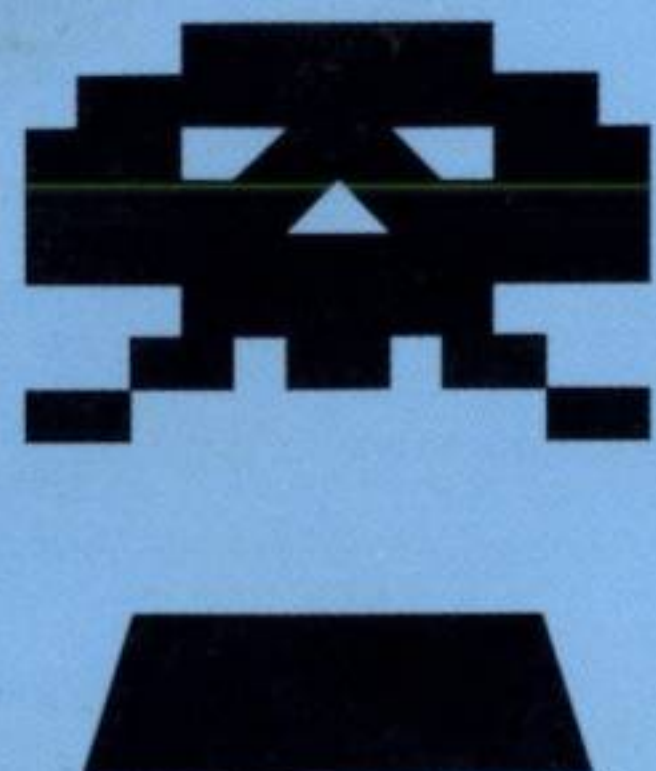


PLAYSTATION NINTENDO 64 PC GAME BOY

NEW!

The videogame magazine

April 1999
Issue 5 £2.70



Amiga

KICK MARIO IN THE NUTS

You know you want to. Page 126

GRAN TURISMO 2

Push your PlayStation to the max

53
BRAND NEW
VIDEOGAMES
reviewed
& rated

**"HANG ON. THAT BLOKE'S
GOT ALL MY CASH"**

Named: videogaming's 50 most
powerful movers 'n' shakers

EXCLUSIVE!

THE TRUTH BEHIND...

METAL GEAR SOLID

"IT GAVE ME FLASHBACKS" SAYS GULF WAR SAS HERO

FINAL FANTASY VIII

Japan's favourite
game is coming
to the UK



SEGA RALLY 2

Dreamcast
shifts into
top gear

future
PUBLISHING
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**"AN EVOLUTION OF THE
ADVENTURE GAME GENRE..."**

PC GAMER

**"DISCWORLD FANS GET
READY FOR HIT NUMBER 3!"**

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**"THE AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION
ALONE SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO
HAVE FANS CHOMPING AT THE BIT!"**

ULTIMATE PC

**"THE GAME'S BRILLIANCE
IS ONLY MATCHED BY THE
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DEPTH OF THE STORY..."**

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SCORES OF BEAUTIFULLY RENDERED LOCATIONS FROM CAFÉ ANKH TO THE UNSEEN UNIVERSITY.

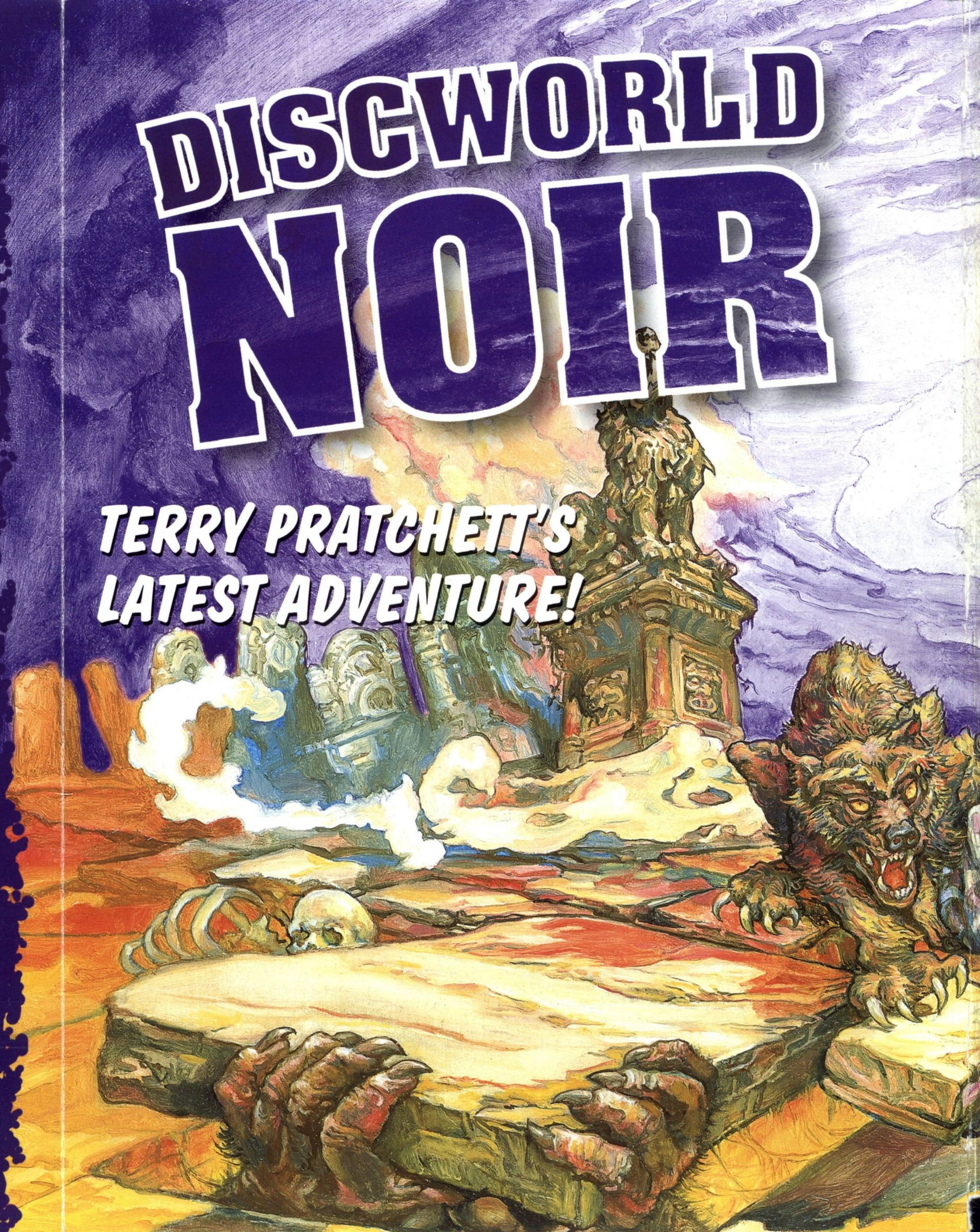
MEET DISCWORLD'S **NEWEST** HERO!

THE NAME'S LEWTON, I USED TO WORK FOR THE WATCH BUT NOW I'M A P.I. WORKING IN THE MOST DANGEROUS PART OF DISCWORLD KNOWN TO MAN - ANKH MORPORK. TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE THERE'S BEEN A MURDER AND I GUESS I'M THE ONLY GUY AROUND THAT'S GOING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT ALL...



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TERRY PRATCHETT'S LATEST ADVENTURE!



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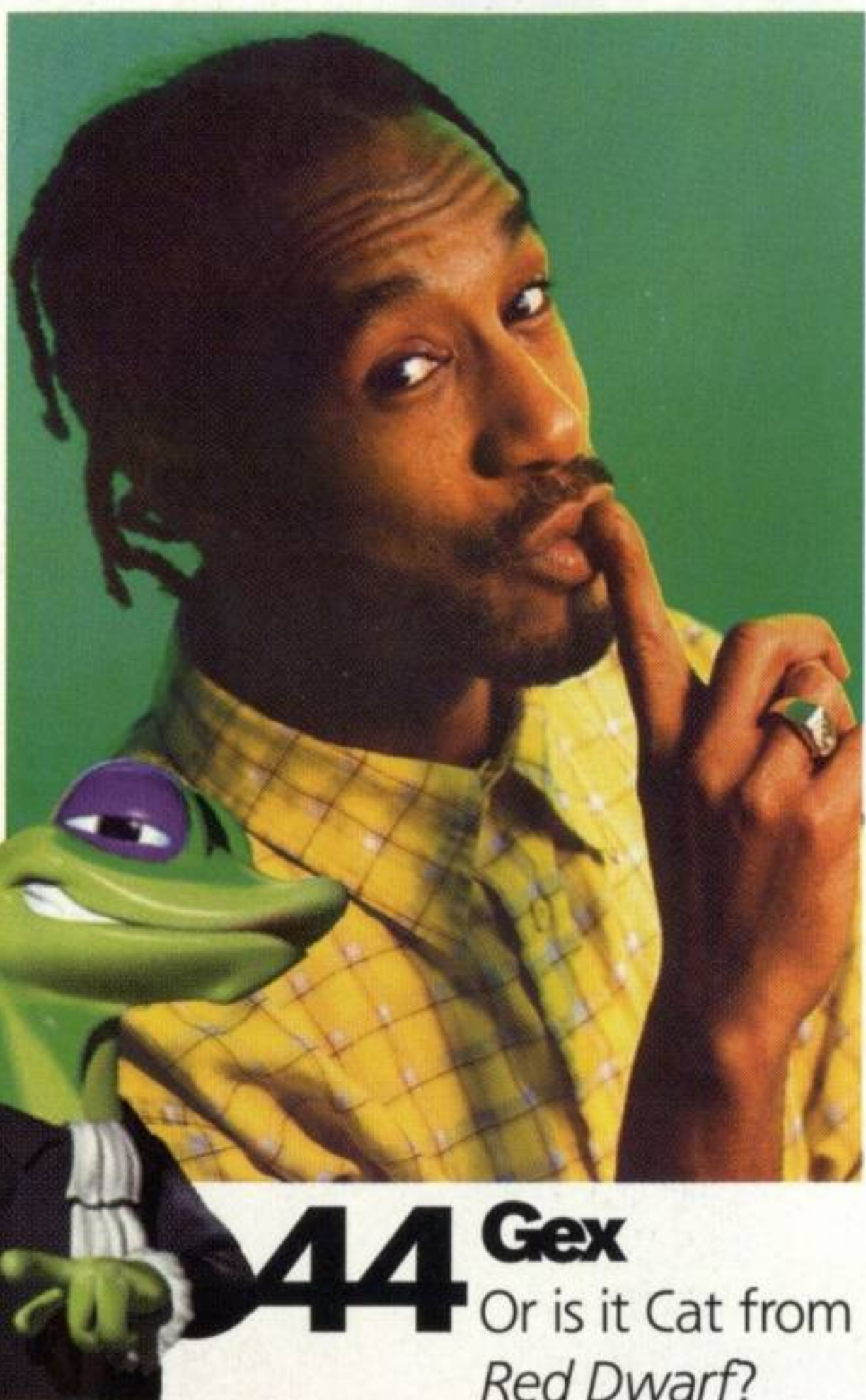
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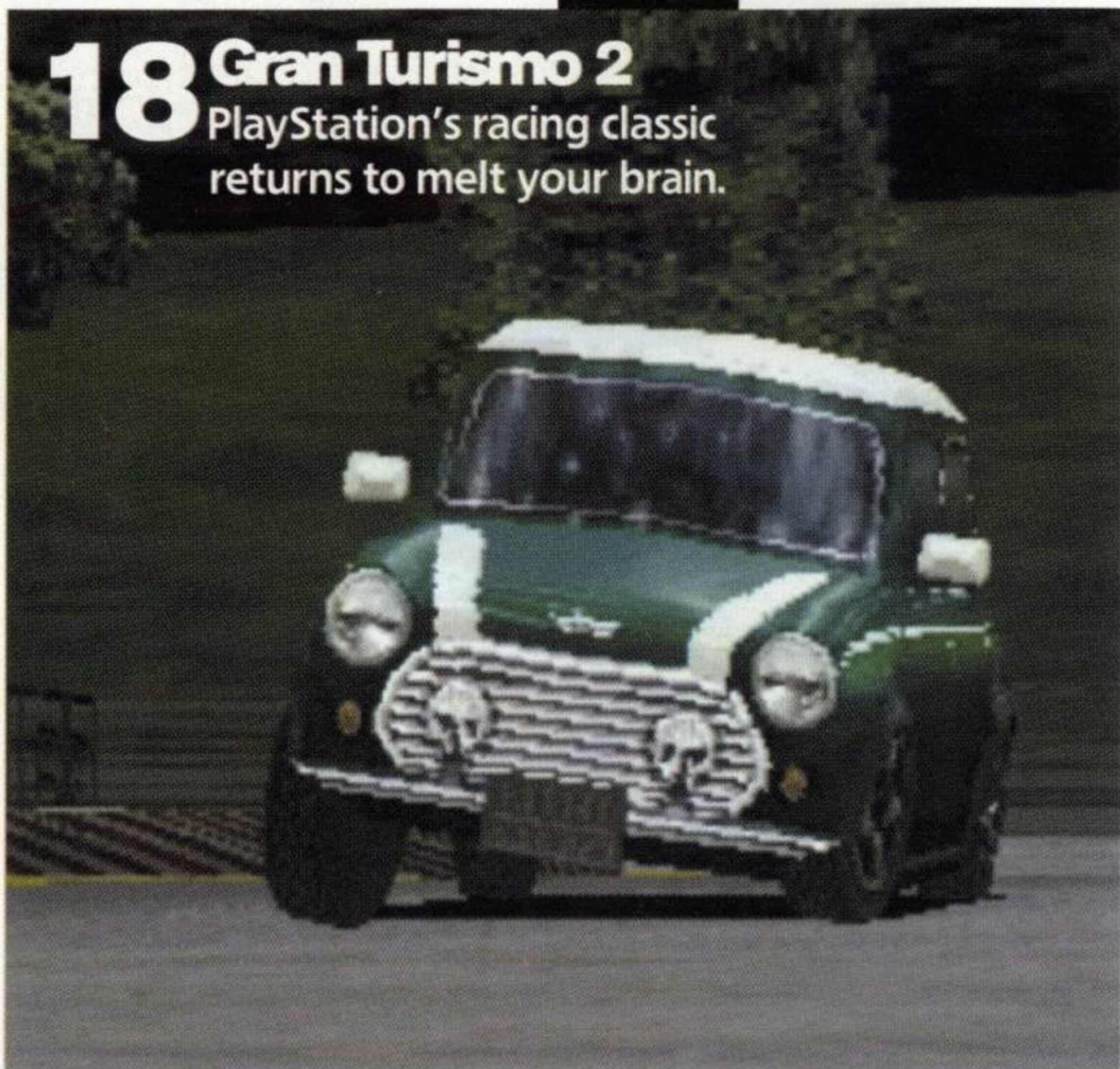
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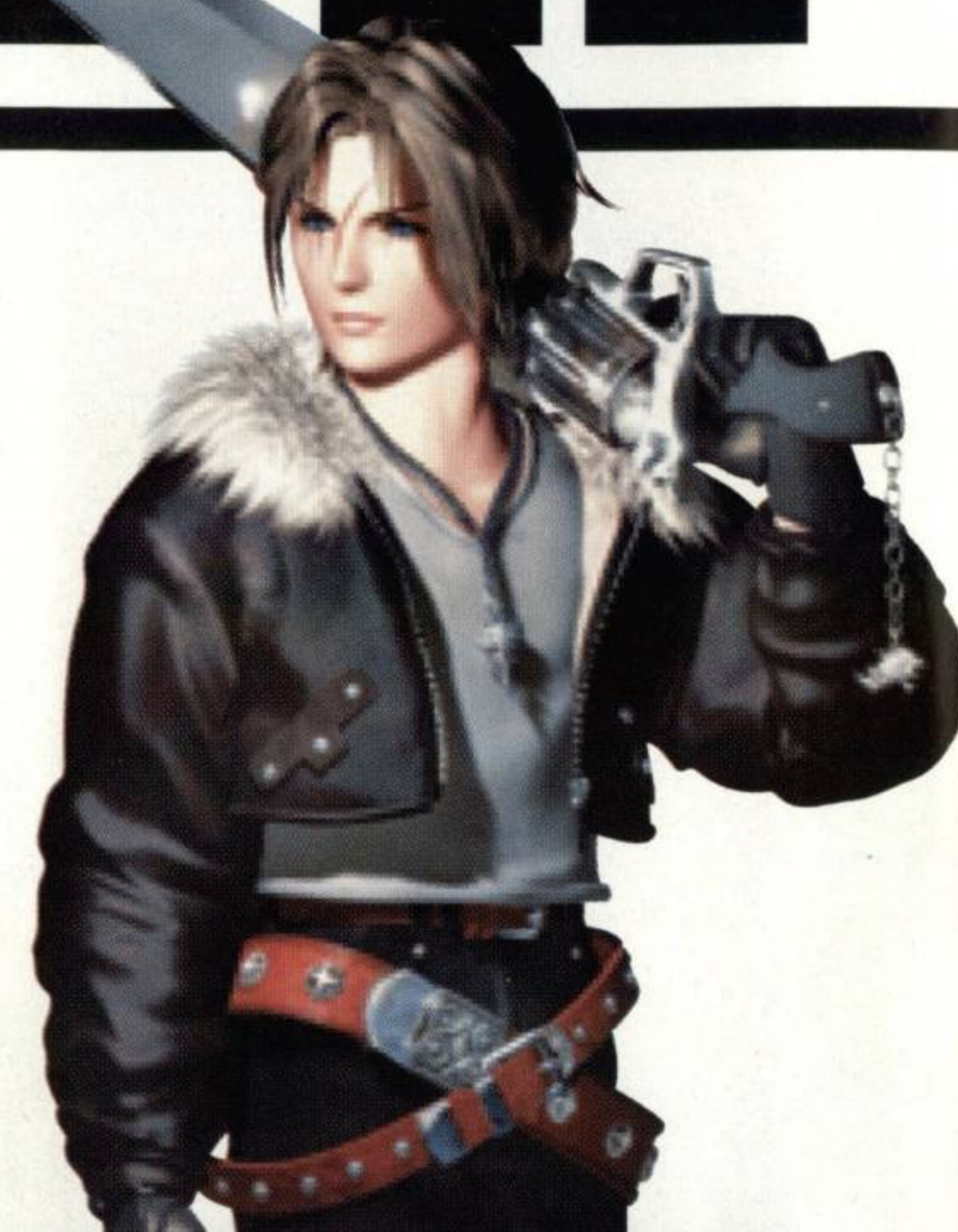
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Or is it Cat from Red Dwarf?



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It's the biggest PlayStation game ever.

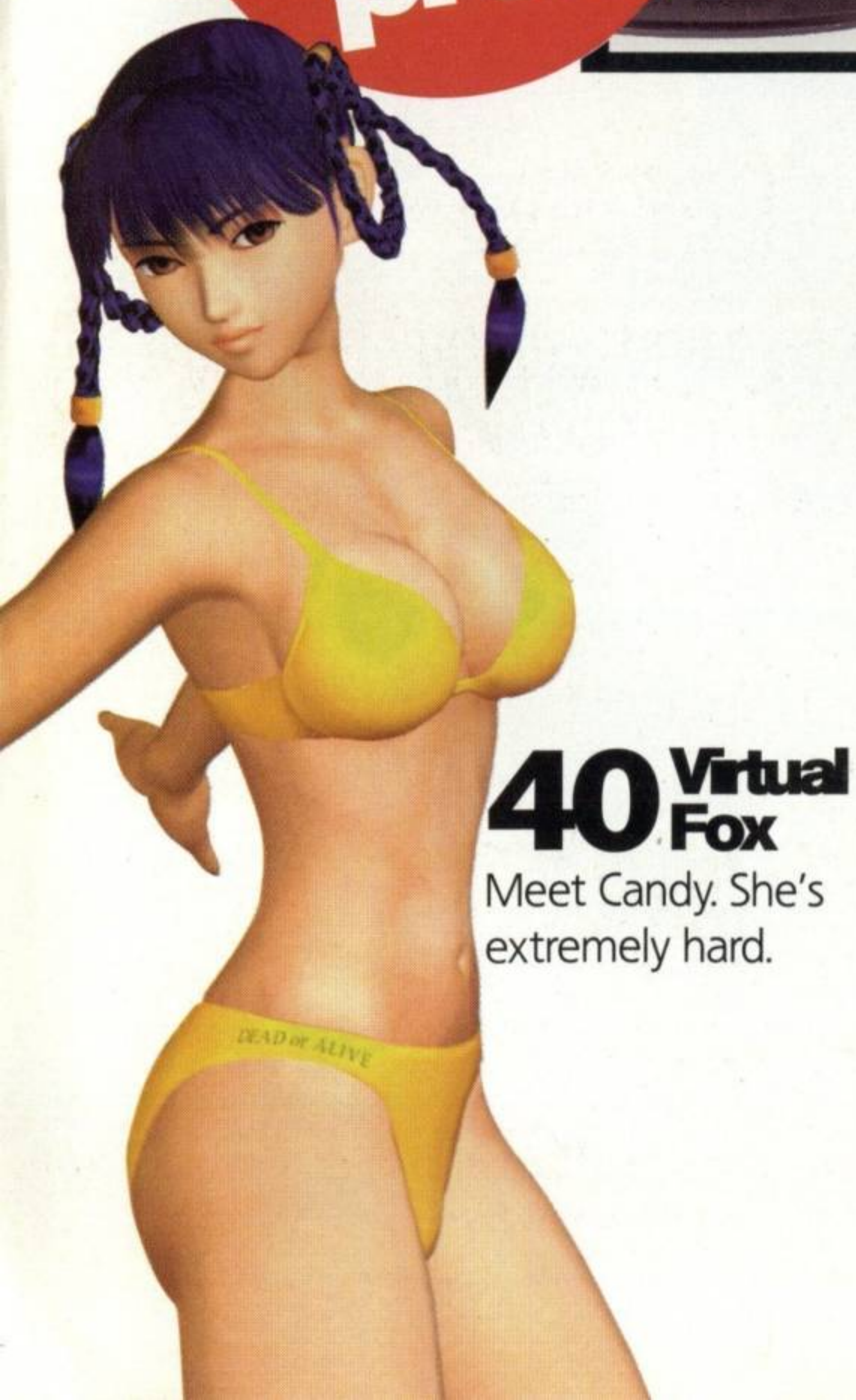
Play like a pro!



Starting on page 67, we show you how to squeeze more from your PC, Nintendo 64 & PlayStation.



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"My Beautiful Arcades" visits a service station on the M4.

POWER PLAYERS

STORY BY SCOTT CAMPBELL

NAMED: THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE GAMES BUSINESS

Visiting the offices of the most powerful people in the gaming industry is a bit like visiting the most powerful people in the world. You'll find a mix of the rich and famous, the successful and the struggling, the established and the upstart. It's a mix of the old and the new, the traditional and the innovative. It's a mix of the people who have shaped the industry and the people who are shaping it now. It's a mix of the people who have made the industry what it is today and the people who are making it what it will be tomorrow.

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47 Power Players
Who runs the videogame business? We name names.

