach balls and complete with a section of track that is a flat toy piano (not unlike the one from the film *Big*) featuring interactive keys.

The early demo shown to **Next Generation** already featured a highly evolved physics model, but many of the other cars, AI, pick-ups, and sounds had not been implemented. However, the game will offer both racing and battle modes, and all formats will feature multiplayer options, with the PC version enabling 12 simultaneous network players. The PC game will also include a track editor.

But is there still interest in the radio-controlled genre? Well, if the AI and control can match the high-quality graphics and frame rate, *RC Racing* might prove to be a great, off-beat gameplaying experience. NG

The 28 cars vary from more traditional RC models to outlandish vehicles straight out of a cartoon world



The colorful toy track (above left, above right) features beach balls, flying model planes, and even some arcade games. The courses, with their elaborate architecture, stream fluidly — read, there's no pop-in

FORMAT
PC/Nintendo 64/PlayStation

PUBLISHER
Acclaim

DEVELOPER
TBA

RELEASE DATE
Q2 1999

ORIGIN
U.K.

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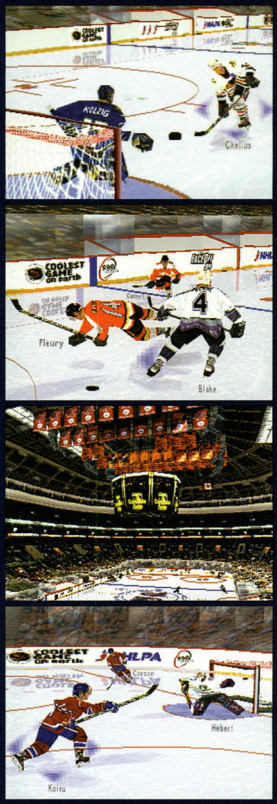

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ARMY MEN 3D

"Get out of the sandbox maggot!" Little plastic guys go over the top

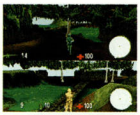
Sarge's weapons include bazookas and, of course, the always lethal flamethrower (which reduces soldiers to puddles of melted plastic)

The original *Army Men* for PC received a lukewarm greeting from critics but was enthusiastically embraced by the public. It quickly became the best-selling title in Wal-Mart and stayed at the top of the charts there for several months. The PlayStation version is vastly different in structure, however, and has been turned into a third-person, 3D action game, which is more at home with the console audience.

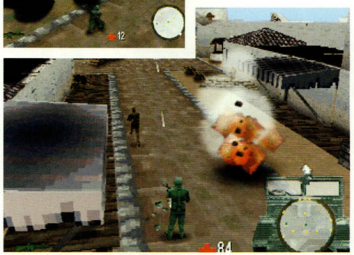
"The thing is," says Producer Nicholas Earl, "the PC version wasn't a realtime strategy game. I think a lot of people who played it treated it like that. It was actually designed more as an action game, but it had strategy elements and it looked like an RTS. However, [the PlayStation version] is a real action game and looks like a mission-based action game."

Once again, the game follows Sarge, the stalwart, green, plastic leader of a group of toy soldiers. Game mechanics have been kept somewhat simple, and Sarge is able to duck and roll, crawl, enter vehicles (tanks, jeeps, half-tracks), and use a variety of weapons, all taken from classic Army Men poses — bazooka, flamethrower, etc. Proper use of cover is key, and when squad members are released or rescued, they fall into line behind Sarge. "You can't give your squad orders to move around the map," Earl explains. "When you pick up a new guy, he's pretty much a power-up standing next to you, adding extra firepower."

There are a total of 25 missions, divided into three distinct terrain types: desert, alpine, and bayou (including some urban scenarios in a city that looks suspiciously like New Orleans). There's also a boot camp level to give players a chance to practice. While the missions vary from rescue to search-and-destroy, the overall storyline follows the recovery of pieces to the portal. "That's the big payoff, the big surprise at the end," Earl says. Where does it lead? "You'll have to play to see." NG



The final version will include a two-player, split-screen option, with deathmatch and possibly co-operative modes



The emphasis for the PlayStation version is firmly on action, but it also takes advantage of the system's high-res mode

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
3DO

DEVELOPER
3DO

RELEASE DATE
November 1998

ORIGIN
U.S.

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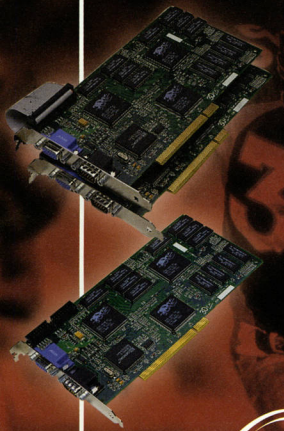

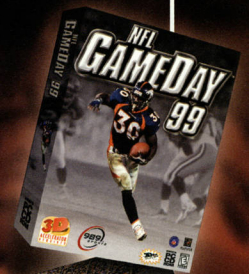

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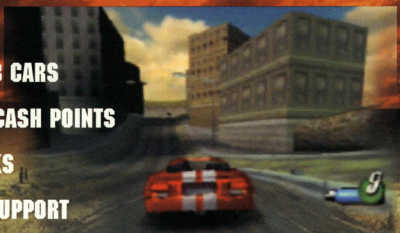

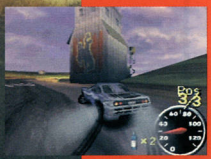

KEMCO

NINTENDO64

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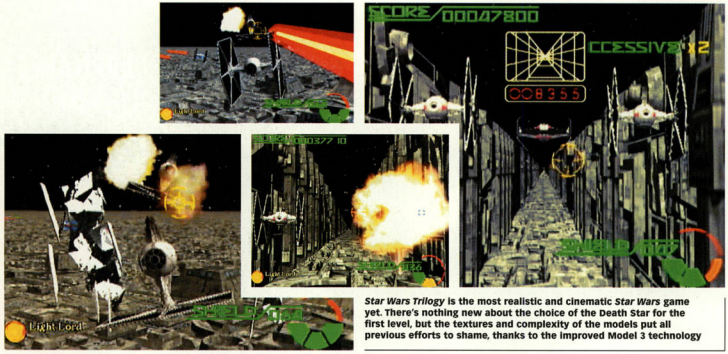
STAR WARS TRILOGY

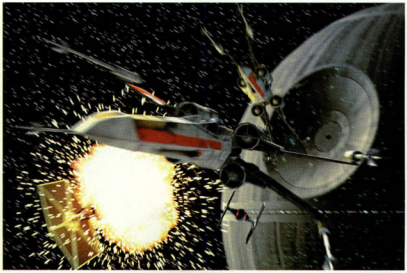
Sega's legendary AM divisions may be losing talent to Dreamcast, but they continue to push the envelope when it comes to fast-paced coin-op action and high-powered graphics



***Star Wars Trilogy* is the most realistic and cinematic *Star Wars* game yet. There's nothing new about the choice of the Death Star for the first level, but the textures and complexity of the models put all previous efforts to shame, thanks to the improved Model 3 technology**

At Sega's recent annual Summer Private Show in Tokyo, it became evident that, despite the recent brain drain to the consumer department, the world-renowned AM divisions are as strong as ever.

Spikeout (previously known as *Spike*) was there in all its multiplayer glory, with four linked cabinets courtesy of AM2; meanwhile, AM1 showcased its latest gun game, *Ocean Hunter*. AM3 also announced that at the forthcoming JAMMA show, it would introduce its own Model 3 Step 2 title, the sequel to the popular shooter, *Gun Blade*. But all this is set to be somewhat overshadowed by the young upstarts at AM Annex, who have been given the enviable task of creating what is almost certain to be the number one arcade hit of 1999.



The cinematic CGI sequences used in the Attract mode are in a class of their own

FORMAT
Arcade

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
AM Annex

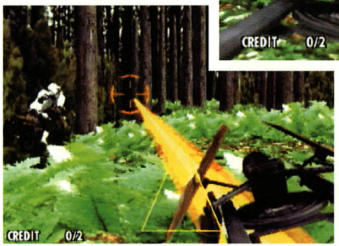
RELEASE DATE
Spring 1999

ORIGIN
Japan

This is the fourth time a *Star Wars* game will be coming to the arcades

Star Wars Trilogy is only 20% complete but already playable and responsible for the lion's share of the buzz surrounding Sega's winter arcade lineup. Heading up the project is General Manager Kenji Sasaki, filling the shoes of Tetsuya Mizaguchi, who recently departed for the consumer department to begin work on an undisclosed Dreamcast project.

Sasaki and his team started working on the title in March, after LucasArts approached Sega with a view to expanding its *Star Wars* franchise into the arcades for the fourth time. This time,



Where *Star Wars Trilogy* distinguishes itself is in its wide variety of stages. Here, the player engages in an on-rails (though not FMV) speeder-bike chase on Endor. Elsewhere, Sega has also included a first-person lightsaber stage

however, the game release will tie in with the run-up to the 1999 prequel movies.

But as LucasArts itself knows, creating a *Star Wars* game that will pass the close inspection of the fans isn't easy, and the pressure is on Annex to produce a worldwide hit that anyone, from kids to adults, can happily embrace. Sasaki understands this too. "We cannot fail," he says, laughing. "We must make a *Star Wars* game that is better than the competition, better than all the other games, and we have to find a good balance between constructing a believable *Star Wars* environment and building a sound gameplay system. The pressure is huge."

He is almost certainly assured of success in the second goal — constructing a convincing environment. *Star Wars Trilogy*, as the title suggests, covers all three movies in one game. Each film constitutes a stage, which is then divided into smaller sub-stages, all offering a wide variety of play mechanics. Despite the *X-Wing* style of these early screenshots, it would be a mistake to assume that *Star Wars Trilogy* is just another space-combat game. As well as the predictable Death Star bombing run, players can expect a jungle speeder-bike chase and even a first-person lightsaber

These realtime story sequences link the stages. Here, the Rebellion forces meet in orbit for battle

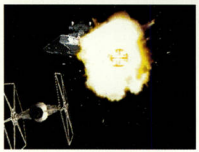
stage — far more than was on offer the last time Sega and *Star Wars* got together, with the Model 1-powered trench combat sim, simply titled *Star Wars*.

Of course, when that appeared, the whole world wasn't eagerly awaiting a new movie. Expectations are running high, as much on the technical front as any other — a fact not lost on the team's lead programmer, Takahiro Kakizawa, who explains the advantages of using the latest Model 3 Step 2 technology. "There are many things in *Star Wars Trilogy* that were simply not possible with Model 1 and even Model 2," he reveals. "For example, it was previously impossible to produce movie-quality cut scenes — something that features heavily in the new game — and we couldn't have created the transparency and explosion effects on the older boards. Model 3 is especially good at lighting."

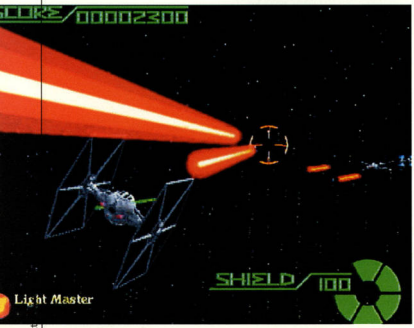
And it shows. The cut scenes are stunningly realistic and allow for seamless transitions between the stages, and the ship models and environments are some of the most realistic to date, with the most detailed utilizing tens of thousands of polygons. There even seems to be some sadness on the part of the team over producing what will be Sega's last Model 3 title. The board has served the AM divisions well over the years — games such as *Sega Rally 2* and *Virtua Fighter 3* would have been impossible without it — and despite Sega's claims, many believe the Power VR-based replacement, code-named Naomi, will be inferior.

Sasaki is reserving his judgment, but **Next Generation** detected more than a tinge of regret at the technological changing of the guard. "Yes, for all the Sega AMs, it is the end of the Model 3 era," he says, ruefully. "I believe that *Star Wars Trilogy* will be the last AM Annex Model 3 game, and we are already beginning to study the new board."

Whatever the impact of Naomi, however, AM Annex will undoubtedly rise to the challenge — as will the other AM departments. They've ruled the coin-op market in the '90s, and there's no reason to assume they won't continue to do so as the industry ticks over into the next millennium. Before that, however, *Star Wars Trilogy*, barring a fatal upset, will not only be another step forward for Sega, but also for Lucasfilm, which plans to own the entertainment landscape lock, stock, and barrel, in 1999. NG



The space battles feature a multitude of ships, including the Star Destroyers, which can be attacked at close range



***Star Wars Trilogy* will almost certainly be the last Sega coin-op to utilize the Model 3 board, to be replaced next year by Naomi**

***Star Wars Trilogy* re-creates the atmosphere of the movies perfectly**

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INTERSTATE 82

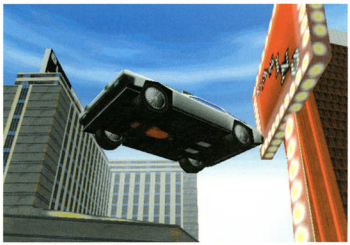
The past still isn't what it used to be, as Activision updates its hit to the '80s

***I-76* has been updated for the '80s, with car combat in both outdoor and indoor areas**

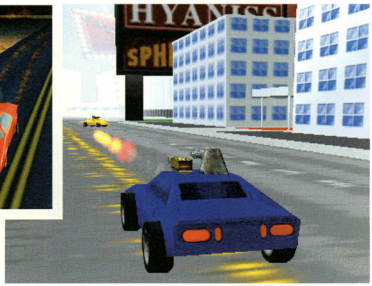
Set in a retro-dimension where the '70s never died, *Interstate 76* was a breath of fresh air among the usual glut of *Blade Runner*-inspired dystopias and elf-ridden fantasy worlds. Enter *Interstate 82*: "We went out into our audience and asked, 'What do you guys want?'" says Zack Norman, director on both *I-76* and *I-82*. "One of the philosophies I had was that if it's going to be a sequel, it had to have enough newness and uniqueness to warrant being called a sequel because in this age of Whatever II or Whatever III, there has to be enough of a rationalization aside from some little bit of tweaking and new missions."

First among the fans' requests was a high frame rate, so *I-82* has been built around a completely new, state-of-the-art rendering engine — one that requires hardware acceleration, is blistering fast, and supports such niceties as environment-mapping and (possibly) bump-mapping. Second, level design is now based around a notion called the Large Driveable Mesh, or LDM, with each level being created whole cloth in Softimage and supporting both indoor and outdoor environments. Also, thanks to "Multivehicle Combat," it will be possible for characters to exit vehicles, fight and interact with the environment on foot, then enter other vehicles at will.

And, as the title implies, the setting has been fast-forwarded to the new-wave era of the early '80s. Expect the soundtrack to be filled with (ahem) homages to The B-52s, Elvis Costello, Flock of Seagulls, and others. "When I looked back and started doing research about the '80s, I thought, 'This was such an absurd time,'" Norman says. "I mean, the '80s was like, 'What is the president of the United States doing? And why does no one care about this stuff?' And I think new-wave music really typified the sensibilities of that period: It was disposable, kind of trashy, and fast. I described *I-76* as *Road Warrior* meets *Shaft* — I'm describing *I-82* as the *Road Warrior* meets 'Miami Vice.'" NG



The new rendering engine is capable of a wide range of special effects



Arming and outfitting the vehicles have been changed: Every weapon system now has a countermeasure, shifting the strategic dynamics

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Activision

RELEASE DATE
November 1998

ORIGIN
U.S.

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PlayStation

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JEFF GORDON RACING XS

Can NASCAR champ Jeff Gordon drive ASC's next game into the winner's circle?

All tracks are raced at night, enabling the developers to boost the visuals with plenty of multicolored lighting

Gordon is closely tied to Pepsi, but the glaring Pepsi logos are placeholder

"I'm getting spanked," says Jeff Gordon after his car is crunched into a high corner by two passing cars. Fortunately, Gordon isn't at Charlotte Motor Speedway — this year's leading Winston Cup driver is sitting safely inside the Ambassador Suite at the Boca Raton Resort in Florida, where he's just started test-driving his forthcoming game with ASC. Less than a minute later, Gordon is easily sliding through turns, a consummate pro even behind a Mad Catz steering wheel.

Flanking Gordon on either side are ASC Executive Producer Howie Schwartz and Real Sports President Robin Antonick. They've brought the latest rev of their game to Gordon's home state of Florida, and they are intently focused on getting feedback from Gordon. "We take the responsibility of putting Jeff in the game very seriously," says Antonick. "We've built a lot of tools and implemented a lot of elements that we can tune and respond to his input, which he's very articulate in giving because he is a gameplayer."

Unlike many other celebrities who've signed their names to the front of a game package, the 27-year-old Gordon actually does play games. "I played *Gran Turismo* until I got the Castrol Supra GT," at which point, Gordon says, "it became too easy to win."

But don't expect to see a replica of Gordon's number 24 car in this game — that belongs to EA's *NASCAR*. Instead, ASC and Real Sports intend to bring players a futuristic racing game.

"At the core it's racing," says Schwartz, "with real cars and real physics." And while the designers intend to capture the gritty essence of NASCAR, the presentation and 10 tracks are more of the *Wipeout* variety. One mountainside track features steep sloping roads, another cloverleaf track whips players around corners, then launches them over

The designers intend to give players that neck-and-neck, give-and-take feeling of close racing

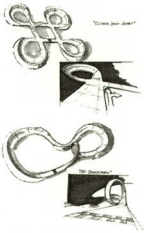
FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
ASC

DEVELOPER
Real Sports

RELEASE DATE
Q1 1999

ORIGIN
U.S.



Conceptual art shows track designs that are a long way from NASCAR

jumps. An early-in-design, Las Vegas-based track capitalizes on the night racing aspect of the game, with glowing casino backgrounds.

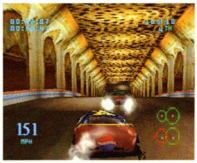
Of course, players won't just step into Jeff's shoes. Through some bluescreen presentation and voice-over, Gordon mentors players during the first stages. Ultimately, however, players will have to unseat Gordon to win the game. "Everyone is beatable on any given day," Gordon admits, then quickly suggests that players will need to be almost perfect to beat him.

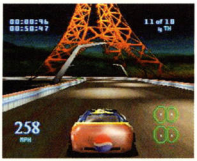
But with so many racing games available and a new *Ridge Racer* around the corner, where does ASC expect to find its niche? Antonick believes Real Sports can match the competition's vehicle dynamics, physics, and frame rates. However, the company doesn't want to build another *Gran Turismo* because the consensus is that the game should have a pick-up-and-play appeal.

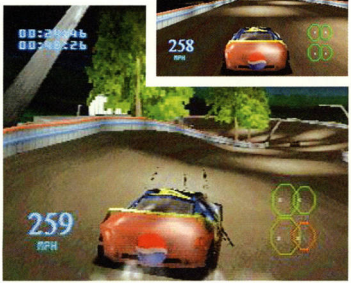
As this is futuristic and not realistic racing, the cars will morph and repair damage on the fly

Antonick feels his game will excel with proper racing AI, modeled on neural net technology. "This is what Jeff focuses in on," says Antonick of Gordon's affinity for smart driving, "so that's where we place our attention — not in the garage, but on the racetrack. It's the concept of retaliation, the concept of an epic taking place on the racetrack."

This is not some fast-lap philosophy for ASC. Having struck a five-year, multititle, multiplatform deal with Gordon, this game is the first in what both publisher and developer hope will be a long-running franchise. In a battle with racing veterans like EA, Namco, and Sony, Gordon's availability and cooperative spirit certainly give ASC some needed turbo. And who knows? He does have a history of taking checkered flags. NG







The game's engine is genuinely impressive — it currently runs at 30fps, even while displaying eight cars and multiple lighting effects

An interview with

JEFF GORDON

At age 27, Jeff Gordon is the two-time NASCAR Winston Cup champ and current points leader. In Gordon's Winston Cup career (178 starts as of press time), he lists 38 wins and 22 poles, and has finished in the top five 50% of the time and earned more than $20.5 million.

Gordon's perhaps a natural for starring in a game, as his career in racing started about as early as his love of games. He began racing at age five, just about the same time he got an Atari 2600 with *Night Driver*. In a position to give some real advice about the sport and racing games, Gordon tells **Next Generation** where the two meet, and where the line never blurs.

NG: Assuming ASC approached you with this project, what made you bite?

JG: I've always wanted to be involved in making a videogame. Every time I pick up a racing game, I critique it. "It's not real enough" or "It's not fun enough," "It's not competitive enough." When ASC came along, I said, "Perfect, this exactly what I like to do." I think there's a lot of people out there who get involved with games, but it's not really what they want to do. It's not what they're personally into. For me, I'm really into it, I wanted to be a part of this and not just have my name put on the cover of the thing.

NG: There are plenty of NASCAR games out there, but you guys took a different approach. Why?

JG: [Pauses] I guess because I'm a young, exciting type of guy, and I'd like to see a young crowd get into a game that's more futuristic. You can go way out with the cars, with the handling of the cars, and type of race tracks ... We've seen every type of racing game that you can see, and I wanted to see something a little different, a little newer.

NG: Is there anything missing from a real racing experience that you'd like to see come to your game?

JG: Someday I want to see the feedback from the steering wheel put into the actual home videogames. You're seeing it in the arcade games now. But more importantly, I think it's being able to get that feeling [of resistance] by what you're seeing on the screen — to have your car sliding through the corners, and you being able to control that slide and feeling like you're part of the game because you can feel what the car's doing.

NG: Other than its futuristic art direction, what specifically sets your game apart?

JG: One thing that we're doing that I haven't seen is the really high-banked corners. You can actually run low, middle, high, and the higher you get up on the banking, the more speed you can carry through the corners, but the farther around you have to go, it makes the track longer. But it gives you other options instead of there always being one groove.

NG: It sounds like there's some things from your game you'd like to see in real NASCAR racing, besides more banking.

JG: You know, we're getting more into the aerodynamics. The cars in the game are very slick and rounded off, with speeds up to 300-plus miles per hour, which, a long ways down the road in NASCAR, you might see, but right now they're keeping us under 200. I think the one thing I really would like to see in racing is to be able to have more options when it comes to passing. That does lead back to banking, and what we want is three or four [cars] wide racing, where you're seeing several cars going for the win on the final lap. I think that's what the fans, drivers, and teams want to see.

The only way you're ever gonna get that true feeling of what the race car's like is to feel it in the seat of your pants

NG: Do you feel a game will ever accurately capture the NASCAR experience the way that you live it on the track?

JG: Oh, absolutely. Someday. There's been a lot of talk about it. I think the only way you're ever gonna get that true feeling of what the race car's like is to feel it in the seat of your pants, to feel it in the wheel and in the pedals, to have the screen and you become one. Just as long as we don't actually feel what it's like when we hit the wall, then everything will be fine.

NG: But as gamers, if we know we're safe from that wall, can it ever be as real as when you go out on the track?

JG: Well, I guess you'll never get that real a feel because the danger aspect of it definitely comes into play when you're out on the racetrack. If that wasn't there, and there wasn't a little bit of fear in you, then you wouldn't mind hitting the walls, you wouldn't mind hitting other people. That's what keeps the professionalism and the competition to what it is — because it is real out there.

NG: Who would win in a fight, Sonic or Mario?

JG: Oh, man! Well, me being the big Mario fan, I think Super Mario would take him. I don't know, that'd be a tough battle, but I'd pull for Mario. I think Mario can get pretty mean, pretty nasty. He's got all those tricks up his sleeve, all those hidden things that could take out Sonic. NG

Jeff Gordon (right) discusses track design with Real Sports President Ron Antonick (left). Antonick is not only a developer with experience on several *Madden* football games, but he's also a recreational Skip Barber and Formula Mazda series driver

NINTENDO 64

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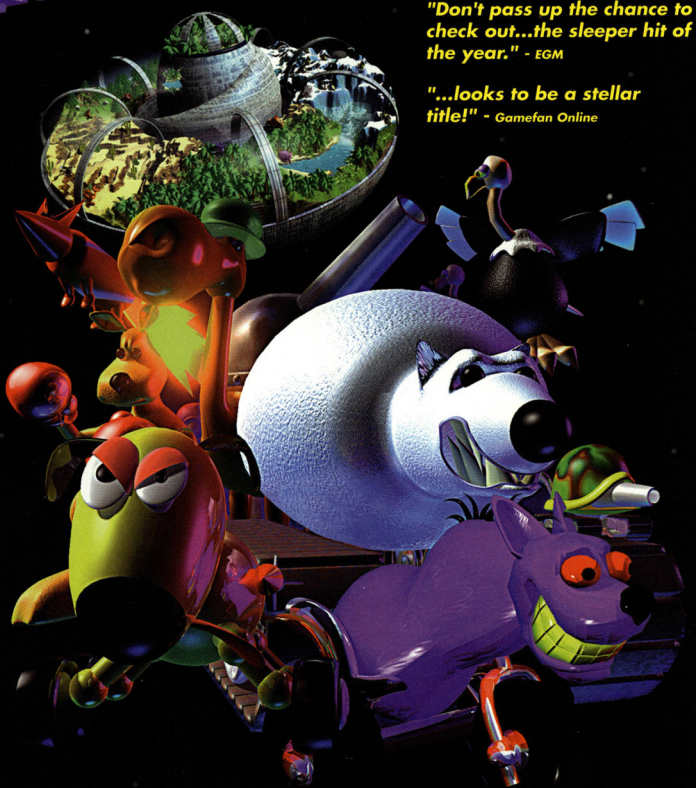

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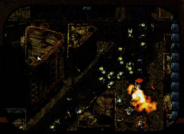

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ESRB

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SILENT HILL

Can Konami's upcoming horror/adventure steal the crown from *Resident Evil 2*?

After being coaxed through this fog-heavy level by an encounter with an apparition, the player encounters a message of warning about a dog

To call *Silent Hill* a clone of *Resident Evil* would be to do it a severe injustice. That's because the game's environments are presented in realtime 3D, and the atmosphere it generates may exceed that of Capcom's legendary horror adventures.