1999

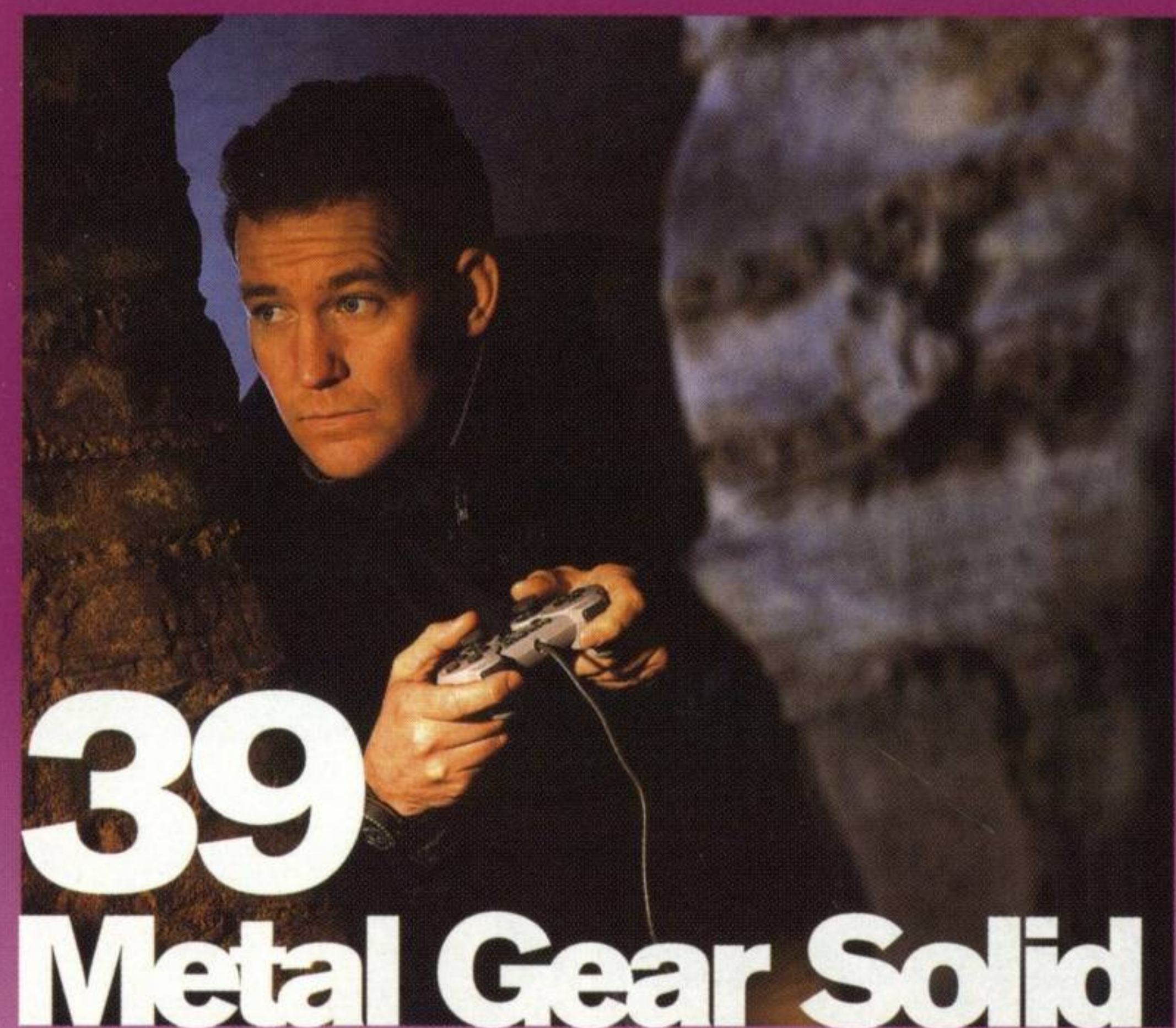


■ Are you ready to dance a Grim Fandango? The music starts on page 74.

Arcade

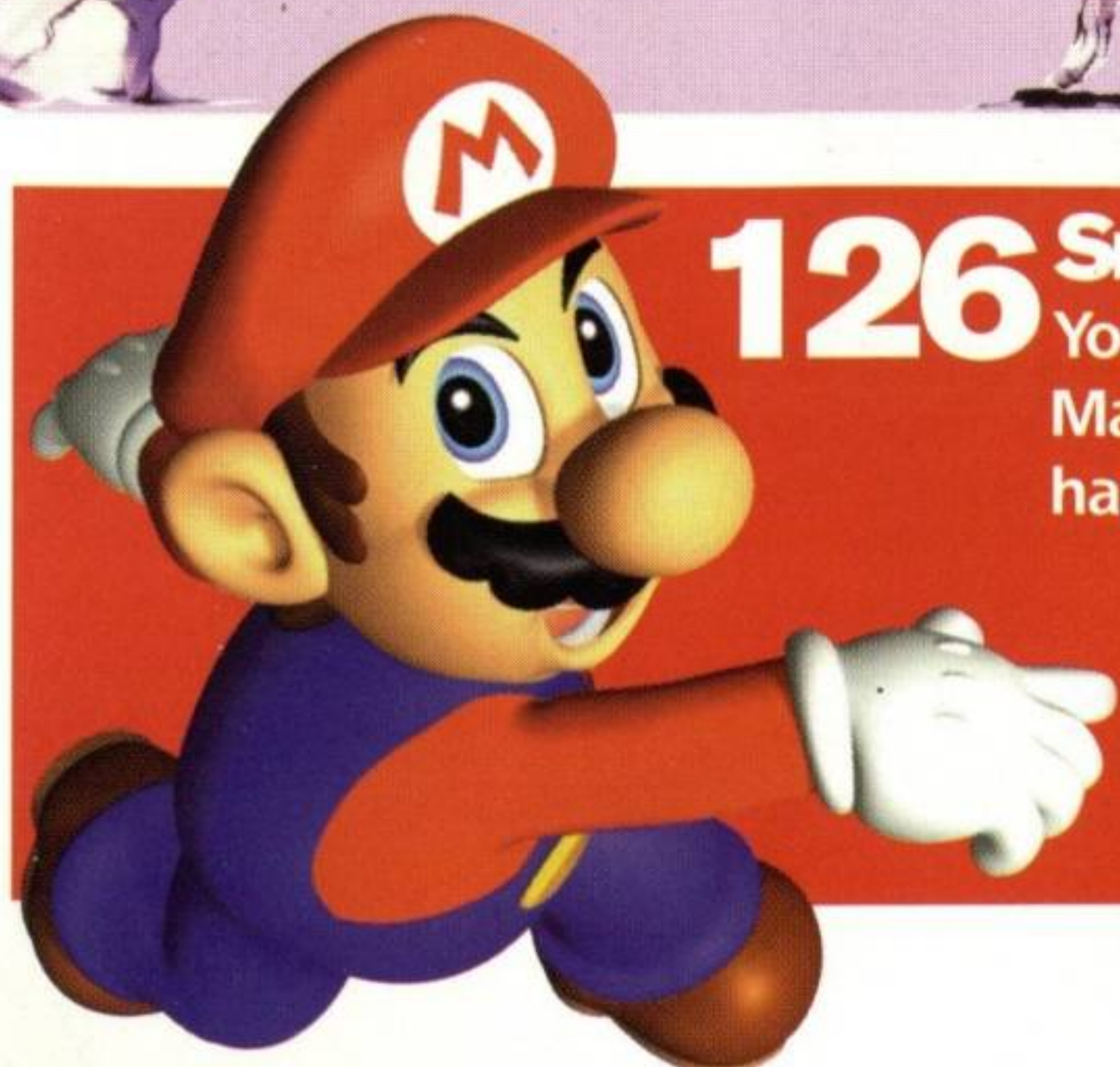
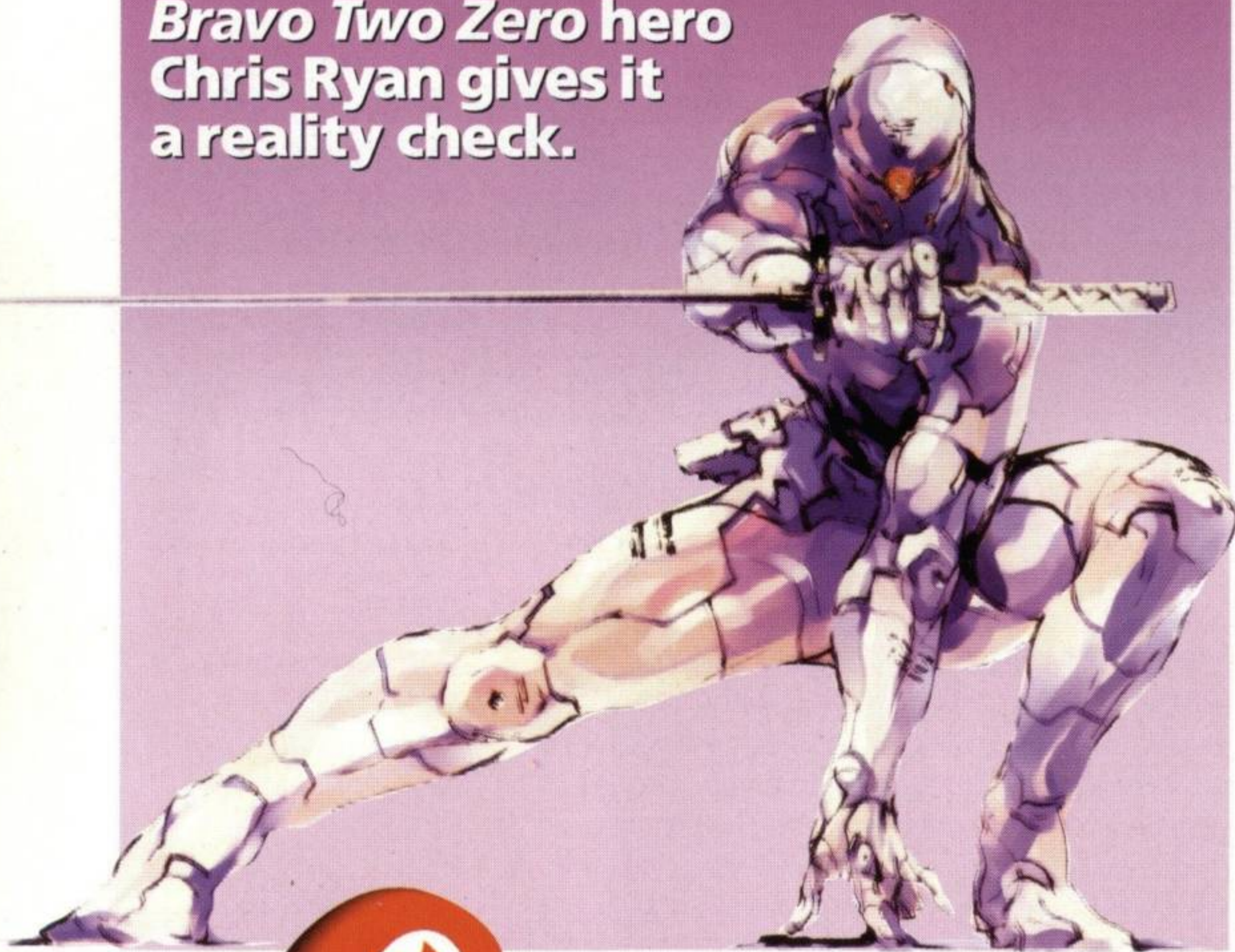
The videogame magazine

Editorial & Arcade magazine, advertising 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW
Telephone 01225 442244
Fax 01225 732275 (edit) 01225 732282 (ads)
E-mail arcade.mag@futurenet.co.uk
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Just how realistic is it? Bravo Two Zero hero Chris Ryan gives it a reality check.



126 Smash Bros.

Your chance to kick Mario and Link in the happy sacks. Oh yes.

A Review

The Ultimate Game Buyer's Guide

104 New PlayStation Games

New releases: *A Bug's Life*, *Bloody Roar 2*, *Live Wire*, *Megaman X*, *Populous: The Beginning*, *Poy Poy 2*, *Pro Pinball*, *Retro Force*, *Rollcage*, *Running Wild*, *Street Skater* and (get out the KY Jelly) *WCW/nWo Thunder*.
"Platinum" budget games: *Crash Bandicoot 2*, *G-Police*, *Tomb Raider II* and *Total Drivin'*. Unmissable bargains at just £20.

114 New PC Games

New releases: *Baldur's Gate*, *Biosys*, *Civilization: Call to Power*, *Championship Manager 3*, *Close Combat III*, *Pro 18 Golf*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Super Bikes*, *Tellurian Defence*, *TOCA 2*, *Western Front* and, bringing up the rear, *Worms: Armageddon*.
Budget games: *The Biggest Names*, *The Best Games*, *Command & Conquer Classic*, *Dark Earth*, *Darklight Conflict*, *Joint Strike Fighter*, *Overload*, *Privateer 2: The Darkening*, *Shadow Warrior*, *Street Racer*, *TOCA Touring Car Championship*, *Uprising* and last but not least *X-wing Collector Series*.

124 New N64 Games

New releases: *All-Star Tennis*, *Castlevania 64*, *FIFA 99*, *Twisted Edge Snowboarding* and *Virtual Pool 64*.
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Coin-op: *LA Machineguns*.
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■ *Bloody Roar 2* for PlayStation is looking for a fight.

Every issue More, more, more.

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News from the world of videogames. Including a report from the UK *Tekken* tournament, confirmation that *Gran Turismo 2* will roar onto PlayStation this autumn, and *Final Fantasy VIII* in Japan.

20 Special Report: Coin-ops

Arcades across the country are reporting a drop in earnings. But is it the success of PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and the PC that's to blame? Arcade investigates.

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Previews of upcoming games. Featuring: *Silent Hill*, *R-Type Delta*, *Daikatana*, *Wild Metal Country*, *Duke Nukem*, and *UEFA Champions League*.

84 Kick Ass

Stuck on a game? Beaten into blubbering submission by your mates? Then you need the advice of gameplaying experts. You'll find it here.

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Do you remember your first time? Arcade's crack drinking team ventures back in time...

149 The A-List

Your essential buying guide to every – and we do mean every – videogame currently on sale in the UK. Over 380 titles played, reviewed and rated. It almost killed us. Enjoy.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN SCOBIE, RICK BUETTNER, JUDE EDGINGTON

EDITORIAL

Videogames get real



With Neil West, Editor

Metal Gear Solid – what a cracking game. But then you probably already know that. You can't walk into a games shop at the moment without catching the buzz. What you may not realize, however, is just how realistic some of Konami's sneak-'em-up action is. We found out by tracking down Gulf War and Bravo Two Zero veteran Chris Ryan and playing the game with him. The full story starts on page 58.

The ex-SAS man laughed at the invisibility suits and scoffed at Snake's slipshod explosives handling. But he certainly didn't find anything too ridiculous about climbing under a cardboard box to escape his pursuers. "I was on the run in Germany," he reminisces, "and I came over a hill with 20 guys chasing me. I spotted a cow's feeding trough, overturned it and then hid underneath." And did he get away with it? "They never found me," he smiles.

Okay, so Chris didn't make it all the way back to Blighty lurking under his lucky trough, but we take his point. Games are getting more realistic all the time.

Be careful out there,

Neil West
Editor

Rants & Raves

The write and the wrong of it, all bought together in three opinion-packed pages. This month it's football, coin-ops, piracy and more letters from angry parents.

Letters pages are wonderful things. They inspire all sorts of people to create all sorts of outpourings. There are the constructive pieces about the content of *Arcade*, with advice about what we could to make your magazine a better place to be. There are our detractors; the people who don't like what we do, or just don't get it. There are informed pieces about the nature and progress of the big topics facing videogaming. And there are the death threats. Only two, so far, but both from people who have apparently forgotten that videogames are supposed to be fun. Lucky for us, then, that there are some real enthusiasts out there.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

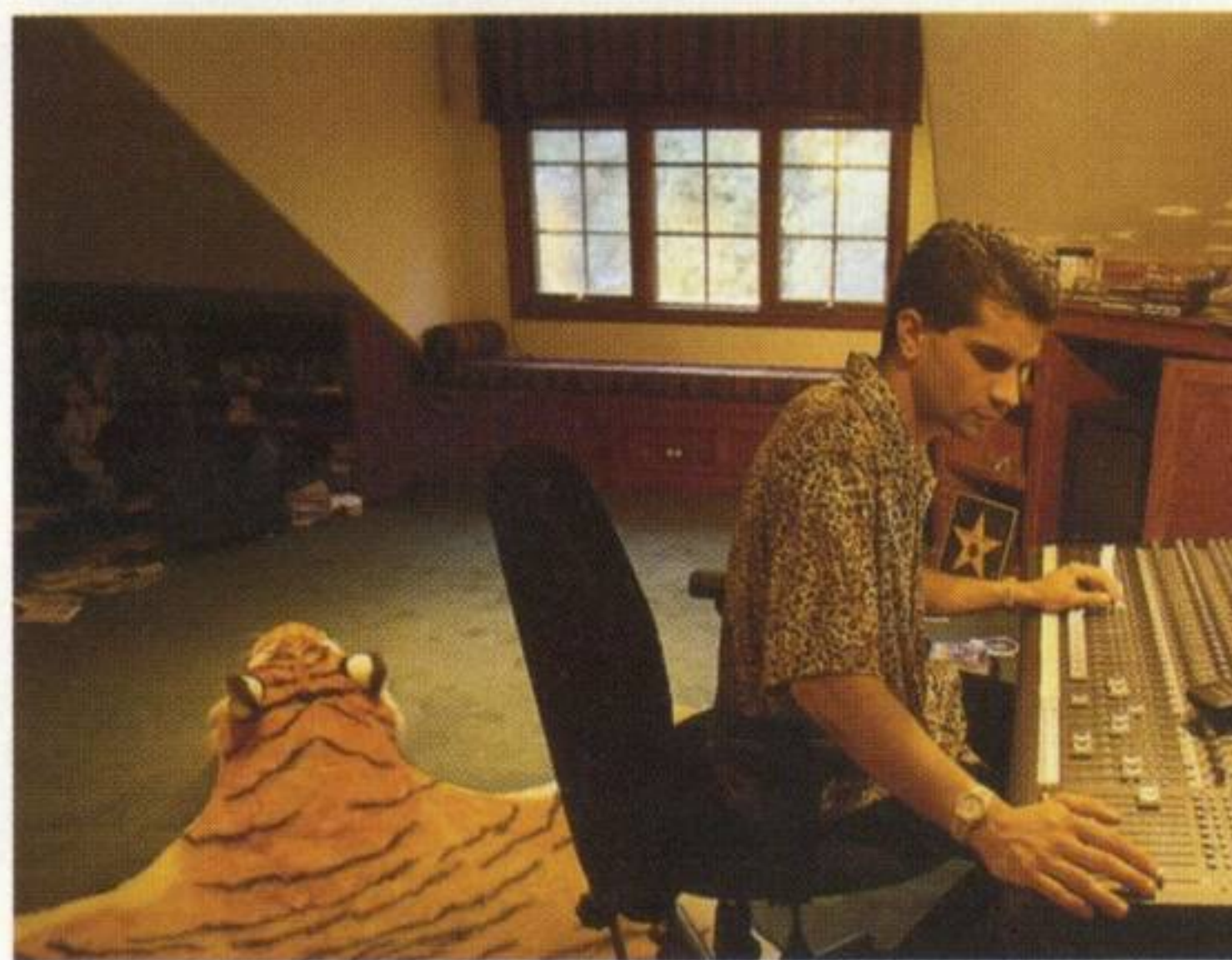
Sounds important

That Tommy Tallarico from issue 3, eh? Crazy name, crazy guy etc, but regardless of his taste in clothes and high-spend hair gel habit it's good to see *Arcade* giving coverage to an often criminally overlooked part of gaming – the sound.

Where gamers fall over themselves to praise a new graphics engine and eye-massaging pre-rendered intros, it's often the audio qualities of a game that make it truly great. Would *Resident Evil* have been anywhere near as scary without its brooding strings to build atmosphere? Similarly, *Zelda 64* wouldn't be half the cinematic, life-enveloping experience it is without its fantastic heart-warming soundtrack. And would you feel as much like you were actually driving the Viper in *Gran Turismo* without the throaty engine sound?

Cinematic soundtracks have come in for renewed interest in the last few years and it's high time more programmers thought about what was coming out of the speakers as well as what's happening on screen. Maybe you could start us off with a review of the *Metal Gear Solid* soundtrack in your Music section?

Stuart Norris, Cardiff



Tommy Tallarico – doing his bit for videogames.

Game music is evolving at a furious rate. With stars like Fat Boy Slim signed up to produce soundtracks for games, it's no wonder that the quality of our in-game tunes are on the up. *Arcade* feels that the most exciting developments, however, are being made in the field of interactive or context-sensitive music: the creation of soundtracks that adjust themselves to the progress of the player. *Zelda 64* demonstrates this perfectly – the music changes as you get closer to an enemy. This is clearly the way forward, with the potential to add far more to the gaming experience than simply playing even the most chart-friendly tracks straight off of CD in the background. Expect a full report in an upcoming issue.

Write to us at

Arcade

Do the write thing, go on. Enliven our postbag with your thoughts on the world. Send your letters to:

Rants & Raves, Arcade, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

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

The best letter each month wins an exclusive *Arcade* T-shirt modelled here, as ever, by the Lovely Lisa™. Keeping yourself busy, Lisa? "Yes, I've been making chocolate cake." Lovely! Can we have some? "No, I don't think so." Oh.



WILLY CUPP

WITH JUST VIVA FOOTBALL AND A PLAYSTATION OR PC HE CAN CHANGE FOOTBALL HISTORY!

LATER, AT HOME, IT'S 1970 AND BRAZIL ARE PLAYING AMERICA'S 1990 TEAM.

THERE GOES THAT WILLY CUPP. HE'S GOT VIVA FOOTBALL AND CAN PLAY IN ANY INTERNATIONAL MATCH BETWEEN THE YEARS 1958 AND 1998.

SOUNDS LIKE A SUPER NEW TITLE.

YEEHAW!
YOUR TIN CANS AND BEACHES ARE NO MATCH FOR OUR HIGH-TECH TRAINING FACILITIES.

BRAZIL SOON GET STUCK IN.

THATS FOR CALLING IT 'SAWWKER'!!

THEN, FROM THE CUPBOARD UNDER THE STAIRS, WILLY'S THUMBS TURN ON THE STYLE!

IT'S LIKE A CARNIVAL.

YES, A CARNIVAL OF FOOTBALL.

GEE! THESE GUYS ARE KICKING OUR BUTTCKS!

I SUPPOSE WE MAY BE SUPER POWERS IN EVERY OTHER RESPECT BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE BEAUTIFUL GAME WE OUGHT TO KNOW OUR PLACE.

BRAZIL WIN 7-0

DON'T DESPAIR AMERICAN. YOU'VE JUST GOT TO LEARN THE RULES AND NOT BE SO COCKY.

YOU CAN'T HELP FEELING SORRY FOR THE YANKS, BUT PERHAPS IF THEY REALISED THEY'RE ALWAYS GOING TO BE RUBBISH AND BOUGHT VIVA FOOTBALL INSTEAD, THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO CHANGE 'SAWWKER' HISTORY IN THEIR FAVOUR!

Issue five

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Special thanks to **Mike Wilmoth**

Alex Soboslay

Sue Bartucca

Gerbils

Okay, deep breath – All contributions are submitted and accepted on the basis of a non-exclusive world-wide license to publish, or license to other studios, unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing.



UK and overseas newsstand distribution:

Future Publishing Ltd – 01225 442244.

Printed in the UK.

All material © Future Publishing 1999

Next issue on sale 8 April 1999

On the side

Arcade is the dogs bollocks! Great articles, stories and graphic shots from the games you feature. Do you have a Web site?

Tiff Hill, via e-mail

Arcade doesn't yet have its own site, but we can recommend one: Future Gamer (<http://www.futuregamer.com/>). It offers a regular weekly on-line magazine, and – best of all – it's free. It's not as good as Arcade, though, obviously.

Oi, toss rangers! I just read your "comments" in issue 4 on how useless you think the water arrows are in Thief. Please try to play the game before you comment like this or you would know that water arrows are indispensable to get rid of zombies and to put out torches to create shadows to hide in.

David S, via e-mail

Toss rangers? That's a new one.

I bought the March issue of Arcade, despite the fact that I hate football, because I was pleased to see a decent magazine covering more than one format of console.

I do wish you wouldn't assume that all gamers are blokes though. Most of my girlfriends play games too. I am fed up of seeing half-naked women spreadeagled across most of the men's lifestyle mags and it adds insult to injury to have to trawl through more scantily-clad women in Arcade. It would be interesting to see if you could find enough sexy male games characters to fill your Virtual Fox slot so the girls could have an ogle instead.

Mandy Harris, Notts

We'll think about it. Can't promise anything though. What does everyone else think?

All-time Videogames XI

No, no, no! You've got it all wrong. I'm talking about your "all-time Videogames XI", from Arcade 4's (admittedly excellent) football special. I've got a team of game characters that could whip your lot's collective arses, much as France whopped England at Wembley recently. And, as with France, it's all to do with controlling the midfield. My lot play in a probably-soon-to-be-abandoned Glen Hoddle wing-back formation, and the line-up goes like this:

1. Goalie: Pong bat. No-one has more experience – he's been around since gaming began. And he's a custom-built stopper; it's what he is, it's what he lives for.
2. Right back: Bub from *Rainbow Islands*, *Bust-A-Move* etc. Has a near-telepathic understanding with brother Bob, who holds the line on the other side of the pitch. Okay, so these boys aren't the biggest, but they move fast, and are used to coping with balls descending upon them from everywhere at once.
3. Centre back: E Honda, *Street Fighter II*. Our rock in the heart of defence, and surprisingly quick for a big fella.
4. Left back: Bob. Really, they'll be even better than Phil and Gary.
5. Right wing-back: R-9 from *R-Type*. Kinda fast, but it's for his nippy dodging abilities



that this diminutive space craft holds down a place in the team. Excellent ball control too, whether it's floating in front of him or seemingly attached to his feet (or arse).

6. Right midfield: Link from *Zelda*. With his ear ring and floppy blonde fringe, he's the team's current golden boy. A strong all-rounder, he tends to pick up new tricks and techniques easily. And the ladies love him, despite a celebrity marriage to Princess Zelda seemingly on the cards.
7. Midfield destroyer: Bomberman. Terrifying bursts of speed over short distances, followed by an explosive tackle. Rarely booked, for he usually appears on the other side of the pitch, hiding round a corner, when the opposition player finally topples.
8. Left midfield: Ryu from *Street Fighter 2*. You may be surprised at the inclusion of two of the not-very-fancied Japanese in the team, but Ryu earns his place with speed, power, and a vast range of tricks.
9. Left wing-back: Toad (in a kart from *Mario Kart*). Fast, highly manoeuvrable, with a vicious streak that constantly surprises. Much like Graham LeSaux, then, although like him, easily knocked off the ball.
10. Striker: Duke Nukem. A traditional target man. He's strong, aggressive and filled with the arrogance needed to succeed.
11. Striker: Wario (from the *Mario* games). Clearly a cunning scumbag, he can turn whole matches by the sudden application of his greatest skill: cheating. Still unforgiven for the infamous "Hand of Wario" incident. Coach: John Madden. Highly experienced tactically, even if the senior players

sometimes question whether he's playing by the same rules as the rest of us.

Well, that's my team. Against your Videogames XI, I predict a 3-1 victory, chiefly thanks to your too-honest right-back, Fox McCloud, completely failing to get to grips with the wily Wario.

Martin Craik, Hackney

No, no, no, no, no. As Alan Hansen always maintains, you won't win anything with kids, which is why Bub and Bob just won't last the distance and Link will only find his maturity a third of the way into the game. Your three-at-the-back formation can only succeed with two wing backs who can tackle and dribble, and can you see R-9 and Toad really withstanding a constant push forward? And the rest of your team? Wario, as everyone knows, only appears once in a blue moon (he spends at least half the season suspended); Bomberman will find his fuses waterlogged at the merest hint of rain; Duke's exhausted all his stamina hanging out in strip bars; and as for your Pong bat – ever heard of a lob?

Bizarre moments

I really enjoyed the "Top 50 Most Bizarre Gaming Moments" in issue 4, but I couldn't help thinking that some of the moments weren't actually all that bizarre at all. A computer chess game? Characters dressed in '70s clothing? The ability to change a golf player's hat? They're really not very odd. You should see the shareware game I've just downloaded off the Internet. It features an ugly, bald clown, who collects money by simply jumping up and down on the spot and screeching. Oh, no, hang on a minute – it's the latest Robbie Williams video. Do I win £5?

Fred Nash, Bolton

Thanks Fred, but you've got us muddled up with a "comedy" magazine such as Viz.

We're not doing anything funny ever again. This bloke doesn't like it...

I'm not laughing

Arcade is very, very disappointing. Why are there interviews with people like Alan Shearer who have absolutely no association with games? And Nell McAndrew – what has she got to do with games? Nothing, apart from the fact that she has been chosen by a panel of bigwigs to represent a fictitious game character. The "Games Night" feature is also rubbish. Who cares about a bunch of blokes who got drunk and then played some games? Not me! And then there are the little things like "Top 10 Videogame Porn Films". WHAT IS THE POINT?

David Rolands, via e-mail

Sorry David. There is no point. Please accept our humblest apologies.

Nor am I

Question: what do the following have to do videogames? Almost naked pictures of babes (Nell McAndrew, *Arcade 2*). Thin, beautiful, legs-up-to-their-armpits girls draped over cars (*Ridge Racer 4*, *Arcade 3*). Bottles and glasses of beer ("Pub ammo" in the "Just Started?" feature, *Arcade 3*). Answer? Nothing at all.

But what is true about them is men have them and want more of them – legally. Boys also have them and want

1941
1942
1943
1944
1945



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IS MINUS 40°C**
**KIEV HAS
FALLEN**
**SUPPLIES AREN'T
GETTING
THROUGH**

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Rants & Raves ³

more of them – illegally. So what's the average age of your readership? Grow up *Arcade* and concentrate on the games not the sex and alcohol.

Ian Powell, via e-mail

Sorry Ian. You're right. Even though the average age of *Arcade's* readership is well over 20 years old, you're right. Men should wait until at least their late 40s before indulging in the sins of guzzling booze or looking at pictures of ladies.

I want one

Thanks for your article on owning a coin-op machine (*Arcade* 2). It's something I have wanted to do for years but never knew where to buy one or who to talk to. Now Christmas has gone and I've got some free cash I'm desperate to get one of these classics before they are all snapped up.

My problem now is that I cannot find my copy of *Arcade* with the contact details in. Could you please print the details of the companies that you highlighted that sell machines to Joe public?

David Reeves, via e-mail

By far the best way to track-down coin-ops is on the Internet (search for "coin-op", "JAMMA", and "UK"). If you're not connected, however, try: Andrew Baker on 0374 157648; Chris Jackson on 01977 662276; or, for Multisystem XXX, Simon Wilson on 01384 444570.

Drunk in charge

You lot are always going on about which games are best to play when you come home from the pub with your mates, but I reckon you need more research. Racing games are out, because they'll have you puking all over the shop. The last thing you want after travelling at 100mph through the suburbs at the hands of a mental cab driver is to try it again yourself.

Anything with sickly vomit-inducing colours is also a no-go so you can forget your *Mario Karts* and your *Bust A Moves* unless you want to see the colours repeated in the carpet. Sports games are alright, but they're a bit too complicated for the time of the evening. You might as well get rid of the beat-'em-ups too, cos it's impossible to see what's going on with that rate of blurrage. *GoldenEye*? You try it after eight pints of Scutlocks Old Durrigible.

Bond might have been keen on Martini, but he was never rat-arsed. Which basically leaves *Worms*. No fast reactions, no blurry screens, no complex controls, but you can still blow the crap out each other. Top.

Jamie Wootton, Leeds

We'll check it out. Thanks for the tip.

Miyamoto Madness

In your last issue, you quote Shigeru Miyamoto as saying "I'd also like to come up with a new type of game that doesn't require you to sit in front of a television". I think he is hinting at the possibility of Virtual Reality headsets, which could be the most exciting step taken yet in videogaming. What do you think?

Andy Morris, via e-mail

After everyone's flirtation with the idea of VR headsets a few years back, the

consensus seems to be that technology will need to improve before it's a viable, non vomit-inducing experience. We can't imagine what Miyamoto's thinking. But we expect to enjoy playing it when it arrives.

Yo ho doh!

Your article on PlayStation Piracy rang true with me ("Will the ever-increasing army of bootleggers sink the ship?" *Arcade* 4). I have owned home computers from the early 1980s starting with a Sinclair ZX81 and, when I was at school, pirating games was just a part of owning the computer.

The rot set in when I bought an Amiga with over copied 200 games. There were so many that I got stuck on a level I'd just load up another. It sounds so corny but it's true – I really didn't enjoy playing any of them because they had no value to me.

Then the Mega Drive and Super NES came along and I had to start paying full price for each title. Once again I started enjoying my games, sticking with them to the bitter end getting every last bit of enjoyment out of them.

In 1995 I bought a PlayStation, got it "chipped" to play import games and started picking up pirated gold disks. I soon had a collection of 75 games which I'd played for less than ten minutes each.

A Nintendo 64 is my latest purchase, and I've been enjoying my games – completing *Mario 64* three times just for the fun of it. A few months ago I was offered a disk drive system for the N64 enabling me to copy and play games on disk. I was almost tempted but refused – not on moral or legal grounds, but for selfish ones – I am once again enjoying my games and don't want to spoil it.

Andy Lees, via e-mail

See? It's never too late to "do a Darth" and turn to the good side.

You got me

I'd managed to make it into my late 20s without ever buying a videogame of my own. I'd played the odd racer at mates' houses, and it'd been a laugh, but I'd never had the desperate urge to lay out a couple of hundred quid for a system of my own.

Until last weekend, that is, when – a couple of pints and a smoke to the wind – some utter bastard (who calls himself a mate) who'd read your article ("National Elf", *Arcade* 4) invited me back to his house to have a go on *Zelda*. And I couldn't put the damn thing down. I played for four hours and had to be dragged away when my taxi arrived. That night I dreamt about the little green sod with the sword. And in my dream worked out that "The sticks catch fire! That weird metal thing's a brazier! All I need to do is light a stick, and light the fire – it's the only thing left to do and then the door MUST open." And that was it.

Saturday morning, I took enough Nurofen Plus to knock the hangover on the head, poured a pint of tea down my throat and I was in HMV by eleven. I left clutching a big box and a little box by eleven fifteen, and I sat in my living room for the rest of the weekend. Now my arse aches, I've flattened the beanbag, my left hand's stuck in a trigger-grip claw shape and I've smoked myself stupid. And I'm still playing.

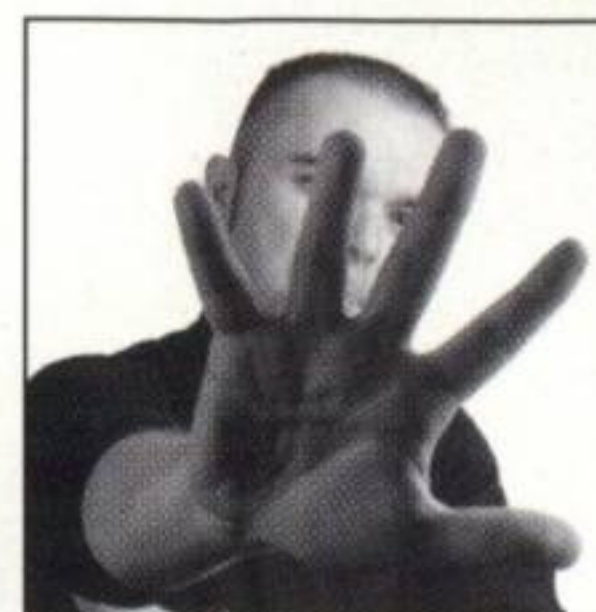
Cheers.

Jules Harrison, via e-mail

Yet another satisfied customer. Albeit in a chain-smoking, claw-gripped, nervous wreck kind of way.

CONTRIBUTORS

Helping wedge *Arcade* full of words and pictures this month, we have the following characters...



Stuart Campbell

The ebullient Mr Campbell has been writing about videogames almost since they were invented. From *Your Sinclair* through *Amiga Power*, to his current position as one of the industry's top

journos, Stuart's love of gaming and willingness to speak his mind (however pedantic his fault-finding) have carried him through. This issue he assembled the Top 50 "Power Players" chart for us (starting on page 47). "I was tempted to include myself," Stuart confesses. "People underestimate my influence. I made the Amiga the gaming force that it is today. IT WAS ALL ME! ME, I TELL YOU!!!" At this point, our phone line went dead. **Game of the moment:** Like we said, the phone went dead. But if a game's out, you can bet he's played it.



Neil Jackson

Out of all our Games Insider columnists, it's alien-hunter Neil who has received the most reader mail. Some letters have pointed out the similarity between Neil's monthly rants and the sleazy paternal advice of the *Fast Show's* Swiss Tony.

Others have wondered if he gets stiff standing in front of that sketch board all the time. Just a few ask if he's finished making *Star Trek: New Worlds* yet. "We're now very close to a beta version, it's all going extremely well. The 3D engine's been improved and now we've got proper trees in it, which is lovely."

Game of the moment: "WWF Warzone and *Turok 2* are two stonking post-pub party games, or the things to play when there's a group of us hiding from our girlfriends on a Sunday afternoon."



Justin Scobie

Never one to balk at a challenge, Justin was off to Herefordshire this month to snap ex-SAS soldier Chris Ryan for our *Metal Gear Solid* feature (starting on page 58). When ordering a trained killer to adopt silly poses for the camera, you have to

tread carefully – overstep the mark and you could find yourself on the wrong side of six feet of turf. "Actually, the biggest problem was finding a location that resembled something like a war scene in the grounds of this very pretty hotel," Justin says. "Eventually I stumbled across this old stick shed which I filled with smoke to create an atmosphere. We certainly confused the gardener."

Game of the moment: Justin claims he's not into videogames, but he is very excited about his new iMac. That's just the start of it, we warned him.

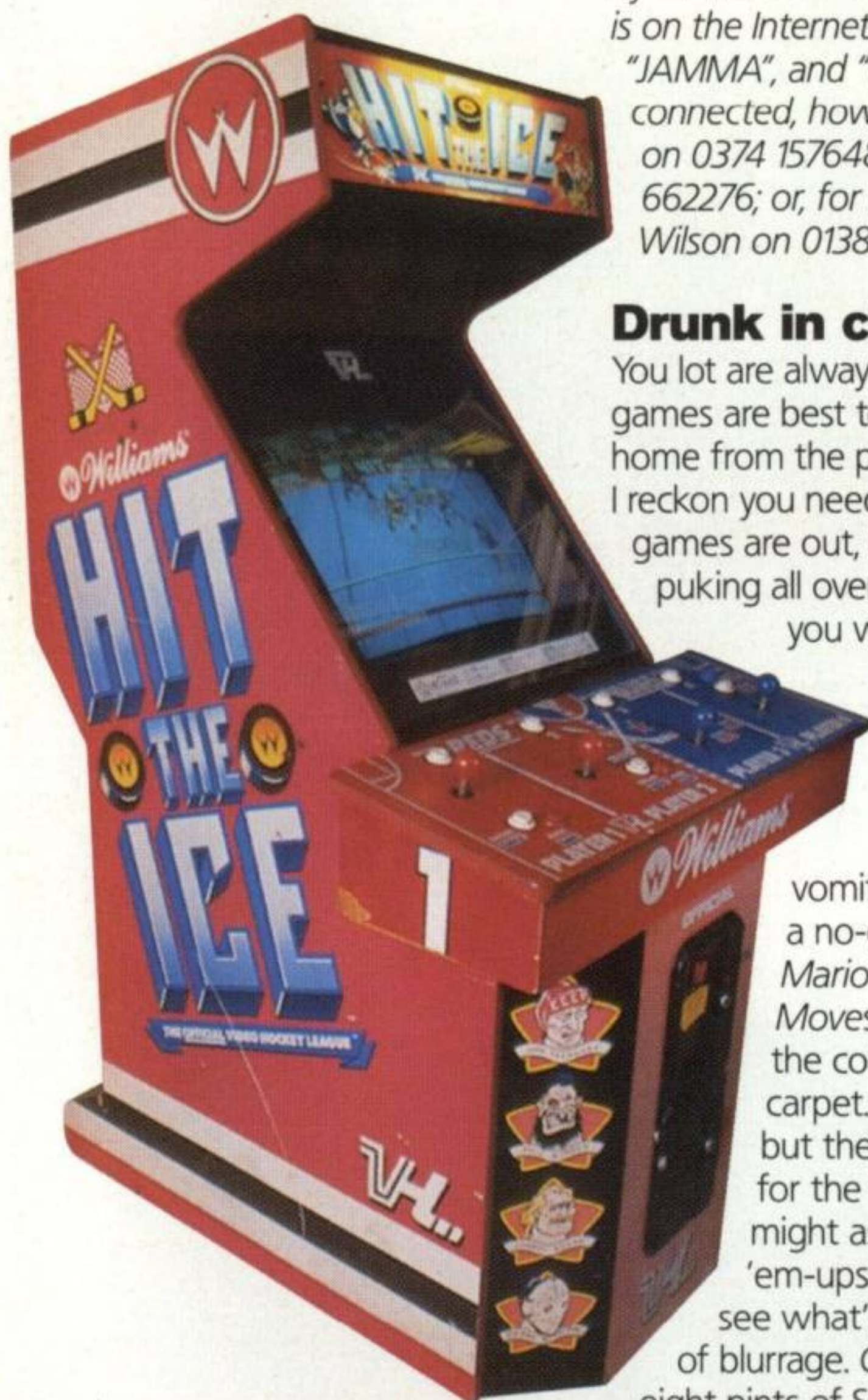


Kerry Haysom

The editorial team's new girl, *Arcade's* Designer tumbled straight out of art college and into the sweaty, aggressive, testosterone-fuelled atmosphere of Games Night. Kerry coped admirably with this culture shock, even though we

forced her to play Spectrum games and dress up like Mick Hucknell. "*Arcade* is an excellent magazine and the team are great!" she gushed, without us even needing to hold a gun to her head. "Now I'm looking to improve my game-playing ability." Ah, you've come to the right place.

Game of the moment: "In the absence of any new *Resident Evil* games, I've been playing *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins*. If it's got gore, it's fine by me."



Arcade exit poll

Arcade

■ We're determined to make *Arcade* the best we can. To help us, please include answers to the following questions when you write to *Arcade*.

The best bits this issue are:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

I didn't like _____

LETHAL

IMPACT



LOADED

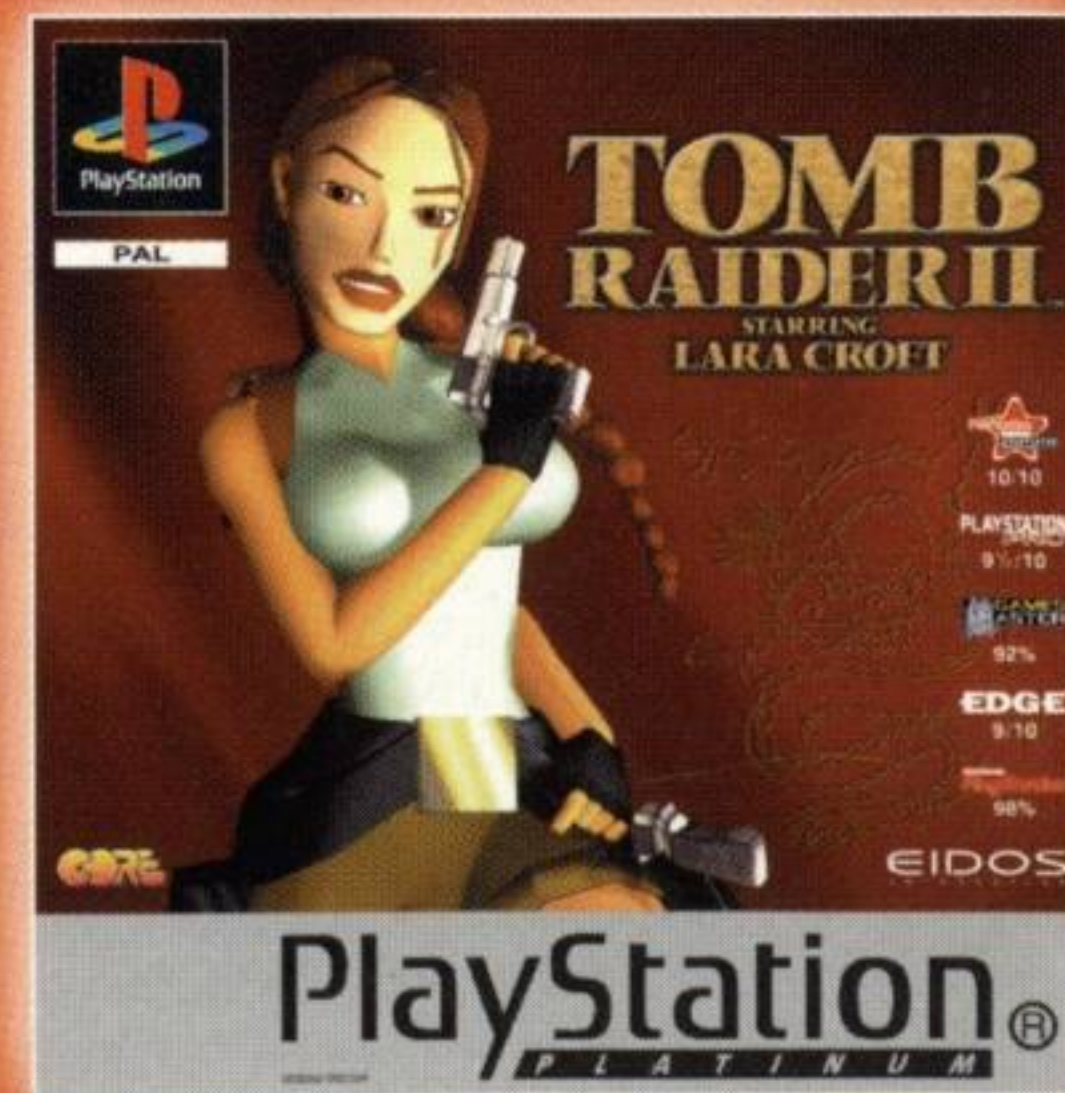
ACTION

IRRESISTIBLE

PRICE

£19.99

Tomb Raider II goes Platinum in March 1999



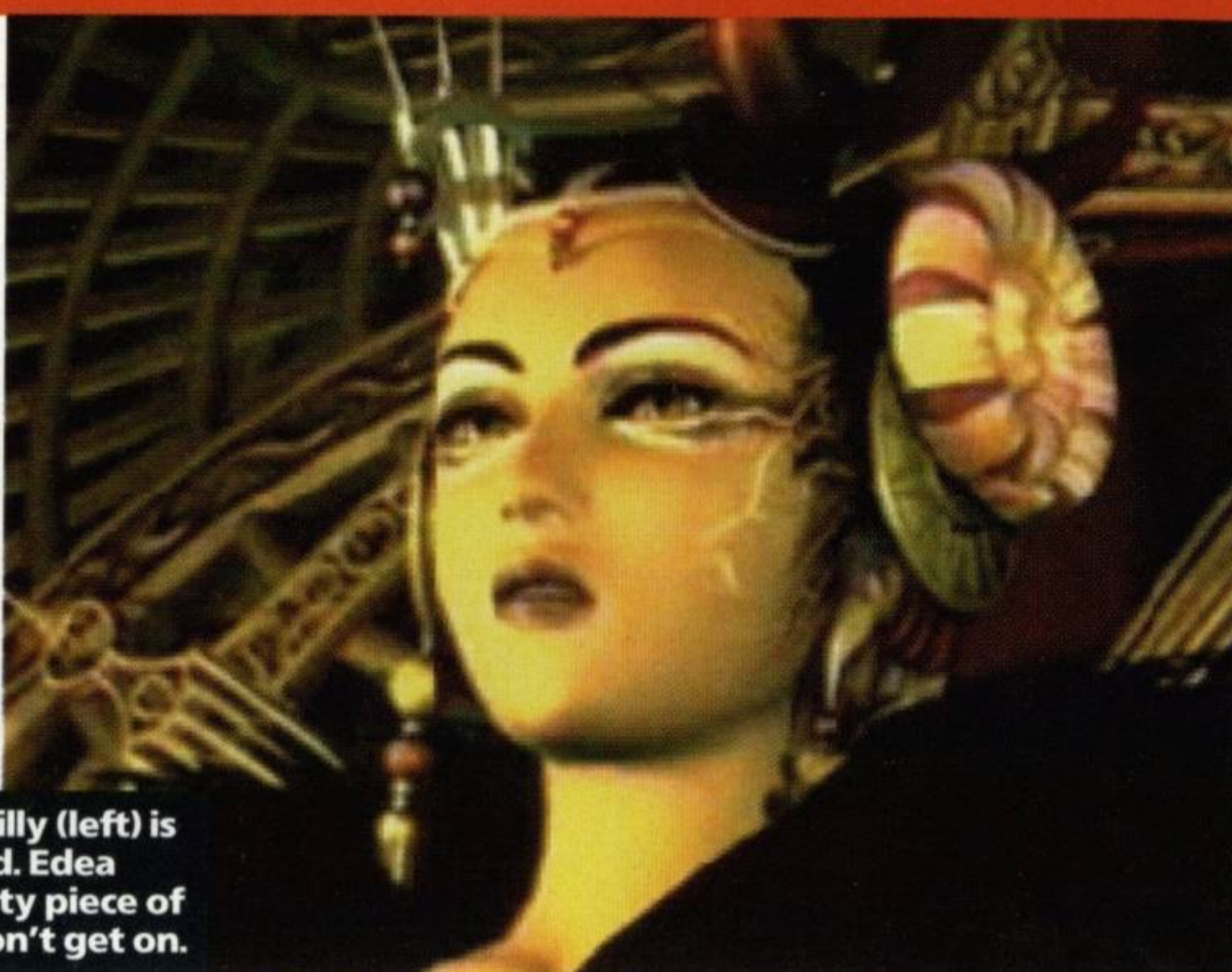
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GAME ON

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



■ Rinoa Heartilly (left) is your girlfriend. Edea (right) is a nasty piece of work. They don't get on.

SHOW NEWS

Final Fantasy VIII storms Tokyo

Square's PlayStation epic sells two million in Japan | Next stop UK

By Wil Overton

Even with the massive success of *Final Fantasy VII* in the West, it's still difficult to understand the following that Square's premier RPG series has gained in Japan since its humble beginnings on Nintendo's 8-bit NES. Initially meant to capitalise on the success of Enix's popular role player *Dragon Quest*, each instalment has built on the last to the point where over two

million eager Japanese gamers had pre-ordered *Final Fantasy VIII* for the PlayStation. On its 11 February release, the gaming stores of Tokyo's Akihabara (the main shopping thoroughfare) were once again forced to limit sales to one-per-customer, as they wrestled with thousands of punters.