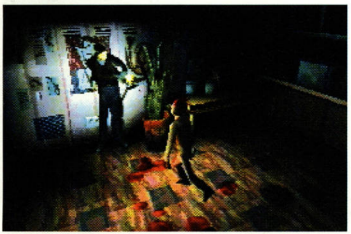
The game has players pick up the role of a car-accident victim who loses his daughter — literally — following the incident. Heading toward Silent Hill, a small, sleepy town from which occupants have mysteriously vanished, the player finds a game that's a blend of the *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider* series.

Armed with a map of the area, players set out to explore a town shrouded by a thick fog — a feature adopted, presumably, to build atmosphere while relieving pressure from the game's 3D engine. Exploration in an early build of the game reveals a variety of shops and buildings — none of which can be entered but a factor that could change in the finished game.

Further progress involves negotiating a series of dimly lit passageways that require the use of a torch — bringing some fabulous lighting effects into play. It's then that the truly sinister feel of *Silent Hill* surfaces, the grim color scheme enlivened by areas decorated with buckets of gore. When rounding a corner, players find that the soundtrack begins to complement the visuals, as churning, wheezing tones issue forth before the player is assaulted by what appear to be zombie-esque children. On this admittedly limited evidence, it looks as though *Silent Hill* could be the most genuinely chilling videogame ever realized.

Beyond the gameplay itself, which at this point appears sound, the cut scenes deserve a special mention. Unlike other big-name Japanese publishers like Namco and Square, Konami does not have a reputation for producing cutting-edge CGI, and yet the quality of the sequences in *Silent Hill* is nothing short of mind-boggling.

The *Resident Evil* theme is ready to go real time, and *Silent Hill* is poised to explore those avenues with aplomb. NG



A pistol comes in rather handy when dispatching these genuinely odd little enemies. We think, perhaps, *Children of the Corn* may have been part of the inspiration here

The interior sections prove reminiscent of a certain Capcom series

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
Konami

RELEASE DATE
Spring 1999

ORIGIN
Japan

PlayStation

EVERYONE
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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SHADOW COMPANY: LEFT FOR DEAD

An early look at what could be Interactive Magic's riskiest endeavor yet

Almost every vehicle in the game is available to the player, from boats, helicopters, and tanks to motorcycles, street cars, snowmobiles, and jet skis

The first time **Next Generation** caught a glimpse of *Shadow Company*, we were amazed. The game had the look of *Metal Gear Solid*, gameplay reminiscent of a realtime strategy title, and persistent environments that looked as good as any big-budget action film.

Several months later, Paul Meegan, designer for Sinister, talks anxiously about the company's first game. "We looked at a lot of different games, and really there aren't too many games that compare to our engine. The game isn't linear. The environment is beautiful, with real physics on the helicopters and vehicle suspensions. With effects like real wind, water surfaces, and so on, you get the feeling you're interacting with a much more real world."

The remarkable engine is also what provides personality for the game's characters and the way they interact with one another. If one of the team members runs out of ammo, depending on which character it is, another character will throw over a replacement clip. The actions are done without being intrusive to gameplay. "One of the things we've seen in other games, like *Commandos*," says Meegan, "is that they operate in the assumption that enemies behave a certain way. It becomes a puzzle game. Our game is more realistic. Each character has their own personality because of our AI."

This plays a larger role in creating a team, as each character has distinct advantages and disadvantages. Some act well under fire, some might take the initiative, and others may cower in the

Players explore a number of locales, which include cloning facilities, infirmary tents, supply bunkers, barracks, and command bunkers

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Interactive Magic

DEVELOPER
Sinister Games

RELEASE DATE
Q2 1998

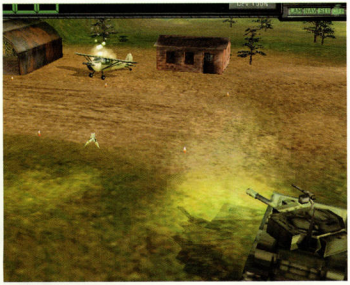
ORIGIN
U.S.

Players have access to the typical array of weapons, including pistols, rifles, grenade launchers, flamethrowers, and knives. Unlike in realtime strategy games, a player is capable of tagging a vehicle to take direct control of it and its weapons. Tanks offer the ability to destroy buildings previously traversed on foot

shadows. Much of the game's charm lies in the fact that there are so many different characters, and the player must help develop their skills. "You get attached to them," admits Meegan. "We really want to avoid the faceless soldier. We want you to get to know them and not just choose what weapons they use."

All this is great, but history tells us that when technical innovation takes the lead, the game and its story often suffer. But Sinister is taking precautions to ensure the best overall gaming experience, starting with the story. A powerful political force enlists a group of mercenaries to take on a mission in Africa. During the operation, the team is informed that it is no longer needed. With funding cut and communications ignored, the team is lost and left for dead. Players assume the role of the team leader, responsible for delivering the group to safety as well as uncovering a conspiracy of "X-Files" proportions. Because of the structure of the game, there are no set missions. The situations stem from the players' decisions. "It is up to you to decide how to accomplish the mission," says Meegan. "It requires real good assessment of the area to find the oil refineries, prisons, or anything that could affect the tactical aspect of the game. There is a campaign structure, but it is your discretion how to perform it. It is a living world to interact with."

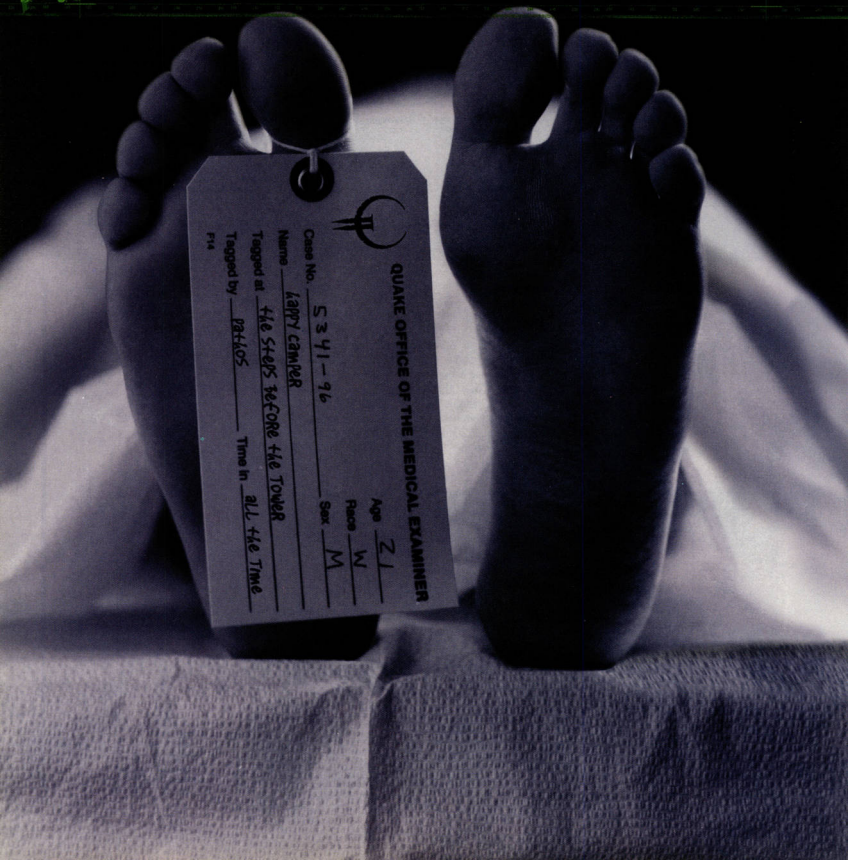
The game certainly has the makings of being a mainstream success for Interactive Magic, whose product roster has always catered to a niche audience. Likewise, the game could be the launching pad for Sinister Games' success. The company has already alluded to interest in the Dreamcast platform and future console systems. At this rate, it sounds as though we'll be hearing a lot more from Sinister Games in the near future. NG



At the moment, the plan is to complement the action music for each locale. If the mission is in South America, the music reflects the culture

Equipment and tools include flak jackets, scuba gear, starlight goggles, and more

HE PRACTICED ON A PC.



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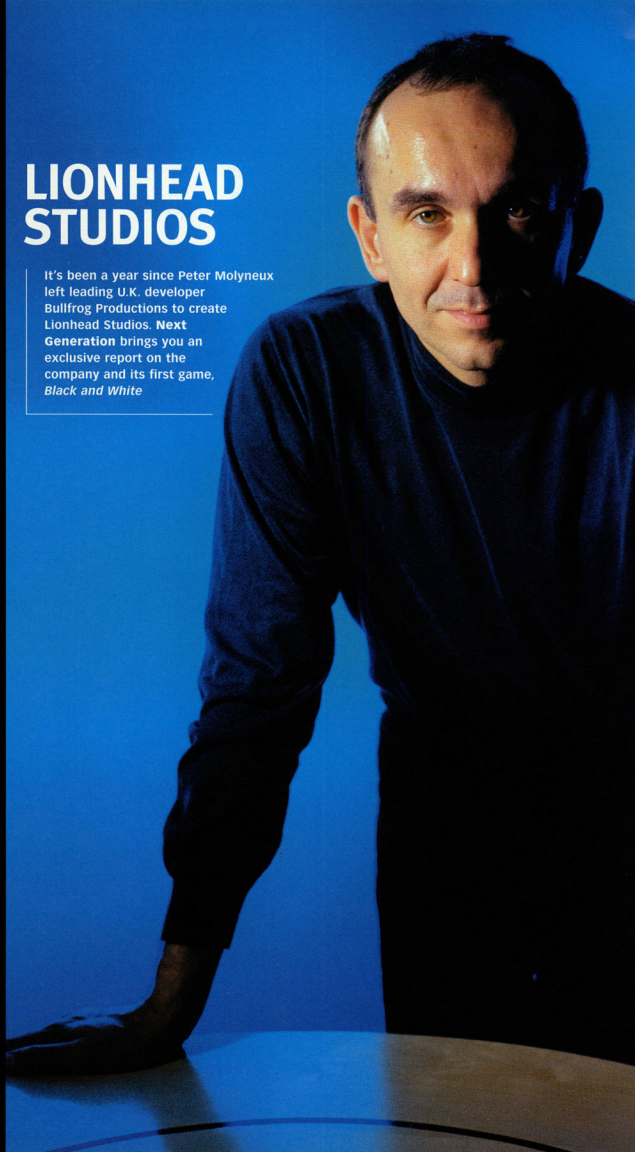
LIONHEAD STUDIOS

It's been a year since Peter Molyneux left leading U.K. developer Bullfrog Productions to create Lionhead Studios. Next Generation brings you an exclusive report on the company and its first game, *Black and White*



When **Next Generation** last spoke with Peter Molyneux, he was just putting the finishing touches to *Dungeon Keeper* at Bullfrog Productions. What followed was a protracted, and at times, acrimonious, departure from the company he had founded. The game press was filled with speculation about what the man who is acknowledged as one of the best game designers in the world would do next. The answer was simple: He would start again, from scratch.

And so in August of 1997, Lionhead Studios was born, and Peter Molyneux found himself sitting in front of the blank screen of the company's first official purchase — a PC — armed with nothing more than Windows and Word and the three other people he had brought with him: Technical Director Tim Rance, ex-Bullfrog producer Mark Webley, and millionaire businessman Steve Jackson. And he was scared. At least, that's how he describes it in the pristine meeting room of Lionhead's newly acquired headquarters in leafy Guildford, England, as **Next Generation** quizzed him on leaving Bullfrog, the creation of Lionhead, fame, and the current state of the industry he helped to form.

NG: What were you scared of?

PM: I had given everything I had in terms of equipment back to Bullfrog, so I got this new computer, and the first day I sat down, it was me, Tim, Mark, and Steve, and I sat down, turned my computer on, and thought, "What the fuck have I done?" There was nothing on this machine, not a single tool, nothing. At Bullfrog I had entire departments dedicated to tools, to code, to graphics — all these resources — and then just nothing. It was deeply, deeply scary. ▶

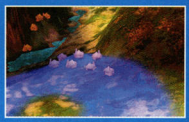
BLACK AND WHITE

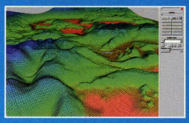
A thousand things could go wrong between now and the release of Lionhead's first title, but even if 900 of them happened, *Black and White* would still be one of the most important PC games ever. The sheer scale of the project terrifies Peter Molyneux — not the first person you would imagine being daunted, considering that he almost single-handedly invented the god sim as we know it with the seminal *Populous*.

Though the lineage is abundantly clear, *Black and White* is in many ways both the logical conclusion of the genre and the beginning of something completely different.

The game begins by offering the player a picturesque 3D landscape — what Molyneux describes as "an Eden," decorated with deserts, plains, forests, mountains, waterfalls, seas, and snow caps. Zooming in to the surface reveals scattered villages and fields, populated with tribes — each one depicting an established human race that includes Celts, Egyptians, Aztecs, Greeks, the Japanese, and (somewhat less obviously), the Tibetans. And they are happy.

"They have everything they need," Molyneux explains. "Everyone in the towns is totally happy and well-balanced. There is no crime and no concept of good or evil. If you just watch these little people, they'll go fishing in the sea and plow the fields and chop down trees if they need more houses. They'll even go out and mate and have a wedding ceremony. It's a completely encapsulated, Utopian world. And then something disastrous happens, and the disastrous thing that happens is you." In the shadow of a mountain, to the extreme west of the map, lies your





The blue ring is an early demonstration of a spell. Each ground texture and building tile has as many as eight different forces acting upon it at any time, determining color and composition — again depending on the style of play adopted by the user

***Black and White* represents an evolution of the genre that Molyneux almost single-handedly created: the god sim. As players progress, the game decides whether they are a force for good or evil, and morphs the appearance of the levels accordingly**

NG: Why did you leave Bullfrog? After all, it was your baby — you created it.
PM: I had become management. I went from someone who is really just a programmer and designer to being a suit, and it was a totally unnatural thing for me to do — completely and totally unnatural. It was the most nightmarish situation in the world. I had to ask myself, was I going to be a programmer and designer at Bullfrog, or was I going to be management? And the company became just too big. It got so I didn't know a lot of the faces around the office. I mean, when I sold it to EA, Bullfrog was 40 people, and when I left it was nearer 150.

NG: Does Lionhead feel like Bullfrog in the early days?
PM: Well, we have more money now! And having an office like this makes a huge, huge difference. We socialize a lot, and people work late here, and that's great — we're all in this together. One thing that's certainly the same is that it's very obsessional, and I'm in huge amounts of trouble with my girlfriend. We have this agreement that she only stays at the weekends, and now I'm starting to eat into the weekends as well as the evenings, so I'm in trouble.

NG: You mentioned that the size of Bullfrog was a problem. How will you stop Lionhead from becoming too big? Surely, if you're successful, you'll grow ▶

PM: I said originally that we'd have no more than 20 people working here, in total. Now we have 25, but that's only because *Black and White* is such a huge project. But we're only going to ever be making, internally, one game at a time. What we're doing is kind of *Black and White* and Lionhead against the world. We won't do any conversions in-house, we won't do any sequels in-house, and we won't do any specialist versions in-house — that will all be done externally.

NG: When you started in the industry, it only took a couple of people to make a game — now it takes, as you said, 20. Doesn't that make it hard for stars to emerge, to make themselves heard? Where do you think the next Peter Molyneux will come from?

PM: I hope from Lionhead. I'd like to think that. A couple of Saturdays a month and during the evenings in the week, we have this programming and design thing, sort of like a workshop. We have a kid here now who's basically learning from scratch — we're teaching him how to design and program games because I think that if there is going to be someone famous, then they're going to be young. It's something we did a lot of at Bullfrog, and it produced some great talent, like Sean Cooper, who worked on *Syndicate*.

NG: But you can't really say that these guys created the ▶

citadel, the seat of your power. As in *Dungeon Keeper* and *Populous* before it, the user is playing God.

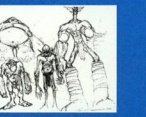
What Molyneux is doing with *Black and White* is attempting to create a game of simple elegance. A world is given to the player, and rules are established. Players can cast spells, but they need power, and they can only get power from being worshiped, and for that they need the villagers. The villagers, in turn, will provide their own magic to the player, and each race has its own type of magic. It should be easy, except that the other player, be it the CPU or another human being, needs those same villagers to increase its power. The battle lines are drawn. This is all fairly standard stuff — *exactly* what you might expect from Peter Molyneux.

But then two unique elements are added to make *Black and White* completely engrossing.

First, players can create one creature to do their bidding. This begins with the player taking a creature from the landscape (it can be anything from a cow to a dog to a human to even a tree — anything that's living) and placing it in a pen outside the citadel, where it is then nurtured, Tamagotchi-style. "It's Tamagotchi time, but Tamagotchi on, like, a million times out," Molyneux says. "I can pick up this piggy and put him into one of these pens, and the creature becomes like your child. It is a reflection of you within the world, and you can make that creature as mean and as vicious and as cruel as you want it to be, or you can make it as kind and as nice and as sweet and as innocent as you want it to be. You can torture your creature and make him even more vicious, or you can play with him and make him happy and give him this sort of well-balanced upbringing."

The creature grows in the pen until the player lets it loose in the world, where it can cast spells and fight on the player's behalf. It even learns gestures from the player — for example, if the player throws a fireball spell by moving the mouse across the screen, the creature will throw its arm from left to right when casting the spell. The creature is, in many ways, a miniature version of the player.

"Well, not so miniature, actually," Molyneux says, accessing the cheat menu. What was, moments before, a creature the size of a bus had suddenly



Lionhead artist Christian Bravery has created some creatures with a great deal of character — knowing that the game engine will allow much of it to appear on screen with just as much personality as he intended

The creatures morph over time into good-, neutral-, or evil-looking models. Instead of using several meshes, the game defines a number of skeletal axes around which the changes take place. For example, the cow that you see here (top) lowers its head along a predetermined path the more evil it becomes. The shoulders also gradually hunch over and the horns grow larger — a fraction at a time

The citizens that inhabit the world are made up of just 12 polygons, and as many as 5,000 citizens can be on the map at any one time

become supersized — towering a full 200 feet above the tiny villagers. The more powerful the player becomes within the world, the bigger the creature becomes. Depending on the number of players, there could be anything between two and 200 of these giants stomping their way across the landscape at any one time, eating enemy villagers, destroying buildings, and generally playing Godzilla.

Molyneux will be setting up a server at Lionhead to make *Black and White* a massively multiplayer experience, with players able to load their citadels and creatures into the multiplayer game after nurturing them at home in single-player mode — a neat extension of Nintendo's Japanese Pocket Monster gimmick. With a click of the mouse, gamers can play the creatures from a first-person perspective (something that was explored on a much simpler level in *Dungeon Keeper*).

But where *Black and White* really shines brightest (and this is the second unique element) is in its morphing. As players progress in their quest to dominate the landscape, the game reads their style of play and begins to morph their citadel, creature, and lands to reflect their demeanor. Every cell that makes up the textures on the map is created from as many as eight different sources — each one a receptor, reading the level of good or evil in the gamer's mode of play. Gradually, over time, everything changes. If the player is an evil despot, murdering with impunity, causing undue suffering, and exhibiting cruel traits, then the green hills around the citadel will slowly blacken; the trees will die; the animals will morph into weird, evil creatures; and the citadel will turn black. Conversely, players who are charitable and merciful, and who only cause suffering in order to defend themselves, will find flowers blooming in the fields, bunny rabbits running about, and bright flags adorning their Disney-esque citadel. The pace of change is so subtle and precise that it's almost imperceptible, but by the end of the game, the landscape will have changed beyond all recognition.

Molyneux describes *Black and White* as "kind of like one giant personality test. I wanted people to come in after a really bad day and play *Black and White* for a bit, and think, 'Fuck — I've just taken all this out on one game.' They'd look around their land at the end and suddenly find the flowers have fallen off the trees, and the forest is petrified. You just think, 'Well, I've obviously had a bad day ...'"

The game is so ambitious, with so many variables, that it could easily take as long as *Dungeon Keeper* to develop. And though Molyneux is keen to avoid another protracted schedule, he's not saying when it will be finished. When pressed, he grudgingly reveals, "toward the middle of next year, maybe." And for the record: Peter Molyneux appears friendly enough, but after hours of play-testing the game, there was a decidedly char-grilled look to his own landscape. And his citadel? Black as pitch. NG

The higher-resolution town models are workstation shots but are well within the capabilities of the high-end accelerated PCs that will eventually run the game

LIONHEAD STUDIOS

game when so many others were involved.

PM: No, you can't. I think in some ways the fame in the future will belong more to the producers. When you talk about fame, you shouldn't really say Peter Molyneux, you should really be saying Miyamoto — because he's just incredible. That guy is amazing. I mean, we've done a few little games with some friends, but he has made a company — Nintendo. There wouldn't be a Nintendo without him. But he doesn't program, he designs and produces, and I think that's where you'll find the next Peter Molyneux.

NG: What's your impression of the current state of the game industry? Is there anything that really gets you mad?

PM: I think it's very healthy in some ways, but what really, really aggravates me more than anything else is that there's no time anymore — especially when developing for the PC. There's no time to stand back and to say, "Well, this is what we want to do with our game, and this is where we want to take it," because everything changes overnight. Since we started this conversation, there have probably been two video card announcements, one audio card announcement, and somebody else is thinking of doing a new console, but it takes time. It takes time to do really good stuff. If you look at the PlayStation now, it's ▶

coming out with some really incredible, incredible games, and yet the technology is four or five years old. There's nothing on the PC that even comes close to *Gran Turismo*, and that's because the PlayStation has been around and you get used to it. We have to jump through all these technology hoops every day of the week, and that really pisses me off.

NG: Which brings us to Dreamcast ...

PM: I actually think it's very, very good — and it bridges the gap between PCs and consoles. We've been talking to Sega for a long time about it, and I really like the machine. I think it could have gone disastrously wrong if it had decided not to use the Microsoft technology — that has solved a lot of problems.

NG: Will *Black and White* be a Dreamcast title?

PM: I can't really comment on that. It's certainly more suited to a console than, say, *Dungeon Keeper* because there are no fiddly icons on screen. We make it very simple to get into. But I do believe that console games and PC games are very different beasts, and the market is different. For console, everything must be intuitive and quick, and incredibly obvious. The next game I want to do, after *Black and White*, will almost certainly be a console action title. I'd really like to have a go at that.

SATELLITES OF LOVE

Lionhead is a developer, first and foremost, but it is also expanding into other areas. Co-directors Steve Jackson and Mark Webley are heading up what they describe as a "satellite" system — the chief aim of which is to provide tools, equipment, PR, and start-up funds for small development outfits that have the talent and the ideas, but not the resources, to enter the increasingly expensive world of videogame development. Though not a full-service publisher like G.O.D. (which distributes its titles), Lionhead will promote the work of its satellites to publishers and to the press, shopping the games around at demo stage to secure further backing, and then taking a small percentage of the profits once the game is sold — in effect, acting more like a record label than a videogame developer.

The first title to be nurtured under the satellite system will be one for Dreamcast, though it's so early in the development cycle (not quite at demo stage) that Big Blue Box, the three-man team behind it, is remaining tight-lipped about precise details. **Next Generation** asked Steve Jackson and Mark Webley to explain the thinking behind such a unique approach to development.

MW: We'd been going about three weeks as a company, and two ex-Bullfrog guys came to us with their game designs, and we sat down and we thought, "Well, it's a good game design and they have good potential, but what do we do? Do we bring them in-house and employ extra people?" And it was like, "Oh, soon there will be more than 25 people here, and it will be a nightmare." So that's really what kicked it off.

SJ: Yeah, it did. We were impressed with them and their ideas. And we're getting people coming to us now all the time, and we haven't advertised or anything — it's just word of mouth. We're going to start the whole thing off slowly, with no more than three or four satellite projects going on at once because we want to make sure it all works. The most important thing that we're trying to achieve here is that the Lionhead label achieves a certain quality and has an excellence about it which can be trusted. We're building a brand, and we explain to everyone in the system that their games could get canned at the 11th hour if the quality isn't there.

MW: Having said that, I strongly believe that if you start from day one with a good game design that everyone respects, then a lot of things have to go wrong for it not to come out as a good game. It's easy for teams to lose their way, but that's what we're here for. We're there all the way, and we nurse the thing through — which I suppose is the big difference between us and the traditional publisher in the end.

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PlayStation

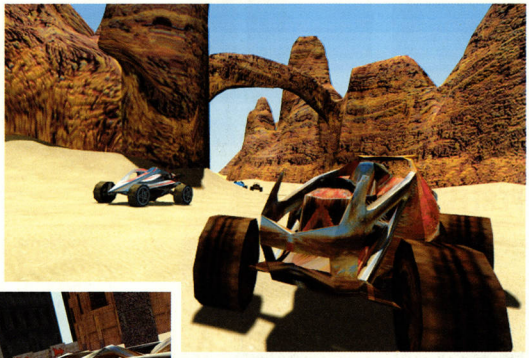
RATING PENDING
RP
ESRB

MILESTONES

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

Now begins the quiet season, where most holiday titles have been finished and developers take a much-needed break before going back into their development dungeons. But not before a glut of titles hits store shelves in time for the holidays. Here's a sampling of a few of those games, as well as a glance at what lies ahead for the year 1999.

POWERSLIDE PC



GT Interactive's *Powerslide* is a remarkable racer that runs at 60 frames per second while processing more than 300,000 polygons. Developed by Emergent Software, the game features arcade racing physics and a 3D engine that supports the best 3D accelerators on the market

BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD

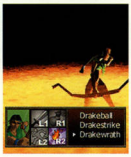
GT's PC and PlayStation title takes the duo on a field trip to college in search of women

AREA 51 SITE 4

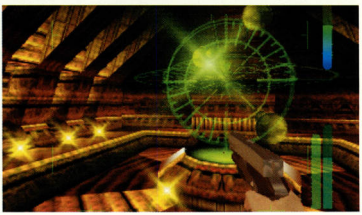
Atari Games' arcade sequel to *Area 51* continues the story of hostile alien contact

SHADOW MADNESS PlayStation

Crave introduces players to a collapsing world that features 40 hours of gameplay and beautifully rendered backgrounds



PERFECT DARK Nintendo 64

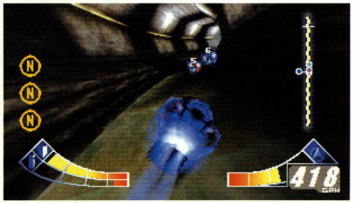


In the year 2023, a young field operative named Joanna Dark uncovers a conspiracy spread across hundreds of light years. Rare has produced the first true successor to *Goldeneye*, with far more ambitious game mechanics and visuals, including a two-player, co-operative story mode

BLOODSHOT Nintendo 64

Bloodshot **is yet another comic property to emerge from Acclaim. The main character is similar to Marvel's Punisher, but immune to damage**

XG2 Nintendo 64

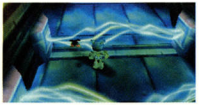


Unlike Acclaim's other sequel, *Turok 2*, *XG2* does little to improve over its predecessor, *Extreme G*. This game still needs work before release

TWISTED METAL 3

The *Rally Cross* team's freshman effort to pick up the PlayStation franchise needs just a little more polish before release

JET FORCE GEMINI Nintendo 64

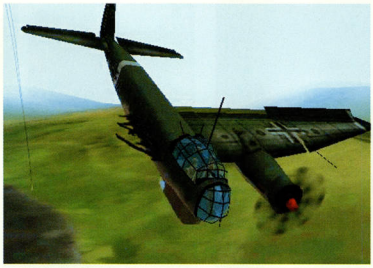


Rare's epic shooter introduces Juno, Vela, and a dog named Lupus, who are on a mission to put an end to the evil Mizar's galactic reign. The game features realtime lighting and reflections, while huge bosses exhibit complex AI unrivaled by contemporary shooters

QUARTERBACK CLUB '99

Acclaim's latest N64 sequel has 31 NFL teams, six Europe clubs, and the Cleveland Browns

FIGHTER SQUADRON PC

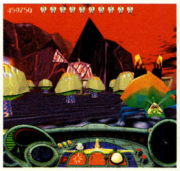


Intense World War II aerial combat is the theme for Activision's latest flight sim. Players are granted the chance to change history during three campaigns across the world

WAR OF THE WORLDS

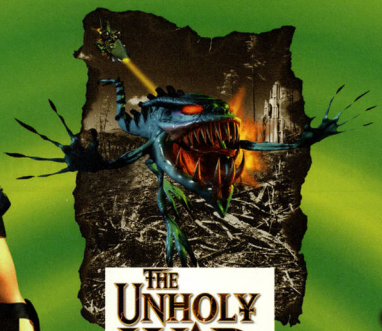
Rage's realtime PC strategy game is based on the musical version of H.G. Wells' classic novel

CENTIPEDE PlayStation/PC

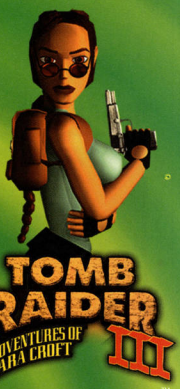


Hasbro's retrofit of the classic '80s hit *Centipede* retains the well-known classic gameplay, as well as introduces an entirely new 3D mode that spans across six worlds. In all, gamers get the classic shooter, a new 3D perspective of the game, and an adventure mode

OMIKRON
The Nomad Soul



THE UNHOLY WAR
OUT THINK. OUT MANEUVER. OUT LIVE.



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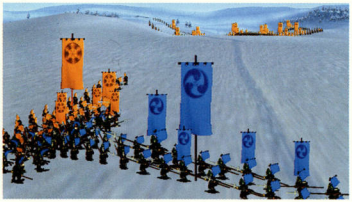
EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

URBAN CHAOS PC

Mucky Foot's 3D adventure title features an incredibly large and fully interactive city with amazing visual effects and character animation

TAISHO: TOTAL WAR PC



Like *Homeworld*, Electronic Arts' latest RTS lets you zoom down to the individual units. One big difference: it's set in feudal Japan, not space

THE REAP

There's nothing like a shooter to really demonstrate what hardware can do. In this case the game's by Housemarque and the card by 3Dfx

KNOCKOUT KINGS

EA's licensing triumph may fall short on gameplay. With a fall release date, the PlayStation version shown in August was lacking some snap

AKOLYTE PC/Dreamcast

Akolyte, from Houston-based Revenant, uses a modified portal technology in its third-person action/adventure. The game promises 25 massive worlds, more than a dozen bosses, and heretofore unseen graphics and lighting effects. The plot is based around Norse mythology — players have to avenge Odin's death by destroying Loki

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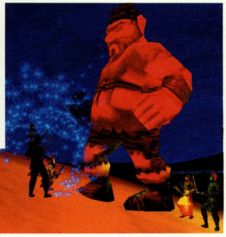
CARMAGEDDON 2 Multi

This title may not win Interplay any humanitarian awards, but fans will certainly appreciate the new graphics and more horrific gore

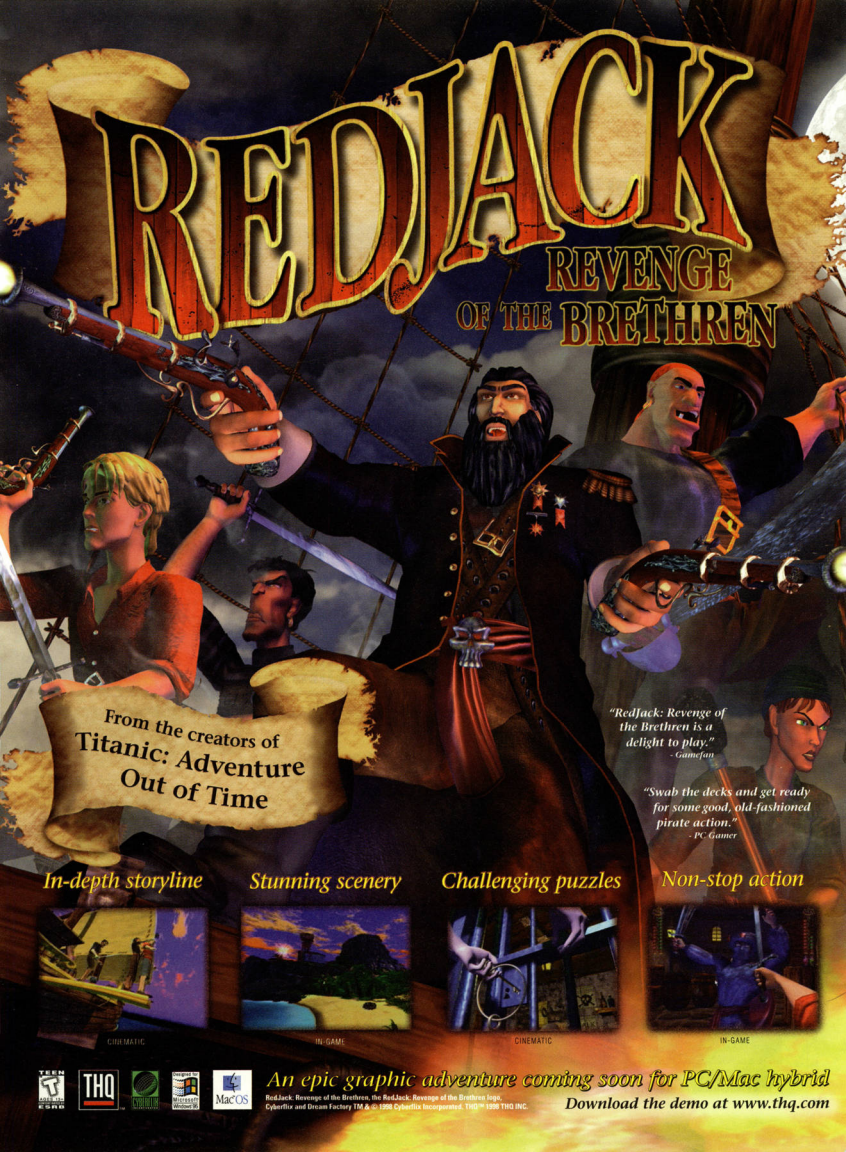
BOMBERMAN WORLD

Think the series peaked on Super NES? Could be, but that won't keep Hudson from bringing *Bomberman* to PlayStation for the first time

EVERQUEST Online



989 Studios' ambitious online RPG should trump the competition graphically, based on these 3Dfx-enhanced screens, which also show many of the game's features: weather, variably sized characters, massive structures, spells, and a seamless interface. What don't the screens show? The protective PK-switch option, for one


REDJACK
REVENGE OF THE BRETHREN
From the creators of Titanic: Adventure Out of Time
"RedJack: Revenge of the Brethren is a delight to play."
- Gamefan
"Swab the decks and get ready for some good, old-fashioned pirate action."
- PC Gamer
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Stunning scenery
Challenging puzzles
Non-stop action
CINEMATIC
IN-GAME
CINEMATIC
IN-GAME
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An epic graphic adventure coming soon for PC/Mac hybrid
RedJack: Revenge of the Brethren, the RedJack: Revenge of the Brethren logo, Cyberflix and Dream Factory TM & © 1998 Cyberflix Incorporated. THQ™ 1998 THQ INC.
Download the demo at www.thq.com

ODT

Psygnosis' PlayStation and PC ode to Jules Verne takes place in a giant tower after a crash landing, where the crew of an airship must fight for survival and its homeland

BLUE STINGER Dreamcast

Next month, Next Generation will have a full preview of the game, but for now, we'll tease you with these impressive images from Climax's Dreamcast debut title

HIRED GUNS PC

Psygnosis' 3D, multiplayer update of its Amiga classic was one of the titles that managed to survive the recent purge of the studio

C3 RACING PlayStation

Car Constructors Championship features collision damage that affects gameplay, realistic lighting effects, multiple terrains, and no pop-in

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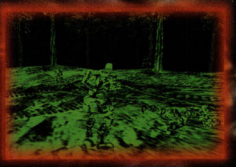

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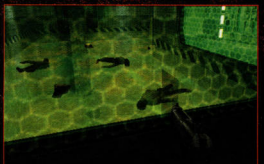

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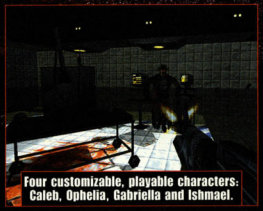

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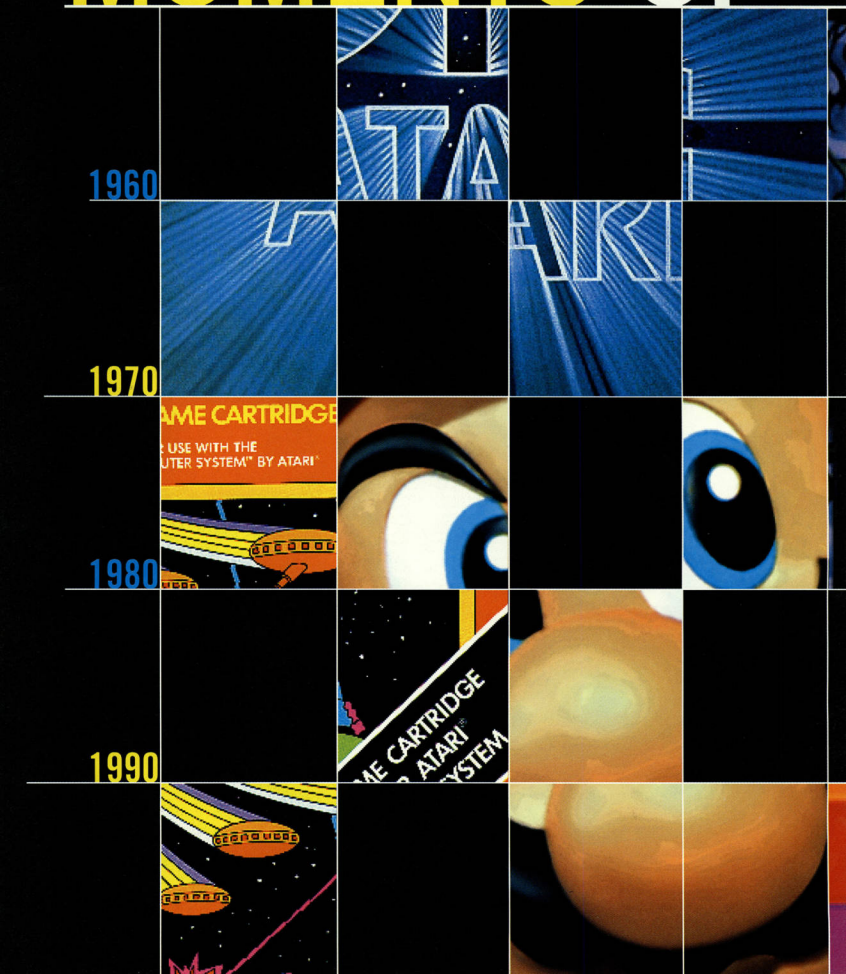
Flame Throwers, Tesla Cannons, Voodoo Dolls and Humiliation Animations.

MOMENTS OF


1960
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AME CARTRIDGE
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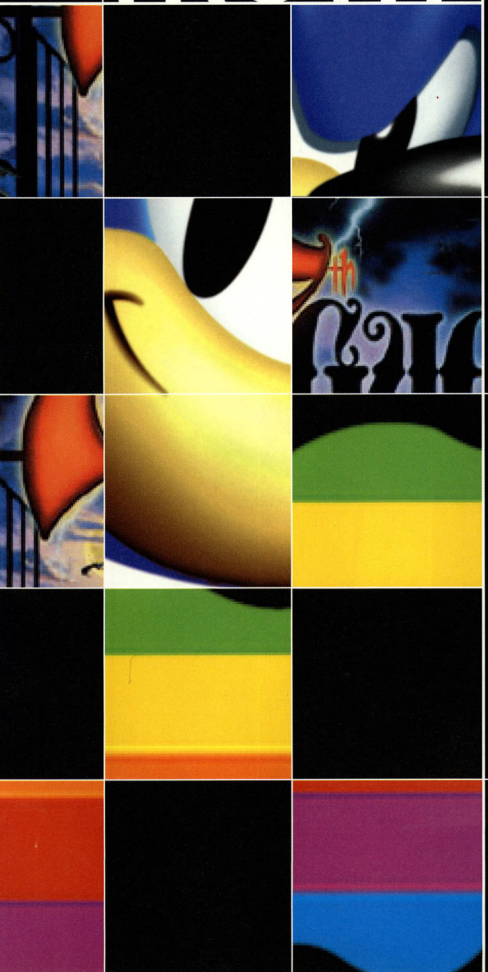
TRUTH



Many people say that life is just a series of moments, and so too, apparently, is the game industry. **Next Generation** uncovers the most important moments that have changed the course of game history

The history of video and computer games is punctuated by a few moments when the direction of the entire industry hinged on a single decision, a lucky accident, or a strange combination of both. Although often small and insignificant-seeming at the time, like a pebble tossed in a pond, these moments sent ripples throughout the gaming world, and in some way or another, things were never the same again.

This article isn't just a list of amusing anecdotes (although there are a fair number of laughs), but rather a series of snapshots, pictures of moments in time when the gaming community was either dragged or took a pratfall into its future. If anything, they prove that no event is without consequence, the noblest of intentions can fall short, and the basest motivations can benefit others in unexpected ways. Read on.

1980

PIZZA DELIVERY

The moment: Toru Iwatani finds his gaze attracted by a partially eaten pizza and creates one of the most important characters in game history.

The story: Shortly after graduating from college in 1977, Toru Iwatani joined Namco. He wanted to create pinball tables, but Namco had moved full steam into videogames. Iwatani compromised and started creating video pinball games like *Gee Bee*, *Bomb Bee*, and *Cutie Q*. In 1979, Iwatani decided to create a "real" videogame, but one with a twist: "I was interested in developing a game for the female game enthusiast. I started out with the concept of eating and focused on the word 'taberu,' which means 'to eat.' The actual figure of Pac-Man came about as I was having pizza for lunch. I took one wedge, and there it was, the figure of Pac-Man."

The fallout: *Pac-Man*, the first game to feature an animated character and cut scenes, sold more than 350,000 units, making it by far the most successful arcade machine of all time. Much of its success was thanks to Pac-Man himself, the first true videogame character. From Pac-Man to Lara Croft, recognizable characters have helped superior games stand out even further ever since.

LIAR LIAR

The moment: Nolan Bushnell launches the game industry with a series of fibs.

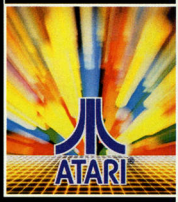
The story: Shortly after hiring Al Alcorn as his company's first engineer, Atari founder Nolan Bushnell came up with a project. He told Alcorn that he had just signed a contract with General Electric to design a home electronic game based on ping-pong. The game would be very simple — "one ball, two paddles, and a score ... nothing else on the screen."

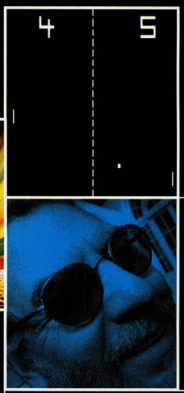
This was a lie. In fact, he had *not* signed a contract with General Electric or even had any kind of discussion with the appliance company. The truth was that he wanted to get Alcorn familiar with the process of making games, and this was the simplest idea he could think of. "He didn't even think it had any play value," Alcorn says.

A few weeks later, Bushnell flew to Chicago to sell *Pong* to Midway or Bally. Meanwhile, the first prototype of *Pong*, which was at a bar called Andy Capps Tavern, had stopped working, and when Alcorn went to investigate, he discovered that the coin slot was overflowing with quarters. He called and told Bushnell.

Flushed with success, Bushnell immediately decided he should manufacture the game himself. The problem was, after their first set of meetings, executives at both Bally and Midway expressed interest in buying *Pong*. Now he had to find a way to steer them away while keeping the door open for future projects. So, he told another lie and played one side against the other, telling Bally that Midway didn't want it. When Bally heard this, the company decided it must be a bad investment and dropped its offer, so Bushnell could then (with a clean conscience, even) tell Midway that Bally wasn't interested, ending that business deal.

The fallout: Nolan Bushnell and Atari were left with a sure-fire hit on their hands. *Pong* conquered the arcades, giving Atari the capital and brand-name buzz to design and market home versions, eventually leading to the Atari VCS and the birth of home consoles. The rest, as they say, is history.





1972

1985

DIAL "M" FOR MOLYNEUX

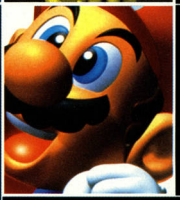
The moment: An executive at Commodore dials the wrong number, and Peter Molyneux runs with it.

The story: In the mid-'80s, Peter Molyneux was running a software company called Taurus, which was small, underfunded, and struggling. Then one day, out of the blue, European executives of Commodore Computers called him up and told him, "We'd really love you to put your product on to our machines. Could you come up for a meeting?"

At the time, Commodore was huge, marketing the highly successful Commodore 64 and getting ready to launch the Amiga (which would also become huge in Europe), so naturally Molyneux took the meeting. "He was talking about the Amiga and what a wonderful machine it was going to be and how it was going to be sold in the tons," Molyneux recalls. "He kept on saying how he expected our product to come on to the machine. He kept on calling it 'our product.' I said, 'Oh, yes. We will be very excited to do that. We'll put all of our resources into getting out our product.' Neither of us were talking specifically about what 'it' was."

As the meeting concluded, Commodore agreed to send five top-of-the-line Amigas to Molyneux's office, and that was when he realized something was wrong. "He phoned the wrong Taurus," Molyneux explains. "He had phoned us instead of *Torus*, a company that did network cards. All the time he thought we were going to put network cards on to the computer. Well, we weren't." Still, Taurus desperately needed the hardware, so after a brief "crisis of conscience," Molyneux kept mum and accepted the machines.

The fallout: The first "god game," *Populous*, and every groundbreaking and influential title Molyneux has worked on since. "That got us into computer games," he says, simply, "because if we hadn't had those Amigas, we would have never made the leap."



THE BIRTH OF MARIO

The moment: Nintendo loses the Popeye license.

The story: To Hiroshi Yamauchi, president of Nintendo Co Ltd., breaking into the American arcade market in the late '70s proved a baffling experience. His American office reported failure after failure. *Space Fever* did not attract business. Arcade owners did not like *Sheriff*. His American sales team was only able to sell 1,000 units of *Radarscope*, a game that was highly popular in Japan and that Yamauchi hoped would take America by storm. If he was going to establish Nintendo in the United States, he would need something that was not only original and fun, but also appealing to Americans.

Fortunately, Shigeru Miyamoto, a young college graduate with a degree in industrial design, whom Yamauchi hired in 1977, was working on a game based on an American icon: Popeye. This was to be Miyamoto's first game, but shortly after the game was scripted, King Features pulled the rights to its character.

Desperate, Yamauchi called Miyamoto to his office and told him to design a new game based on Miyamoto's own ideas. Ironically, years later, Miyamoto got the opportunity to create a game based on Popeye, but the character he created in Popeye's place became the symbol of videogaming around the world: a pudgy little carpenter originally named Jumpman, who later became a plumber named Mario.

The fallout: In 1981 *Donkey Kong* became an international hit, but more importantly, Shigeru Miyamoto was now officially a game designer, and on his way toward creating some of the most memorable characters, games, and genres the industry has known.

1981

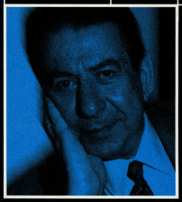
1954

THE GENESIS OF SEGA

The moment: David Rosen decides to start fixing Pachinko machines.

The story: At the end of his stint in the Korean War (in the Air Force), David Rosen returned to Tokyo to try out a business idea. At the time, occupied Japan required a photo ID card for almost everything — rice ration cards, railway cards, employment cards, etc. Getting photos, however, cost ¥250 and took three days. Starting in 1954, Rosen imported instant photo booths, charged ¥200, and made a mint. Looking to expand his business, he started repairing Pachinko machines (an obvious step, since he needed technicians to fix broken photo booths anyway). Some replacement Pachinko parts came back stamped SE GA, for Service Games, the name of his Pachinko operation, and one of the greatest arcade companies in history was born.

The fallout: As a result of his Pachinko operation, he began importing penny arcade games from the U.S. When duties became too high, he started producing games locally, eventually exporting them to the U.S. He sold out to Gulf & Western in 1969, and when Gulf & Western decided to liquidate the company in the mid-1980s, was part of the management buy-back that obtained Sega's Japanese operations. (Incidentally, the fact that an American started Sega is virtually unknown in Japan.)



1991

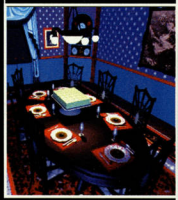
THE STAB IN THE BACK

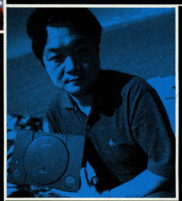
The moment: Nintendo cancels Sony's CD-ROM add-on for the Super NES.

The story: In the early '90s, right around the time Sega was readying the Sega CD, Nintendo approached Sony about making a similar CD-ROM device for the Super NES. Nintendo assigned top engineers to the project, and Sony assigned a skilled engineer named Ken Kutaragi to head the Sony side, which was finally announced in 1991 and dubbed "PlayStation."

Nintendo had even begun acquiring games for the new system, and U.S. executive Don James visited Virgin Interactive Entertainment to have a look at *The Seventh Guest*, a title that he felt had the potential to drive sales for a Nintendo CD-ROM device. Nintendo even translated tiny portions of the game into a cartridge to prove that the game could run on a Super NES and eventually purchased the console rights.

However, not long before the system was due to launch, Nintendo backed out of the project and left Sony holding the bag. The reasons for this have never been fully explained — lukewarm sales of Sega CD likely contributed to the decision, as did Nintendo's lucrative cartridge-based licensing model (a model that it continues to adhere to). Whatever the story, millions spent on R&D by Sony was down the drain.

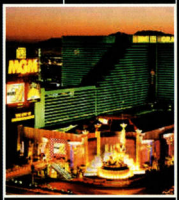




The fallout: According to outside reports, Sony president Norio Ohga was furious. So furious, in fact, that he not only gave Kutaragi permission to continue developing a CD-ROM-based game system, he also gave him permission to keep the original name. Eight years later, PlayStation is the fastest-selling console in history, and Nintendo is no longer the dominant force in gaming it once was.

1982

THE ODD COUPLE



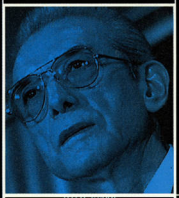
The moment: Sid Meier beats Bill Stealey at a game of *Red Baron*.

The story: General Instrument Corporation held company meetings in Las Vegas in 1982. While attending these meetings, a young programmer named Sid Meier met a salesman named Bill Stealey, and they struck up a friendship. Sid talked about ideas for making computer games, and Bill talked a lot about being a pilot. When a lecture they attended became too dull, they cut out and went to a videogame arcade in the MGM Grand hotel. There they found an Atari *Red Baron* machine.

Sid humiliated Bill. "I bet him a quarter for the next game that I could beat him at *Red Baron*," Stealey recalls, "so we played and I went first. I flew it like a fighter pilot, flying past enemy planes, then coming around and getting them. I beat the high score, then Sid went on and nearly doubled my score. He said that *Red Baron* was not a bad game, but that it had a couple of problems. Now, he had already shot my pride by beating me, so I said, 'OK, you make a better game and I'll sell it.'"

The fallout: The company they founded was MicroProse. Sid Meier went on to make quite a few games that were better than *Red Baron*, and Bill Stealey sold them worldwide. Their long string of hits included *Civilization*, one of the most enduring and influential games of all time.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY



The moment: Atari fails to return Hiroshi Yamauchi's calls.