Given its theme of "love" you might expect *FFVIII* to be a gentler experience than its predecessors, but it's a hard world that the new hero, Squall, inhabits. As a member of an elite band of

soldiers dedicated to maintaining world peace, he soon becomes embroiled with attractive rebel leaders, a war-mongering witch, and a deadly rival from his training academy. This time it's all on a four-CD set, so there's plenty of scope for romance among the familiar technology and monsters.

But stripped to its bare bones there's not a huge difference between *FFVIII* and its cousins. The story and characters have changed, and the graphics have moved even further away from the archetypal Japanese animé look and towards gritty realism, but the random menu-driven

combat is still very much in evidence, as is the sometimes bewildering statistics system.

Despite the obvious language difficulties that render *FFVIII's* strongest element – the story – incomprehensible to non-Japanese readers, you can see the \$30 million development budget was put to good use. It'll be interesting to see if Western gamers who bought *FFVII* on the strength of its hype, never to finish it, will return for an even longer gaming investment when *Final Fantasy VIII* hits the UK later in the year. No release date has yet been set.



SNEAK PREVIEW

Final Fantasy movie nears completion

■ As if to prove how far the cult of *Final Fantasy* has come, Square is now working on *Final Fantasy: the Movie* in conjunction with Columbia Pictures. The fully digitised, computer-generated film will, in the tradition of the *Final Fantasy* series, feature no characters from the existing games, although the theme of the story set on Earth in 2065 will apparently bear some correlation to earlier offerings. A trailer has appeared on the Net, and while it gives little of

the plot away, the graphics are already looking absolutely astounding. We see lingering profiles of an old man, then a young woman, interspersed with shots of a planet viewed from space and a bleak alien landscape. It's the ultra-realistic face movements, however, that are really getting us excited.

Could this be the kind of graphical quality we can expect from videogames in years to come? Square has invested millions in technology. This is just the beginning...





Over two million eager Japanese gamers had pre-ordered *Final Fantasy VIII* for the PlayStation.

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



■ Playing *StarCraft* never looked anything like this.



NEW FILM

Captured by the game

Cronenbourg's new film *eXistenZ* | Movies merge with videogames

By Sam Richards

Cult director David Cronenbourg, famous for film hits such as *The Fly* and *M Butterfly*, and controversial classics *Videodrome* and *Crash*, has turned his attention to the future of videogames for his new movie *eXistenZ*.

It's set in a world where game

designers are worshiped as superstars and where videogames have advanced to the point where players can organically enter the game environment.

Jennifer Jason Leigh plays designer Allegra Geller (a sexier version of Shigeru Miyamoto). She's the creator of the *eXistenZ* system which taps into its users' emotions via an interface drilled into the base of the spine. Pursued by a gang of fanatics who aim to assassinate her, Allegra escapes into the world of *eXistenZ*, taking unwitting security guard Ted Pikul (Jude Law) along for the ride.

There are unfashionable shades of virtual reality and the idea of escaping into a videogame has already been immortalised in *Tron* but, given Cronenbourg's reputation, we should be in for something better than *The Lawnmower Man*.

Explaining his motivations for *eXistenZ*, Cronenbourg says he was inspired by a conversation with Salman Rushdie back in 1995, at that point still in hiding

sense to me, because putting on glasses and gloves is a crude attempt to do just that."

Certainly, *eXistenZ*'s jargon (all "MetaFlesh" and "Bioports")

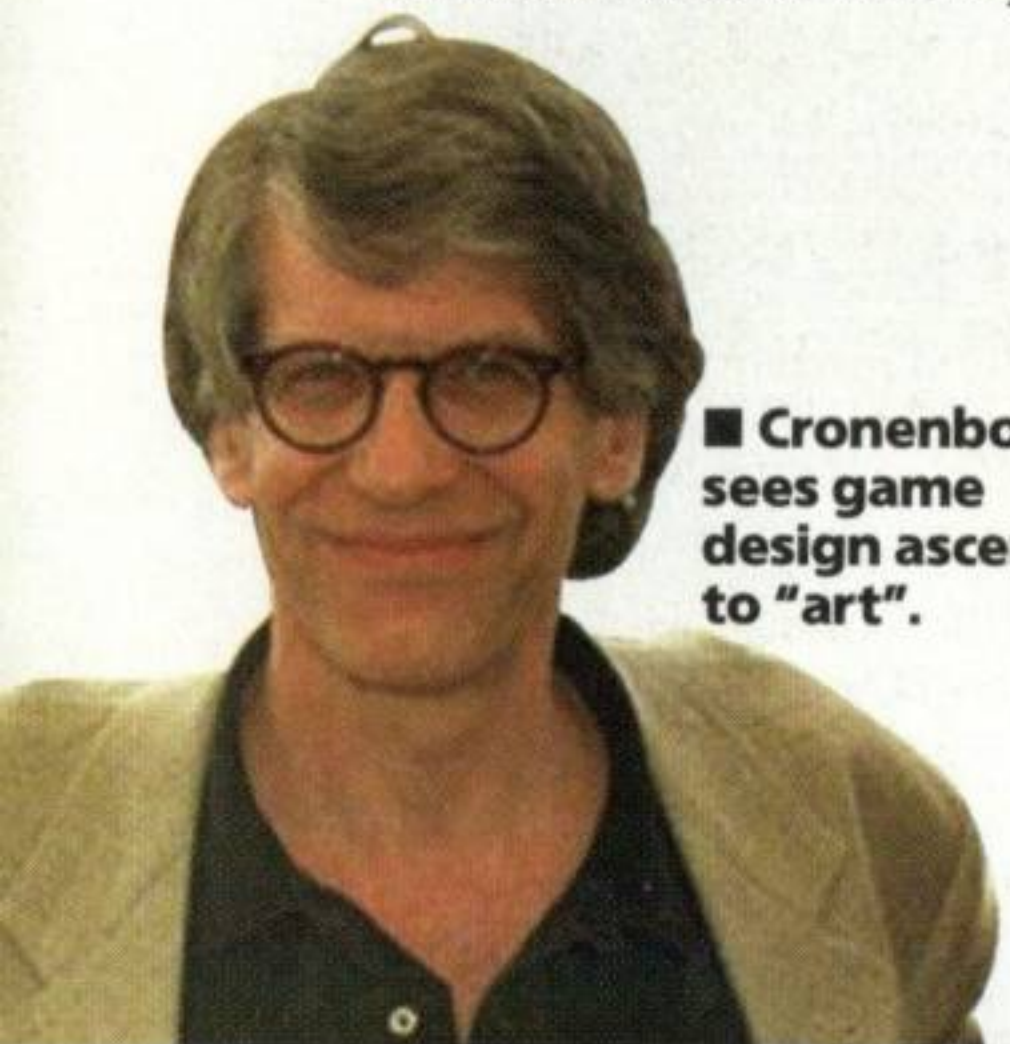
"A game that plugs into your nervous system makes perfect sense."

from his Iranian fatwa. Struck with the idea of an artist on the run, Cronenbourg made his heroine a game designer. "I was thinking of a future where game design could ascend to the level of art," he explains. "And it seemed to me that what people are really doing in videogames is trying to get closer to fusing themselves with the game. The idea that a game would plug right into your nervous system made perfect

accurately mirrors that of today's gaming, and the scene where Jude Law's character visits a back-street mechanic to attach the game interface to his spinal cord is clearly the future equivalent of getting your PlayStation chipped.

We'll know whether *eXistenZ* is another step toward mainstream recognition of videogames or a further example of Hollywood getting it all wrong when it opens in May.

■ Cronenbourg sees game design ascending to "art".



CONSOLE LAUNCH

Sega's blue dawn

Dreamcast's UK debut set for September 9th

Although Sega is remaining uncommunicative, it's now almost certain that Dreamcast will launch in the UK on 9 September, the same day as the US and the rest of Europe. Bizarrely, the latest Sega Europe literature suggests that the Dreamcast's spiral logo will change colour from orange to blue for the European release, scotching those Tangerine Dreamcast puns. Giles Thomas of Sega claims that they're "still working on the branding of Dreamcast in Europe". Rumours blame the hue U-turn on everything from a copyright problem to a need to give the machine a more mature image in Europe.

Sega is readying ten games for Dreamcast's UK launch. Non-starters such as *July*, *Godzilla* and *Tetris 4D* will never see the light of day over here, but the launch titles should include *Sonic Adventure*, *Virtua Fighter 3tb*, *Sega Rally 2*, *Incoming*, *Monaco Grand Prix*, *House of the Dead 2*, *Blue Stinger*, *Pen Pen Trilcelon* and two others. The Dreamcast modem will be available at launch, but it's not confirmed if this will come as standard packed with the machine.



■ Orange or blue?

NEW GAME

Variations on a theme

Theme Park 2: Now you can ride the rollercoasters of love.

What was your childhood dream? A visit to Alton Towers. And your dream after that? To design your own version of Alton Towers, of course. Bullfrog's *Theme Park*, released across all available formats a few years back, let you fulfil those dreams making many grown-up kids very happy, it was also responsible for the legion of copycat "theme" strategy games which followed, such as *Theme Hospital*, *Theme Aquarium* and *Theme Lighthouse*.

Theme Park returns for a

sequel later in the year and it's more sickly and colourful than ever, just how it should be after overdosing on candyfloss. Its key improvement is the option to let you ride on the rollercoasters of your own creation. The screenshots suggest a whole raft of new features, enabling you to mould your park to your own fantasies in four different styles (lost kingdom, space, Halloween and fantasy). Human AI has also been overhauled and the kids populating your parks are harder to please than ever, wired on Chupa Chups and fizzy pop.

Appearing only on PC to begin with, *Theme Park 2* will be good news for those with low-end machines, since it relies on simple-yet-addictive gameplay. However, it will have a new competitor - *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, from Hasbro, released next month.



■ Build it, ride it, then throw up your lunch.

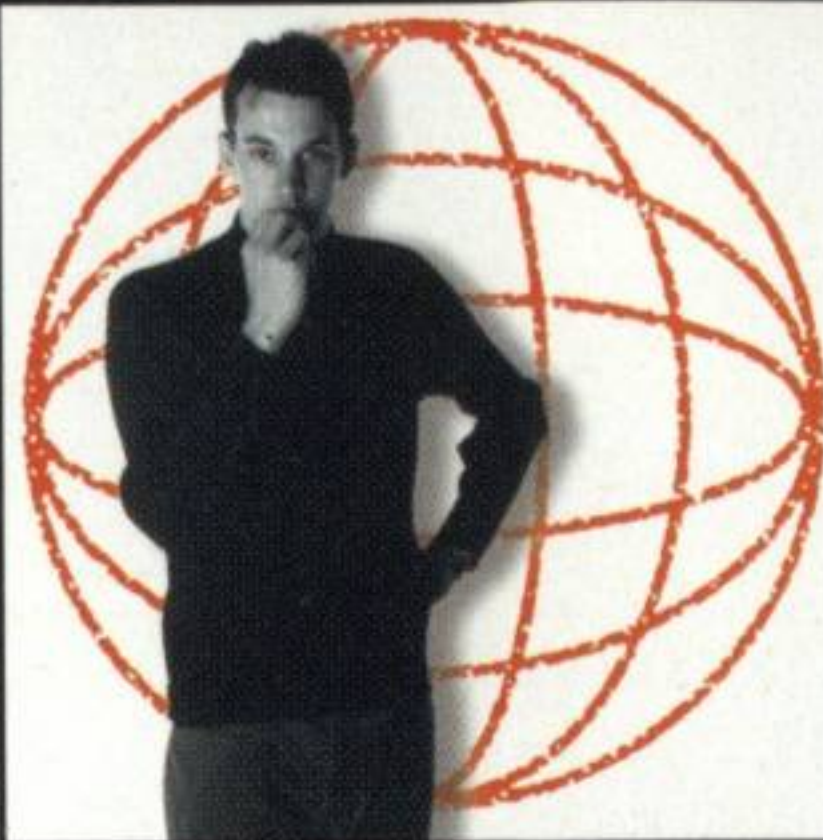




■ The all-dancin', all-shootin', all-riffin' world of the modern arcade. Nice.



Sam Richards' World of Games



Bedroom gamers

■ What's that noise? The sound of the old gaming stereotypes being shattered? Nintendo would like us to think so. Here's their latest claim, based on data garnered from callers to the Nintendo Hotline: No longer are male videogamers pallid, spotty inadequates who would rather stay in playing with their joysticks than run the gauntlet of the dating game. No, they're better in bed than normal men.

The reasons behind this nebulous conclusion, claims Nintendo, include the fact that gamers are "used to persevering for hours at the same level without giving up" and that "their finger dexterity is second to none". So ladies, if you suddenly find yourself pressed into a corner by a man espousing the virtues of *Lylat Wars*, don't kick him in the groin – it could be the start of endless nights of pleasure.

Small and neat

■ Fans of gaming on the move will be pleased to note that the NeoGeo Pocket is now available in the UK. The silver machine is reviewed on page 144 of this very issue.

But how successful will it be? Maker SNK has a cult following in Japan, but whether more casual gamers will appreciate its pedigree remains to be seen. Certainly its black-and-white screen puts it at an immediate disadvantage to Game Boy Color. Perhaps realising this, SNK has already announced the upgraded NeoGeo Color, which appears to have serious software support lined up. Capcom, Taito and Atari are committed to developing games alongside SNK's own in-house team.

The NeoGeo Pocket Color boasts 146 colours (as opposed to the Game Boy Color's 56), twice the battery life of Nintendo's machine and, allegedly, a link-up facility with Dreamcast. Still, don't hold your breath for a UK release within the year.

Meanwhile, Bandai's strangely-named Wonder Swan handheld, boasting software support from Namco, Square and – oddly – Sony, is being considered for a UK release later this year.

ARCADE NEWS

New coin-ops showing off

A new wave of coin-ops arrives | Dancing's "in" | Fighting's "out"

By Jason Brookes

The coin-op business may be having a hard time (see page 20) but February's

Amusement Trade Exhibition International (or ATEI) show at London's Earls Court still managed to

draw crowds eager to test out all the latest games.

This year, beat-'em-ups and shoot-'em-ups were out, and dance-'em-ups were definitely in. Leading the charge is Konami's *Dancing Stage* (the UK version of *Dance Dance Revolution*), due to hit arcades around the country as you read this. The shake-your-booty-to-the-lighted-floor tiles

game may be cheesier than Edam underpants and deeply embarrassing to those who lack natural rhythm, but it's great fun and appeals to a wider audience than most coin-ops. In fact, it's just the kind of game that Dad will be tempted to have a go on at the seaside pier to show the kids he was once "a bit of a mover". And he'll make an utter tit of himself.

After that he'll probably fancy a go on *Guitar Freaks*. This is the latest rhythm action game to come out of Japan and was another show-stopper for Konami – the company whose games demonstrated more innovation than any other. Two simplified electric guitars are included with the cabinet and players jam along to popular songs by plucking the oversized strings in time to the music, while following on-screen commands. It's just possible that you can look sadder than the blokes out of Status Quo.

Award for best game title had to go Konami's *Hyper Bishi*

Bashi Bashi, and the name is certainly apt. This ludicrous multi-game cabinet enabled three players to frantically bash enormous red, green and blue buttons faster than their opponents, although there are complex patterns to adhere to. "Rocket Horse Racing", for example, assigns each colour button a direction as well as its speed function and, naturally, each horse has a rocket strapped to its arse for rapid acceleration.

As usual, hordes of driving games cluttered the booths at Earls Court, although only two seemed to do anything new – Sega's *Crazy Taxi* and Konami's *Thrill Drive*. The former utilises the Sega's Dreamcast-powered Naomi hardware. It puts you in seat of a taxi with an objective to ferry passengers safely around, while careering through the on-coming traffic like a lunatic. *Thrill Drive* is comparatively standard racing fare, but it does feature extremely high-speed races along dangerously congested open freeways, its main attraction being the head-on smashes that are replayed in gruesome, realistic detail. Nasty.

■ See "Game On Special Report" on page 20 for a more in-depth look at the state of arcade games.

Arcade needs you!

As *Arcade* continues to grow bigger and better, we need some talented new team members to help us make it the best we can. Current vacancies are:

Staff Writer

Do you love writing? Are you any good at it? Do you have an inexhaustible passion for videogames and a normal life? *Arcade* is very proud of its writers and we use only the best. If you think you've got what it takes to join our ranks, write 500 words on a game you love playing and send it in. Go on, dazzle us.

Deputy Editor

We're looking for a highly experienced magazine journalist to join *Arcade* at a senior level. The successful applicant will be a great writer, an enthusiastic communicator, a keen game player, a whizz at XPress, and able to keep their head when all around are losing theirs. Send a writing sample and five ideas on how to make *Arcade* better.

Production Assistant

Are words your "thing"? Are you organised and motivated with a strong grasp of English usage? Then we want to hear from you.

Send all materials (including your CV) to: Lynn Cousins, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or send email to: lynn.cousins@futurenet.co.uk. Be sure to mark all correspondence with "Arcade vacancies".

Smack my pitch up

Our goal: to get a ridiculous game idea turned into an actual game.

No. 4 Termite Attack

■ **The pitch:** An action/adventure in which, at the touch of a button, control is transferred from your main character (a tough, unkempt Lee Marvin-style adventurer) to his army of pet termites. This battalion of adventuring insectoids are on hand to solve the puzzles where one man alone would be at a loss. The termites can eat through solid wooden surfaces in a matter of months, carry hundreds of times their own

weight in straw, and chew at enemies' ankles when you're outnumbered. Blasts of atomic radiation won't kill these guys, but be careful not to tread on them.

■ **The response:** "This concept is more flawed and vague than any game design I've seen in years. First off, a

landscape detailed enough to zoom in to termite level would be too much for even a Pentium 2 450s. Second, there's no indication of how you control these pesky critters. Maybe some sort of C&C clone is in order, with Lee's chunky shoes as the battlefield. Is Lee Marvin still alive, by the way?"

Nick Harper, Game Designer, *Psygnosis*.

■ **Next month:** More pitch slapping.





■ Keown and Upson make it one-nil to the Arsenal, watched over by the "real" Yoshimitsu.



Iron Fist trophy "tekken" by Brit

19-year-old UK gameplayer beat the world at Namco's *Tekken 3* | Arsenal players fight fiercely...

The world's first *Tekken 3* Iron Fist tournament, held at London's Namco Station last month, was won by 19-year-old Carshalton College student Ryan Hart. He beat off competition from Sweden, Germany and Australia to

scoop the \$5,000 prize money, *Tekken 3* coin-op machine and trophy. Ryan, fighting as leather-clad Paul Phoenix, later revealed that this was his 11th games tournament victory, having walked off with prizes in previous *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter* contests.

"I hadn't practiced much before tonight, but I think my *Tekken* experience showed through." When asked what he'd do with the cash, Ryan told us he was planning a holiday, although he'd also be upgrading his kitchen – he's a keen cook – and investing in the latest version of Japanese rhythm action game *Beatmania*.

A celebrity *Tekken* tournament held at the same event was won by young Arsenal defender Matthew Upson, who beat team-mate Martin Keown in the final. Watch out for Eddy Gordo-style footwork launching the Gunners towards Premiership victory.

"I choose to play as Paul Phoenix because I'm used to playing the coin-op machine and his moves translate more easily to the PlayStation joypad," explained Ryan. "I

"My experience showed through"

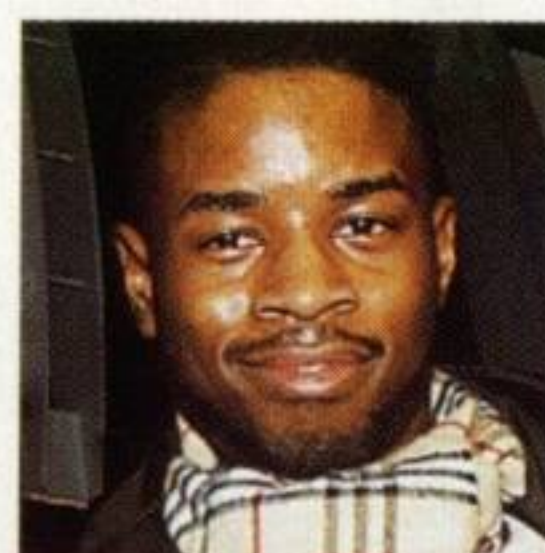


■ The Brits are best at *Tekken* – official.

TEKKEN TIPS

Top *Tekken 3* tips from the new World Champion, Ryan Hart

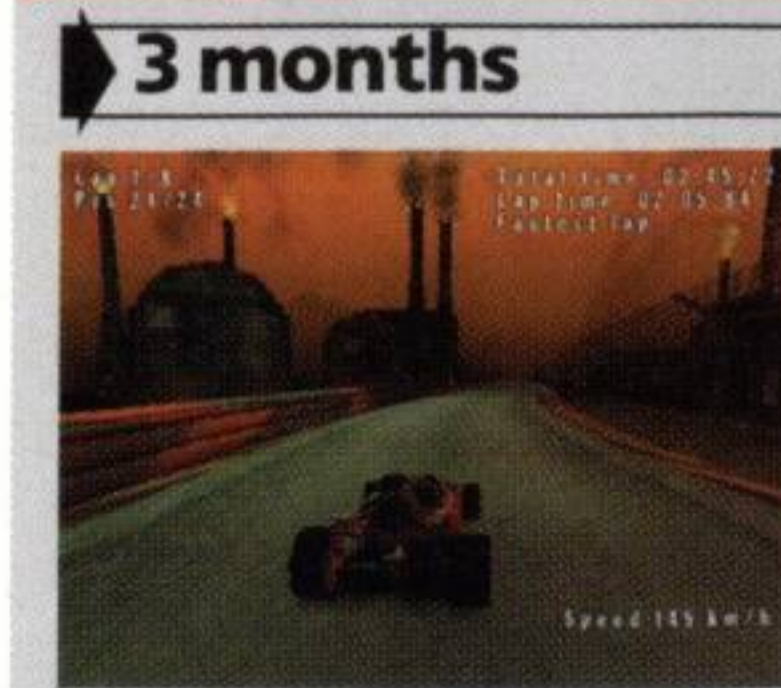
How to beat him at his own game.



1. Learn how to block. Simple defensive moves are the most important you can know.
2. Play it cagey until you can grasp the style of your opponent's play.
3. Learn how to anticipate the combos of the various characters in order to block.
4. Turn defence into attack as rapidly as possible.
5. The most spectacular combos are not always the best. Learn the moves that you can best conceal from your opponent.
6. At the start of a bout, never move backwards. Step sideways, then launch your first attack.
7. If any of the *Tekken* fighters challenge you in real life, avoid Yoshimitsu – he's got a big sword.

INCOMING

Six gaming beauties you can expect to play in the next year.



Thrust, Twist & Turn
 ■ PC ■ /Take2/Carts Entertainment ■ May
 Circuit Breakers meets F-Zero X. A 3D racer with 3D tracks in which tiny cars hurtle at tremendous speeds around mad loops, ramps and jumps.



Project SDR
 ■ PlayStation ■ SCE ■ June
 Mario Kart-style racer, formerly known as Wheel-Nuts, still without an official title. Boasting cartoon drivers, cars without chassis and 12 theme tracks, this looks like multi-player fun.



Legend Of Legaia
 ■ PlayStation ■ SCE ■ July
 Popular Japanese RPG with lovably archetypal plot – something about solving the Riddle of the Mist. Fully developed characters and beat-'em-up style fighting enhance the enjoyment.



Syphon Filter
 ■ PlayStation ■ 989 Studios/Sony ■ July
 Blockbusting 3D action adventure combining stealth and shooting to counteract biological terrorism. Top feature looks to be the sophisticated third-person gunplay.



Blue Stinger
 ■ Dreamcast ■ Climax/Sega ■ September
 One of the Dreamcast's UK launch titles, this spooky action adventure will also be the first game to feature urination, but given the sensitivity of censors, this may be pissing in the wind.



Evolva
 ■ PC ■ Computer Artworks/Virgin Interactive ■ Winter
 Real-time action strategy with gorgeous graphics and a futuristic evolutionary theme with huge insects. Rumoured to appear on Sony's PlayStation 2.



POCKETSTATION

PlayStation's kid brother

PocketStation set for April launch in UK.

It's the Scrapy to PlayStation's Scooby Doo and the Godzooky to its Godzilla. Sony's PocketStation add-on is a cross between a Game Boy, a Tamagotchi and a memory card and it will arrive in UK shops next month.

Available in white or transparent casing, the PocketStation isn't much larger than a memory card. In fact, you can use the device to store game saves just as you would a normal memory card, but the Pocket Station is also a tiny games machine. The small but detailed pixel screen is designed to run sub-games which have been downloaded on the PocketStation from selected PlayStation titles.