The story: One of the lessons Hiroshi Yamauchi learned from *Radarscope* was that success in Japan did not necessarily translate into success in America. The 1983 launch of the Famicom was an unqualified success in Japan, but both Yamauchi and the Nintendo of America team doubted they had the marketing clout to launch the system in the United States. Deciding that it needed a partner to represent the Famicom in America, Nintendo turned to Atari.

At Yamauchi's suggestion, Nintendo of America vice president Howard Lincoln contacted Atari. When Lincoln suggested the partnership, he told Atari president Ray Kassar that he had been authorized to offer Atari a license to sell the Famicom internationally in every market except Japan. In exchange for allowing Atari to sell the system under its own label, Nintendo would receive royalties on every unit sold and have unlimited access to sell software for the system.

Kassar asked for a meeting, and Lincoln and Minoru Arakawa received the royal treatment during their visit to Atari. However, after three days of demonstrations and haggling over prices, back in Japan Yamauchi was getting annoyed with all the delays. Eventually, however, they struck a deal.

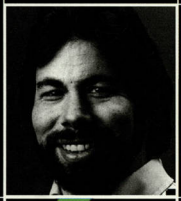
Unfortunately, the deal never went through. After a dodgy stock sale, Kassar left Atari in disgrace, and Atari turned down Nintendo's offer shortly after. Today, neither Lincoln nor Arakawa believe Atari ever really wanted the system, and some observers believe negotiations on Atari's part may in fact have been a simple delaying tactic — at the time, Atari was working on the 7800.

The fallout: Angered but not dissuaded, Yamauchi decided to have Nintendo of America launch the Famicom in the United States all by itself, a decision made even easier as Atari continued to fall apart over the next two years. Within 14 months of its nationwide launch in 1986, NES had sold more than a million units, and Nintendo was well on its way to becoming a household name and industry monolith. Atari Corporation never again had a home hit and folded in 1996.

1983

1976

VALENTINE'S DAY



The moment: Don Valentine learns the number of ham radio operators in America.

The story: Don Valentine is the dean of the Silicon Valley venture capitalists — his first deal in the business was financing Atari. A few years later, Atari founder Nolan Bushnell hooked Valentine up with Steve Jobs, a young Atari employee who at the time was designing a new computer with his friend Steve Wozniak. After some conversation, Valentine agreed to visit Jobs' garage and see the computer they were building.

He was not impressed by the technology. "He said, 'The technology doesn't matter as much as marketing considerations,'" says Wozniak. "I said we could sell a million units." Wozniak's logic? There were millions of ham radio operators, and his computer would be "bigger than ham radio." Although Valentine didn't quite approve of Wozniak's methodology, he did eventually buy into the company.

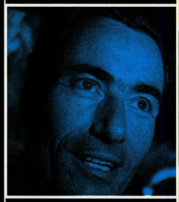
The fallout: Obviously, this was the beginning of Apple Computer, which would dominate the home computer market throughout the early '80s and become the first system many game programmers ever worked on.

THE SLAM DUNK

The moment: Trip Hawkins realizes he's six degrees of separation away from Dr. J.

The story: In 1984, Electronic Arts decided to experiment with using sports stars' images in its games. As it happened, then EA president Trip Hawkins had a friend who had a friend who knew the agent handling Philadelphia 76ers' basketball star, Julius "Dr. J" Irving. So Hawkins asked Irving's agent if his client would be willing to let EA use his name and likeness in a computer basketball game.

This was the first time a computer game company licensed an athlete's name. Mattel had licensed such sports organizations as the NFL and the NBA, but no one had ever approached the athletes themselves. Electronic Arts paid Irving a $25,000 fee for his name and image. "Anyway, he agreed to do it, making it possible for us to have Dr. J's agent ask Larry Bird's agent, 'Why don't you do it and on the same terms [as Dr. J]?'" says Hawkins. "Of course you'd be lucky to do anything like that today for even 10 times that amount," Hawkins laughs. The final game, programmed by Eric Hammond (now VP of product development at Segal), was called *Dr. J and Larry Bird Go One-on-One*.



1984

The fallout: The title was a huge commercial and creative success, drawing in droves of fans who had never before played a sports game, or any game. It launched EA's sports division (it wasn't too long before Trip made a call to John Madden's people), and it was the first step toward more realistic sports simulations. It also established the need for all sports games to have hot licenses. Today, sports licensing is almost as ubiquitous as the option screen, EA Sports is still number one overall in sports, and huge numbers of people who would never have been attracted to *EA's Little Pixel Men Go One-on-One* are dedicated sports gameplayers.

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1989

BLOCKED

The moment: Nintendo realizes the difference between a console and a computer.

The story: The rights to *Tetris* were carved up and sold off like a side of beef. Robert Stein of Andromeda originally bought the computer rights from creator Alexey Pajitnov, which he divided between Spectrum Holobyte and Mirrorsoft. Mirrorsoft then sold the American coin-op rights to Atari and the Japanese coin-op rights to Sega. In the meantime, Nintendo realized that owning the rights to *computer* versions didn't preclude it from securing the rights for consoles. The company figured that *Tetris* would make an ideal killer app for the Game Boy. Nintendo quickly swung a separate deal.

Atari, believing it had the right to make *Tetris* cartridges, made a wonderful NES version of the game, and was promptly sued. In court, Atari claimed that the NES was really a home computer since Nintendo had announced its intention to market a keyboard and disk drive for the system. Nintendo argued that the NES, like the Game Boy, was a console game machine. Nintendo won. Atari was forced to warehouse its superior version of the game. Some 263,000 Tengen (the brand Atari used for its cartridge games) *Tetris* cartridges were destroyed.

The fallout: The keyboard and disk drive never shipped for the NES (although the drive did ship in Japan). More importantly, however, no other single game has been more responsible for a system's success than *Tetris* has been for Game Boy. Still going strong after 10 years on the market, Game Boy is the most successful game platform in history and has crushed all competitors, superior and inferior. In Japan, Game Boy today accounts for the greatest portion of Nintendo's profits.

GAMEGATE

1993

The moment: U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman calls for committee hearings on videogame violence.

The story: There are actually three different versions that are told of the events that touched off the 1993 Senate hearings on videogame violence. The story told by several Nintendo employees is that the hearings happened as a result of Nintendo executives giving a speech decrying the Sega version of *Mortal Kombat* to the League of Women Voters. The only thing that can be verified about this account is that indeed a speech was delivered late that year.

The next account, told by some of the "victims" of the hearings, is that Nintendo intentionally brought the Sega version of *Mortal Kombat* and the Sega CD game *Night Trap* to the attention of Senator Lieberman with the hope of stirring up trouble. According to Lieberman, this is not the case. He admits that Senator Slade Gordon (Republican, Washington) did arrange a meeting for him with Nintendo representatives before the hearings, but he claims that he already had strong feelings about the Sega games before then. It is interesting to note, however, that Nintendo provided the video clips of *Night Trap* and *Mortal Kombat* fatalities used in the hearings.

Senator Lieberman's version of the story is that he became aware of the violence through one of his aides. "Bill Andresen, my chief of staff, and I were talking," Lieberman claims, "and he said to me, 'You know, I'm having this argument with my son Chris (who then I think was nine), about this videogame called *Mortal Kombat*, which I hear is incredibly violent. And I don't want him to buy it, but his friends have it, and he wants it.' I said, 'Let's get one of these things and look at it.' I was startled. It was very violent and, as you know, rewarded violence."

The fallout: No matter which account you accept, Senator Lieberman did hold a full-blown Senate hearing on videogame violence, which eventually resulted in the industry adopting a rating system.

Ironically, the industry's gore quotient soon went off the scale. With a rating system in place, developers felt free to create even more graphically violent games, and the trend has continued to this day.

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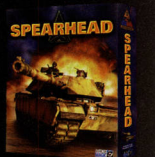

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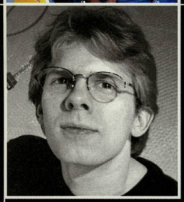
1990

DOOMED TO SUCCESS



The moment: John Romero realizes that most of his fan mail is from the same person using different names.

The story: The story is best told by the man who wrote those letters — Scott Miller of Apogee and 3D Realms: "Back in 1990, I was doing shareware games and doing well at it. But it was hard to run a company and make games, so I decided to recruit other authors whose games would be released through Apogee. I noticed that on Soft Disk, there were quite a few nice arcade games that would be perfect for the model.

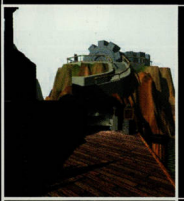
"I found out that John Romero was the author of one, *Pyramids of Egypt*. I also did stuff for Soft Disk, and I knew they were very strict and they wouldn't allow me to contact Romero, so I did a stealthy thing. I wrote him a bunch of fan letters, and he got those. Finally he figured out they came from the same person, and he wrote me a big letter calling me a psycho, but — he included his home address. I finally got him to call me, and I talked to him and Carmack, and they agreed to do *Commander Keen*. Five months later the game was released [using the Apogee model, where the first episode is given away, and people pay if they want additional levels]. It did really well, and they decided to start their own company called Ideas from the Deep, which later became Id.

"Soft Disk sued, arguing [correctly] that *Keen* was created on their computers. They wanted the id guys to stay for two more years, and they were resigned to doing it, but I got a lawyer, and the result was they did six more games for Soft Disk. Even then, *Wolfenstein* almost didn't happen because they still owed a game to Soft Disk. To give them time, Apogee actually developed that game, *Scuba Venture*. Then we had to promise them a lot of money, for the time, $75,000. A year later, of course, I was cutting them checks for $100,000 a month."

The fallout: Not only did id unleash *Doom* on the public, forever changing the direction of PC games, but Miller's "Apogee model" of shareware distribution helped the PC game industry grow much faster than it would have otherwise. The Apogee model has had a lasting effect: Few major PC games are published today without a robust demo being released prior to the ship date. With no approval structure to go through (as console games have to), PC demos act as a de facto approval process. If the demo sucks, no one buys the game. The final result is fewer disappointments for gamers, who can try before they buy — the original goal of shareware.

THE MYST OPPORTUNITY

1993



The moment: *Myst* is released on the right format at the right time.

The story: By 1990, brothers Rand and Robyn Miller had already published three kids' titles on the Mac. The HyperCard-driven products featured plenty to explore and see, but they didn't feature much in the way of plot or story. But the Rands wanted to do an ambitious project for an adult audience. Funded by Sunsoft (which, in one of the industry's greatest blunders, only contracted for the console rights), the pair took the better part of three years to deliver the game — a lengthy schedule, both then and now. The Millers named their game *Myst*. Released by Broderbund for Mac in 1993 and PC in 1994, it housed its hundreds of megabytes of rendered pictures on CD-ROM, a hot new storage format. At the time, CD-ROM drives, especially running under DOS, were creaky and unpredictable. A game that ran fine on one system would crash on another. *Myst*'s simple game engine (HyperCard), still-picture format, and leisurely pace, on the other hand, could run on almost anything, and hugely lucrative OEM deals soon put a copy in the box of almost every CD-ROM drive sold in the world. Even nongamers could get the hang of pointing, clicking, and flipping little levers and switches. The game remains on the Top 10 list to this day. (Ironically, console versions bombed — it's unclear if Sunsoft ever recouped its investment.)

The fallout: *Myst*'s crimes are legion. The mystical mumbo-jumbo that accompanies the storyline convinced some that any vague game premise would fly. The arbitrary and illogical puzzles continued the de-evolution of the adventure genre, and the game spawned countless imitations, like *Lighthouse* and *TimeLapse*, which not only sucked, but also clouded the waters for good adventures like *Last Express*. The game's high production values suddenly meant that any game released had to approach or surpass the *Myst* graphics standard, and development costs shot up, effectively closing the door on garage operations.

However, in the final analysis, the game may have done more good than harm. Without *Myst*, it is unlikely that today's healthy PC game scene would exist. *Myst* sold a lot of CD-ROMs and multimedia PCs, and its graphic splendor helped pave the way for the Super VGA graphics and 3D cards. The fact that it was the only game that reliably ran on DOS probably helped get the Windows gaming standard off the ground as well. Sure, *Myst* was a bad game, but it was also one that provided an important step in evolving the PC gaming world of today.

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1979

PARTY OF FOUR

The moment: Al Miller, David Crane, Bob Whitehead, and Larry Kaplan decide they want recognition from Atari.

The story: Atari, for reasons **Next Generation** will charitably chalk up to discredited management ideas, offered its star programmers and designers working conditions that had more in common with New York sweatshops than Silicon Valley startups. Programmers were underpaid, their work was never publicly acknowledged, and they generally were treated like, well, dirt. By 1979, four Atari 2600 programmers had had enough. "I put together a closed contract based on contracts I had read for writers and musicians," recalls Alan Miller. "At some point Larry, Dave, and Bob became aware of what I was doing, [and] the four of us became a group." Management balked at their demands, and the four walked out, reappearing as Activision, a company designed to produce software for the 2600. Atari sued, Activision won, and the third-party software system was born. Within a year, Activision had passed Atari to become America's fastest growing company.

The fallout: Today a world without third parties is inconceivable (except, maybe, on N64). Although lockout chips and licensing schemes keep the consoles from being completely open systems, the presence of competing software publishers means that developers no longer get routinely screwed, gamers get a wider variety of titles, and everyone is (a bit) more honest. Incidentally, Atari apparently failed to learn its lesson: The company's efforts to keep its home computers closed to third parties helped ensure the success of the (totally open) Apple II.

MORT D'ARTHUR

1985

The moment: Infocom releases Cornerstone.

The story: Infocom was formed in June 1979, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by a group of people who met at the M.I.T. artificial intelligence lab. The group's first commercial product, the seminal adventure game *Zork*, which enabled keyboard input in plain English, became an unqualified success. In the wake of its overwhelming popularity, the company released nothing except games for the next five years, solidifying the adventure game genre with sequels to *Zork* and other classics like *Planetfall*, *Trinity*, *Lurking Horror*, and *A Mind Forever Voyaging*.

Still, the lure of the lucrative business products market was strong, and in November 1984, the company announced Cornerstone, a relational database. Released in early 1985 for $495, the product tanked, and hard. "We hired a lot of people who were committed to Cornerstone's success," said game designer David Lebling (*Zork*, *Lurking Horror*) in 1990. "But if Cornerstone failed, they didn't care if it took the rest of the company down too." Which is exactly what happened. By September 1985, there were Cornerstone-driven layoffs, and in February 1986, the company had no choice but to merge with Activision.

The fallout: After a management shake-up, Activision became Mediagenic, and Infocom was shut down for good in mid-1989. Companies fail all the time, but Infocom's demise marked the end of an era, and may indeed have marked the effective end of a genre. The company's focus on interactive technology, not graphics, meant that its games were the most interactive and immerse adventure games ever. Even to this day, 10 years later, no commercial product has approached the depth of interaction that existed in *Arthur*, the last Infocom game produced in Cambridge. Most subsequent commercial adventure games have focused more on graphics technology than on interaction. Pundits who are pondering the moribund adventure genre need look no further than the death of Infocom for a good cause.

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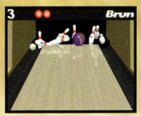

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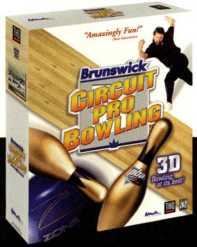

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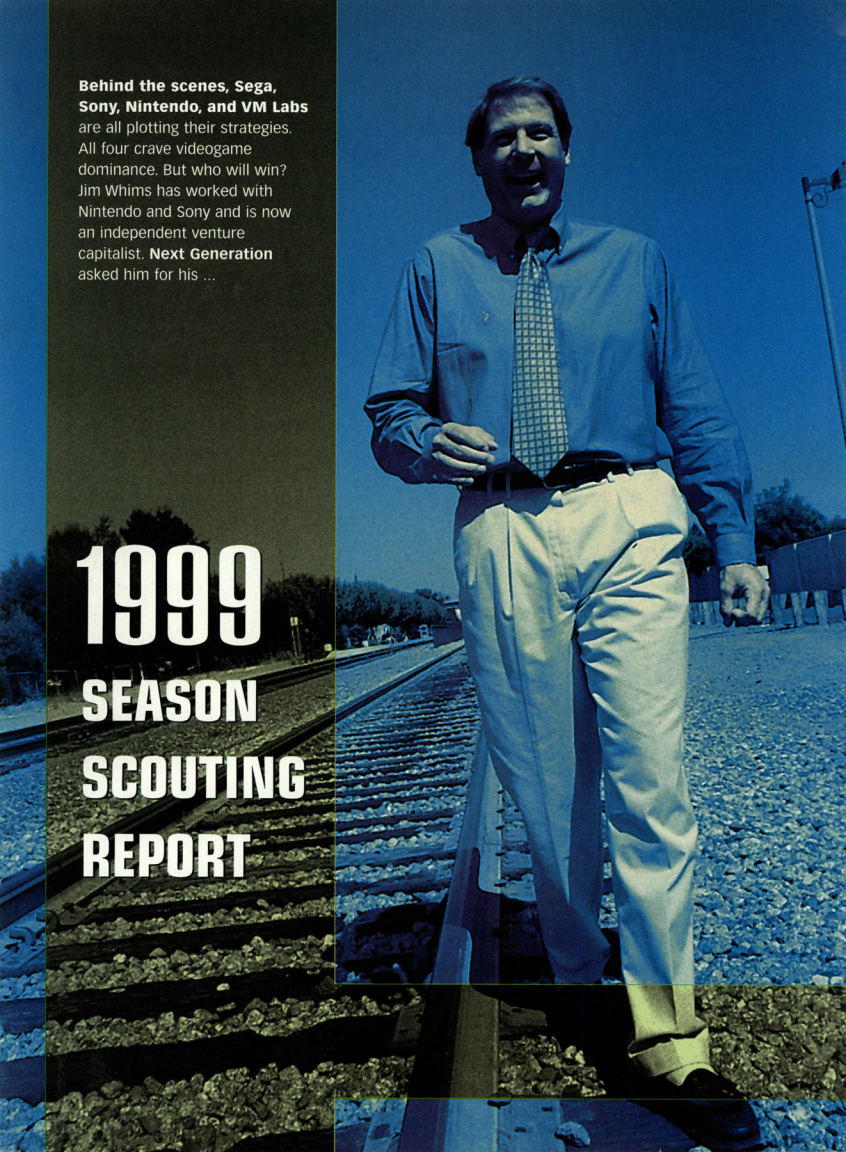
Behind the scenes, Sega, Sony, Nintendo, and VM Labs are all plotting their strategies. All four crave videogame dominance. But who will win? Jim Whims has worked with Nintendo and Sony and is now an independent venture capitalist. **Next Generation** asked him for his ...

1999 SEASON SCOUTING REPORT



As all eyes turn to Dreamcast's Japanese launch in November, it's not just gamers whose pulses are racing. The videogame business is worth billions of dollars, and in corporate boardrooms the world over, Sega's next move is being watched attentively. With Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, and Project X all jostling for position (and with Nintendo waiting on the sidelines), the battle for next generation dominance is going to be even more fierce than the scrap between PlayStation and Saturn. And the stakes have never been higher.

What's going on behind the scenes at these companies? What's keeping the executives at Sony awake at night? What scenarios does Sega fear the most? Jim Whims should know. As a co-founder of Worlds of Wonder, he helped Nintendo launch in the U.S. back in 1986. In 1994 he joined Sony Computer Entertainment to help launch PlayStation. Now he's an independent venture capitalist — it's his job to look at markets and predict the winners and losers. **Next Generation** met with him for some inside information.

Setting the scene

NG: PlayStation is still coming on strong — it almost seems that there's no need for a next generation of more powerful consoles. How many years does the PlayStation have left?

Jim: My guess is that '98 should be PlayStation's peak year in terms of hardware. As a result '99 will be the biggest year for software. There's a chance that with the launch of Dreamcast, Sony will get aggressive on price and break the sub-$100 mark in '99, which may allow it to be a big year for hardware. It kind of depends how aggressive Sony gets in response to Sega. But most people I talk to in the industry think this year is it.

NG: Rumors are rife in the U.K. that Sony will try to nail the coffin on Nintendo this holiday season by cutting PlayStation to £69 ($115). And if they're doing it in the U.K. ...

Jim: It's very possible. When we were putting together the business plan for PlayStation at Sony, "$99 in '99" was always something that we wanted to keep as a possibility.

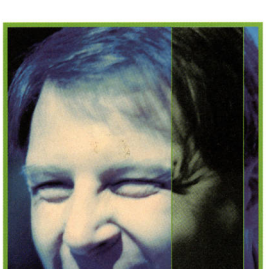
NG: What lessons can Sega, VM Labs, and Nintendo learn from PlayStation's success?

Jim: Sony did a lot of smart things. First, they cultivated the development community. They made PlayStation easy to use and easy to develop for, and they gave developers the right economic incentive. So they got everyone in the world to support them. Second, and this is key, Sony just flat-out outmarketed everyone in that business.

Look at what happened: Sega launched early with, for the most part, a parity product. There really wasn't that much difference between PlayStation and Saturn. Sega had great relationships with the trade and consumers. They had great arcade titles. And yet, somehow they failed. You tell me, how could they fail like that, get completely obliterated? It happened because they got outmarketed.

NG: Presumably, Sony had been following the fortunes of the videogame industry for a while. Did the 3DO story teach Sony any valuable lessons?

Jim: Oh yes. Before PlayStation launched, Sony did a lot of work on what happened at 3DO. It was pretty obvious that 3DO was a game machine, sure. But it was also an educational machine, it was a Photo CD player, it was a multimedia machine. They tried to be all things to all people. And usually when you do that you end up being nothing to everybody, and that's exactly what happened to 3DO. And so one of the very first things Sony realized was that they had to be laser-focused that PlayStation was the ultimate game machine.



NG: So PlayStation was just games. No Photo CDs, no multimedia, no education ...

Jim: While building up to the launch of PlayStation, we had executives from one of the U.S.'s big two educational companies sitting in our lobby. They were at Sony to try to get a license to ship some of their products on PlayStation. And I said to our people, "I don't mean to be rude, but I want these education people removed from the building. Be as nice and as gentle as you can and apologize. But whoever made this appointment — don't ever do it again."

We couldn't afford to let that 3DO thing happen to PlayStation. We had to be positioned as the ultimate game machine, and nothing else could distract from that. The only chance we had to unseat both Sega and Nintendo was to capture the opinion leaders, the "heat seekers." This is what Sony did with their advertising campaign. And it worked.

Is Sony scared of Dreamcast?

NG: OK, so you're saying that PlayStation won this time because all the hardcore gamers — the heat seekers — rallied around the system. Now let's talk about the next generation. As soon as Sega launches Dreamcast, PlayStation will no longer be the coolest console on the block. All the heat seekers will abandon PlayStation and move back to Sega.

How long can Sony delay before winning them back with PlayStation 2?

Jim: I'm sure that this is exactly the topic that takes up all the time at Sony's executive meetings in Japan. My guess is that Sony will wait and see how successful the launch of Dreamcast is and then decide its response. Sega's next move is what Sony's looking at. Certainly, they don't have to worry about Nintendo at their back anytime soon.

[3DO] tried to be all things to all people. And usually when you do that you end up being nothing to everybody, and that's exactly what happened to 3DO

NG: So although there's obviously plenty of life left in the original PlayStation, the launch of Dreamcast may force Sony to release PlayStation 2 early to keep the heat seekers. But when will it happen? What's your gut feeling?

Jim: The earliest would be the fall of '99. If I had to bet, I'd say it will be sometime in the year 2000. Unless Dreamcast is a big success, there'll be no reason in the world to launch PlayStation 2 before the end of the century.

Sony's in no real rush. The longer they wait with PlayStation 2, the more time it gives their engineers to trump Dreamcast's technology.

NG: Does Sony hold most of the aces right now?

Jim: Sony has got so much momentum. If they don't win the next generation, it'll be ... a tremendous defeat, a staggering blow.

What happened to Nintendo?

NG: How is Nintendo faring in the battle between PlayStation and Nintendo 64?

Jim: Nintendo has never recovered. First, they were a year late to the marketplace. Second, the games just weren't enough to compel the consumer to join in. Software has always been the key — in this business software sells hardware. Nintendo, of all companies, should know that.

NG: How did Nintendo stray so far off course?

Jim: I think they underestimated Sony. I hate to say this, but maybe they were a little overconfident when they made the shift from 8-bit to 16-bit. They let Sega walk in through the front door, and it then took them three to four years to catch up. I'm a little surprised that Nintendo didn't learn from these mistakes.

It must be very embarrassing for them to have given up their market leadership overnight. And it's got to be especially scary for them to have given it up to Sony. Because Sony's not going away.

NG: Do you think that deep in their hearts the people at Nintendo acknowledge that the fight with PlayStation has been lost?

Jim: The people I speak to, who are very close to this industry, [say that Nintendo] can live with their current market share. They may not be number one, but they're still a very profitable entity, and they're happy with that.

NG: They may claim to be happy. But do you believe them?

Jim: I don't think they have a choice.

They made some very big mistakes. First, they chose the wrong medium. If you look at the history of any industry, once there's been a change of medium, people just don't go backward. Over the years Nintendo's been so successful financially with cartridges that I can understand how hard it must be for them to give them up. But I don't believe that business model works well today.

NG: OK, but on the other hand, a lot of money has been wasted trying to push a new format when there was nothing wrong with the old one. Sony's experienced this with MiniDisc.

So was CD always the only real choice? Or is Nintendo's fatal mistake only clear with the benefit of hindsight?

Jim: It's easy to sit here and second-guess people, sure. But yeah, in retrospect, CDs would have served them a lot better in the long run.

But this wasn't the only mistake Nintendo made. Back at Sony I always said that as long as Nintendo leads with *Mario* we'll be fine ...

NG: That's a bold statement. Were you serious?

Jim: Yeah. *Mario* has been hailed as the "greatest videogame of all time," and I don't disagree with that, but its appeal is too young.