Street Fighter Zero 3 will be the first game to support a PocketStation sub-game and Tamagotchi-style elements will feature heavily in the gameplay. After selecting a character, you can improve its statistics via training options, before embarking on fights against the computer which win you additional characters.

Future PlayStation games with PocketStation capabilities include *Final Fantasy VIII*. And, although difficult to define as a "game", *Crash Bandicoot 3* will let you download graphics of Crash larking about on to the PocketStation.

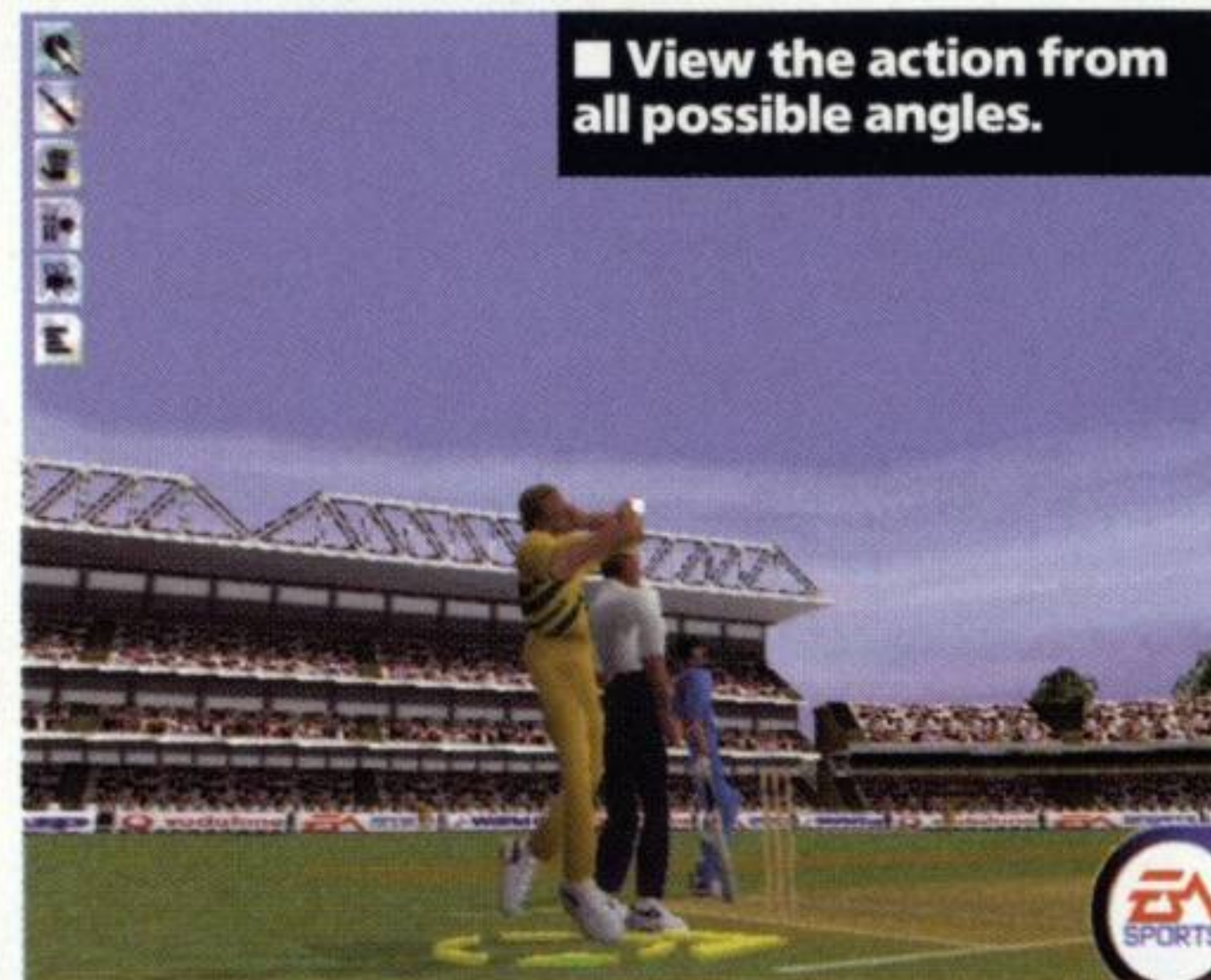
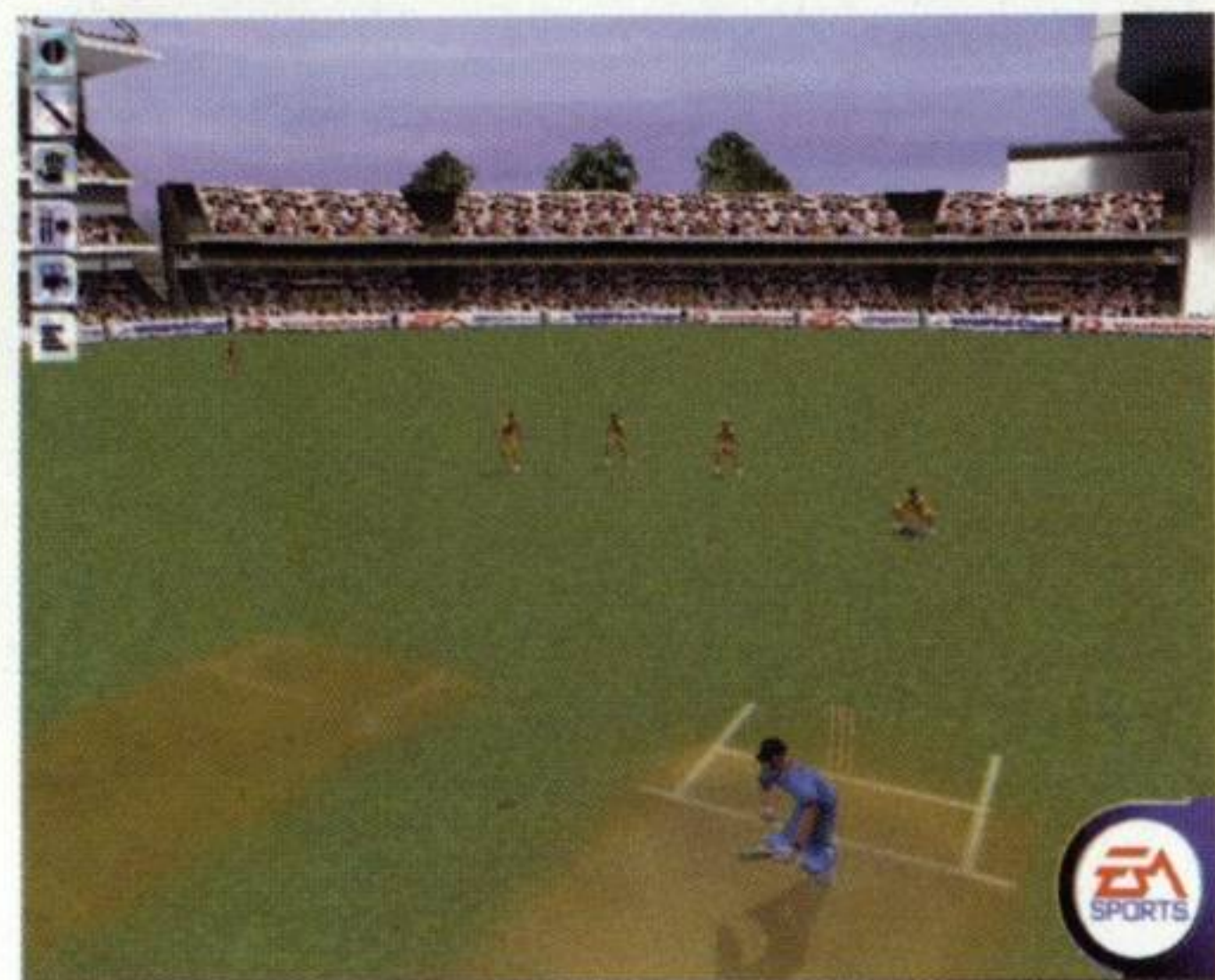
Although Sega was first to launch this kind of add-on (with the VMS companion to Dreamcast), PocketStation will be first to reach the UK. Stock sold out on the day of release in Japan, although as it's aimed at younger gamers, we're interested to see how it is received over here.



■ The new PocketStation. Ah, bless. Ain't it cute?

EA puts a new spin on Cup cricket

World Cup Cricket for PlayStation and PC | "Added reality" courtesy of Stewart and Hollioake.



■ View the action from all possible angles.



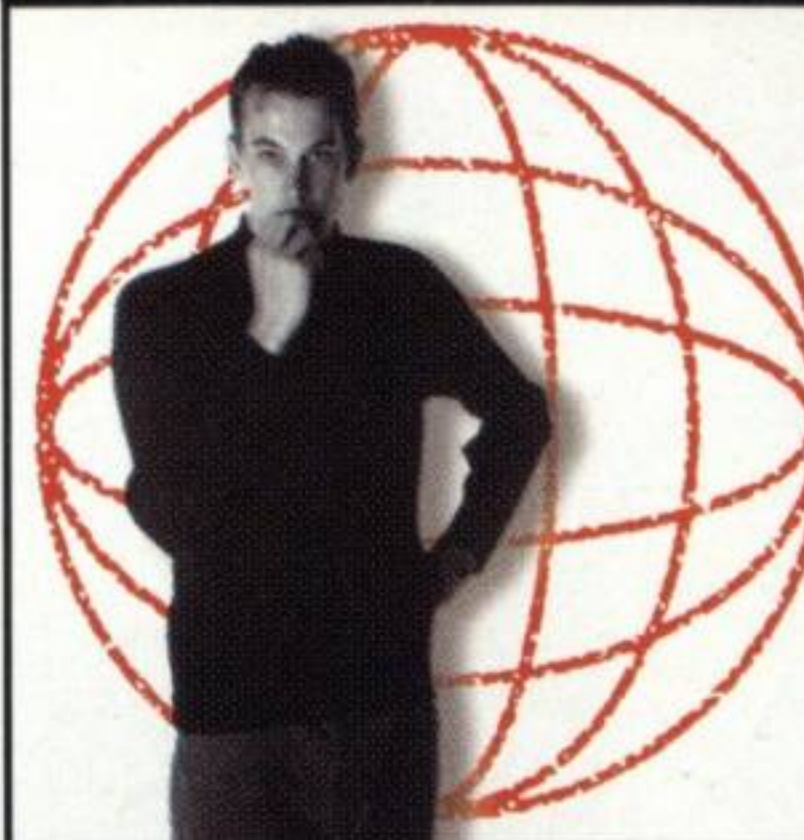
■ Adam Hollioake: aiming for World Cup victory this summer.

With the England cricket team's hopeless performance on the Australian tour now a distant memory, it's time to look forward to the Cricket World Cup. Held on home turf at Lords in May and June, our boys in the blue pyjamas should have a much better chance of success. To ensure that even when rain stops play the willow-on-leather action doesn't end, EA has pulled off another licensing coup

to bring us Cricket World Cup '99 for the PC.

Featuring all the 12 World Cup teams and their players, endorsed by England Captain Alec Stewart and with motion capture provided by Adam and Ben Hollioake, this is the most ambitious cricket game to date. Its aim is to translate the subtleties of the sport into enjoyable gameplay, while the innovative player interface promotes a tense confrontation between batsman and bowler, prioritising two-player matches. An Internet site for multi-player gaming has already been created. Time to start dreaming of that edge to gully for four.

Sam Richards' World of Games



Balls of fire

World Of Games first reported that the Bitmap Brothers, famous for desperately trying not to look like programming geeks back in the '80s, were working on new projects. Predictably, and despite denying it at first, the new game will be a *Speedball* update. Still, as the violently thrilling *Speedball 1* and *2* were everybody's favourite Amiga games, this is a good thing. Look out for *Speedball 2100* on PlayStation and Game Boy next year.

Symphonies on ice

In a smart musical move, Gremlin has secured the services of post-rock noise symphonists Mogwai to soundtrack its forthcoming *Actua Ice Hockey 2* release. The tunes featured include "Like Herod" from the excellent *Mogwai Young Team* album, along with the DJ Q remix of "R U Still In 2 It". On the PC version only (it's also released for PlayStation), you'll be able to play as the Mogwai team and the band's chirpy mugs have been digitised into the game. There's also a possibility that Chris Evans and his Virgin radio breakfast show posse will have their own team, making the emulation of ice hockey's notoriously bruising confrontations all the more appealing. *Actua Ice Hockey 2* will be reviewed next issue, as will Mogwai's new album *Come On Die Young*.

PHOTOGRAPHY: HIRO IZUMI, ALLSPORT

NEW GAME

Roll over Rusedski

Real tennis takes a bashing from Smash Court.

Getting your hands on a good, realistic tennis game is less likely than a Brit winning a Grand Slam tournament. The fact is that tennis game plus realism equals boredom. Which is why Namco's *Smash Court Tennis* is such a fabulous PlayStation game and why *Smash Court Tennis 2* - fresh into the office from Japan - is even more wonderful.

Kiddie characters who look and dress like the worst playground misfits play a game of surprising depth across courts



■ Wimbledon? Pah! Give us *Smash Court* in the UK.

that range from the traditional grass and indoor arenas, to New York, the streets of London (where you can drive forehands against a passing double decker) and a glass-topped court under which dolphins swim. If this isn't enough comedy for you, the baffling Tennis Roulette sub-game should satiate your

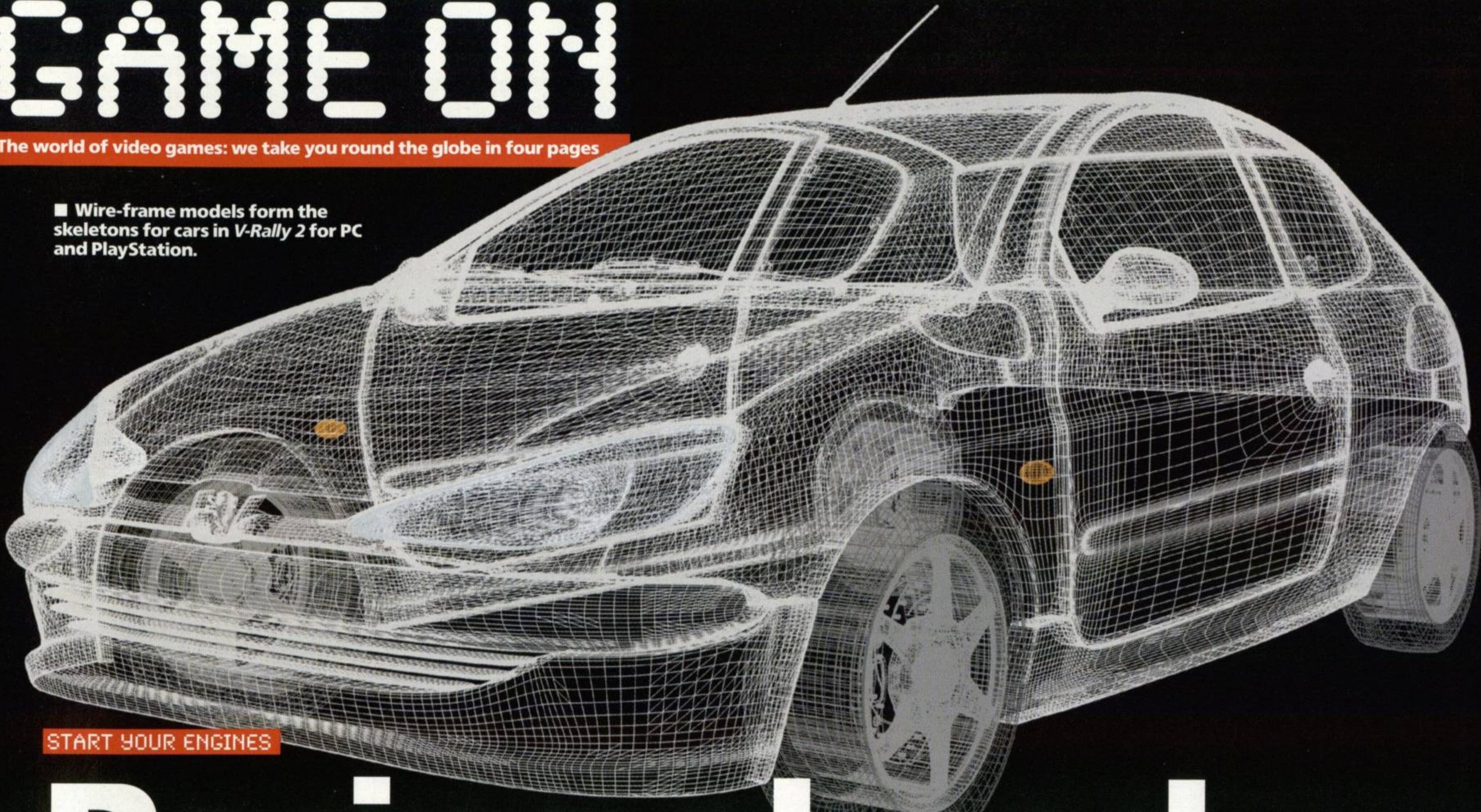
humour needs completely. To fully experience the beauty of *Smash Court Tennis 2*, you'll need a Multi-Tap and three willing companions. However, for the time being you'll have to seek out import copies as Sony has not set a UK date. Pray the company sees sense and releases it here *toute suite*.



GAME ON

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

■ Wire-frame models form the skeletons for cars in *V-Rally 2* for PC and PlayStation.



START YOUR ENGINES

Racing ahead...

Gran Turismo 2 revealed | *V-Rally 2* gears up | More biggies to follow



■ *V-Rally 2* looks to build on the popularity of the original, still going strong on PlayStation as a £19.99 Platinum release.

By Sam Richards

This year is already shaping up as a great year for driving games. Riding in the slipstream of the superb *Driver* and tailgating the marvellous *Ridge Racer Type 4*, comes the sequel to the greatest driving game ever. Sony has finally admitted to the existence of *Gran Turismo 2*, currently slated for release in November.

There are likely to be four racing categories included, the most exciting being the off-road rallying option. Around 400 cars should be available, including a much stronger European presence than last time, of which the Mini is

just one example. Races will be held in Tahiti, Rome and Monaco.

GT2, again developed by the motor racing aficionados at Polyphony Digital (who claim to have actually driven all the cars in the game), looks set to reinforce its status as the PlayStation's premier driving franchise. It will even support some kind of PocketStation feature and be compatible with *Ridge Racer Type 4*'s Jog Con joystick.

Meanwhile, *V-Rally Championship Edition 2* is also preparing to join the race. The beauty of the original was its pick-up-and-play feel, and Infogrames

appears to have added startling depth to the equation with 92 tracks across 12 countries, a selection of 20 cars, in-game damage (so engine failure is a possibility), animated drivers, and two "secret bits of technology" which Infogrames is coquettishly refusing to tell us about. *V-Rally 2* is due for release in June.

Other driving favourites coming back for more in 1999 include a third helping of Psygnosis' *WipEout* and DMA's controversial *Grand Theft Auto*, itching for more illegal hotwiring and handbraking action. More details next issue. 

GT2's designers claim to have driven over 400 cars during its development

TOP 100

Time to vote

What's your pick for the best game of all time?

In a couple of months time, *Arcade* will publish a list of the 100 best games of all time. But it won't be a list put together by us, it'll be compiled by you.

So please take five minutes out to register your votes. What we need is your top ten games, in order (complete with what system each

game's for) and then a few words explaining your number one pick. Write to:

**Arcade Top 100
Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath BA1 2BW.**

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

A life less ordinary

A bunch of nutters make *Half-Life*, the movie.



■ Bob Holness waived his fee to appear as a scientist.

■ A group of *Half-Life* fans have just completed a five-minute action film based on the game. Described by director Jamie Matson as "tongue-in-cheek Ridley Scott on a budget," it was filmed at a decommissioned military



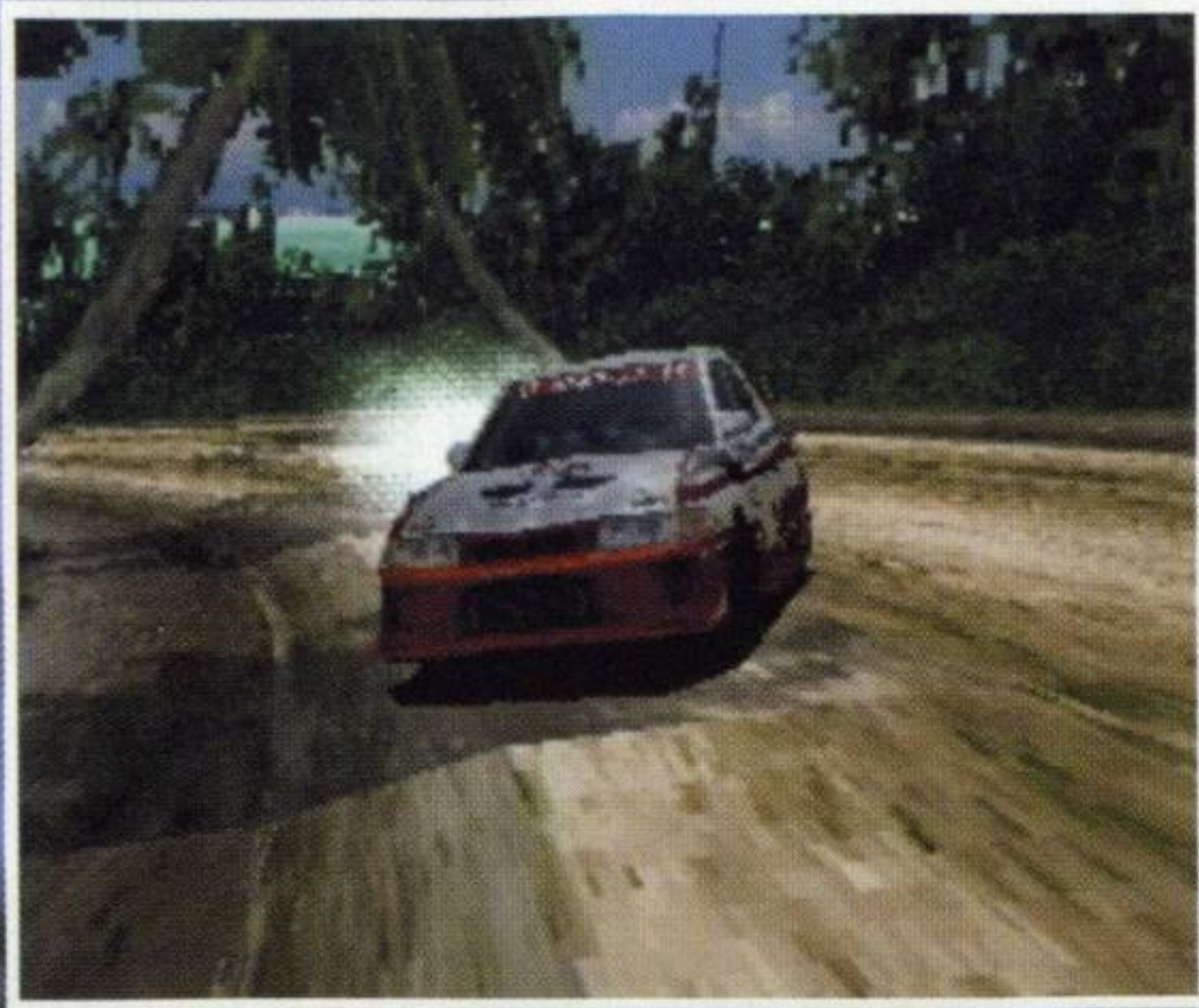
■ Enemies were distinctly less ugly than in the game.

base in Bedfordshire to represent *Half-Life*'s Black Mesa Research Centre. The film was officially commissioned by Cendant (*Half-Life*'s UK distributors) in order to provide the gaming fraternity with a different angle on the game,



■ Lights, camera, action... oh hang on, he's dead.

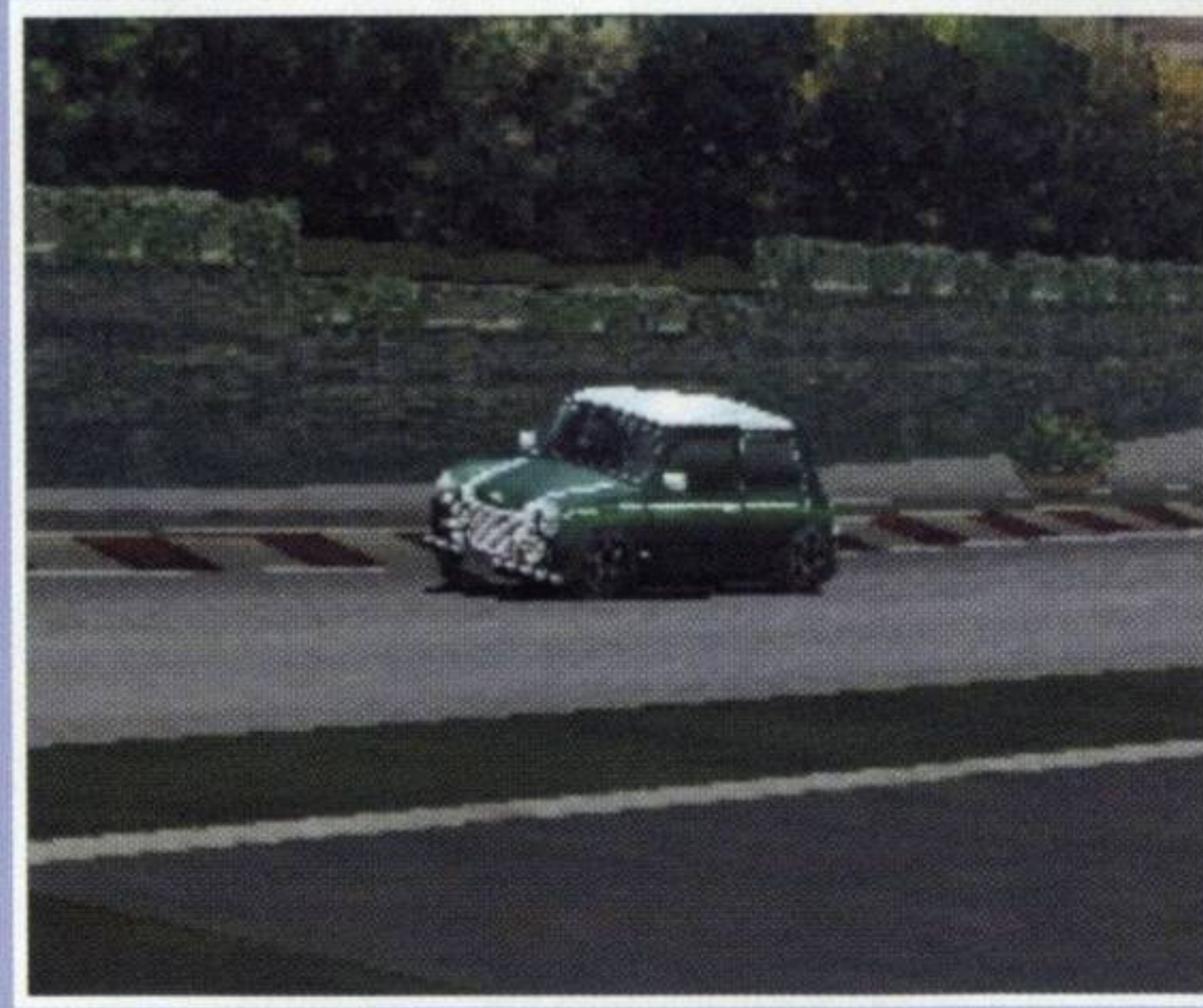
although we reckon that having a good laugh ranked high in the film-makers priorities. *Half-Life Uplink* (boasting several different endings), is now available to download from www.cruisecontrol.uk.com.



■ Just as *Ridge Racer 4* ups the racing ante...



■ ...*Gran Turismo 2* threatens to up it again.



■ PlayStation racing fans have never had it so good.



GT2's Driving Force

■ In an exclusive interview with *Arcade's* sister magazine *Edge*, *Gran Turismo's* producer Kazunori Yamauchi of Polyphony Digital outlined his intentions for the eagerly-awaited sequel.

"It's unlikely to have the impact of the original game," he explained, "but there's 25%

more of the PlayStation's performance to be used. The visual quality is enhanced, and the increased level of detail should please car lovers."

Physics modelling has been improved to make handling of the cars even more realistic. "The cars now have the same mechanics as their real-life counterparts," he says. "The models behave authentically and should drive as real cars. There

was the option to increase the number of cars racing but this would have meant no improvement on the quality of tracks."

And what's he most proud of? "With most other racing games, a car comes up to you, overtakes and races into the distance. With *GT* the group of six cars are all racing with each other, which is a great achievement."



GAME ON

SPECIAL REPORT



ILLUSTRATION: MATT KENYON; PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDE EDGINTON

NEWS ANALYSIS

Have PlayStation and N64 killed the coin-op?

Coin-op revenues are down. Home systems are breaking all records. Coincidence?

By Jason Brookes

Any gamer worth their salt will have fond memories of a misspent youth pumping 10ps into their favourite coin-op machine in a dark arcade or the corner of the local chippy. This was a time when arcade machines commanded almost religious respect. When games such as *Defender* and *Asteroids* consumed both players and their pocket money.

It was also a time when skintight stonewashed denims and leg-warmers were the streetwear of choice. But while the passage of time might have been cruel to fashion, it has left a handful of arcade games with an almost sacred ancestry. Now, this nostalgia is salt rubbed into the wounds of a coin-op industry that's finding it harder and harder to get people to dig in their pockets and splash the cash. In short, the arcades are in trouble.

"The coin-op industry has suffered over the last three years," explains Alex Tanner, editor of the coin-op industry's leading trade magazine *AB*

Europe. "One reason is the advancements made in PC and console game systems. They've become so powerful that it's become more difficult for coin-op manufacturers to come up with games that can only be played in the arcade."

A walk around the recent ATEI show in London – an annual exhibition of the latest coin-ops – is all the proof you need. In the late '80s, when coin-ops were sold on cheap, replaceable PCBs (printed circuit boards), there would have been hundreds of machines competing for attention. Now the number of new games on display has been dramatically reduced, and many games

companies have pulled out of the coin-op sector altogether because of falling revenues. Most of them point the finger at the escalating cost of the machines themselves (up to £20,000 for a deluxe sit-down driving game such as *Daytona USA 2*), and the subsequent high prices (£1 a go) for the player.

As Alex Tanner says, the biggest challenge the arcade game designers have faced is coming up with experiences that are nigh-on impossible to recreate on home systems.

For years, the simple process of upgrading the graphics and sound quality was enough to keep gamers coming back.

And the gap between home systems (Mega Drives and Super Nintendos) and state of the art coin-ops (like *Virtua Fighter*) was big enough to make sure the home systems couldn't catch up.

But the rise of powerful new home gaming systems such as PlayStation and Nintendo 64 has meant that the gap has not only narrowed, it's almost disappeared.

"You only have to look at titles like *Gran Turismo* to see that the level of innovation in the home games market is outstripping that of the coin-op companies," remarks Tanner. "Sophisticated and deep gameplay, packed with options and network play – this is what gamers want. But the kind



■ Coin-op developers are starting to look at the home market for inspiration, instead of the other way round.



■ But many others believe that deluxe cabinets, unique to the arcade experience, are the way forward.

"Far too many people in the coin-op business see home systems as their enemy."

of risks involved in delivering it are hardly ever taken in the coin-op market. What you're much more likely to see now is a company developing bigger, dedicated games that are difficult to reproduce at home, such as Sega's *Top Skater* or Namco's *Alpine Racer*. But this is a little naive when you consider how much coin-op companies make when the console port is a hit.

So what's the solution? In recent years the coin-op industry has found itself sitting between a rock and hard place. Not only can they not compete with gaming in the home, but in an attempt to open up the appeal of their machines to non-gamers, many new games comes across to committed gamers as derivative and one-dimensional. A look at the simple shoot-'em-up gameplay of either Sega's *Star Wars Trilogy* or the *Lost World* arcade machines will confirm this. The designers are falling between two stools: Do they continue to court the "newbies" and lose their traditional audience to the home systems, or do they fight against the tide and try to win back the hardcore gamers with big-budget arcade games that will be too expensive and too "deep" for the

casual catch-a-quick-game-before-the-movie crowd?

No matter which path they chose, all coin-op companies need to forge stronger links with the home market. Namco's *Tekken* is one of the most successful examples of how a company can release a game in the arcades and then capitalise on it several months later with a translation to console. And if, as in *Tekken*'s case, the arcade machine shares the same technology as the console, then the process is quicker and the research and development time isn't wasted. In this sense the arcade can be a breeding ground for home games – and that's exactly what Sega has planned for its Naomi system (see "Naomi games").

Along similar lines, although yet to prove themselves, are coin-op systems based around PC kit. So far these have enjoyed a mixed degree of success, and even *Quake* – a game that has limitless appeal on the PC games scene – struggled to make any impact in networked arcades in the US. One arcade developer remarked "I haven't seen a single PC game that has shown any sign of being strong enough for the arcade market".

Ironically, arcade developers are starting to look to home titles for their inspiration, instead of the other way round as has traditionally been the case. Atari Games' *War: The Final Assault* is a blatant homage to *Doom* and *Quake*, and the company admits that it's an attempt to bring *Quake* players back to the arcade.

"Too many people in the coin-op industry still see the home systems as the enemy," says Neil Nicastro, CEO of Midway. "But that's not the way it should be approached. The home market is complimentary to coin-op." The fact that his successful *NFL Blitz* coin-ops have earned more money since the release of an N64 version shows that home games can sometimes re-ignite interest in an arcade title – especially when there's an element of cross-compatibility.

So despite the efforts made by coin-op companies to make their games more exciting, despite all the advanced hydraulics and sensory feedback, it's clear that more needs to be done. "The gamers can be attracted back to the arcades," believes Alex Tanner. "It's just a matter of coming up with something they can't afford to ignore."

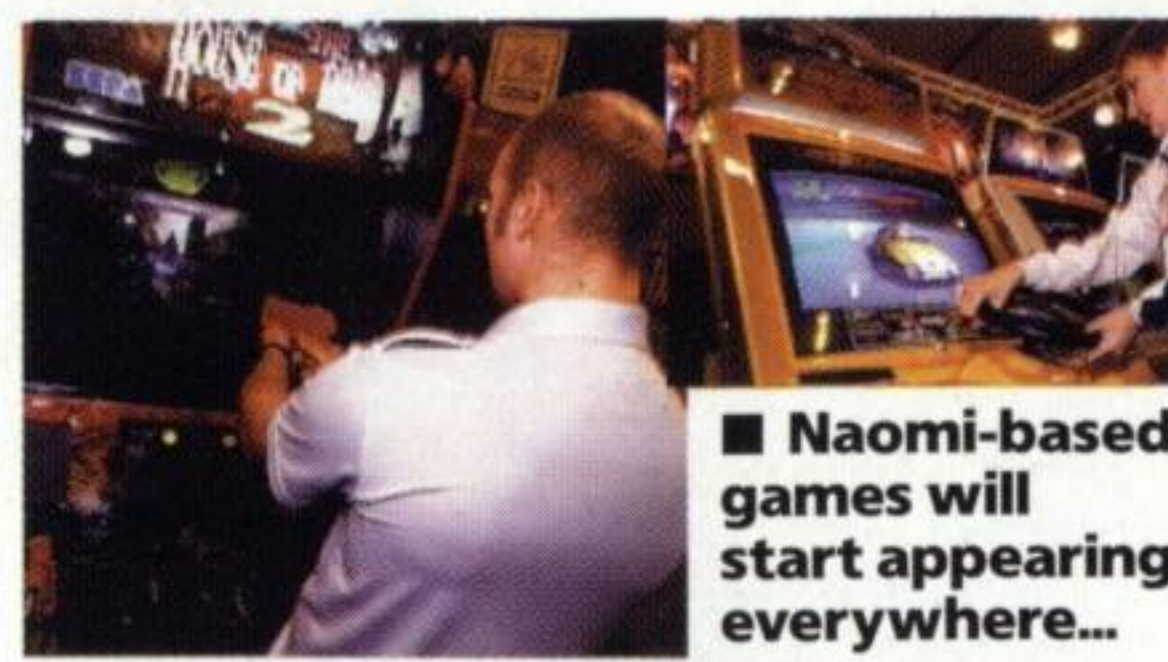
NEW BEGINNING

Dreamcast's coin-op cousin

Sega's "Naomi" coin-op system hopes to breath life into the flagging arcade scene.

■ Sega's Dreamcast console launched in Japan last November and is due to arrive in the UK on 9 September.

Now, Sega's promoting its "Naomi" system, a hardware base upon which all manner of coin-op games can be built. Naomi is essentially a souped-up Dreamcast, which means that its 3D technology is already a few steps ahead of its competitors. And because Naomi games can easily be converted to the home Dreamcast format, it means that developers utilising the Naomi technology can design games with a



■ Naomi-based games will start appearing everywhere...

broad audience in mind. It's also cheap (a big plus in today's climate) which will help developers using Naomi spread their games far and wide.

Videologic is the company behind the superb Dreamcast/Naomi graphics chip. The company's Trevor Wing

comments, "Because of Naomi's low price, you'll find high-quality games in places that they've never been before. Pubs, airport lounges, and even shopping centres will all reap the benefit".

The games listed below will be the first for the Naomi system:



Zombie Zone (Sega)

■ A *Resident Evil*-style romp for two players simultaneously. It's basically a console-style arcade game derived from the *House of the Dead*. Great weapons to pick up and some entertaining set pieces.



House of the Dead 2 (Sega)

■ One of the best-looking gun games yet, and a sign of impressive stuff to come for Sega's new console. The fact that this game was Sega's biggest release at a recent trade show in London (see page 15) means the company's taking Naomi seriously.



Crazy Taxi (Sega)

■ Think of a cross between Sega's own *Harley Davidson LA Riders* coin-op and a driving game set in busy city streets where you collect passengers and drop them off – while smashing into as much as possible. Great fun with superb visuals.



Powerstone (Capcom)

■ The first beat-'em-up for Naomi comes from the creators of *Street Fighter II*. But this one has little in common with Capcom's finest, and early reports suggest it's more like a cross between *Double Dragon* and *Final Fight*.



Dynamite Baseball '98 (Sega)

■ Well, it's baseball, really.

“My Beautiful Motorway Service Station”

Wherever there are coin-ops, you'll find people having a laugh. And maybe an *Arcade* reporter...



PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDE EDGINGTON

THIS MONTH

Welcome Break, Oxford

Slot check

- Place: **Welcome Break**
- Where: **M40, Jct 8-8a (Oxford)**, plus 21 other service stations around the UK
- Entertainments: **Red Hen, The Granary, Burger King, KFC, La Brioche Doree, Spice Garden, shopping, GameZone, Tourist Information, 24-hour autobank, 24-hour forecourt, Travel Lodge (£45 per room per night)**
- Games: **12 coin-ops**

- How much?: **Free entry, games cost £1 a go, four star petrol costs £73.9 per litre (on the day)**
- Telephone: **01865 877000**
- Opening hours: **24hrs a day, every day of the year**



Everyone should have a favourite service station, but if you don't, then let us recommend one of our personal favourites, the Welcome Break service station on the Oxford ring road. It's spacious, with a '90s design, a funky roof and some interesting squirty fountains outside. The selection of eateries is large and, for some reason, they sell 501s in the shop. The GameZone is big and has a nice carpet; the games on offer were all relatively new and, when we visited, it was comfortably busy.


“We tried to buy an ice-cream at 80mph on the M6, but the ice-cream van wouldn’t stop.”



Tim & Tom 30 & 37, West Yorkshire

Eh-up, lads. Where have you been, then? “Staines. We like Staines. High comedy value. It’d be a great place to live, especially if your surname was Skidmore.”
Is either of your surnames Skidmore? “No.”
So, have you been to some high-powered business meeting? “Very, very high powered. We went to see a client to clinch a multi-million pound deal.” [Look at each other]. “But we were

late, and he’d pissed off.”
[Suspicious aroused] So now you’re skiving off, right? “Yikes. We’ve been rumbled.”
So what else have you been doing, apart from hanging around motorway service stations playing Sega Rally? “We tried to buy an ice-cream at 80mph on the M6. We waved a tenner out of the window at an ice-cream van. We didn’t get any though. I wanted a 99.”

Tch. “Actually, we’re recovering from a bit of a late night. We were having a FIFA ‘99 tournament with our IT manager, but I was pants.” [Fumbles in pocket]. “Do you want a business card?”
Okay. Let’s swap. Look at ours. It folds out. Bet yours doesn’t do that. “You’re right. Yours is much better.”
Well, we’ll let you get back to your skive. “Yeah. We’d better get on with it. Cheers.” 

"My Beautiful Motorway Service Station"



Mark 35, Warrington



Hello. What do you do then?

"I'm a dispatch rider, off to London."

Delivering anything exciting? A human heart for an emergency transplant, perhaps?

"Are you taking the piss?"

Er, yes. "Well, watch it."

Sorry. [Sheepishly] So what do reckon of *Motocross Go!* then?

"The seat's a bit more comfy than on my bike. I've been riding for two-and-a-half hours and my bottom's a bit numb."

So why aren't you, um, giving it a rest? "This game's a good way to let out some aggression. You know, if you're having a bad day..."

You were doing some good stunts... "Yeah, but it's tempting to get carried away once you get back on the real motorway. You end up wobbling all over the place."

Well, careful as you go then. "Thanks. Bye."



Michael & Stuart 21 & 21, Oxford



Hello, having fun? "Yeah, but *Time Crisis II* isn't as good as the first, even though it's two player."

Into games then, are you?

"Oh yes. *Colin McRae* on the PlayStation and *Premier Manager* on the PC are our current faves."

Do you play a lot? "Yeah, in a going-round-to-a-mate's-house-before-we-go-out kind of way."

Where are you off to now?

"We've just been playing golf and we popped in to go to the toilet."

That's just great. "This service station is new, isn't it? It's a pretty nice one, though."

Yeah. They sell jeans in the shop, though. A bit weird, don't you reckon? "Hmmm."

Maybe it's for people who don't make it to the toilets in time."

Crumbs. Safe journey, lads. "Thanks! Bye!"





“Actually, we just came to Burger King for dinner. You’re not going to print this are you?”



Kirsty, Mercedes & Clare 19, 20 & 19, Thame (Nr Oxford)

Hi, girls. Where are you headed today? “Um, nowhere.”

Eh? [Embarrassed] “Actually, we just came to Burger King for dinner.”

What did you have? “A Chicken Royale, a quarterpounder with cheese and a Flamer.” [Goes quiet].

Flamers are a bit too charcoaly for us. “Are you going to print this? We’re embarrassed about coming to a service station to hang out...”

What do you mean? Service stations are fantastic! There’s all this entertainment under

one roof with... “Are you mad?”
Well, you like Daytona 2, right?


“Yeah, it’s fun with your mates.”

Are you into home videogames at all? “Crash Bandicoot 3 is okay. Actually I’m really good at it.”

[Gets all worried]. “How big are these photos going to be?”

Oh, tiny. “Can you airbrush out our spots and double chins?”

We can try. Do you want anything airbrushed in? “No, just make sure we look beautiful.”

We will. “Right. See you later.” 

"My Beautiful Motorway Service Station"

Yoshiko & Akemi 21 & 21, Japan



Where have you been? "Oxford."
Did you see the dreaming spires? [Considerable thought, slightly bemused] "No."
Never mind. So what are the service stations like in Japan, then? Tiny, we'd imagine.
"Not really."
Um. What do you reckon of *The Lost World*? "The dinosaurs are scary. They jump out at you."
Have you got a PlayStation?
"Yes, a lot."
Okay... What do you play?
"Crash Bandicoot and Beat Mania."
[Having a few communication problems] **Okay, thanks very much, girls.** [Giggling] "Thank you. Good bye." 

"The dinosaurs are scary. They jump out at you."



Stephen 21, High Wycombe

Hello. Nice service station you've got here. Which bit do you work in?

"In the Red Hen restaurant."

We just had lunch there.

[Discussion between writer and photographer] What did we say about it? "The nicest service station meal we'd ever had". That was it.

"Cheers. You know, I gave my

girlfriend an N64 for Christmas."


Really? Do you play on it too?

"Yup. I like *Diddy Kong Racing*."

Do you subscribe to the theory that, when offered a choice of characters, you should always pick the one that looks most like you. "Eh?"

Never mind. Does *Alpine Racer* make you want to go skiing?

"I wouldn't mind."

Okay, have fun. "Cheers." 



Your beautiful arcade...

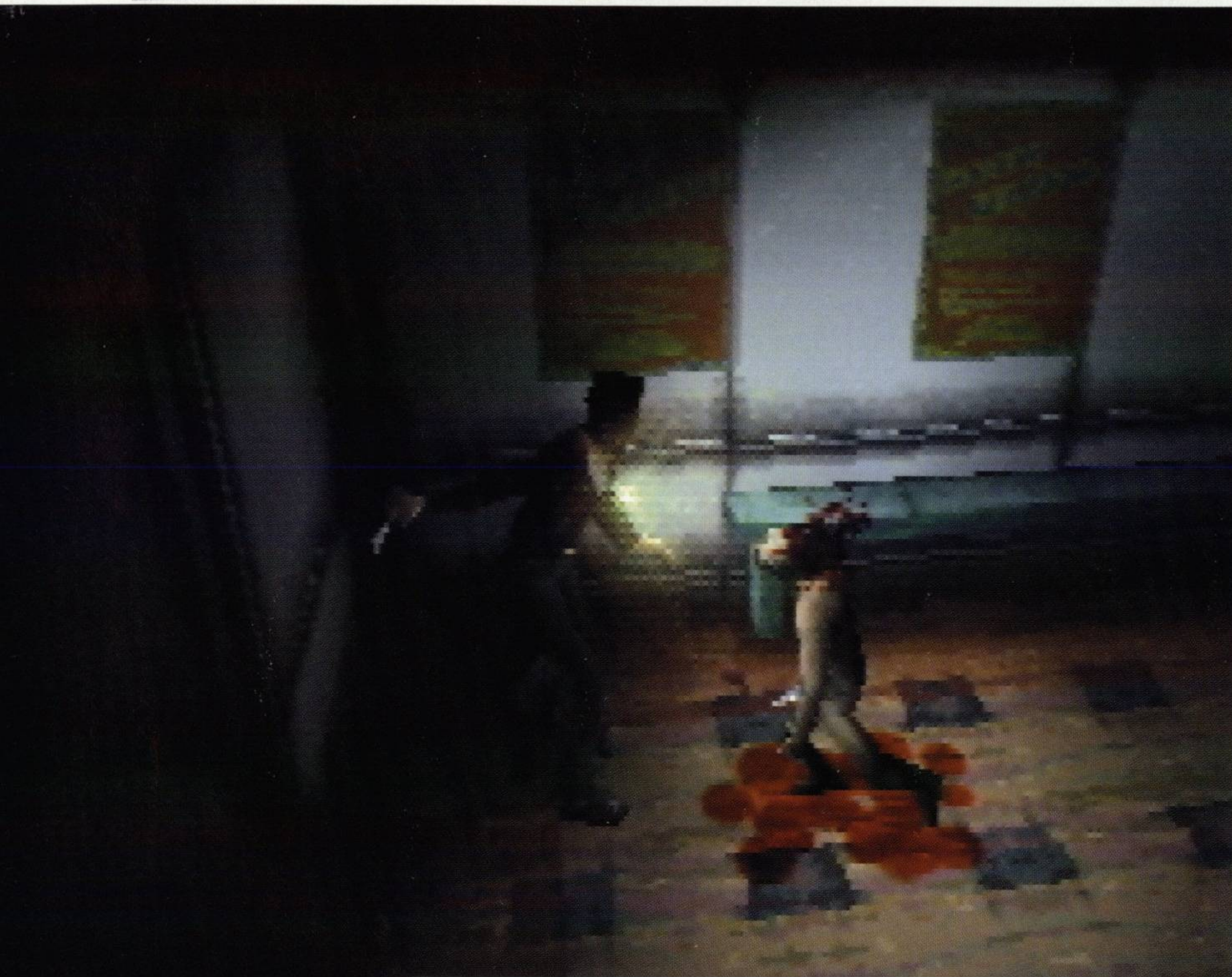
■ Whether you're a Japanese tourist, a chef, an intimidating motorcycle courier or a skiving Yorkshire businessman, you've got a favourite place to play coin-ops. Why not share it with us?

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

"I should be working. I'm a chef in the Red Hen restaurant."

COMING SOON

A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ Explore the hospital by torch-light, and when you least expect it, you'll run headlong into a bloody scene like this. Unwarranted mutilation is encouraged, and after shooting someone, you can stomp on their heads to increase the blood-letting.