Before launching PlayStation, Sony really did its homework. It studied the existing market and learned that Nintendo had a great reputation for producing games of outstanding quality, but that these games were very junior in orientation. Their marketing was all cute and campy. As a result, it wasn't really cool to be associated with the Nintendo brand.

Sony discovered that the market for the next generation of consoles was going to be a lot older and more sophisticated than the 16-bit market. An older audience would decide which systems thrived and which systems would fail. This meant that Nintendo's traditional strengths — the *Mario* games, the *Zelda* games — became weaknesses.

NG: Why?

Jim: Little brothers always want what their big brothers have. So the worst thing you can do is target your advertising at the junior sector. Kids always want to reach up.

So when I looked at Nintendo's TV commercials early on, I sighed with relief and said, "We're safe." I knew PlayStation would be OK because Nintendo had stuck with *Mario* and given us the high ground, which is exactly where we wanted to be.

You only get one chance to make a first impression and Nintendo blew it. They've now been positioned as "the system for your little brother." That is the absolute kiss of death, and yet that is what they became.

NG: So what could Nintendo have done differently?

Jim: I think it would have been interesting had Nintendo taken a different tack and not launched with *Mario* but had taken their key design teams and launched with world-class sports products or world-class fighting products.

Sony has got so much momentum. If they don't win the next generation, it'll be ... a tremendous defeat, a staggering blow

NG: At the time, dropping *Mario* would have been extremely controversial.
Jim: People would have thought I was out of my mind, sure. I mean, if you're Nintendo and you're launching a new system, how do you not lead with the "best videogame of all time" and the single most successful product line in the history of the industry? Jeez, if I was at Nintendo four or five years ago and they asked me what games they should lead with and I'd said I wanted to lead with *John Madden* or *Ken Griffey* and not *Mario*, I'm sure they'd have had me removed from the building.

NG: Just like you asked the education people to leave PlayStation headquarters ...
Jim: Absolutely. It was Nintendo's own corporate culture that made them vulnerable.

It's tough for them. They've got to abandon the crown jewels, the signature products that led them to the promised land. They've got to tell themselves that these can't be their lead products anymore. We're talking about huge changes.

NG: Super NES was a late bloomer. GameBoy has proven itself to be a perennial. Can Nintendo 64 still flower?
Jim: No. It's over. They just can't. It'll help that EA's finally signed an agreement to work with them, but it's too little, too late.

NG: What's going on behind the scenes at Nintendo right now? When will Nintendo ditch Nintendo 64 and launch new hardware?
Jim: Nintendo is a company that is sitting on close to $5 billion in cash with no debt. To the best of my knowledge, they are still extremely profitable. As a result, they don't need to act hastily. They have a strong management team that [can] look long-term when making critical decisions. My guess is they see PlayStation as their true competition today and won't afford Sony the luxury of a one-year lead time to market the next time around. My best guess is expect a new hardware launch from Nintendo in late 2000 or early 2001.

Sega's last shot

NG: What's going on behind the scenes at Sega right now?
Jim: The only time they've been truly successful is with the 16-bit Genesis. They launched a year in advance of Nintendo's Super NES, they had better technology, they had killer applications, and they hit the right price. So they know what they're up against and what they've got to do.

Of course, after Genesis came Sega CD, 32X, and Saturn. In most businesses it's three strikes and you're out, but Sega's still hanging in there. They're trying to partner up with people like Microsoft, which I think they're going to need.

NG: With Sega CD, 32X, and Saturn all disastrous failures, has the Sega brand still got any value in the U.S.? Is anyone going to give them a chance?
Jim: They've disenfranchised the consumers and the trade, sure. But the trade [doesn't want] to have Sony with 65% or 75% market share, so the trade will give Sega every opportunity to succeed. The big question is, will the third parties give Sega an opportunity to succeed? Will they give Sega the best they've got? And, ultimately, will the management of Sega be strong enough to win back the gamers? Because they've clearly lost them.

Nintendo blew it. They've now been positioned as "the system for your little brother." That is the absolute kiss of death

NG: What would be on a shortlist of things that Sega has to achieve with the launch of Dreamcast if it's to stand a chance of competing with Sony?
Jim: They've got to re-engage with the heat seekers. It's critical that they get the opinion leaders at the consumer level back in their court.

If I were at Sega, I would work hard to position this product as more than just another videogame machine with improved graphics — try and offer meaningful online play, for example. It's mandatory that they have the full support of the third-party community. Lastly, they'd better be willing to invest a lot to build an installed base prior to Sony and Nintendo's entrance into the marketplace. Remember, there's only room for two players in this business.

The Project X wild card

NG: What about Project X from VM Labs?

Jim: I don't know enough about it to comment on it.

NG: Does this in itself speak volumes?

Jim: Well, yeah. If you're thinking about Project X, then you're dreaming. To get into this marketplace, now that Sony is so entrenched, and with Nintendo with $5 billion in cash and no debt, and with Sega partnering with Microsoft and NEC and others — you're looking at incredibly tough competition. We've always known that there is only room for one or two systems to succeed because you cannot compete with just 10% or 15% market share — the economic model just doesn't work this way. Ask Sega. All VM Labs has done is buy themselves a two-year hall pass.

If I were Nintendo, Sony, or Sega, I would make sure that I had an online strategy that made sense. Because that's what could shake it all up

NG: You don't think that this Trojan horse idea of sneaking a game machine into living rooms inside DVD players can work?

Jim: If you tell me that they're going to spend the same £100 million advertising on TV that Sega, Nintendo, and Sony will spend, then maybe they've got a chance. But I don't see anyone saying that.

The barriers to entry were always high in the hardware business, but they have quadrupled since Sony got in. If you were a strategic planner at one of these think tanks, you would look at the videogame market and go, "Damn, we're just a little bit too late. We're one iteration of hardware too late to get in." It's going to be incredibly expensive and incredibly risky to be in this business from this point on. And how successful can you be? Are you going to knock Sony out completely? No chance. Are you going to knock Nintendo out? Of course not. And then you still have to deal with Sega.

All I do all day is invest money. And believe me, this is the last place I'd put my money right now.

What if no one turns up?

NG: OK, so that's covered all of the contenders. But all this talk of who will win the next generation console market assumes that there will be one. As more people buy PCs because of falling prices and the lure of the Internet, and as PC games get better and better, isn't the demand for a next generation console dwindling away?

Jim: Sure, the true gamers — the heat seekers — know that if they really want a great gaming experience, the PC is the place to be. But fundamentally, PCs and consoles are used in very disparate ways. There's a whole social element that's not being taken into account here. There's the obvious answer: [Owning a console] costs a fraction of what it costs to own a PC, although that's changing. But if you look at the sociology of it, most people want to play their console product in a family room in a multiplayer environment. Most people who play their PCs sit in a small office by themselves.

NG: But if the heat seekers led the mainstream to PlayStation, won't they lead the mainstream to PC gaming now?

Jim: My guess is that there's a tremendous amount of dual usage. The true heat seekers will have both systems in the house. And they'll play killer app games on each system.

Besides, I think that [a lot of people] either can't afford a high-end gaming system or don't understand — and maybe don't want to understand — the technology behind it. I think that the two can still peacefully coexist.

The next generation machines are going to answer some of these questions for themselves. They're going to be fabulous game machines, and if Dreamcast does launch at $199, then you know that there's going to be a great piece of technology in that box for that price. Also, in terms of holding off the PC, online strategy is going to be key. Sure, it's all taking longer than anticipated to make a big impact. But if I were Nintendo, Sony, or Sega, I would make sure that I had an online strategy that made sense. Because that's what could shake it all up. That's the real wild card.

Shuffling the deck

NG: So why is there so much uncertainty? Why has no console manufacturer managed to maintain market dominance from one generation of hardware to the next?

Jim: Great question [laughs]. Every time there's a new iteration of hardware technology, it gives you a chance to shuffle the deck. Historically, the easy answer is that Nintendo blew it in the 16-bit business because they were late, and then they blew it again in the 32/64 business because they were a year late again.

Boy, I don't have a reason. But I think that the company that has the best chance of pulling this off is Sony. No one's been this big or this strong before.

NG: We've talked about marketing muscle, technology, and timing. But, ultimately, isn't it still just all about the best games and where to play them?

Jim: It's gone beyond that. The actual games are about 60% of the mix. If you had to point to any one thing, then yeah, software is the key. But it's really not that simple. Sega launched with great software, and Nintendo launched with what's been universally hailed as the best videogame of all time, but look at them now. NG

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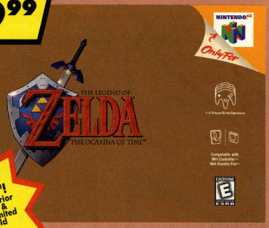

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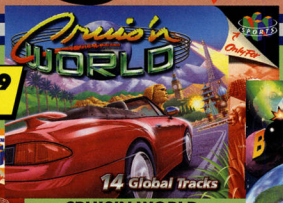

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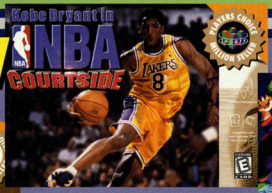

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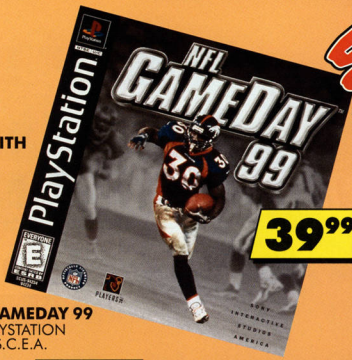

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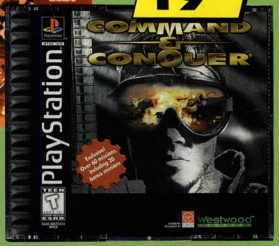

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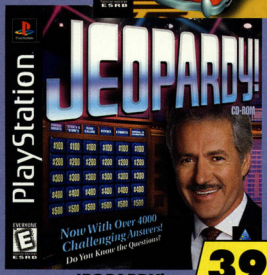

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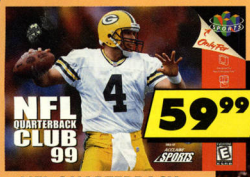

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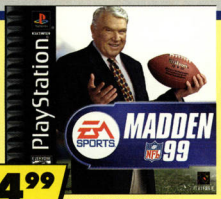

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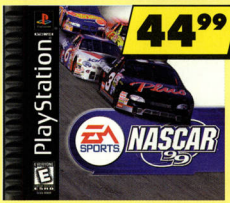

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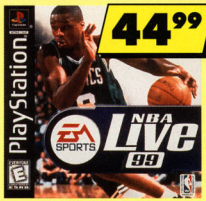

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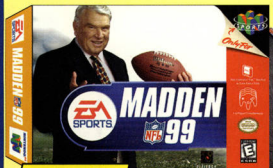

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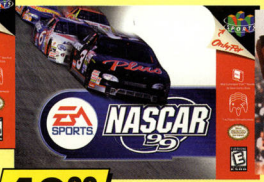

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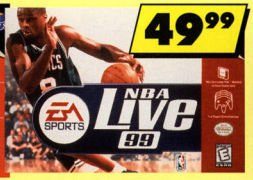

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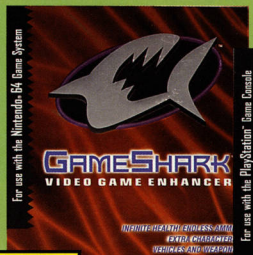

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Sometimes the second time around is the charm; other times, you should quit after a good run

FINALS

We are the authority

Next Generation's reviews have gotten bigger and better, and leaner and meaner at the same time. How's the new format working for everyone? Love it? Hate it? Need something more? Let us know.

★★★★★
Revolutionary
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high watermark.

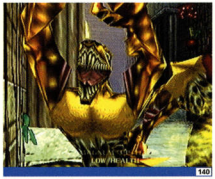
★★★★
Excellent
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★
Good
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★
Average
Perhaps competent — certainly uninspired.

★
Bad
Crucially flawed in design or application.

Denotes a review of a Japanese product.



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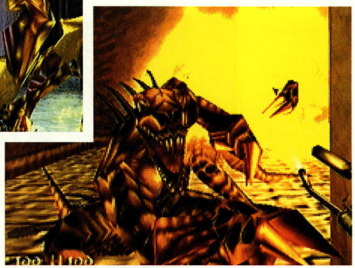
Iguana and Acclaim follow up their **smash N64** hit with a **much-improved sequel**

TUROK 2: SEEDS OF EVIL

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Iguana**



With an entirely new and improved 3D engine, *Turok 2* is free of the claustrophobic fog plane that hampered the original

In the story of Acclaim's fall and rise, it's fair to say that one title marked the beginning of a new, more positive chapter (with the buying public, if not all critics). Developed by Iguana, last year's *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* hammered home the message that things really were changing within the beleaguered company.

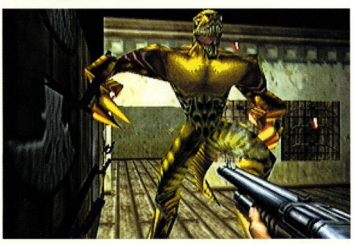
It also proved to the world that Nintendo was not the sole master of the sparkling-new 64-bit technology. The deserved wave of adulation that surrounded Rare's *Goldeneye* almost drowned out all of *Turok*'s achievements, but in truth, the two games were very different. Where Bond brought tight structure to the first-person genre, Iguana's title was all about detailed and atmospheric environments — and a pretty over-the-top arsenal.

Picking up where *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* ended, the sequel builds on the accomplishments of the first game. The plot features a new foe, the Primagen. Assisted by his new (female) sidekick, Adon, the heavily armed hunter must battle through six levels, finally battling the Primagen in its base. Iguana seems to have no desire to re-create the jungle world of the original game, instead creating a series of notably varied locations.

The most striking thing about *Turok 2* is the vast improvement made to the game's 3D engine. After wading through the dense fog of the original, the open layout of *Turok 2*'s first level is a nice surprise. As before, *Turok*'s all about atmosphere — the feeling that there are unseen events occurring in a larger world. Later levels confirm that its six stages contain far more variety of both visual style and types of enemies than comparable PC titles, which have relatively limitless storage facility. From somber swamps to neon-lit alien bases, the artistic range is remarkable. However, the ambitious nature of certain areas leads to inevitable slow-down, particularly when more than one attacker is on screen.

Aside from getting the commitment from its team to create a significantly expanded sequel, Iguana has been able to create the varied set of locales through two key additions. First off, *Turok 2* has become the first game to utilize a 32MB cartridge (the original occupied only 8MB). The game is also able to run at a crisp 480x360 resolution for players lucky enough to find an N64 RAM pack.

New levels include a number of sub-missions, with the player having to save various captured humans (including some sickeningly cute children — and no, they can't be



Adding immense weight to the atmosphere (and surprisingly for a cart-based game), *Turok 2* includes a fair number of voice samples

shot). Other tasks players have to accomplish include obtaining satchel charges and using them to destroy ammo dumps, or riding a heavily armed dinosaur.

Significant advances have been made in enemy AI, a feature that *Goldeneye* was lauded for; yet, stacked against Iguana's reptilian and insectoid foes, *Goldeneye* now seems simple. While basic enemies will dodge and flee when attacked, others can hide behind objects. In one near-comic case, a creature crouches behind a box, only popping up to throw explosives toward the player. Trying to round its flank merely results in the creature circling back around to the other side, leaving no option but to try and pick it off when it breaks cover — much as you might against a human foe.

Inevitably, certain aspects of *Goldeneye* have been absorbed by Iguana, with *Turok's* revamped armory boasting two sniper weapons. Coupled with the new 3D engine, this brings a different pace to the game, with the player able to pick off distant targets with either the Tek arrows from the original game or the new Pulse rifle. However, where Bond became fixed to the spot in sniper mode, Turok retains total freedom of movement — aside from being temporarily unable to jump. Other weapons retain the cinematic blockbuster quality of the original, with a new high mark in questionable violence set by the "Cerebral Bore," which fires a drill-like dart into enemies' skulls, resulting in showers of red and gray matter pluming from their heads. In addition, it's now possible to dismember foes, either through judicious aiming of heavy weapons or by utilizing a knife-edged boomerang. Also of note is the flamethrower, which has easily the best graphic realization of flames yet seen in a videogame.

Many of the needlessly tricky platform elements of the original have been downplayed or eliminated while the first-person experience has been strengthened. *Seeds of Evil* is truly wonderful

Although there still aren't quite enough creatures around, the ones that are there show devious AI — quality has definitely overcome quantity

Turok 2's multiplayer modes do not disappoint either, with a dozen multiplayer levels to choose from and four players supported. Those *Goldeneye* critics who thought the inability to drop from ledges detracted from the game will be pleased to note that *Seeds of Evil* has no such restrictions.

Although clearly a significant advance over its predecessor, this sequel isn't without faults. As with most games in the first-person genre, extended stints of the one-player game can grow repetitive. Also, the later stages of the game are very tough, a result of the aggressive enemy AI and fiendish level design. The moments of "calm before the storm," which are found in earlier sections of the game, are missing from later stages, which reduces the impact of major events.

Overall, *Turok 2* is a real blast. The technical, AI, and design advances over the original make it an absolute must-have.

Rating: ★★★★★

Though at times too cute **for its own good,** this game **definitely reaches PlayStation's** technical pinnacle

SPYRO

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **SCEA**
Developer: **Insomniac Studios**

There's no doubt that *Spyro* is one of the most technically advanced games on PlayStation. In fact, if anything, Insomniac has finally answered the question: Could *Mario 64* have been done on PlayStation? The answer, "yes."

Spyro, the last of the dragons not frozen into crystal statues by Gnasty Gnort, is also the youngest of the dragons and pretty much the cutest character to hit PlayStation yet. He takes on the quest of rescuing the other dragons in several beautifully rendered, free-roaming 3D worlds. The game mechanics are pretty standard 3D platform fare: You can make Spyro run, jump, glide, breathe fire, and do a dashing charge, and the control is very tight. Especially with an analog controller, moving Spyro around soon becomes second nature.

The main problem with *Spyro* is that despite the many different enemies, all with very colorful personalities and specific weaknesses to figure out, there is very little in the way of what might be considered puzzle solving. Levels consist primarily of picking up gems and finding where the dragons are hidden. While this entertains for a while, protracted gameplay becomes mildly tedious and repetitive. The only real puzzles to be found consist of figuring out which cliffs to jump off of to get to a specific ledge, so once you know what to look for, it's not that tough.

The levels in *Spyro* are beautifully modeled and present a fully realized fantasy world

The game features a lot of visual variety — this is arguably the best-looking game ever released for the system

However, it's pretty clear this game was intended for younger audiences. Everything in Spyro's world is bright, colorful, and responsive. If Spyro shoots a jet of flame at a tent, for example, it will burn up and show the soldier cowering inside. Enemies will chat with each other until Spyro comes into range, and even signposts can be knocked around, causing gems to fall to the ground. This kind of environmental interactivity is everywhere and actually surpasses all other efforts to date. It turns the game into an "interactive toy" of sorts, and no doubt players will want to run around and see what Spyro can do in each land.

Sound in the game is mixed. All of the dragons have distinctive voices, and they give Spyro clues when rescued. Spyro's voice, however, is perhaps one of the greatest blemishes in the game and does little more than pull the player right out of the action. The music is also a questionable mix of different styles, which serves to distract the player from the game instead of enhancing the experience.

Overall, *Spyro* is a solid 3D platformer that won't disappoint but won't exactly challenge. However, given that it's aimed squarely at a younger audience, it's tough to fault Insomniac for creating a game that's approachable — especially one that's such a technical showcase for the system.

Rating: ★★★★

Despite the large areas, there isn't a trace of slow-down

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It doesn't **look that great** and has a **few problems**, but somehow, **it's fun as hell**

RAINBOW SIX

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Red Storm**
Developer: **Red Storm**

Terrorists, apparently unaware of your presence, continue to ponder the mysteries of life. The graphics engine doesn't display much draw-in, but also doesn't feature much detail or variety

It's a little ironic that Red Storm Entertainment is one of the first companies to release a licensed game around the same time as the product it's licensed from. It seems equally absurd that a Tom Clancy hardback makes better game fodder than, say, *Independence Day*. But that is definitely the case. *Rainbow Six* is, for all its faults, thrilling stuff.

Technically, the game is a bit disappointing. Once installed, you'll find it populated with bland figures and insipid textures. Sound effects are jarring and repetitive, and the graphics engine seems incredibly dated by current standards (*Unreal* being the current state of the art). And it is fair to compare it with current PC action games because strategic pretensions aside, this is a first-person shooter.

The game uses multiple scenarios to advance the plot, but the basic theme is borrowed from the novel. You control the actions of a team of elite commando counter-terrorism agents, very much in the mold of the British SAS. Much of the game involves planning missions and then actively storming various locales, from ships at sea to Spanish haciendas. What they all have in common is that they're filled with bad guys and civilians. Some need saving and some need killing.

The mission planning can be fun but requires somewhat convoluted mapping. The real meat of the game is the first-person exploration and execution. You can choose to either watch a group of preprogrammed soldiers carry out your plan, or physically control one of them, using your *Quake* skills to your best advantage. Running around in a *Quake*-style frenzy will, however, end in death. Stealth is paramount since a single shot can kill you, and death is swift and usually unexpected.

Still, for all its allusions to realism, *Rainbow Six* is no more lifelike than *Quake*. For example, characters can't look around corners. Instead, their whole body has to peek around, leaving them open to anyone with a gun who might be around a sharp bend. Also, your group of crack-commandos doesn't seem to understand the concept of backing up, and will block your path if you have to turn suddenly in a narrow corridor.

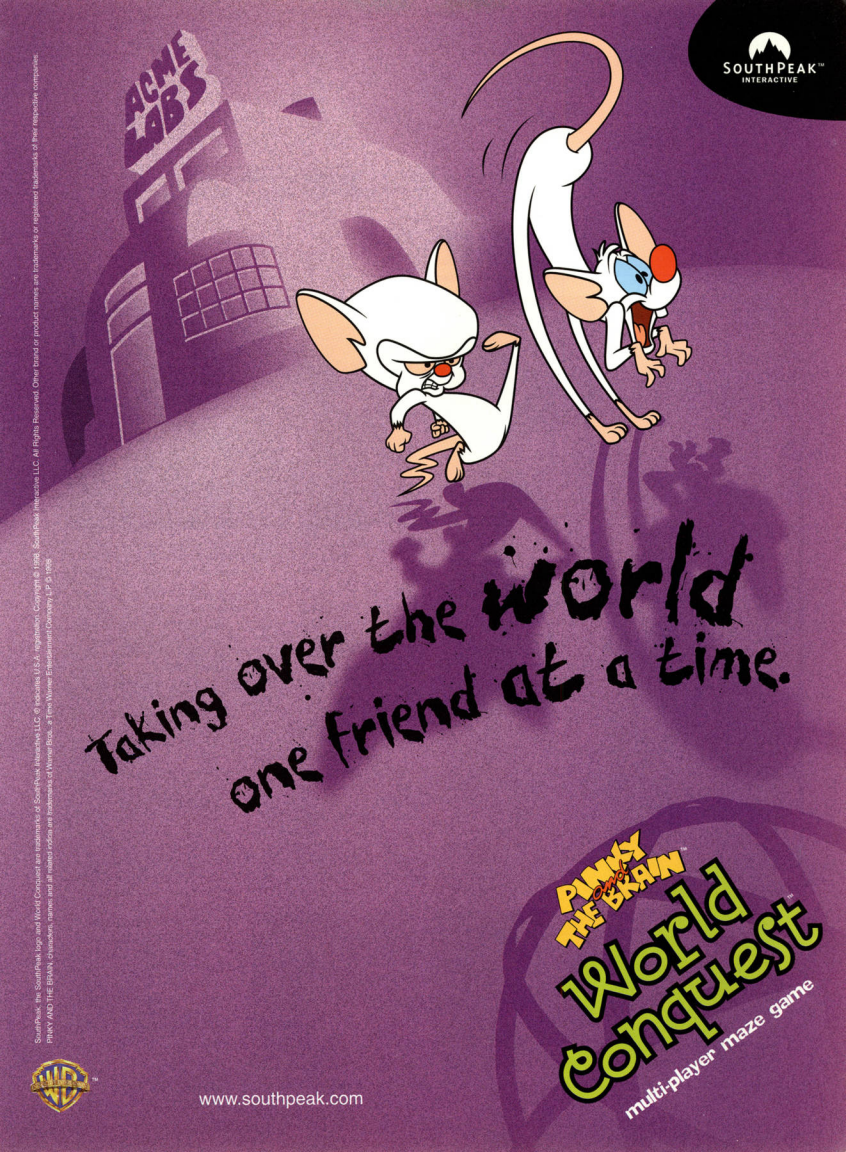
Weapons do add realism, however. You can select a small arsenal for each team member at the start of each mission, and the choices include grenades, flash-bangs, and a huge assortment of real-life guns. These can all be employed strategically, and rolling a grenade into a room full of unwary scumbags is a rewarding experience. Flash-bangs should be used with caution, however, since they're just as likely to blind you.

In multiplayer, things get even more scrappy. The presentation is beyond primitive. When a mission is complete, the screen simply blanks out, to be replaced with a tally of scores rather than a clear statement of victory. It would be nice to be able to identify the player you just saved or the player that just killed you, but that simply isn't an option.

In the end, *Rainbow Six* takes small steps into new territory, succeeding admirably. A brave attempt at something new and an overall fun experience.

Rating: ★★★★

Outside the embassy, you find yourself dealing with panicked civilians, but terrorists lurk inside those gates



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Good news for fans of this **arcade smash**:
The PlayStation version is **actually good**

NFL BLITZ

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Midway**
Developer: **Midway**

Since the receivers usually are setting themselves up for a world of hurt when they go for the ball, sometimes it's better just to run for it

After the dismal pile of garbage that was the PlayStation conversion of *San Francisco Rush*, we had little hope for the port of *Blitz*, which was originally written for the same Obsidian-based arcade hardware. Imagine our surprise when we got *Blitz* in the office — despite some loss of graphic quality, it was an almost perfect conversion.