PLAYSTATION

SILENT HILL

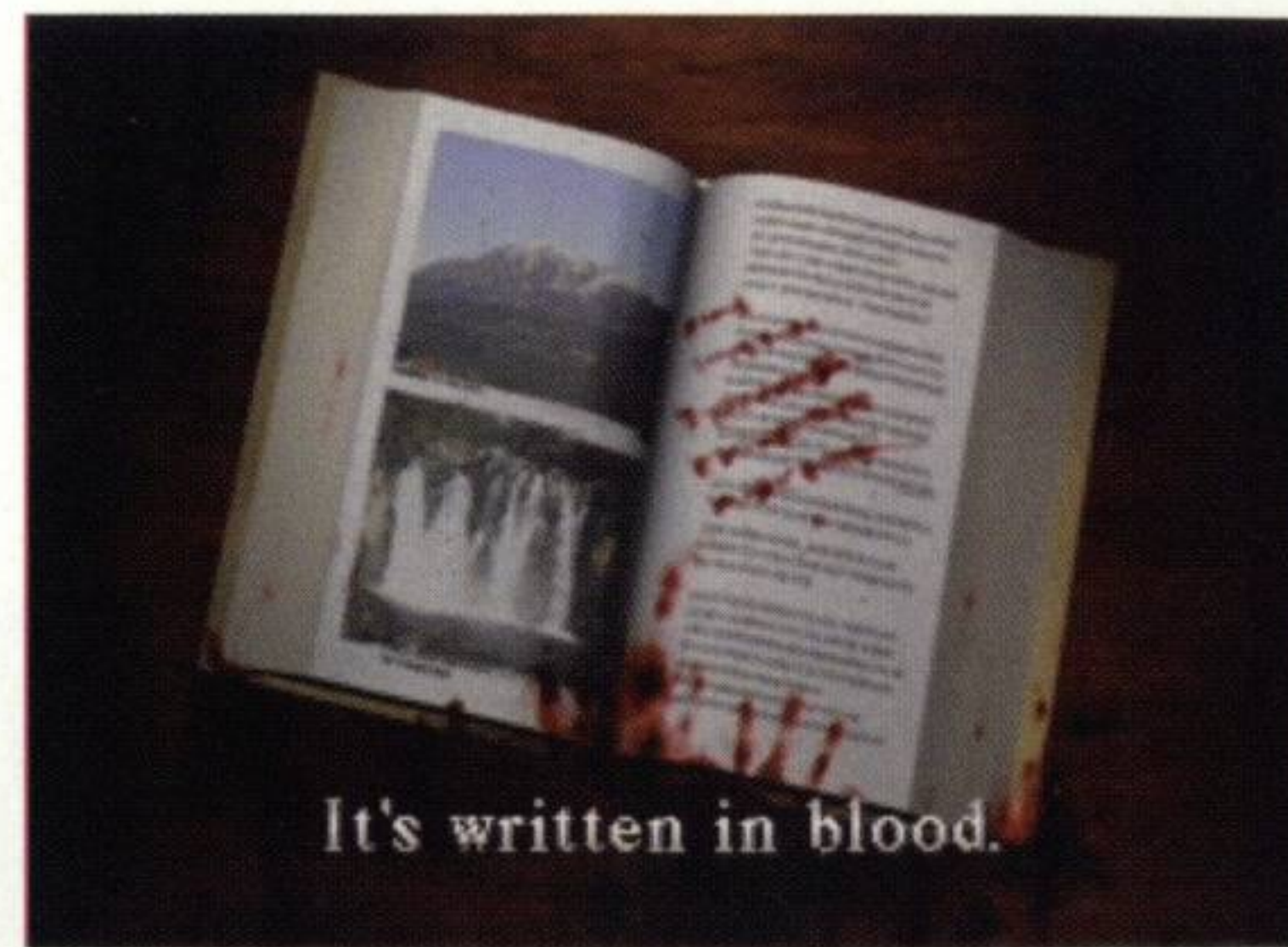
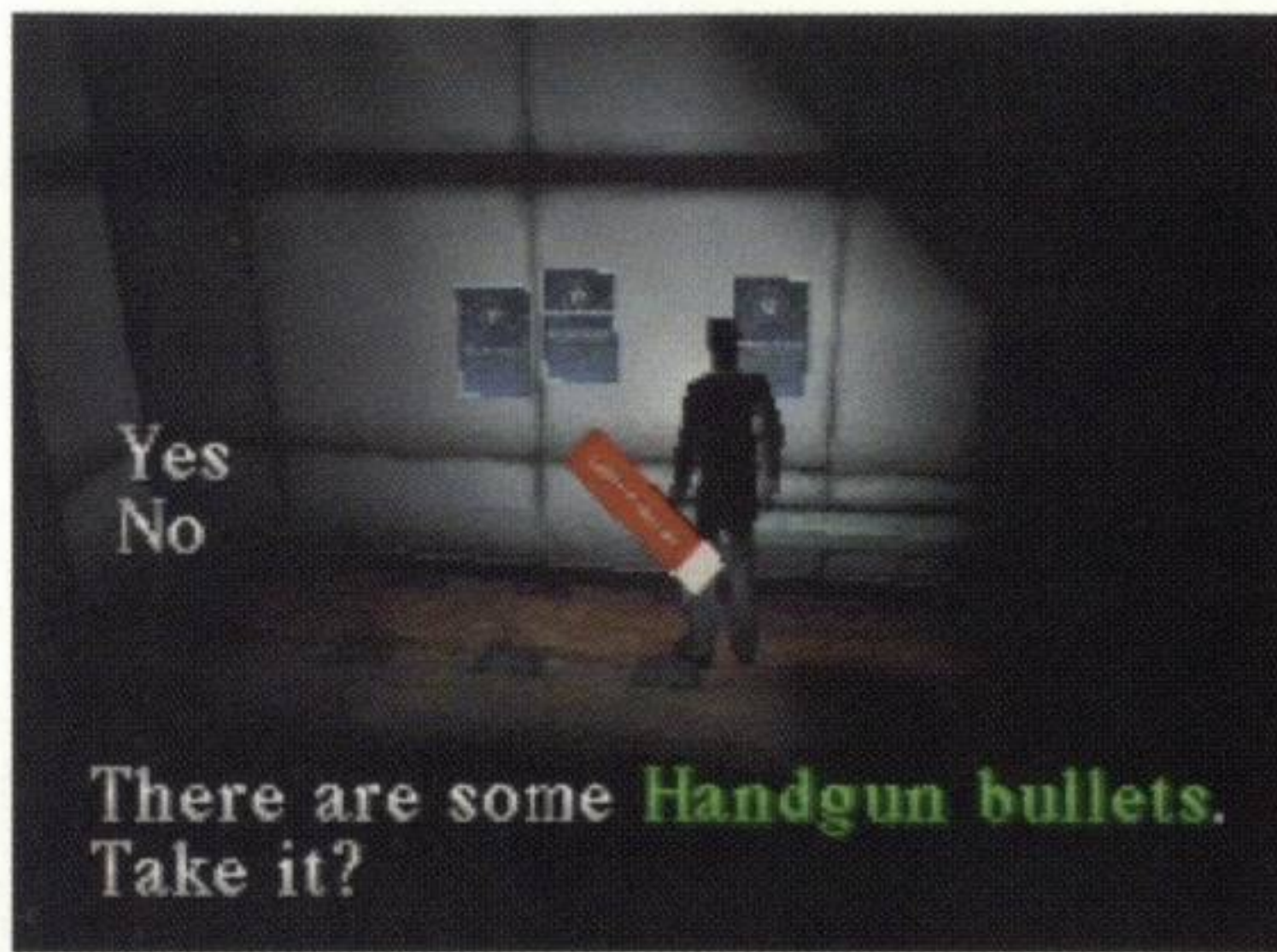
When there is no more room in Heaven and Hell, the dead will walk the Earth. And on that cheery note, welcome to the horrific world of *Silent Hill*.

■ IN A NUTSHELL: *The ultimate PlayStation video nasty.*

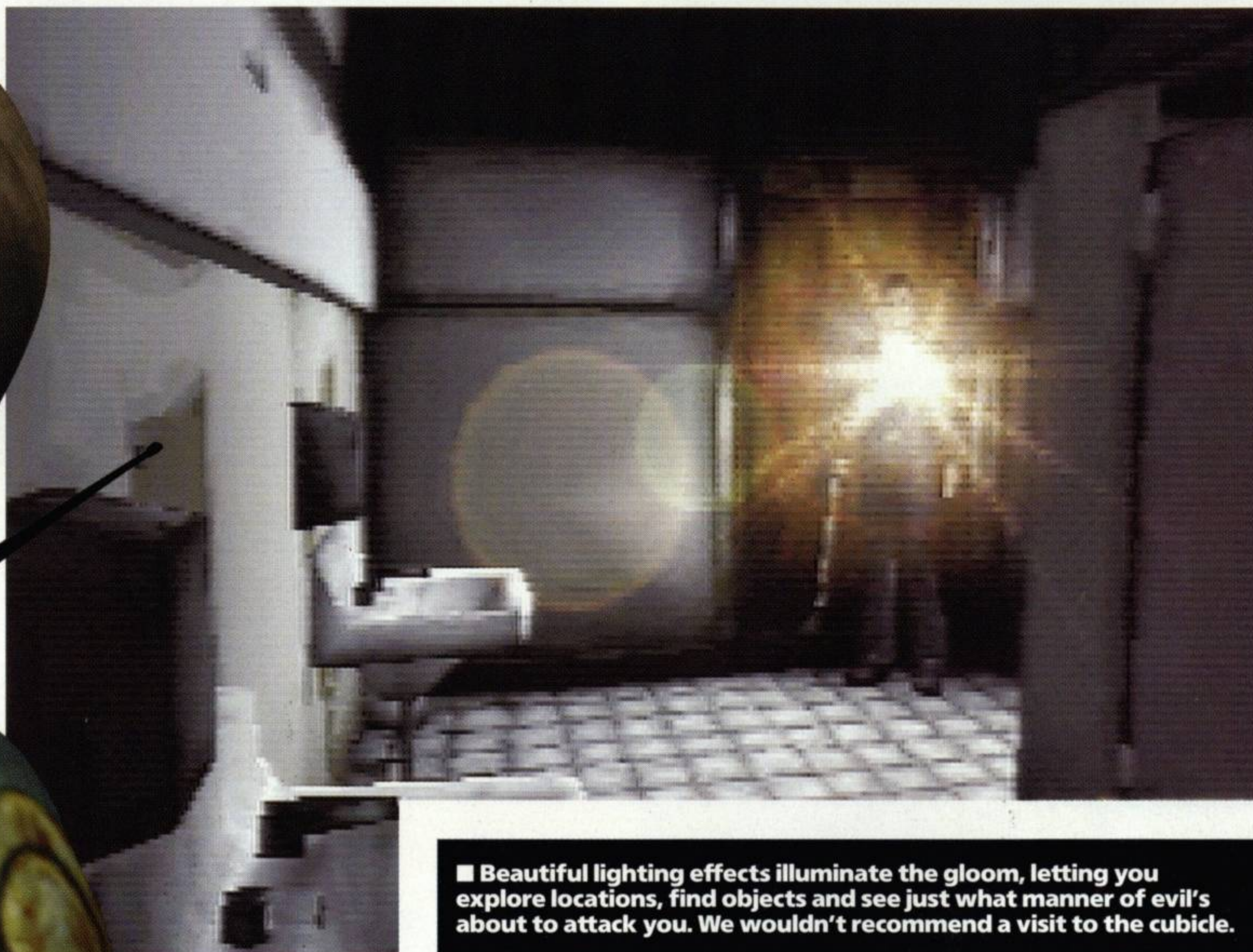
While Capcom can be credited with creating the world of "Survival Horror" with the *Resident Evil* series, Konami is ready to up the ante with *Silent Hill*.

On paper, *Silent Hill* appears to be a mere clone of the Capcom games. It's an arcade/adventure starring an unlikely hero who finds himself drawn into the seedy under-belly of the titular town. Angular, movie-style camera work depicts the action, and plot updates are provided via FMV link scenes. However, *Silent Hill* is so much more than a second-rate *Resident Evil*. For a start the town and its inhuman populace feature a level of detail unseen in any PlayStation title – let alone in Raccoon City. The horror aspects are also arguably more effective as Konami opts for a series of subtle shocks and an all-pervading sense of menace as opposed to Grand Guignol gore effects. With these aspects working together, *Silent Hill* is breathtaking.

The game is all the more impressive as it is played out as a real-time adventure. It opens with the male hero, Terry Mason, taking his daughter for a pleasant drive in the



It's written in blood.



■ Beautiful lighting effects illuminate the gloom, letting you explore locations, find objects and see just what manner of evil's about to attack you. We wouldn't recommend a visit to the cubicle.



country. As the intro continues, the pair are witness to a motorbike accident and, while distracted, are involved in a second collision. As Mason comes round, he finds his daughter is no longer in the car and heads for the nearest town in search of her, or clues to her whereabouts. Unfortunately, the nearest town is *Silent Hill*, and so begins a quest that will lead Mason into a world of inhuman creatures and a journey into a bizarre parallel dimension.

There's a palpable feeling of dread throughout *Silent Hill* – making the player feel as if something bad is always about to happen – and it delivers just as many action set pieces as the *Resident Evil* games. Zombie nurses stumble around looking for flesh, and a wide-ranging assortment of ghouls and monsters also want a

KONAMI OPTS FOR A SERIES OF SUBTLE SHOCKS AND AN ALL-PERVADING SENSE OF MENACE

FACT FILE

SILENT HILL
FORMAT: PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: KONAMI JAPAN
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
PLAYERS: 1
ON SALE IN UK: JUNE 1999

piece of Mason. As he evades their attention, the secret of *Silent Hill* is gradually unravelled through a series of object-related puzzles. He also finds discarded weapons which show off more of Konami's graphical prowess as blood splatters on the remarkably detailed walls and furniture.

The ambiguity of the plot is the key to *Silent Hill*, but everything in the game gels together to create a stunning package. While the graphics are nothing short of spectacular, they

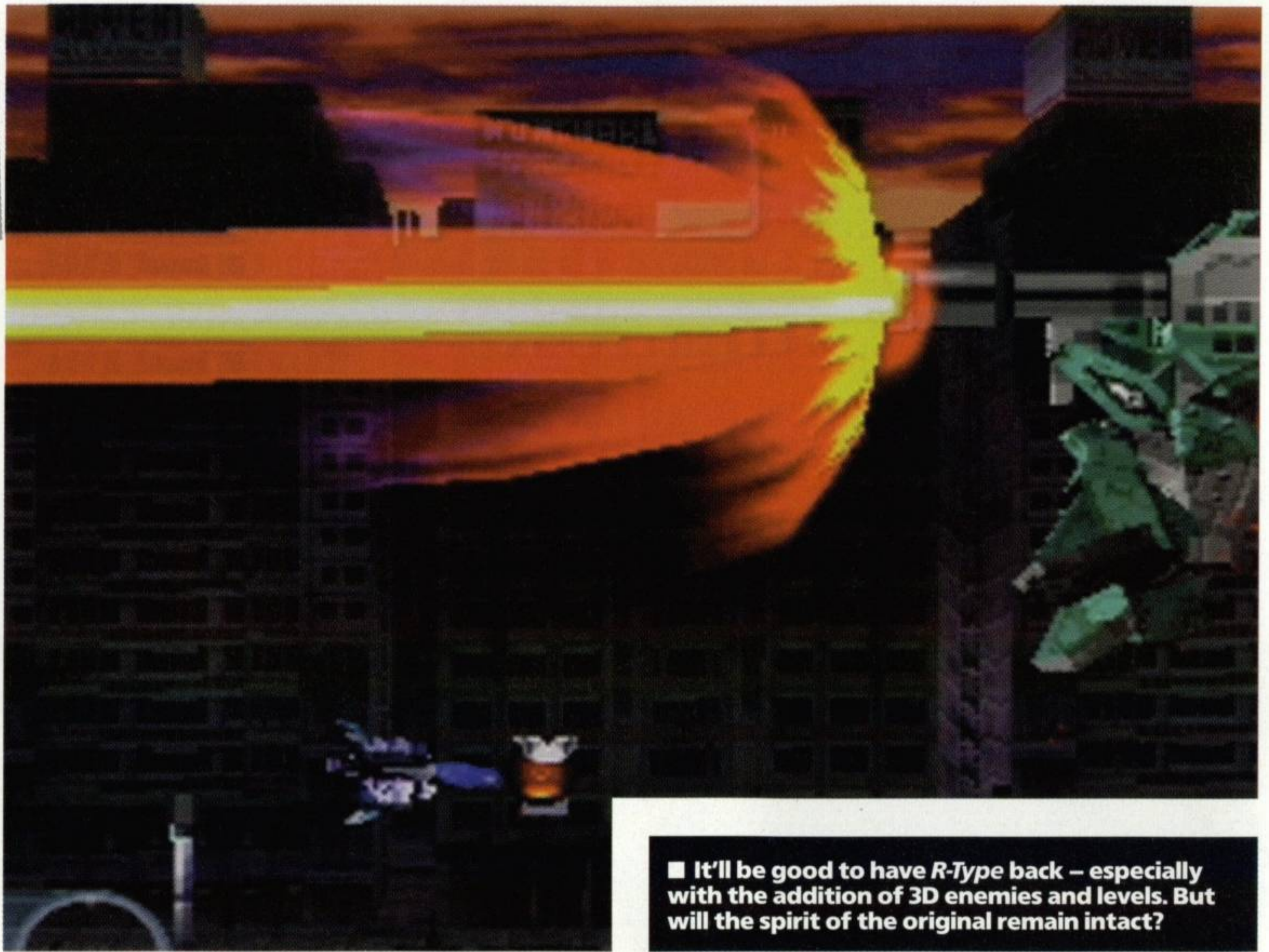
are soon taken for granted as the twisting plot begins to unfold and a supporting cast of seven characters is introduced. Even so, it is hard not to be both impressed, and maybe even repulsed, by the level of detail and subject matter of *Silent Hill*'s undead hordes. Entering a hospital, for example, sees Mason assailed by a number of zombie babies with past evidence of their blood-letting intentions colouring the ward's walls.

Another impressive aspect is that the monsters have a level of AI that makes *Resident Evil*'s zombie legion look dimmer than a 15w bulb. In a nod to Konami's *Metal Gear Solid*, Mason can sneak from room to room as he attempts to pass the enemy unnoticed. However, should he make a noise, the monsters are alerted to his presence and will hunt him down –

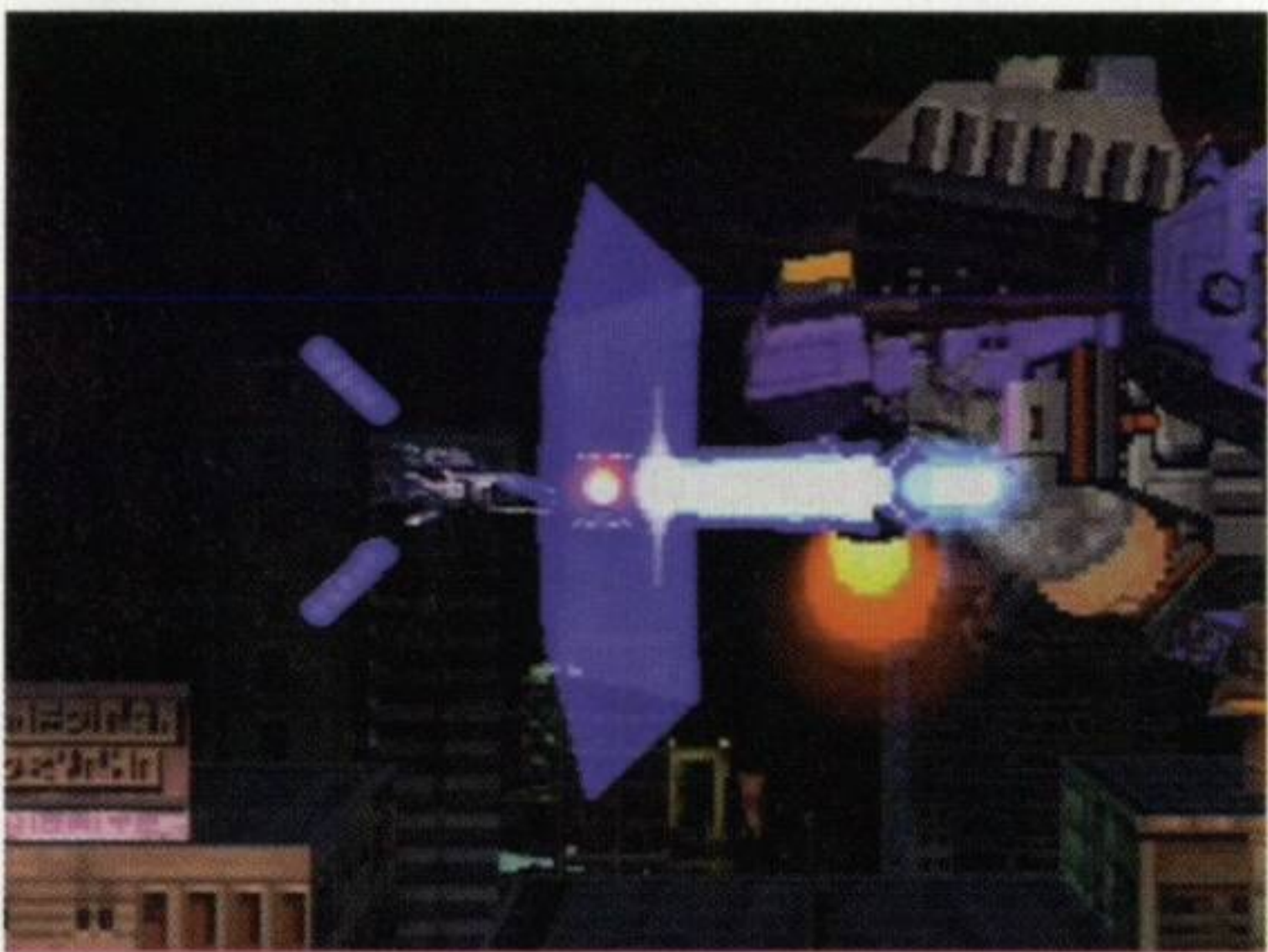
even if they are several rooms away. Not only does this add to the already oppressive atmosphere, but it also works a slight strategic bent into the game. Using a gun is a double-edged sword, for instance, as while it will kill most monsters instantly, the noise will give away Mason's position.

While many have already decreed Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* to be the greatest game the PlayStation will see this year, *Silent Hill* is more than a worthy rival for attention. Although PlayStation owners are becoming inundated with new, grisly arcade/adventures, *Silent Hill* leaves them all standing. Just as a good horror film like *Scream* or *I Know What You Did Last Summer* draws the audience in and toys with them with shocks and suspense, so *Silent Hill* works to keep the player on their toes. 

COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ It'll be good to have *R-Type* back – especially with the addition of 3D enemies and levels. But will the spirit of the original remain intact?



■ Irem shows off the kind of special effects the company's famed for. Where would shoot-'em-ups be without TV-shaking explosions?



PLAYSTATION

R-TYPE DELTA

Hoopy weapons and zigzag laser beams. Fantastic.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** A genuine blast from the past is updated for more civilised '90s tastes.

Released in 1985, *R-Type* is rightly regarded as one of the greatest arcade games ever; a reputation bolstered by Virgin's *R-Types* retro collection. Now Irem has revamped its famous scrolling blaster for the '90s, stirring together '80s playability with '90s presentation.

R-Type Delta unashamedly returns to the 1985 original for ideas, and within the first few minutes, old favourites

such as the ricocheting blue lasers and wall-clinging plasma bolts bring back fond memories.

The main '90s influence is, unsurprisingly, aesthetic. The clean, eight-colour sprites of the original have been supplanted by detailed polygonal foes. And although your own ship still flies along a strictly linear 2D path, the new enemies flit in and out of the screen making the most of the PlayStation's 3D capabilities. This is

initially impressive, but as Irem's admirably high level of background detail merges with the 3D opposition, occasionally there's simply too much going on on screen.

The designers of *R-Type Delta* have clearly revelled in its gameplay heritage, and have sought to breath life into old memories rather than simply retrace them. So while its weapons are nearly identical to those of the 1985 game, the "Force" unit (a nose-cone weapon which can be propelled forward or attached to the rear of the ship) has been updated, with three different versions on offer. Similarly, while a handful of the aliens are reminiscent of those in the original, most have been radically reworked to exploit the 3D aspect.

Sadly, though, from the work-in-progress versions we've played so far

it seems that *R-Type Delta* lacks any of the real innovation that made the original such a classic.

Much of its new content seems second hand. At one point, for example, you are assailed by huge robotic fish – an idea lifted from the *Darius* coin-op (ironically an an *R-Type* rip-off itself).

So it's unlikely that *R-Type Delta* will enjoy the same adulation as its forerunner, but it should stand up as a meat 'n' potatoes PlayStation blaster. And for those who simply can't get enough of big explosions, deadly end-of-level bosses, fancy weapons and all the other shoot-'em-up stalwarts, this will deliver.

FACT FILE

R-TYPE DELTA
FORMAT: PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: IREM
PUBLISHER: SCEE
PLAYERS: 1
ON SALE IN UK: MARCH



■ Alcatraz, the near future. Orange-clad convicts want you to be their woman. Note to self: should have got a haircut before going time-travelling.



■ Werewolves, convicts, centurions and robot things; all part of a day's killing for era-hopping Hiro Miyamoto and his giant sword of death.



PC

DAIKATANA

So just what the hell is a daikatana*, anyway?