Blitz is, at its heart, a no-penalties game of football. The normal game structure is relatively the same as real football, with four downs and lots of touchdowns and free points. Where the game deviates from the actual sport is in its high-action content and sheer amount of violence. Much like *NBA Jam* before it, *Blitz* takes a complicated sport, simplifies the controls so that anyone can play, and then ups the intensity so that every game is just a pure rush of excitement and violence.

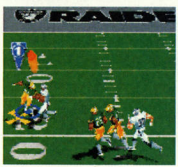
To add to the atmosphere, the game has an announcer who excitedly yells and screams, spewing comments about the onscreen action, as well as a hefty amount of trash talking from the players themselves. The audio isn't all voices, though. Crank out some of the more spectacular tackles with a subwoofer on and you're sure to keep the neighbors awake at night. The graphics are solid and represent the arcade well, although the loss of resolution does hurt a little bit.

Where the home version differs from the arcade game is in its added options. Now there is a season mode, which makes single-player a little more bearable, as you can play through to the Super Bowl instead of just playing random teams like in the arcade version. Also, there is a tournament mode that allows up to eight players compete in ladder-style elimination, which can be stored on a memory card. This is perfect for determining the office champion without everybody being in the same place at the same time.

The PlayStation version of *Blitz* boasts several "movies" that can be unlocked by defeating certain modes in the game. Typical of Midway, however, they aren't really exceptional and only minimally add to the package. The game supports the analog stick on the Dual Shock to great effect, but strangely enough, the rumble feature has been very underutilized, and most of the time you won't even know that it's turned on. There are also some slight load times that players will have to deal with, but they really are minimal (just compare this to *NFL Xtreme*) and should only bug the most impatient of gamers.

The only real knock we have on *Blitz* is that, like the arcade version, the lack of play variety can get stale after a while, especially in single-player mode. Despite that one problem, *Blitz* offers the most intense game of football you're likely to find at home and makes a worthy purchase.

Rating: ★★★★



***NFL Blitz* is all about abuse, so don't hesitate to pound your opponent a couple of times after he's been laid out**

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The Sony dynasty continues as *GameDay* trounces all comers and remains **the PlayStation football champ**

NFL GAMEDAY '99

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **989 Sports**
Developer: **Red Zone Ent.**

Ever since the first *GameDay* scared EA Sports' *Madden* game off the store shelves for a year, Sony's masterpiece has repeatedly proven its dominance over the competition both in technology and gameplay. The adaptation of polygonal graphics for *GameDay '98* made a great game even better. Had 989 Sports (formerly known as Sony Interactive Studios) merely released an updated rehash of last year's game, it still would have been the best PlayStation football game available. Instead, the development team re-examined every facet of the game and improved upon it. The result? A revelation.

The most noticeable improvement in *NFL GameDay '99* is the graphics. Basically, each player model consists of more than 300 polygons or about double the amount per player in last year's game. The amazing part is that despite the demands of pushing twice as many polygons, the game still moves with a speed and fluidity that shames its rivals. A new default camera view setting called "GameDay Cam" has been added to allow the player to enjoy the graphical detail by seamlessly zooming in or out as the action indicates.

***GameDay*'s graphics are in a league of their own. Each player in the game boasts 300-plus polygons — almost twice as many as last year**

Let it be said once and for all that *GameDay '99* is the best football game available

More player animations have also been included to give the game a more lifelike atmosphere. A number of these animations are the requisite big play/touchdown celebrations, but one in particular surprised and impressed us: At one point, a running back grabbed his leg and continued limping forward after he had blown his hamstring on a play.

There was always one area that *Madden* seemed to have an advantage in over *GameDay*: presentation. But *GameDay* clearly surpasses its competitor for 1999. The game commentary provided by Dick Enberg and Phil Simms is the closest thing to an actual TV broadcast yet exhibited in a videogame, and the dynamic camera angles and cut scenes only reinforce the televisionlike experience. It would have been very easy for these "filler" elements to become annoying, but 989 managed to balance their length and frequency perfectly to prevent any detraction from gameplay.

As for gameplay, what's there to say? It was just about perfect last year, and this year's installment still has Total Control Passing. There are also more plays and realistic touches to make the game incrementally more enjoyable. Plus, the AI has been tuned and is now even greater than before. There is really no room for criticism of *NFL GameDay '99* — it provides everything a gamer could possibly want from a console football title.

Rating: ★★★★★

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The series that once defined a genre **continues** its long, depressing slide **into oblivion**

MADDEN NFL 99

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **EA Sports**
Developer: **Tiburon Ent.**

In the glory days of 16-bit gaming, *Madden* was the be-all and end-all of football videogames. But the 32-bit era hasn't been so kind to the venerable series, with its Sony rival *GameDay* consistently besting it in terms of graphics and gameplay. Last year, *GameDay* actually outsold, for the first time, what should have been a firmly entrenched *Madden* franchise. EA Sports' response was to develop polygonal graphics (*GameDay* had them last year) and to make the gameplay more "accessible."

Going to a polygonal engine was basically a necessity for EA considering the success that *GameDay* had with it. However, this year's *Madden* graphics fare miserably compared to last year's *GameDay* graphics (let alone this year's). Of course, as expected for an EA game, the motion captured animation is excellent, and we'd venture to say that when it comes down to minute details, *Madden*'s graphics are a tad more accurate and realistic than *GameDay*'s. Watch a wrap tackle in slow motion on both games and the difference is evident. Trouble is, as great as these player animations are, there was apparently no concern about the effect that this myriad of motion captures would have on actual gameplay.

The players are polygons this year, but the overuse of motion capture is an argument for going back to sprites

Still screenshots can't do the game justice in conveying how appallingly awful the overall experience really is

As good as *Madden 99* looks in screenshots, the experience of playing and controlling the game is thoroughly disappointing. Football is a game that relies on instantaneous reactions and on-the-fly adjustments, but in *Madden 99*, the player is constantly confronted with motion captured sequences that must finish before the next command input can be executed. Compared to *NFL GameDay '99*, the action in *Madden* seems mired in molasses, and the player never feels directly connected to the game or even particularly in control.

Madden 99 is flawed in just about every other gameplay aspect as well. The detached control is the big complaint, but a limited selection of formations and plays won't ingratiate the title to hardcore sports gamers. The addition of a new one-button interface mode is meant to broaden the game's appeal to novice gamers, but it seems as if EA is surrendering the traditional core football market to the more accomplished and in-depth *GameDay* series.

It can be argued that this year's *Madden* was better than last year's, but the fact remains that compared to its main competitor, the gaming experience has become more mediocre. The gap that had existed between the *GameDay* series and the *Madden* series can now only be described as Grand Canyon size.

Rating: ★★

Lo, how the mighty have fallen — and fallen, and fallen ...

Rigor Motorist

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Some series just **keep getting better** and better — this is **one of them**

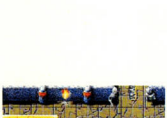
WARLORDS III: DARKLORDS RISING

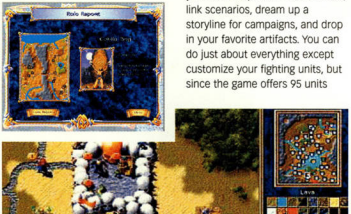
Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Red Orb**
Developer: **SSG**

The epic fantasy landscape of *Warlords* has grown. Building on last year's award-winning *Warlords III: Reign of Heroes*, Red Orb and the Strategic Studies Group have expanded the strife-torn feudal world to give us *Warlords III: Darklords Rising*.

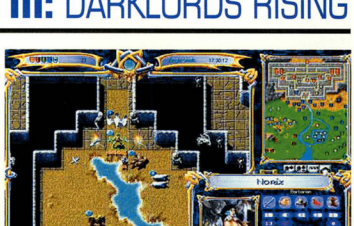
A turn-based game of strategy and conquest, *Darklords* is more than an add-on but less than a sequel. All the old battles and scenarios from *Heroes* are present in *Darklords*, but the game is also packed with new goodies. There are four fresh campaigns, 15 new stand-alone scenarios, twice as many spells, 31 additional army units, nine new multiplayer games, five spanking new heroes, and a game editor to create your own maps, campaigns, and scenarios.

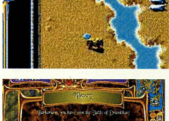
The game editor is the most exciting addition. It's powerful and fairly easy to use. You can fashion your own maps with new tile sets, link scenarios, dream up a storyline for campaigns, and drop in your favorite artifacts. You can do just about everything except customize your fighting units, but since the game offers 95 units already, that's no big deal. It's easily one of the best, most full-featured editors on the market.





Fan-authored maps have long been a *Warlords* tradition, and this latest package includes a surprisingly full-featured terrain editor





Less than a sequel, much more than a simple upgrade, *Warlords III* is everything a strategy wargamer needs

If you prefer to stick with the original game, the plot is simple. It's been a thousand years since *Heroes*, and now Lord Bane and Lord Sartek, the Dark Horsemen of Death and War, are back to do their worst. But you don't need any of that. All you need to remember is that each map is filled with enemies and a few allies. Your job is to eliminate the enemies and find the allies.

That makes the game sound pretty basic: Kill the bad guys, capture forts, build your forces, protect your hero. But it isn't that easy. Even if you find yourself sneering through the tutorial, it doesn't take long to get hooked. The next thing you know, you're up late at night, still playing.

And you'll catch on quickly. You'll learn to back your heroes with strong armies because once your hero dies, defeat is inevitable. And you'll pay attention to the special report screen. All kinds of reports on sites, cities, armies, mana, ruins, spells, and other goodies are available if you call them up. Some of the information they offer can spell the difference between success and failure. You'll also discover the value of balanced forces. If you choose only the weaker, cheaper armies, you'll go down in flames quickly. If you rely on stronger, costly armies, you'll spread yourself too thin.

Whether playing the game as designed or creating your own worlds, you'll find *Darklords* quite mesmerizing. Old-timers should feel right at home with this version, and newcomers will quickly become enchanted.

Rating: ★★★★

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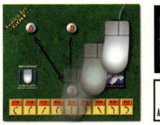

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GT 64

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Infogrames**
Developer: **Ocean**

GT 64 is not the worst racing game ever made, but it's not far from it. Things are bad right from the start, given there are a whopping three tracks to pick from. After choosing a car, players can modify it in relatively simple ways that have very little effect on actual gameplay — you're just as likely to skid with soft tires as with hard ones, and the game moves painfully slowly no matter what kind of power you put under the hood.

Once on the track, the true horror settles in: a slow, barely acceptable frame rate and sloppy control, made even worse by the droning engine sounds (there isn't even any in-game music). The control is similar to *Daytona USA* in that powerslides are the rule, but unlike AM2's masterpiece, which features tight control and a sense of speed, *GT 64* feels like piloting a watermelon over an ice rink. The track design doesn't help, as tracks are made up of nothing but right angles and U-turns. Just going straight for a few seconds feels like an accomplishment, and the computer opponents enhance the feeling of helplessness as they glide effortlessly around the track. On the bright side, the frame rate doesn't take a hit when racing against opponents, locked at a rock-steady 20fps. Pathetic.

Overall *GT 64* lacks both the technique of a technical racer and the speed of a fast racer — in fact, it lacks just about anything you can think of.

Rating: ★

Competing against the AI cars is much less of a challenge than actually doing a lap without smashing into the walls

VIRTUAL CHESS 64

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Titus**
Developer: **Titus**

The typical 3D view looks fairly nice, but the camera controls like a dog, and hardcore chess players will probably pass

It's hard to make any really negative comments about *Virtual Chess 64* because it pretty much does exactly what it advertises: it plays a darn good game of chess.

Forget about the gimmicky battles that make the antiquated ones found in the classic *BattleChess* look like incredible feats of cinematic excellence, or the mediocre 3D graphic sets that can only be used with the most primitive and frustrating of camera controls — turn these "features" off and you have a rather thorough and competent simulation. There are actually plenty of features hidden in this title that make it worthwhile for chess players. First of all, for amateurs, there is a tutorial mode that can walk you through the basics of the game all the way up to some of the more complex maneuvers and strategies. For those who like to sit and analyze a game, it's possible to set up a mid- or end-game scenario and then play it out against the computer AI.

Believe it or not, the AI is actually quite good, and unless you're a chess master in the vein of Kasparov or Karpov, the game will probably have a level of difficulty that will suit you. Beginners can even set the AI up so that it purposefully makes stupid moves.

There is also a strange array of seemingly useless multiplayer features included in the game. Frankly, we honestly can't foresee a situation where we have three friends over and want to play four separate games of chess simultaneously, but if it happens, heck, now we're prepared. Overall, if you turn off all of the gimmicks, this is a pretty decent chess game. Nothing spectacular, though.

Rating: ★★★

BATMAN AND ROBIN

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Probe**

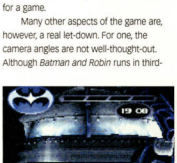
OK, we were wowed by *Turok 2* from the "new" Acclaim, but it seems there's still some life left in the "old" one. Sure, *Batman and Robin* is an improvement over the other junk Acclaim has thrown at us in the past, but in the end, a few bright spots can't make up for the fact that, well, it's still pretty bad.

Following the movie closely, the game gives players (mostly) nonlinear freedom to explore Gotham City for clues to what Mr. Freeze and Poison Ivy are up to, all while the game clock ticks down in real time. Later, players must combine and analyze different clues in order to discover where and when the villains will strike next — all in all, not a bad structure for a game.

Many other aspects of the game are, however, a real let-down. For one, the camera angles are not well-thought-out. Although *Batman and Robin* runs in third-person with a floating camera, fixed camera angles were added to provide a cinematic feel. Unfortunately, the sudden jumps in angles are a huge hindrance to control, making even a simple task like walking across a room difficult. And that's not all: Enemy AI is extremely basic; controls, which involve using all the shoulder buttons to toggle things like running, fighting, and dodging, quickly become complicated; and the driving sequences are flawed due to unrealistically responsive controls and horribly low render distances.

We're going to be charitable and assume this was a game Acclaim was contractually obligated to release and quietly ignore it. While not in the same league as previous Acclaim licensed horrors, *Batman and Robin* is still pretty damn horrible.

Rating: ★★



***Batman and Robin* is better than some movie tie-ins, but still isn't good**

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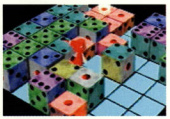
DEVIL DICE

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **THQ**
Developer: **SCEI**

A puzzle game that, amazingly enough, has nothing to do with *Tetris*, *Devil Dice* pits you against an opponent in a ring with die that must be maneuvered to match up numerically. By connecting, say, two twos or six sixes, the dice will disappear and rack up the score.

The game illustrates its cleverness in four modes: Trial (continuous puzzle solving), Battle (you against one to four other humans or the AI), Wars (you against a handful of opponents vying for high points), and Puzzle (solve the puzzle in limited steps). Each provides intelligent yet simple fun that's hard to come by these days. This puzzler is as addictive as they get.

Since the game really doesn't boast anything other than great gameplay (what else does it need?), the simplistic polygons and funny little devils (little folk in devil suits) who run across the die serve their purposes perfectly. And the looping, pop-ish techno, often mixed with instrumental rap, funk, and even ragtime, ranges from mellow to funky, and is so surprisingly good that it's worth listening to on its own.



***Devil Dice*'s Battle mode is hectic, but rewarding**

THQ's puzzler may be too hard for some (a handy techniques and tips section is built in for those folks), but its learning curve is just right for any player who's been around the puzzle gaming block once or twice. *Devil Dice* comes highly recommended.

Rating: ★★★★

HEART OF DARKNESS

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Tantrum/Interplay**
Developer: **Amazing Studio**

Five years ago a revolutionary game was announced for the then brand new "next generation" systems. Promising an interactive cartoon, *Heart of Darkness* got a lot of hype — then vanished from sight. So, after all this time, is this mythical game any good? Well, yes and no. *Heart of Darkness* does seamlessly mix animation and gameplay, but unfortunately, in the end it turns out to be just another mediocre adventure game.

Character design is one of *Heart of Darkness*' strong points

While a few puzzles do require some thought, the majority are solved through basic trial and error. Try something, die. Try something else, die. Finally, get it right, then go on to the next screen and start the process over. This is not only tedious, but it also kills any replay value the game may have had, since once a scene has been beaten, it's trivial to beat it again.

In fact, it isn't anything in particular about the gameplay that entices players to continue, but rather the prospect of moving the story along to see what happens in the next prerendered FMV sequence. Although FMV is normally a bad thing, here it's well-done, integrated nicely, and keeps things moving.

Heart of Darkness is very much a visual title that relies heavily on the storyline to keep a player's interest. And while the story is good, the gameplay isn't anything revolutionary, or even that interesting. After five years of waiting, the wait simply wasn't worth it.

Rating: ★★

MEGAMAN LEGENDS

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **Capcom**

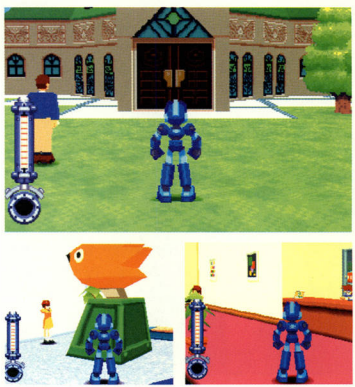
One of the most enduring characters in videogame history, Megaman finally gets a chance to join his mascot brethren in 3D. In typical *Megaman* style, the game progresses through a series of mazes and merciless bosses, but beyond the usual weapon upgrades and mechanical enemies, *Legends* is refreshingly different from other *Megaman* games.

In a surprising switch from the (at times, mindless) action *Megaman* has been known for, *Legends* incorporates RPG and adventure game elements, taking advantage of its massive, finely detailed 3D worlds and densely populated towns. In addition to shooting bad guys and taking down humongous bosses, Megaman must interact with a host of characters and can participate in a slew of sub-missions, showing a level of depth that should appeal to fans of the series as well as the more dexterous role-player. But, despite Capcom's good intentions, there are several problems.

First, despite being the master of 2D design, Capcom still has a few things to learn about 3D, most notably the need to implement analog control. The lack of it results in jerky control and stiff maneuvering, which can be unforgiving when the player is in a tight spot. Also, the camera controls work in tandem with how you alter the configuration of the controller, thus completing the equation: difficult controls = bad camera angles.

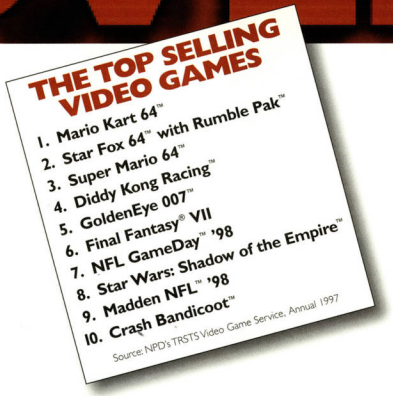
It's a tough hurdle to overcome for the casually interested gamer, but the controls can be mastered, and for those with enough patience, the game opens up magnificently, offering a wide variety of actions, options, and areas to explore. With a high level of depth and interactivity, *Megaman Legends* is much more immersive than any of its 2D predecessors. But first impressions can be a killer, and the game just doesn't possess the most outstanding graphics or mechanics to hook the merely curious after just one play. For those who look deeper, it's a diamond in the rough.

Rating: ★★★



***Megaman Legends*' new world is made up of huge, flatly textured polygons, producing a highly distinctive look unique to the series**

GAME OVER



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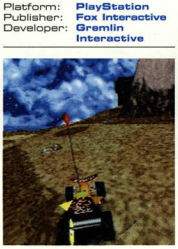
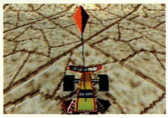
TEAM LOSI RC RACER

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Fox Interactive**
Developer: **Gremlin Interactive**





Just sit back and watch the background pop up out of nowhere — it's pathetic, and so is everything else about *Team Losi RC Racer*

On the surface *Team Losi RC Racer* looks promising, with multiple tracks, plenty of cars, and hidden secrets to discover. Unfortunately, though, *Team Losi* fails to deliver on just about every level, suffering from a case of split identity — it doesn't know if it wants to be a full-on RC racing sim or a cutesy racer complete with power-ups and special items. The resulting mishmash doesn't fill out either category very well.

The most noticeable problem with *Team Losi* is the horrendous visual pop-up. Whether this is caused by a poor engine, bad track design, or a combination of both is unknown, but the end result is a game that actually draws the course on screen just barely in time to be driven over. Gameplay doesn't fare much better, with minimal controls (left, right, forward, and backward). The camera is horrendous — if there's a confusing or obscured angle to be found, the camera will unerringly swivel right to it.

The two-player, split-screen view, with its drastically reduced line of sight, is even worse. Players who have memorized the course will do fine, but others will find themselves bouncing off walls for the first lap or so. In fact, we'd venture so far as to say that the two-player mode is completely unplayable by anyone without psychic powers or the reflexes of Bruce Lee.

Simply put, there isn't a single positive thing to say about *Team Losi*. It's about as much fun as Gremlin's last PlayStation game (*Judge Dredd*), and that about says it all.

Rating: ★

TRAP GUNNER

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Atlus**
Developer: **Racdym**

Blow your friends up real good in *Trap Gunner*

Imagine *Mad* magazine's Spy vs. Spy played out by anime characters, and you've got the idea behind *Trap Gunner*, one of the few original titles to show up in a sea of videogames overpopulated by copycats. The object of the game is simple: Kill the enemy and stay alive, mostly through the creative use of deadly traps. Initially based on mines and other simple devices, the game soon progresses to intense, elaborate setups, as players string traps together to create devastating attacks. Arming and disarming traps require a fair amount of strategy and quick reflexes.

Visually *Trap Gunner* is a treat. Although it's most fun when played in its split-screen, two-player mode (which is preferred), the display never feels cluttered. Still, fighting against the computer isn't far behind. Every character in *Trap Gunner* is well-balanced, but all are unique, not simple clones of one another. Each has a different set of abilities and default traps. This results in a dynamic play mechanic as well as a lot of replay value, since each character requires a slightly different approach. At the easiest levels, besting the computer AI is a simple feat, but higher difficulty settings provide a nice challenge.

Developer Racdym has created an excellent game that is well-balanced, enjoyable, and original. Everything, from the background music to the tight control, has been designed to work together, and it shows. *Trap Gunner* is definitely one of the season's sleeper hits.

Rating: ★★★★

WWF WARZONE

Platform: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Iguana West**

***WWF Warzone* won't win any awards for originality, but it delivers**

Perhaps the best thing about videogame wrestling is that you can guarantee it isn't faked. The punches aren't pulled, the kicks aren't choreographed, and the virtual action is more realistic than anything you'll see on TV. The drawback? It's almost as shallow as the real thing.

This game, more than any other, is directed at the fans. It's custom-built from the ground up to appeal to the WWF's loyal masses, featuring the current wrestling lineup with heroes like Stone Cold Steve Austin, Goldberg, and the British Bulldog. Players can also customize and create new wrestlers in a brilliant edit mode — all saved to memory card, of course.

Graphically, this hardly stretches the PlayStation, but the characters are smooth, and more importantly, recognizable. The gameplay is derivative of all other wrestling games but adds *Mortal Kombat*-style touches, including fatalities. Hilarity and gore ensue.

The game is largely idiotic fun and especially great in multiplayer mode (up to four with a multitap). But it's the huge wealth of options and detail (including interactive player biographies) that makes the game shine and ultimately a great purchase ... if you like professional wrestling.

Rating: ★★★

GET IN THE GAME

"I don't get 'player's thumb' …I have a lot more control."
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NAM

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **GT Interactive Software**
Developer: **GT Interactive Software**

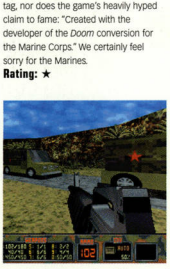
Ask any 'Nam vet and he'll tell you, the Vietnam experience was an endless tedium of featureless jungles and hidden enemies. Unfortunately, *Nam*'s authors decided that it would be a rippling idea not only to base a game around this ugly, boring conflict, but to make it the world's first war simulation.

It is absolutely impossible to make a first-person war game accurate and fun, and this one misses the mark on both counts. The ludicrous body count and the player's ability to take 10 rounds to the head and heal up with a single medical kit instantly kills the possibility of accuracy. Conversely, the one-note scenery, limited ammo, and repetitive gameplay meant to approximate real combat conditions serve only to drain any and all excitement from the experience. Brought together, they make for one hell of a miserable game.

Even more unfortunate was the choice to power the game with the Build engine. Yes, the same three-year-old engine that ran behind *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Shadow Warrior*, and *Blood*. Problem is, the developers didn't start from scratch. Instead, they performed some minor tweaks on *Duke Nukem*, made an abortive attempt at designing a few levels, and called it a game. *Duke* haunts the whole monotonous experience, right down to his trademark knuckle-crack at the start of each level.

This horrendous *Duke Nukem 3D* conversion should have stayed on the Net as freeware. The GT logo on the box certainly doesn't warrant its $20 price tag, nor does the game's heavily hyped claim to fame: "Created with the developer of the *Doom* conversion for the Marine Corps." We certainly feel sorry for the Marines.

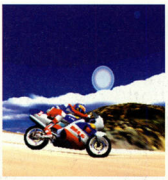
Rating: ★



***Nam* is the most miserable use for the Build engine yet**

REDLINE RACER

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **Criterion Studios**



From a visual standpoint *Redline Racer* can compete with the best of them, but a few quirks and a general lack of focus leave the game with plenty of room for improvement

For all the pretty graphics on display in *Redline Racer* (which has been used by Intel as an AGP demo for some time now), one has to wonder why the developer didn't spend a little more time tweaking the gameplay. With a few changes the game could have been a masterpiece. As it is, *Redline Racer* is little more than an average, albeit good-looking racing game.

Spotty collision detection is easily the most annoying thing going on here. It's not uncommon to be racing along near the head of the pack, only to be thrown out of a turn because another racer decided to play kamikaze. Nor is it unusual to slide up against what appears to be a small incline and then find yourself eating pavement. Were the collision detection a result of a super-realistic physics engine, it could have been forgiven, but the extended crashes, with hang time that would make Michael Jordan envious, quickly discount that possibility.

As far as control is concerned, *Redline Racer* pretty much screams for a joypad, but surprisingly enough, it failed to work with a Microsoft SideWinder pad, as it stopped responding about a minute or so into the race. Keyboard control is passable as is a standard joystick, but neither is preferred.

With a little more gameplay tweaking, *Redline Racer* may have been the game to get. Unfortunately, the annoyance factor is high enough to sap the game of most of its appeal. As an arcade racing game, *Redline Racer* just can't stand up to the likes of *Manx TT* or *Moto Racer*. Rather, it is just another average racing game with which to pass the time. It is a shame because *Redline Racer* does look really good.

Rating: ★★★

M.A.X. 2

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Interplay**
Developer: **Flat Cat**

The original *M.A.X.* (*Mechanized Assault and Exploration*) made friends and influenced players across the strategic spectrum, so it seems only proper that Interplay has now released *M.A.X. 2*, the sequel.

Set 15 years after the award-winning original, the new *M.A.X.* puts the remnants of humanity into an alliance with the Concord, a collection of friendly alien races. The resulting hybrid human/alien intelligence must then match wits with a ruthless newcomer, the Sheevat.

A richly layered game of strategic planning and mass destruction, *M.A.X. 2* offers three modes of play — turn-based, simultaneous turn-based, and real time. The first two work fine while real time tends to be a shade frenetic. Players can choose from four campaigns (with nine missions each), or plunge right into any of 23 stand-alone missions, and of course, there are also a number of multiplayer options.

Battles are huge and complex. Basically, there are two kinds of military units in *M.A.X. 2*: the cheap, weak ones and the expensive, powerful ones. Aggressive players may wish to load up with the cheap stuff and start fighting right away, while patient players who invest more time and material will be rewarded with some worthy fighting machines. It's a typical strategic dynamic, but it works well.

Will the new *M.A.X.* satisfy die-hard fans of the original? Perhaps not. Some players may be hoping for more than the new game delivers. But with or without die-hards, *M.A.X. 2* is a solid combat/strategy game that is bound to make numerous new friends.

Rating: ★★★★

***M.A.X. 2* builds on the success of the original and scores**

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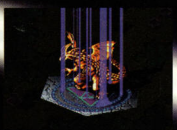

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THE GAMER'S GUIDE

The quintessential guide to released software

Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, the ultimate resource for checking what games to buy. Every month we add the reviews from last issue and push out an equal number of older ones. Which ones, you ask? Generally we leave the console titles in, even for games that are out of print, since there's a large used market. So PC games get dumped first, especially old, really bad PC titles (which, paradoxically, makes PC games look really, really good if you just check the ratings). Once again, please note the issue number — technology and game design march on relentlessly, so a game that got ★★★★ in **NG 6** might be hard-pressed to score ★★★ today.

Nintendo 64

title	publisher	rating	#
1080° Snowboarding	Nintendo	★★★★★	42
Aero Fighters Assault	Video Systems Inc.	★★★	36
Aero Gauge	Ascii	★★★	39
All Star Baseball '99	Acclaim	★★★★	43
Automobili Lamborghini 64	Titus	★★	37
Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo	★★★★	43
Blast Corps	Nintendo	★★★★	31
Clay Fighter 63 1/3	Interplay	★★	36
Cruisin' USA	Nintendo	★★	26
Dark Rift	Vic Tokai	★★★	31
Diddy Kong Racing	Nintendo	★★★★	37
Doom 64	Williams	★★★	29
Duke Nukem 64	GT Interactive	★★★	37
Extreme-G	Acclaim	★★★★	43
F-Zero X	Nintendo	★★★★★	46
HF1 Pole Position 64	Ubi Soft	★★★	36
FIFA Road to the World Cup 64	Electronic Arts	★★★★	38
FIFA Soccer 64	Electronic Arts	★★	30
Fighter's Destiny	Ocean	★★★	41
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	37
Goldeneye 007	Nintendo	★★★★★	34
Hexen	GT Interactive	★★	32
International Superstar Soccer	Konami	★★★★★	30
International Superstar Soccer '98	Konami	★★★★	44
Killer Instinct Gold	Nintendo	★★	26
Mace: The Dark Age	Midway	★★	37
Madden 64	Electronic Arts	★★	30
Mario Kart 64	Nintendo	★★★	30
Mike Piazza's Strike Zone	GT Interactive	★	44
Mission: Impossible	Ocean	★★★	44
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★★	44
Multi Racing Championship	Ocean	★★★★	33
Mystical Ninja	Konami	★★★	45
NBA Hangtime	Williams	★★	29
NBA in the Zone 64	Konami	★	41
Olympic Hockey '98	Midway	★	41
PicoWings 64	Nintendo	★★★★	21
QBC 64	Acclaim	★★★	37
Quake 64	Midway	★★★	41
Quest 64	THQ	★★★	43
Rampage World Tour	Midway	★★	41
Robotron 64	Crave Entertainment	★★★	39
San Francisco Rush	Midway Home	★★★★★	36
Shadows of the Empire	Nintendo	★★★	26
Snowboard Kids	Atlus Software	★★★	40
StarFox 64	Nintendo of America	★★★★	32
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	31
Tetrisphere	Nintendo	★★★	35
Top Gear Rally	Midway	★★★★	37
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim	★★★	28
War Gods	Midway	★	31
Waverace 64	Nintendo	★★★★★	25
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey	Midway	★★★	29
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98	Midway	★★	39
Wetrix	Ocean	★★★	44
Yoshi's Story	Nintendo	★★★	41
Yuke Yuke Troublemakers	Enix	★★★	34

PlayStation

title	publisher	rating	#
3Xtreme	SCEA	★★	25
Abe's Oddysee	GT Interactive	★★★★	35
Ace Combat 2	Namco	★★★★	35
Addidas Power Soccer	Psygnosis	★★★	21
Adventures of Lomax, The	Psygnosis	★★	26
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★	18
Alundra	Working Designs	★★★★	38
Andretti Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★★	25
Arc the Lad	SCEA	★★★★	10
Area 51	Midway	★★	27
Armored Core	SCEA	★★★★	37
Atari Collection One, The	Midway	★★★★	27
Auto Destruct	Electronic Arts	★★★	39
Azure Dreams	Konami	★★★	44
Ballblazer Champions	LucasArts	★★	31
Battlesetarians	Electronic Arts	★★	31
Beyond the Beyond	SCEA	★★	23
Black Dawn	Virgin	★★★★	23
Blast Chamber	Activision	★★★	25
Blasto	SCEA	★★	42
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★★	24
Bloody Roar	SCEA	★★★★	41
Bogey Dead 6	SCEA	★★★	22
Bottom of the Ninth	Konami	★★★★	19
BRAHMA Force	Jaleco	★★★	30
Bravo Air Race	THQ	★★★	34
Breath of Fire II	Capcom	★★★★	41
Broken Helix	Konami	★★★	32
Bubsy 3D	Accolade	★★	26
Bug Riders	GT Interactive	★★	37
Burning Road	Playmates	★★★	27
Bushido Blade	Sony	★★★★★	21
Bushido Blade 2	SquareSoft	★★★★★	43
Bust-a-Move	Enix	★★★★	41
Buster Bros Collection	Capcom	★★★	30
Cardinal SYN	SCEA	★★	43
Carnage Heart	SCEA	★★★★	28
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	★★★★	36
Circuit Breakers	Mindscape	★★★	45
Clock Tower	Ascii	★★★★	37
Codename Tenka	Psygnosis	★★★	28
Colony Wars	Psygnosis	★★★★★	31
Contra: Legacy of War	Konami	★★★	25
Cool Boarders	SCEA	★★★	27
Cool Boarders 2	SCEA	★★★	37
Courier Crisis	GT Interactive	★	37
Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back	SCEA	★★★★	37
Crash Bandicoot	SCEA	★★★	23
Croc: the Legend of the Gobbos	Fox Interactive	★★★	35
Crow: City of Angels, The	Acclaim	★	30
Crusader: No Remorse	Origin	★★★★	29
Cyberia	Interplay	★★★	16
Dark Forces	LucasArts	★★★	26
Dark Omen	Electronic Arts	★★★	43
Dark Stalkers	Capcom	★★★	16
Darklight Conflict	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Dead or Alive	Tecmo	★★★★	37
Deathtrap Dungeon	Eidos	★	42
Decapitor	Tecmo	★★★	24
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★★	12
Descent	Interplay	★★★★	17
Descent Maximum	Interplay	★★★	29
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★★	11
Destruction Derby 2	Psygnosis	★★★★	25
Diablo	Electronic Arts	★★★★	42
Die Hard Trilogy	Fox Interactive	★★★★	23
Disney's Hercules	Virgin Interactive	★★	34
Disruptor	Universal Interactive	★★★★	24
Divide: Enemies Within, The	Viacom New Media	★★	28
Doom	Williams	★★★★	15
Dragon Ball GT Final Bout	Bandai	★	39
Dragonheart: Fire & Steel	Acclaim	★	28
Dynasty Warriors	KOEI	★★★★	32
Einhander	SCEA	★★★★	40
Fade to Black	Electronic Arts	★★★★	21
Fantastic 4	Acclaim	★	35
Felony 11-79	Ascii	★★★	34
FIFA '97	Electronic Arts	★★	26
Fighting Force	Eidos	★★★	37
Final Doom	Williams	★★★	24
Final Fantasy Tactics	SCEA	★★★★	40
Final Fantasy VII	SCEA	★★★★★	34
Floating Runner	THQ	★★	27
Formula 1	Psygnosis	★★★★★	24
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	43
Frank Thomas Baseball	Acclaim	★	32
Frogger	Hasbro Interactive	★	37
G Darius	THQ	★★★★	46
GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★★	27
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★	15
Gex: Enter the Gecko	Crystal Dynamics	★★★	32
Ghost in the Shell	THQ	★★★	35
Goal Storm '97	Konami	★★★★	30
Grandstream Saga	THQ	★★	44
Gran Turismo	SCEA	★★★★★	40
Grand Slam	Virgin	★★	31
Grand Tour Racing '98	Activision	★★★	36
Grid runner	Virgin Interactive	★★★	23
Gunner's Heaven	Media Vision	★★★★	08
Gunship	MicroProse	★★	22
Hardball 5	Accolade Sports	★★	19
Herc's Adventures	LucasArts	★★★	35
Hot Shots Golf	SCE	★★★★	41
In the Zone	Konami	★★★	14
In the Zone 2	Konami	★★★★	26
Independence Day	Fox	★★	29
Iron & Blood: Warriors of Ravenloft	Acclaim	★★	24
Jersey Devil	Asmik	★★★★	41
Jet Moto	SCEA	★★★★	27
Jet Moto 2	SCEA	★★★	37
Judge Dredd	Activision	★	42
Jumping Flash!	SCEA	★★★★★	08
Jumping Flash! 2	SCEA	★★★★	20
K-1 The Arena Fighters	THQ	★★	30
Kartia	Atlus	★★★★	45
Kileak the Blood	SCEA	★★★	05
Kileak the Blood 2	SCEA	★★	16
King's Field	Ascii	★★★★	16
King's Field II	Ascii	★★★	26
Krazy Ivan	Psygnosis	★★★	17
League of Pain	Psygnosis	★★★	30
Loaded	Interplay	★★★★	14
Lode Runner	Natsume	★★★	39
Lost World: Jurassic Park, The	Electronic Arts	★★	34
Machine Hunter	MDM Interactive	★	34
Madden '97	EA Sports	★★★	05
Madden '98	Electronic Arts	★★★	35
March Madness '98	Electronic Arts	★★	42
MechWarrior 2	Activision	★★★	31
Mega Man X 4	Capcom	★★★	36
MegaMan 8	Capcom	★★	39
Micro Machines V3	Midway	★★★★	39
Midway Collection 2, The	Midway	★★★★	38
MLB '99	SCEA	★★★★	46
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	★★★★★	38
Mortal Kombat 4	Midway	★★	46
Mortal Kombat Mythologies	Midway	★	38
Moto Racer	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	36
Motor Toon Grand Prix	SCEA	★★★	26
N2O	Fox	★★★	45
Nagano Winter Olympics '98	Konami	★★★	39
Namco Museum Volume 1	Namco	★★★★	21
Namco Museum Volume 2	Namco	★★★	24
Namco Museum Volume 3	Namco	★★★	27
Nanotek Warrior	Virgin	★★★	27
NASCAR Racing	Sierra	★★	24
NBA Jam Extreme	Acclaim	★★	28
NBA JAM TE	Iguana Entertainment	★★★★	12
NBA Live '96	Electronic Arts	★★★★	19
NBA Live '97	Electronic Arts	★★	25
NBA Shoot Out	SCEA	★★★	19
NBA Shoot Out '97	SCEA	★★★★	30
NCAA Gamebreaker	SCEA	★★★★	24
NCAA Gamebreaker '98	SCEA	★★★★★	38
Need For Speed II	Electronic Arts	★★	32
Need For Speed III	Electronic Arts	★★★	43
Newman/Haas Racing	Psygnosis	★★	41
NFL Xtreme	989 Sports	★★	46
NFL GameDay	SCEA	★★★★★	14
NFL GameDay '98	SCEA	★★★★★	35
NHL '97	Electronic Arts	★★★	25
NHL '98	Electronic Arts	★★★★	36
NHL Breakaway '98	Acclaim	★★	37
NHL Face Off	SCEA	★★★★★	15
NHL Face Off '97	SCEA	★★★★	25
NHL Face Off '98	SCEA	★★★	36
Nightmare Creatures	Activision	★★★	38
Nuclear Strike	Electronic Arts	★★★	36
Olympic Soccer	U.S. Gold	★★★	21
One	ASC Games	★★	39
Open Ice Challenge	Midway	★★	28
OverBlood	Electronic Arts	★★	31
Pandemonium	Electronic Arts	★★★	25
Parappa the Rapper	SCEA	★★★★★	35
Parasite Eve	Square Electronic Arts	★★★★	45
Peak Performance	Atlus	★★★	28
Perfect Weapon	ASC Games	★★	24
Persona	Atlus	★★★	27
PGA '98	Electronic Arts	★★★	36
Pitfall	Accolade	★★★	25
Pitfall 3D	Activision	★★	42
PO'ed	Accolade	★★★★	19
Pocket Fighter	Capcom	★★★	45
Point Blank	Namco	★★★	40
Porsche Challenge	SCEA	★★★★	35
Power Move Wrestling	Activision	★★★	26
Powerboat Racing	VR Sports	★★	42
Poy Poy	Konami	★★★★	33
Pro Pinball	Interplay	★★★	26
Project Overkill	Konami	★★★★	23
Project: Horned Owl	Sony	★★★	22
Psychic Force	Taito	★★	25
Punky Skunk	Jaleco	★★	42
Rage Racer	Namco	★★★	32
Raiden	Seibu	★★	05
Rally Cross	Sony	★★★★	30

Rascal	Psygnosis	★★ 43
Rayman	Ubi Soft	★★★★ 10
ReBoot	EA	★★★ 40
Re-Loaded	Interplay	★★ 27
Rebel Assault 2	LucasArts	★★ 26
Red Asphalt	Interplay	★★ 37
Resident Evil	Capcom	★★★★★ 17
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	★★★★★ 39
Return Fire	Time Warner Interactive	★★★★ 19
Ridge Racer	Namco	★★★★ 04
Ridge Racer Revolution	Namco	★★ 15
Risk	Hasbro	★★ 45
Road Rash 3D	Electronic Arts	★★ 46
Robo Pit	THQ	★★ 22
Robotron X	Midway	★★ 27
Rush Hour	Psygnosis	★★ 32
Saga Frontier	SCEA	63
Samurai Shodown III	SCEA	★★ 25
Sentient	Psygnosis	★★★ 30
Sentinel Returns	Psygnosis	★★★ 44
Shadow Master	Psygnosis	★ 41
Shellshock	US Gold	★★★★ 19
Shipwreckers!	Psygnosis	★★★ 39
Shockwave Assault	Electronic Arts	★★ 15
Sidewinder	Asmik (Japan)	★ 18
Silverload	Vic Tokai	★★★ 18
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★ 23
Skullmonkeys	EA	★★ 40
Slam Scape	Viacom	★ 26
Soul Blade	Namco	★★★★ 28
Soviet Strike	Electronic Arts	★★★★ 24
Space Hulk	Electronic Arts	★★ 21
Space Jam	Acclaim	★ 27
Spawn: The Eternal	SCEA	★★ 38
Speed Racer	Jaleco	★★ 42
Spider	BMG	★★★ 28
Spot Goes to Hollywood	Virgin Interactive	★★ 24
Star Gladiator	Capcom	★★★ 24
Star Wars: Masters of Teras Kasi	LucasArts	★★ 38
StarWinder	Mindscape	★★★ 24
Steel Harbinger	Mindscape	★★★ 24
Steel Reign	SCEA	★★ 37
Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha	Capcom	★★★★ 35
Street Racer	Ubi Soft	★★★★ 24
Sulkoden	Konami	★★★★ 25
Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo	Capcom	★★★★ 29
Syndicate Wars	Electronic Arts	★★★ 34
Tail of the Sun	SCEA	★★★★ 31
Tekken	Namco	★★★★ 07
Tekken 2	Namco	★★★★ 30
Tekken 3	Namco	★★★★★ 42
Tempest X	Interplay	★★★ 24
Tenchu	SCEI	★★★★ 43
Ten Pin Alley	ASC Games	★★★ 27
Tennis Arena	Ubi Soft	★★ 43
Test Drive 4	Accolade	★★ 37
Theme Hospital	EA	★★★ 43
Thunder Truck Rally	Psygnosis	★★★ 33
Thunderforce V	Working Designs/Spaz	★★★★ 06
TigerShark	GT Interactive	★★★ 29
Time Crisis	Namco	★★★★ 38
TNN Hardcore 4X4	ASC	★★★ 26
Tobal No. 1	SCEA	★★★★ 24
Toh Shin Den	Takara	★★★★ 04
Tokyo Highway Battle	Jaleco	★★★ 22
Tomb Raider II	Eidos	★★★★ 37
Tomba	SCEA	★★★★ 45
Top Gun	Spectrum Holobyte	★★ 20
Touché: Retsuden	Tomy	★★★ 14
Triple Play '98	EA Canada	★★★★ 31
Tunnel B1	Acclaim	★★★ 25
Turbo Prop Racing	SCEA	★★★★ 45
Twisted Metal	SCEA	★★★★ 13
Twisted Metal 2	SCEA	★★★★ 30
Vandal Hearts	Konami	★★★★ 29
Viewpoint	Electronic Arts	★★★ 13
Vigilante 8	Activision	★★★★ 45
Virtual Pool	Interplay	★★★ 27
VMX Racing	Playmates Interactive Ent.	★★★ 36
VR Baseball '99	Interplay	★★★ 46
WarGames	MGM Interactive	★★★ 46
Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat	Mindscape	★★★ 28
Warhawk	SCEA	★★★ 33
WCW Nitro	THQ	★★★ 38
WCW Vs The World	THQ	★★ 30
Wild Arms	SCEA	★★★ 32
Wing Commander IV	Electronic Arts	★★ 31
Wipeout	Psygnosis	★★★★★ 11
World Cup '98	EA Sports	★★★ 45
Worms	Ocean	★★★★ 19
WWF WrestleMania	Acclaim	★★★ 12
X-Com: UFO Defense	MicroProse	★★★★★ 14
X-Men: Children of the Atom	Westwood	★★★ 40
X-Men vs. Street Fighter	Capcom	★ 45
Xevious 3D/G+	Namco	★★★ 31
Zero Divide	Time Warner	★★★ 14

title	publisher	rating	#
Online			
Aliens Online	Kesmai	★★★	43
Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor	Westwood	★★	41
Meridian 59: Revelation	3DO	★★★	37
Netstorm	Activision	★★★★	40
NetWAR	Headland	★★★	41
Tanarus	Sony	★★★★	40
Ultima Online	Origin	★★★★	37

title	publisher	rating	#
PC			
11th Hour, The	Virgin	★★	16
688(i) Hunter/Killer	Jane's Combat Simulations	★★★	34
A Fork in the Tale	Anyriver		30
Abuse	Crack dot Com	★★★★	14
Addiction Pinball	MicroProse	★★★	45
Advanced Tactical Fighters	Electronic Arts	★★★	19
Afterlife	LucasArts	★★★	23
Age of Empires	MicroSoft	★★★	37
AH-64D Longbow	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	21
Air Warrior II	Interactive Magic	★★	31
Air Warrior III	Interactive Magic	★★★	40
Albion	Blue Byte	★★★	43
Alien Earth	Playmates	★★	42
Allied General	Microshade	★★★★	18
Amber: Journeys Beyond	Graphic Simulations	★★★	27
American Civil War	Interactive Magic	★★★★	22
Anthem Racing	Electronic Arts	★★★	39
Apache	Interactive Magic	★★★★★	15
Armor Command	Ripcord Games	★★★	38
Armored Fist	NovaLogic	★★★★	02
Army Men	3DO	★★★★	44
Ascendancy	Broderbund	★★★★	12
Atlantis: The Lost Tales	Interplay	★★★★	35
Azrael's Tear	Mindscape	★★★	25
Banzai Bug	Grolier	★★★	30
Battleground: Waterloo	Talonsoft	★★★	22
Battlespire	Bethesda	★★★	41
Battlezone	Activision	★★★★	42
Beast Within: A Gabriel Knight Mystery	Sierra On-Line	★★★	17
Bedlam	GT Interactive	★★★	26
Betrayal in Antara	Sierra	★★★	34
Big Red Racing	Domark	★★★	19
Black Dahlia	Take 2 Interactive	★★★	44
Blade Runner	Virgin	★★★	41
Blood	GT Interactive	★★★★	33
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★	36
Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror	Virgin Interactive	★★★	36
Buried in Time: The Journeyman Project 2	Sanctuary Woods	★★★	13
Burnout Championship Drag Racing	Bethesda Softworks	★★★	43
Caesar II	Sierra On-Line	★★★★	14
Capitalism	Interactive Magic	★★★	13
Carmageddon	SCI	★★★	33
CART Precision Racing	Microsoft	★★★★	38
Castrol Honda Superbike	Intense Simulation	★★★	46
Chaos Overlords	New World Computing	★★★	21
Chronomaster	Capstone	★★★★	16
Circle of Blood	Virgin	★★★★	24
City of Lost Children, The	Psygnosis	★★★	32
Civilization II	MicroProse	★★★★★	08
Close Combat	Microsoft	★★★	22
Colonization	MicroProse	★★★★	20
Comanche 3	NovaLogic	★★★	33
Command & Conquer	Virgin	★★★★★	13
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	Virgin	★★★★	31
Conquest of the New World	Interplay	★★★	20
Creatures	Mindscape	★★★★★	35
Crusader: No Remorse	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	13
Curse of Monkey Island, The	LucasArts	★★★★	39
D-Day: America Invades	Avalon Hill	★★★	11
Dark Earth	MicroProse	★★★	37
Dark Forces	LucasArts	★★★★	05
Dark Reign	Activision	★★★★	38
Deadlock II	Cyberlore Studios	★★★	43
Death Drome	Viacom	★★★	29
Death Rally	Apogee Software	★★★	27
Descent	Interplay	★★★★	05
Descent II	Interplay	★★★★	18
Descent Freespace	Interplay	★★★	45
Descent to Undermountain	Interplay	★	41
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★★	14
Diablo	Blizzard	★★★★	28
Die by the Sword	Interplay	★★★★★	42
Dig, The	LucasArts	★★★★	15
Dinotopia	Turner Interactive	★★★	20
Discworld	Psygnosis	★★★	05
Discworld II: Mortality Bytes!	Psygnosis	★★★	32
Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3	Eidos	★★	46
Dragon Dice	Interplay	★★	35
Druid	Sir-tech	★★★	17
Duke Nukem 3D	3D Realms	★★★★	20
Dungeon Keeper	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	09
EarthSiege 2	Sierra On-Line	★★★★	21
Earthworm Jim 1 & 2	Playmates	★★★	21
Ecstatica 2	Psygnosis	★★★	30
ES2000 v2.0	Ocean of America, Inc.	★★★	36
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall, The	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★★	24
Emperor of the Fading Suns	SegaSoft	★★★	32
Excalibur 2555 A.D.	Sir Tech	★★	37
Extreme Assault	Blue Byte	★★	35
Extreme Tactics	Pinyahia Interactive	★★★	46
F-15	EA	★★★	43
F-22 Lightning II	NovaLogic	★★★	25
F1 Racing Simulation	Ubi Soft	★★★	39
Fable	Sir-tech	★★	31
Fairy Tale Adventure II	Encore Software	★★★	40
Fallen Haven	Interactive Magic	★★	32
Fallout	Interplay	★★★★	36
FIFA '96 Virtual Stadium Soccer	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	13
Fire Fight	Electronic Arts	★★★★	21
Flesh Feast	SegaSoft	★★★	45
Forsaken	Acclaim	★★★	44
FX Fighter	GTE Interactive	★★★	09
Game, Net & Match	Blue Byte	★★★	45
G.Police	Psygnosis	★★★	38
Grand Theft Auto	Take 2	★★★	42
Havoc	Reality Bytes, Inc.	★★★	16
Heavy Gear	Activision	★★★	29
Heretic	Id Software	★★★★	05
Heroes of Might and Magic	New World Computing	★★★★	12
Heaven: Beyond Heretic	Id Software	★★★★	14
Hi-Octane	Electronic Arts	★★★★	10
Hind	Interactive Magic	★★★	25
Hyper 3-D Pinball	Virgin	★★★★	18
Icebreaker	Twentieth Century Fox	★★★	20
F-22 Raptor	Interactive Magic	★★★	46
Imperium Galactica	GT Interactive	★★★	33
Incoming	Rage Software	★★★	46
Industry Giant	Interactive Magic	★★★	45
Interactive Fiction Collections	Activision	★★★★★	10
Interstate '76	Activision	★★★★	31
Into the Void	Playmates	★★★	33
Isle of Four Winds: Rune War, The	Arcanum Productions	★★★	39
Jazz Jackrabbit 2	G.O.D.	★	45
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	★★★★★	36
Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith	LucasArts	★★★★	41
Jetfighter III	Interplay	★★★★	29
Journeyman Project 3	Red Orb	★★★★	41
Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny	Westwood Studio	★★★	37
Last Bronx	Sega	★★	43
Last Express, The	Broderbund	★★★★	31
Leisure Suit Larry 7: Love for Sail	Sierra	★★★	25
Lemmings Paintball	Psygnosis	★★★	22
Lighthouse	Sierra	★★	25
Links LS	Access	★★★★	24
Lion	Sanctuary Woods	★★★	15
Lords of the Realm II	Sierra	★★★★	28
M.A.X.	Interplay	★★★★	30
M1A2 Abrams	Interactive Magic	★★	32
M1 Tank Platoon II	MicroProse	★★★★	43
Magestayer	Interplay	★★★	37
Magic Carpet 2	Electronic Arts	★★★	13
Magic: The Gathering	Spectrum Holobyte	★★	31
Master of Orion II	MicroProse	★★★	28
MDK	Playmates	★★★★	31
Meat Puppet	Playmates Interactive	★★★	34
MechCommander	MicroProse	★★★	10
MechWarrior 2	Activision	★★★★	10
MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries	Activision	★★★	26
Micro Machines 2	GameTek	★★★	21
Might and Magic VI	3DO Company	★★★★	44
Mission Critical	Legend Entertainment Co.	★★★	15
Monster Truck Madness	Microsoft	★★★★	26
Monster Truck Madness 2	Microsoft	★★★★	27
Monty Python and the Holy Grail	7th Level	★★	22
Moto Racer GP	BMG	★★★★★	31
Myth	Bungie	★★★★	38
NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra On-Line	★★★	40
Nemesis: A Wizardry Adventure	Sir-Tech Software	★★	27
NeoHunter	Virgin Interactive	★	27
Neverhood, The	Dreamworks Interactive	★★★	24
NHL '97	Electronic Arts	★★★★	24
Nitro Racers	3DO (Europe)	★★★★	28
Normality	Interplay	★★★	23
Obsidian	SegaSoft	★	30
Of Light and Darkness	Interplay	★★	43
Outlaws	LucasArts	★★★★	32
Outwars	Microsoft	★	43
Panzer Commander	SSI	★★★★	46
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain	THQ	★★	37
Phantasmagoria	Sierra On-Line	★★★	12
Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle of Flesh	Sierra	★★★	27
Pizza Tycoon	MicroProse	★★★★	06
Pod	Ubi Soft	★★★	31
Postal	Ripcord	★★★	37
Powerhouse	Impressions	★★★★	10
Powerslave	Playmates	★★★	30
Princess Maker 2	Ignite	★★★	32
Prisoner of Ice	Activision	★★	12
Private Eye	Simon & Schuster	★★	22
Privateer 2: The Darkening	Origin/EA	★★★★	29
Pure Wargame, Vol. 1	QQP	★★★	08
QP: Tomb of the Middle Kingdom	Learn Technologies	★	23
Quake	Id Software	★★★★★	22
Quake 2	Activision	★★★★	39
RAMA	Sierra	★★★	26
Rayman	Ubi Soft	★★★	18
Realms of Arkania III: Shadows Over Riva	Sir-Tech	★★★★	33
Realms of Arkania: Star Trail	Sir-Tech	★★★	03
Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	★★★★	30
Rebel Assault II	LucasArts	★★★	15
Rebellion	LucasArts	★★★	43
Red Baron II	Sierra	★★★★	40
Redjack	THQ	★★★	45
Redneck Rampage	Interplay	★★★	32
Redneck Rampage Rides Again	Interplay	★★★	45
Riddle of Master Lu, The	Sanctuary Woods	★★★	13
Riven	Red Orb	★★★	38
Rocket Jockey	SegaSoft	★★★	27
Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter	WizardWorks	★★	44
Sabre Ace: Conflict Over Korea	GT Interactive	★★★	38
Sanitarium	ASC	★★★★	44
Scarab	Electronic Arts	★★★	30
Screamer	Virgin	★★★	17
Screamer 2	Virgin	★★★	25
Sega Rally	Sega	★★★	30
Sega Touring Car Championship	Sega	★★	42
Sentient	Psygnosis	★★	33
Shattered Steel	Interplay	★★★	26
Shell Shock	Eidos Interactive	★★	23
Shivers	Sierra On-Line	★★★	17
Shivers 2: Harvest of Souls	Sierra On-Line	★★	32
Sid Meier's Gettysburg	Electronic Arts	★★★★★	12
Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II	Sierra On-Line	★★	20
Space Bar, The	Boffo Games	★★★	33
Spec Ops	Ripcord	★★★	43
Spycraft: The Great Game	Activision	★★★★	19
Star Command Revolution	GT Interactive	★★★	31
Star Control 3	Accolade	★★★	25
Star Trek Pinball	Interplay	★	43
StarCraft	Cendant	★★★★★	43
Starfleet Academy	Interplay	★★★	36
Starship Titanic	Simon & Schuster	★★★	43
Streets of Sim City	Maxis	★	40
Strife	Velocity	★★★	20
Sub Culture	Ubi Soft	★★★★	37
Swarm	Reflex Entertainment	★★	44
SyndiCate Wars	Electronic Arts	★★★	25
Temujin	SouthPeak Interactive	★★★	38
Terminator: Future Shock	Bethesda Softworks	★★★	16
Terminator: SkyNET	Bethesda Softworks	★★★★★	26
Terra Nova	Looking Glass	★★★★	19
Test Drive Off Road	Accolade	★★	31
Tex Murphy: Overseer	Access	★★	42
Theme Hospital	Bullfrog/Origin	★★★	31
Tomb Raider Gold	Eidos Interactive	★★★	43
Toonstruck	Virgin	★★★	26
Torin's Passage	Sierra On-Line	★★★	15
Total Annihilation	GT Interactive	★★★	36
Twinsen's Odyssey	Activision	★★★	34
Ultimate Race Pro	MicroProse	★★★	43
U.S. Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	★★★	03
Under a Killing Moon	Access	★★	02
Unreal	GT Interactive	★★★★★	44
Uprising	Cyclone Studios	★★★★★	37
Vangers	Buka Entertainment	★★★	46
Virtual Pool	Interplay	★★★★	09
Virtual Pool 2	Interplay	★★★★	38
Virus	Sirtech	★★	40
VR Soccer	MicroProse	★★	20
Wages of War	3DO	★★	28
Warcraft 2: Tides of Darkness	Blizzard Entertainment	★★★★★	15
WarGames	MGM Interactive	★★★	46
Warlords II: Reign of Heroes	Red Orb	★★★	35
Werewolf vs. Comanche	NovaLogic	★★★	13
Whiplash	Interplay	★★★	18
Williams Arcade Classics	Williams	★★★	15
Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom	Origin	★★★	18
Wing Commander Prophecy	Electronic Arts	★★★	40
Wipeout XL	Psygnosis	★★★	33
Witchaven II: Blood Vengeance	Intracorp	★★	22
X-COM: Apocalypse	MicroProse	★★★	35
X-COM: Interceptor	MicroProse	★★★	46
X-COM: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	★★★	07
X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	★★★	32
XCar: Experimental Racing	Bethesda Softworks	★★★	35
Z	Virgin	★★★	23
Zone Raiders	Virgin	★★★	16
Zork: Grand Inquisitor	Activision	★★★★	39

Welcome to the real underworld

vigilance

This is Vigilance.
Where the action takes place in the cold, hard light of day. Where the world of today is recreated in photo-realistic 3D with Any Channel's brilliant AnyWorld engine

Where the enemies are scum - human scum. In the single-player mode, gamers use all their abilities to try and make it through over 30 different anti-terrorist mission objectives. In multiplayer mode, players can work as a team against a common enemy - or up to 16 players can duke it out in the most realistic deathmatches ever.

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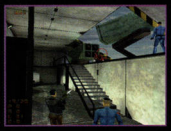

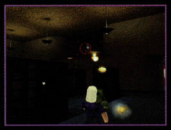

Key features

- 8 unique player characters, each with their own skills and abilities
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- 40+ unique weapons and power-ups
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- Photo-realistic action with the groundbreaking AnyWorld engine
- One month's free HEAT premium membership

Game Profile

- Available October 1998
- PC Win 95 CD-ROM

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HEAT.NET

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LETTERS

Putting our own stamp on things

First of all, I'd like to thank everyone who has ever worked for your magazine. It forces the public at large to accept games as the legitimate art form they are.

Anyway, I'd like to thank you for your feature on how to get a job in the game industry because I just got hired for my first job in the game industry today as a direct result of that article. It's something I've wanted to do since I was about eight, and starting next week, I'll be doing it. I'd just like to congratulate all of you on creating the best magazine in the industry.

Jon Loiterman
maverick@interaccess.com

Always glad to help.

Thanks for a well-thought-out and well-researched article on emulation and classic games. However, there are a few issues your article didn't touch on. For example, Nintendo has successfully shut down nearly every significant NES or SNES ROM site, but people still want ROMs, so people with CD burners collect hundreds of ROMs and sell them for anywhere from $5 to $50 online, at swap meets, and through the newsgroups.

Simply shutting down sites that provide ROMs for free doesn't help, since it only leads to people being able to make money off them once they've become hard to find online for free. The simple solution is for companies to release ROMs, or condone the distribution of ROMs. If the copyright holders simply released a statement allowing the online distribution of ROMs for noncommercial use (like the copyright holders of the Vectrex have done), it would be greatly appreciated by the community.

Most of these games are not making anyone money anymore. Why shouldn't they be made available to future generations to enjoy? It'd be a shame to have emulation repressed to the point where it is impossible to play your favorite childhood game again, especially after all the hard work poured into the community by numerous emulator authors and web site maintainers.

Kevin "Fragmaster" Bowen
editor-in-chief/site director, ClassicGaming.com

In regards to Mr. Lowenstein's letter, I have to thank you for sticking to your guns on this topic. Mr. Lowenstein is typical of the general frame of mind in any media-based industry. This twisted analysis of one of the few straightforward copyright laws comes from the same way of thinking that brought us copy protection. The consequences to the industry are similar, and they have no idea how this alienates their clients, most notably the educated consumer.

ROM images are a scourge and should be eliminated from the Internet whenever possible, I agree. However, blaming the emulation community is counterproductive. In almost all cases, emulators (at least, the ones that work) emulate "dead" hardware, which no one is making money off of anymore. If anything, emulators are keeping the systems alive by bringing new novelty value into these old games and making classic gaming into a growing hobby.

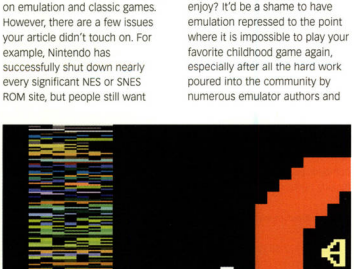
But above all, what bothered me about Mr. Lowenstein's letter is how he interchangeably used the words "properly licensed" and "legal," as if to imply that all unlicensed games/products are illegal. This is pure propaganda: Unlicensed software and hardware, so long as it does not copy anything directly, couldn't be more legal. I can remember when I was a kid reading *Nintendo Power*, how suspiciously we viewed products that (gasp!) didn't have the Nintendo seal of quality! But unlicensed games and ROM images (and for his information, there are several nonlicensed games out there for play exclusively on emulators, although most really suck), like PlayStation modifier chips, are perfectly legal, and the industry's attempts to remove them from the market are about as groundless as Nintendo's lawsuit against Galoob for the Game Genie in 1990.

For some reason, instead of making friends with the public and taking away any reason to violate copyright laws, companies insist on attempting to guard their platforms with an iron fist. This is not how it should be, and they are only hurting themselves.

Justin Sevakis
too.much.anime@ibm.net

On the other hand ...

I was a bit disappointed with your response to Mr. Lowenstein. Instead of taking the responsibility as a major voice in this industry (which you are, like it or not) and denouncing piracy, you chose to use the opportunity to justify your position by using minor technicalities. Sure, maybe running an emulator is not illegal. But what else are you gonna do with it other than run copyrighted ROM or disk images? I have too much integrity to essentially steal from the industry that supports my income and entertainment needs. I ask that instead of saying, "Nanny nanny boo boo" to the IDSA, maybe you should speak out against the illegal acts of the industry we all hold so dear. Your magazine is too well-crafted and informed to simply save some face when responding to the worries of a major player of the industry. If you still hold your position, then I trust you'll



Debate still rages over emulators and ROMs (believe it or not, though, this Atari 2600 ROM is ours legally)

compensate the difference of price I'll be paying for software a few years down the road. Make checks out to **Next Generation**?

D. Christopher Goodman
EVA UNITII@aol.com

As always, we maintain that emulators are not, by themselves, illegal to author or own.

A couple of days ago at work, I stumbled across a real estate pamphlet laying on the break room table (hey, I had to read something while I ate my low-budget lasagna). Anyhow, when I picked it up, I noticed that strange "BPA" logo in the upper left-hand corner — the same logo that weirdo always puts in his "creative corner" in your table of contents. Why the heck would he put some lame real estate logo (or whatever it is) in there? If you ever get a chance to visit his cave, or wherever the heck he's cooped up, ask him for me. Tell him to get out more, too.

Errol
NizmoGT@aol.comDate

BPA International (and don't ask us what that stands for — not even its web site seems to know) is the media auditing service that keeps track of and verifies a given publication's circulation. Obviously, that "real estate pamphlet" used the same service.

I am writing concerning your interview with Mr. Kelly Flock. While he sometimes seemed intelligent and interesting to listen to, quite a bit of the time he was intolerably arrogant and mean-spirited. I don't play sports games, but I still found his comment about how people over 18 didn't like *NFL GameDay* as much as they did *Madden* because "their brain cells aren't firing as fast as they used to" totally uncalled for. Being over 18 myself (if only by three years), I was very insulted. Of course, Mr. Flock looks to be well over 18 himself, even if he doesn't act it. I would imagine that he exempts himself from his own judgment, as poor as it is. Someone should tell him that if he wants more people to at least try *GameDay*, he should try to demonstrate why it's a superior game, rather than insulting them.

I know that the editors of **Next Generation** try to present the broadest range of views possible in their interviews. However, I would greatly appreciate being spared such childish nonsense in the future.

Josiah F. Thorne
South Portland, Maine

I just read your interview with Kelly Flock. The guy seems really fucking cocky. Based on your interview, I learned that since I am over 18, I can't make an informed buying decision, I have turned into my parents, and I need to get a life. I also learned that all magazine reviewers think they are going to work for Electronic Arts some day, so they won't tell the truth regarding the superiority of Sony titles over EA's. Sega might as well ax Dreamcast right now because it's going to fucking fail. PlayStation sequels are unique in that they are dramatically different from the games that they released the year before. Also, Sony might sell 50 to 60 million PlayStations and be a viable gaming platform for years to come. Boy, this guy has all the fucking answers! Ask him if I can call him up and have him read my horoscope.

My opinion: The more cocky and arrogant someone sounds, the more insecure they are. I think Mr. Flock suffers from a Napoleon complex. Big head, little ... Oh, fucking never mind.

Ken Leitz
kleitz@atl.mindspring.com

Hard as it may be to believe, Kelly Flock's interview in **NG 45** generated more reader mail than any since we spoke with Atari's Sam Tramiel in **NG 7** (the famous "Jaguar is just as powerful as PlayStation except PlayStation has more memory" interview). These were fair samples. You get the idea. Oh, what the heck — here's one more parting shot:

The outspoken Kelly Flock's comments in NG 45 produced some equally outspoken reader comments

So, how many bottles of wine was it that you fed to Flock before the interview? And also, is this "pre-interview inebriation" going to be a regular practice from now on? It sure does make for an entertaining read!

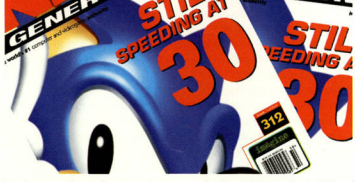
Brian Eun
brian@reboot.com

No comment.

OK, *Zelda 64* is a prequel to all previous *Zelda* adventures. I got that. If in fact Gannon is now the lowly Gannondorf, your main objective in the game is to stop him from becoming the all-powerful Gannon. I get that too. What I don't get is if you succeed and stop Gannondorf from becoming the powerful Gannon, wouldn't that open up an interesting hole in the storyline, in that all the previous *Zelda* games would then make no sense?

Mario Granger Jr.
magjr14@hotmail.com

Mr. Granger, you have made an astute observation but have failed to recognize the possibility of alternate realities. For further information on this topic, read "Worm Holes: A New Gameplay Paradigm," **NG 312** (and while you're at it, read about how Hiroshi Yamauchi's still living brain keeps an iron grip on his company from his cryo tank). NG



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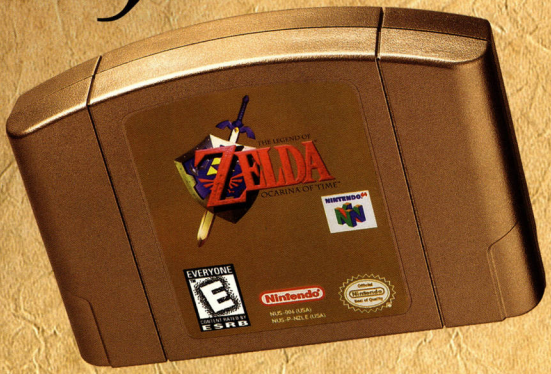

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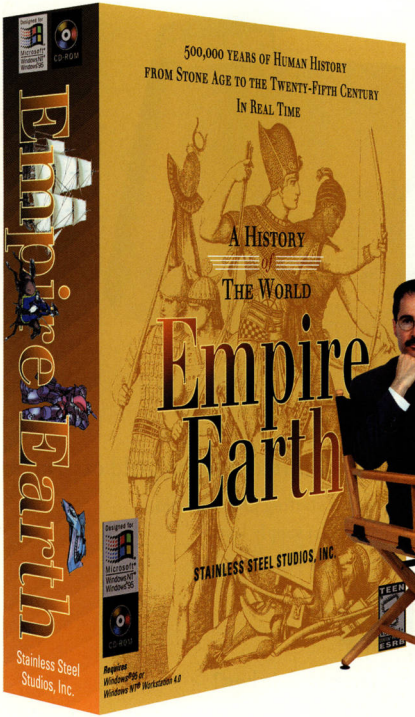

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RETROVIEW

by **Steven Kent**, author of a forthcoming book on the history of videogames

HE'S EVERYWHERE

There are a few veterans in the videogame industry who seem to have been everywhere and seen everything, but nobody has made as successful a career of this as Michael Katz.

Katz received a master's degree in business administration from Columbia University in 1967 and took several high-level marketing jobs before getting hired by Mattel Toys in 1975. At Mattel, he worked on developing a new line of toys. He helped Mattel license the Caterpillar name to compete with Tonka in toy trucks, made a game based on the mascot from the Hawaiian Punch commercials, and marketed Slime — a toy that would later be repackaged as Gax.

In 1976, Katz asked the engineers in the electronics group to design a game using LED (light-emitting diode) technology. The engineers returned with a strip of red plastic that housed several rows of LEDs that could be moved forward, backward, up, or down using four directional buttons. The unit had built-in collision detection — if the light the player was controlling made contact with other lights on the screen, the toy registered a crash.

With the right packaging, Katz decided the toy could be marketed as either a racing game or a football game. He decided to go with racing.

We could have themed it as football. We could have pretended the LED was a running back, but we knew we had a game coming along from the developers at Mattel that was going to make for a better football game, so we chose auto racing.

We tested themes with kids by showing them drawings of what the actual game would look like and having them play the prototype. Racing came in second, so we themed our first game as an auto race.

— Michael Katz

In 1978, Katz was hired by Arnold Greenberg, the volatile president of the Connecticut Leather Company (better known as Coleco). With Greenberg at the head of the company, Coleco abandoned leather goods for electronic games shortly after the release of *Home Pong* in 1976. In 1978, Greenberg decided to focus on handheld and tabletop games, and he brought Katz in as a source of expertise.

Katz remained at Coleco until early 1983. At that time, he accepted an offer to become the president of a small software company called Epyx.

I was contacted by headhunters representing some venture capitalists and told about a company named Epyx, which they described as a $1.5 million computer game company losing $400,000 a year in Sunnyvale.

— Michael Katz

Katz became restless after two years at Epyx. He liked working on electronic games, but software bored him. Around this time he went to lunch with Sam and Jack Tramiel, the owners of Atari. They made him an offer and he accepted, all during a single meal. Interestingly, two engineers approached Epyx with designs for a handheld game system, just about the time Katz was leaving. Epyx adopted the project, which was eventually named Lynx. Within a few years, however, Epyx filed for bankruptcy protection and Atari ended up with Lynx.

Life at Atari could not have been fun for Katz. Jack Tramiel, who had founded Commodore Computers, was famous for his tirades, table-pounding, and on-the-spot firings.

Jack Tramiel, who had founded Commodore Computers, **was famous for his tirades, table-pounding, and on-the-spot firings**

People give me credit for working for both Arnold Greenberg and Jack Tramiel in one lifetime and surviving. They ask, "How could you work for Jack Tramiel?" and I say, "I worked for Arnold Greenberg for three and one-half years."

— Michael Katz

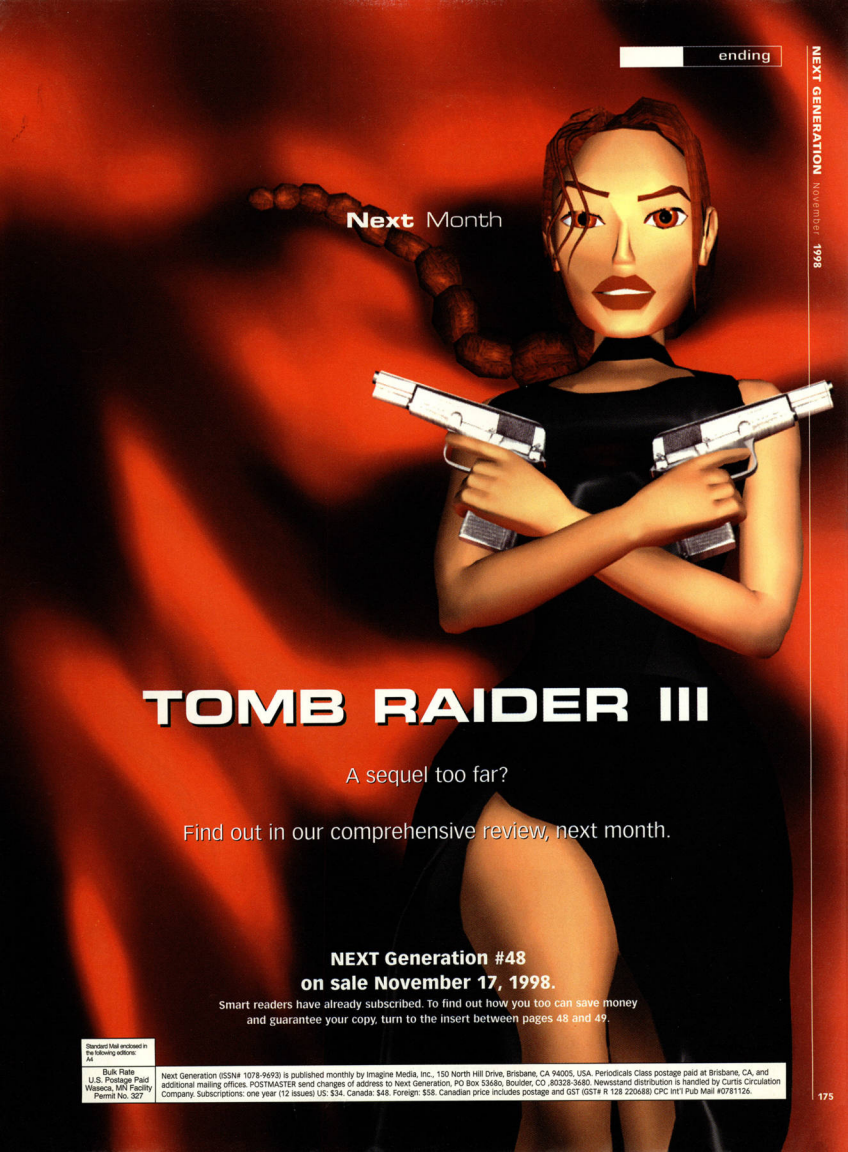
Although Katz speaks kindly of the Tramiels now, the industry is rife with stories about their micromanagement of Atari during his time with the company. He seemed to have found the secret for surviving with them, however, because he lasted at Atari for three and a half years.

In 1989, Katz left Atari and spent three months traveling the world. When he came back, Katz took his last big job in the industry — president of Sega of America. David Rosen, the founder of Sega, offered him the job in September 1989, and he took the position the following month. He started just in time to launch the Genesis.

Things did not go well for Genesis that first year. Although people liked what they heard about Genesis, most of them remained loyal to their NES. Nintendo released *Super Mario 3* at that time, and the NES had its best year ever. It was during this time too that a Sega designer named Yuji Naka began work on a game that Katz never understood. It was about a little-known rodent: a hedgehog.

Katz became restless after two years at Epyx. **He liked working on electronic games, but software bored him**

Impatient for more sales and not satisfied with Katz's explanations for why Genesis was not selling well, Sega of Japan fired him in 1991 and hired someone Katz had known in his former life as an executive at Mattel — Tom Kalinske. With Sonic the Hedgehog as its mascot and Kalinske as its president, Sega went on to become a major player in the videogame industry as we know it today. NG



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