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Four episodes of time travelling antics ranging from future Japan back to ancient Greece. Lots of guns, lots of blood, and lots of deathmatch.

Some reputations are easy to live up to. You can't imagine Les Dennis waking up in the morning and muttering to himself, "Sodding hell; another day of trying to achieve the standards I set in Russ Abbot's *Madhouse*". But what if you're a game

designer and the last game you designed was *Quake*? How do you even begin to top that?

If you're John Romero, you form your own company, then spend the next two years working on the first-person *Daikatana*. It's an ambitious project and has four episodes, just like *Quake*. Unlike *Quake*, the episodes are set in different time zones (Future

Japan, Ancient Greece, Dark Ages Norway and San Francisco 2030), with weapons specific to each era. The only weapon common to every period is the daikatana. (*It's a bloody great Japanese sword).

Playing *Daikatana*, we quickly reached the conclusion that it was good, but not fantastic. *Half-Life* upped the ante for first-person shooters, sure, but *Daikatana* gives the impression of being developed in a vacuum. Four episodes? The whole episodic thing was done and dusted by the time *Quake II* turned up, surely?

It looks the part, with some terrifying monsters, gorgeous landscaping, impressive

weather effects and a definite sense of atmosphere. And then there are your much-lauded sidekicks, Superfly and Mikiko; though quite how much they add to the game we couldn't say, because we've yet to see them working properly. Indeed, last time we saw Superfly he was ambling casually up a waterfall.

The action and tension are difficult to fault; if there's one thing Romero excels at, it's creating mood and pace within a game. And the deathmatch is at least as good as the original *Quake* (still the master after all these years). And yet... the world has moved on. We've been spoiled by *Half-Life*.

For all its looks, intricacies and attempts at innovation, *Daikatana* feels old. It'll be finished by May, or so we're told. No doubt we'll learn the truth then.

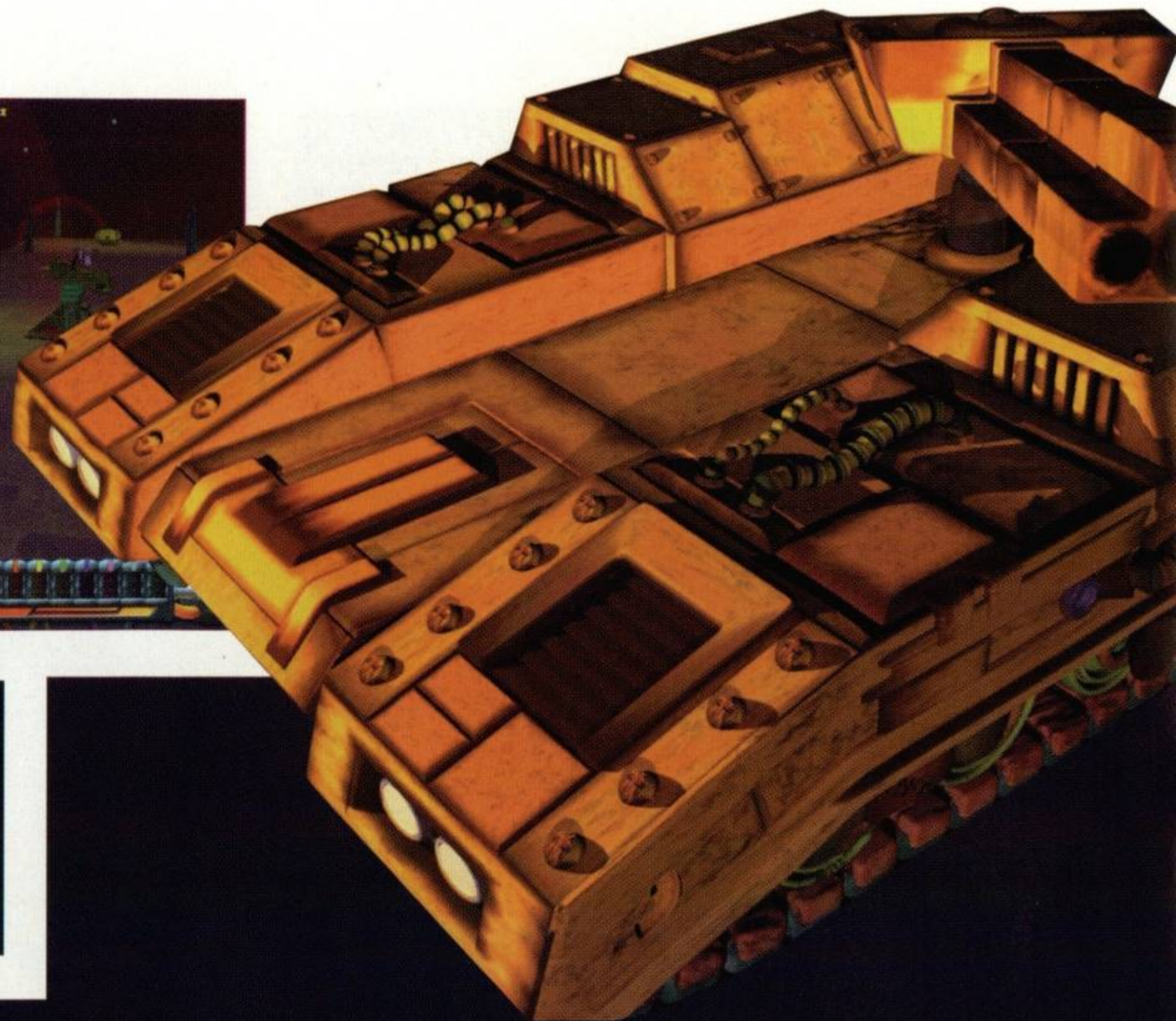
FACT FILE

DAIKATANA
FORMAT: PC
DEVELOPER: ION
STORM
PUBLISHER: EIDOS
PLAYERS: 1-32
ON SALE IN UK:
 MAY

COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ If only you could hear *WMC's* unique 3D sound engine. The low rumble of a far off tank is fleshed out as you get nearer and includes trundling tracks, squeaking suspension and the hydraulic swish of the turret turning to face you...



■ Night-time levels are a tense mix of tank spotlights and sky illuminating explosions.



PC

WILD METAL COUNTRY

Huge rolling vistas populated by herds of wild tanks. Is DMA's grip on reality slipping?

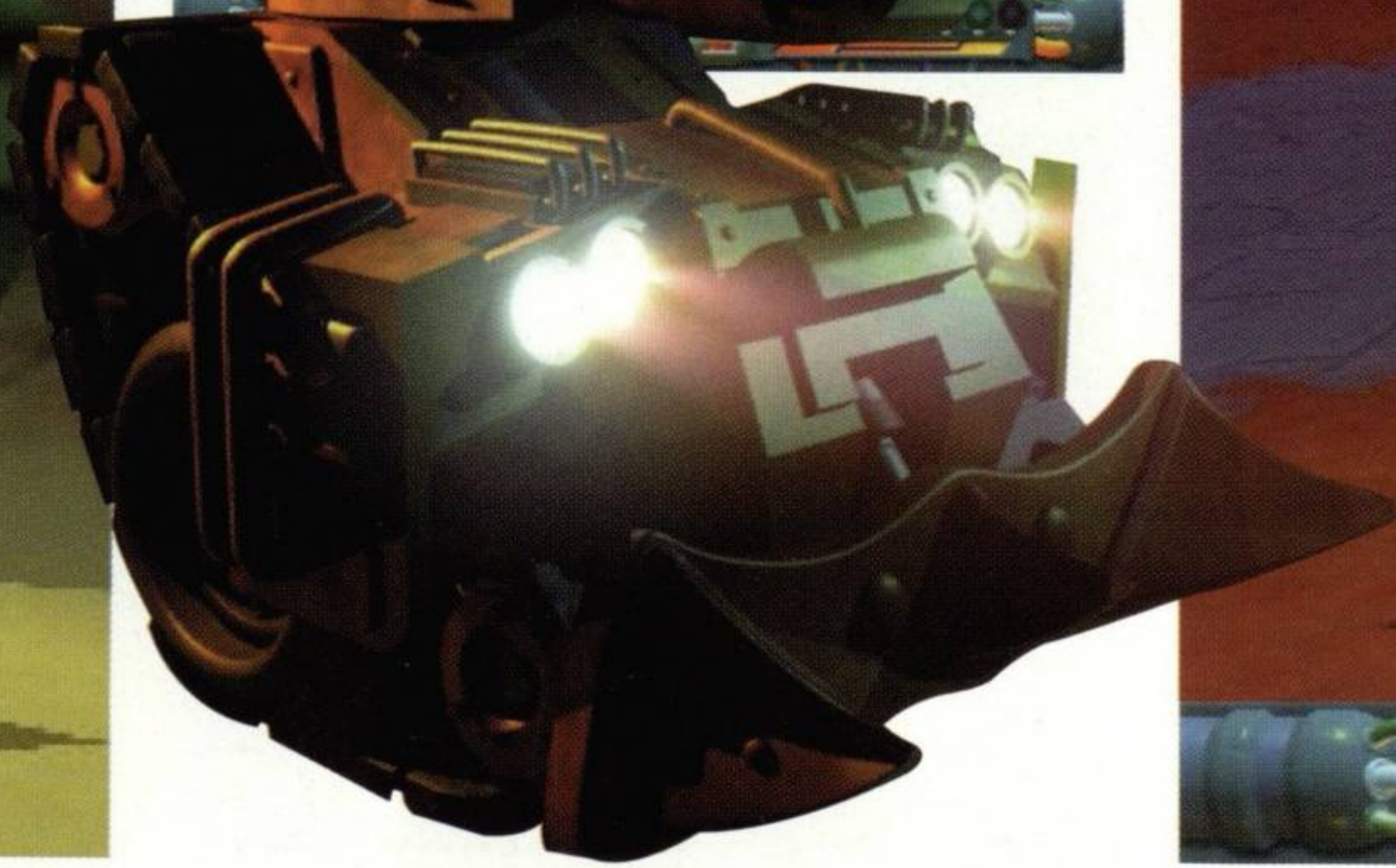
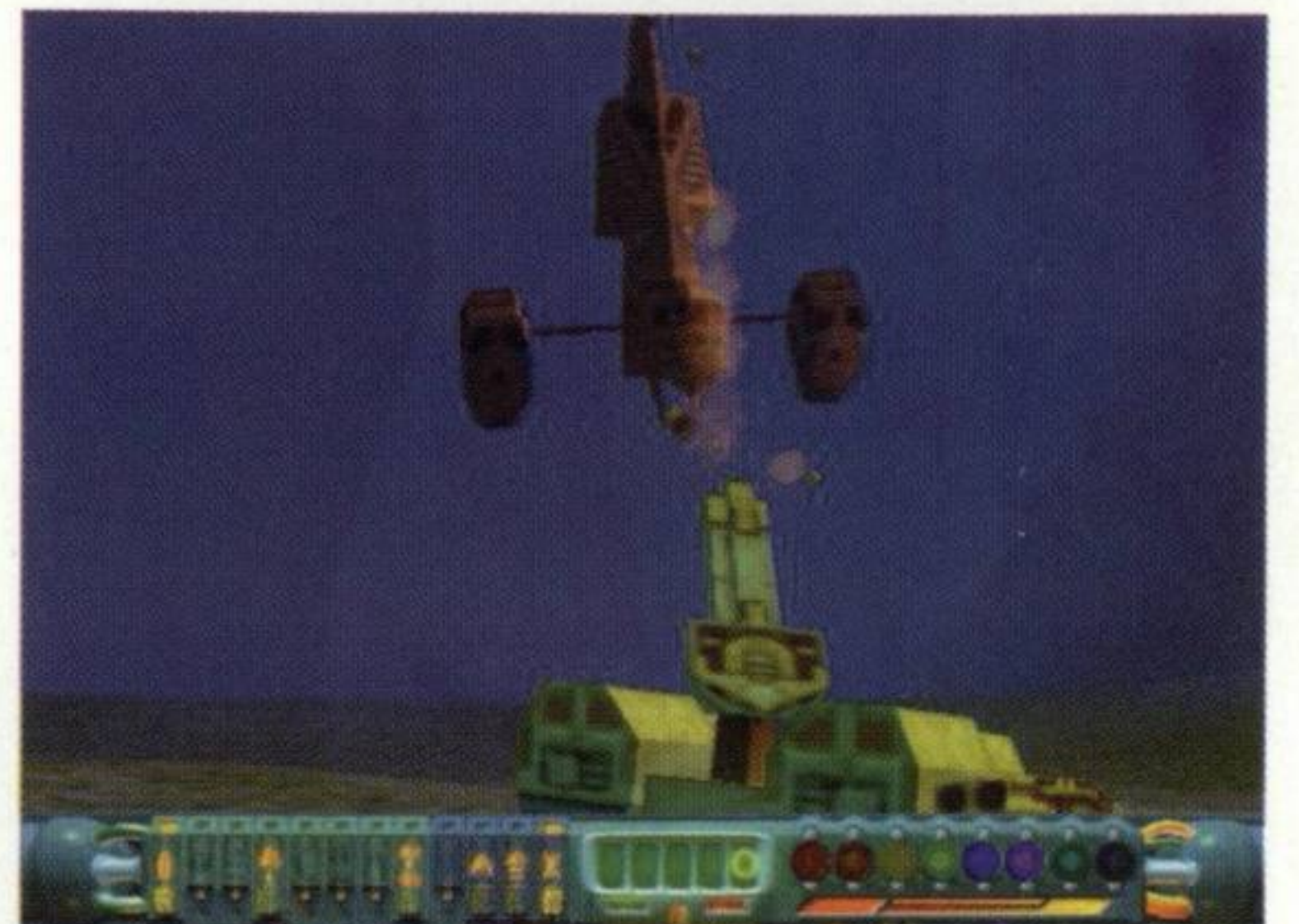
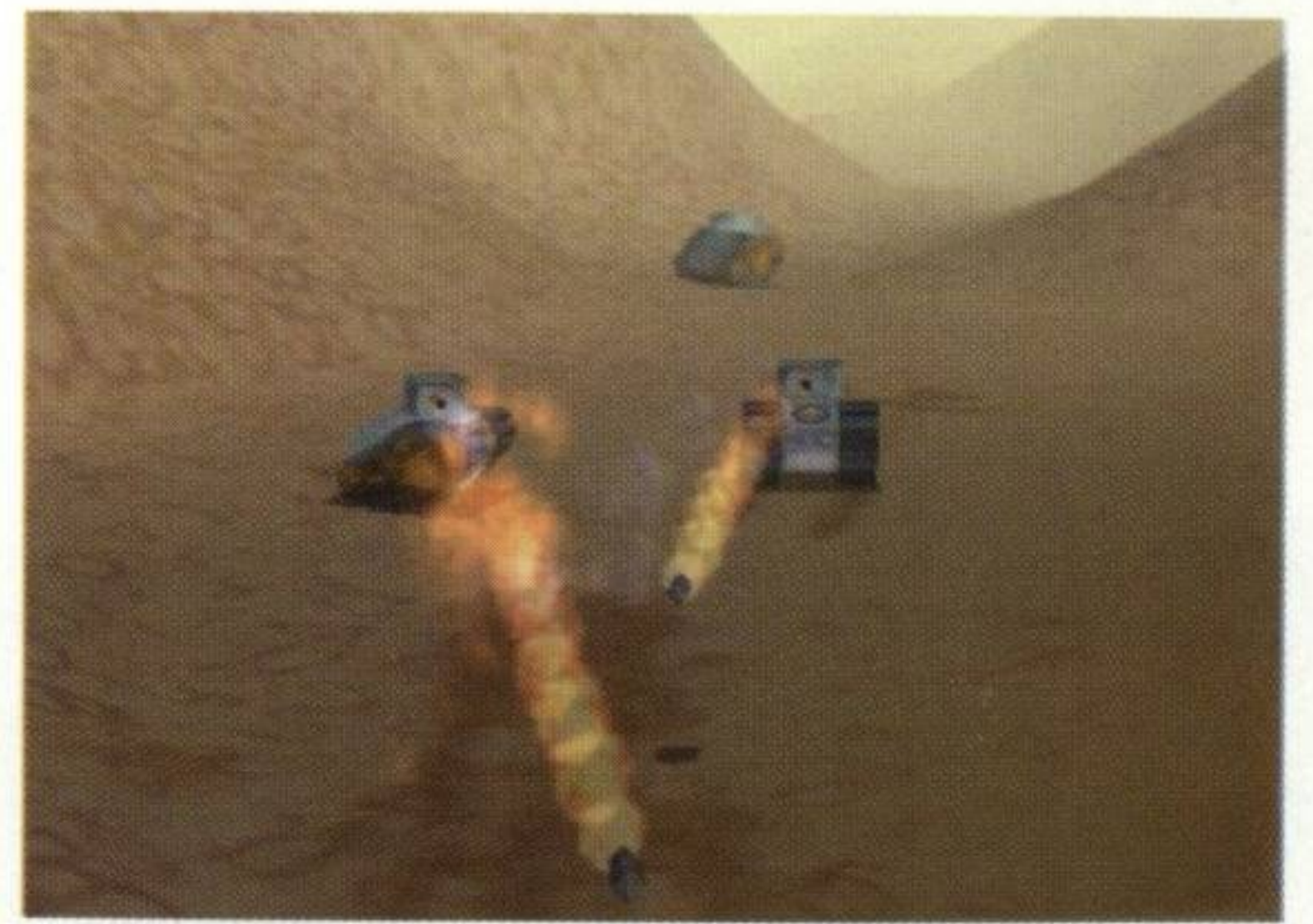
■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** *Mixing extreme physics-based realism with packs of animal-like tanks, the latest off-kilter offering from Lemmings and Grand Theft Auto developer DMA is a 3D combat game like no other.*

Tanks are great. But recent videogame treatments have got bogged down in battlefield seriousness. What about the fun associated with trundling around in a giant gun, that can run people over, without you ever having to change gear?

Enter DMA's *Wild Metal Country*. A tank game that not only features tanks, but is actually *about* tanks and, as you'd expect from developer DMA, is also simultaneously like no other tank game you've played before. In addition to giving you five different designs to cruise around in, the game's three planet-based environments are solely populated by the turret swivelling things, each with more personality than most other games' walking, talking characters.

In an inspired twist – explained away by an organic life destroying war – *WMC's* tanks have evolved to resemble 17 different species of animals. So Bull tanks charge at you

■ You'll be able to anticipate the style of enemy attack by what species of tank it is. These Rats are more like a three-wheeled buggy and incredibly fast, if lightly armed.



■ WMC's tanks aren't limited to trundling through the mud on caterpillar tracks. Huge Eagle tanks fly on giant hover fans and Ravens soar overhead looking to scavenge from the carnage below.

THE ONLY THING MISSING IS DAVID ATTENBOROUGH AND A FILM CREW

aggressively, Lemmings race at you and explode, and Hyenas hunt in packs. Herds of tanks protect a Hippopotamus, a hulking carrier of power cores and the source of energy that you're trying to collect in the one-player game. The only thing missing is David Attenborough and a film crew.

Wild Metal Country's title was chosen to reflect the idea of big game hunting, but with er... tanks, and DMA hasn't skimped on including the sort of highly destructive, but amusing weapons it's famed for. Your tank comes equipped with an unlimited supply of standard shells, but crates

FACT FILE

WILD METAL COUNTRY
FORMAT: PC
DEVELOPER: DMA
DESIGN:
PUBLISHER: GREMLIN
PLAYERS: 1-8
(NETWORK GAME)
ON SALE IN UK: END OF APRIL

packed with more interesting ballistics are dropped around the levels by neutral Chinhook helicopters. These extras include Bouncing Shells that you can bowl around corners, Sniffer guided missiles, and Nukes that provide huge mushroom cloud explosions packed with metal-melting power. Probably best used in multi-player deathmatches is the Teleport missile that swaps you and the target – ideal if you spot a brace of guided shells headed your way. Don't forget your tank's other, sneakier, ways of dealing death, either – mines and Jumping Jacks that hop around like a military-standard firecracker.

To help you deal with so much explosive whistling through the air DMA has put in place an elegant control system that enables you to both return fire and get out of the

way quickly. You also have individual control over the tracks, *Battlezone* style. By pressing Forward on one and Reverse on the other you'll spin on the spot – this is great, ensuring that you feel like you're driving a tank rather than a Volvo with a cannon.

The beautifully simple shell firing's particularly satisfying once you've mastered it. Rather than having to mess around elevating and lowering your gun, you just hit the space bar. The longer it's held down, the higher your barrel goes. So a short stab sends shells whizzing just above the ground, but a long hold and you can fire over hills while remaining out of sight.

WMC's played out over vast, open air terrain. Taking in volcanic peaks, deserts and frozen lakes, it has been mapped on to a startlingly realistic physics engine that has a god-like way

with gravity, traction and inertia. Everything in the game adheres to Newtonian principles. You can push boulders off cliffs and watch as they gather speed while tumbling into valleys below, tanks stall on inclines too steep for their tracks to drag them up, and mines roll down slopes until they reach level ground. Because everything behaves as it should, you can actively use the terrain to sneak past enemies' field of vision, leave mine traps that knock the opposition off their tracks, or scale a mountain and bombard the herds below.

With a NASA-shaming grasp of physics, allied to some seriously surreal animal-based antics, *Wild Metal Country* could only be a DMA game. It should also be the game that wrestles tanks back from the drab military monopoly.



COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ Duke's collection of guns is frankly ridiculous. Here, the man himself models the Nuclear Gun (cat. no 153/7534), available in purple and black.



■ "There ain't room in this town for the three of us." The Wild West in Duke's world is packed with mutants and pigs, all begging to bleed.



N64

DUKE NUKEM: ZERO HOUR

Bad boy Duke perseveres in his mission to mindlessly blast everything in sight.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Violent mutant-blasting and third-person wandering about with the king of one-liners.

Duke Nukem is the anti-ninja. Where a black-clad stealth assassin would be flitting silently from balcony to floor, Duke Nukem is galloping in with all guns blazing. Where a master of the shadows would be holding his breath for hours to avoid detection, Duke is yelling "Hail to the King, baby!" and "Wooahhh, Mama!"

Zero Hour continues the fine Duke tradition of mindless blasting, only this time the camera has moved out of Duke's eyes and into a Lara-like position a few feet behind and

above his head. The PlayStation tried this a few months ago with the tedious *Duke Nukem: Time To Kill*, but the developers of the N64's attempt have started from scratch and made a collective decision to push Nintendo's machine to its limits – both technically and morally.

The plot is disposable – mutants travel back through time to wipe out humankind (*again?*) – but Senor Nukem can now swap his clothes and weapons for each period; the present, the Wild West, and Victorian England.

In Duke's universe, though, huge electric cannons and guns powered by portable nuclear reactors were invented centuries ago, and these, coupled with hordes of kamikaze aliens, give Duke's trigger finger plenty to be getting on with.

Happily, there's more to each new level than a facelift, as the baddies, environments and mission styles change to suit. A mad dash through an underground alien research facility, a sedate cart ride through a beautifully-lit mine shaft, and a level

set aboard everybody's favourite doomed liner cleverly take advantage of each era's peculiarities.

Although Duke still needs to flick switches and solve primitive puzzles to succeed, Eurocom has furnished *Zero Hour* with various other interesting embellishments too. Fire at a mutant's head and it comes off. Stand still for a few moments and Duke decides that "Boy, I'm [bleeping] good". Look around and you'll notice posters featuring ladies in their undies. It remains to be seen what the BBFC and Nintendo will make of all this, but we think they're going to love it as much as we do.

FACT FILE

DUKE NUKEM: ZERO HOUR
 ■ **FORMAT:** N64
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** EUROCOM
 ■ **PUBLISHER:** GT INTERACTIVE
 ■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
 ■ **RELEASE DATE:** MARCH



■ You'll be able to swoop the camera around with gay abandon in UEFA's replays.



■ Silicon Dreams has completely revamped Michael Owen's WLS graphics engine, with smooth-skinned glory.



■ All the players, perfect right down to their very socks.



PC PLAYSTATION

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Michael Owen coders Silicon Dreams bring UEFA glory home.

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Official UEFA Champions League footy, realistic all the way down to the copyright symbols.

The UEFA Champions League might lack the two-leg, away-goal rule tension of the old European Cup, but it involves some of the best teams in the world, 500 million people watched last year's final and your Mum likes the "Champions!" theme music, so you can't blame EIDOS for leaping on the videogame rights with some abandon.

It has entrusted the job to its videogame footy specialists Silicon Dreams, fresh from producing Michael Owen's *World League Soccer '99*, a refreshingly deep

rendition of the beautiful game, even if it wasn't quite as pretty as its immediate rivals. Although not at the silky-shirted levels of *FIFA '99*, UEFA's players do look up to European competition with what EIDOS is calling "Fully skinned, skeletal system plater models", but what we'd describe as "Much more realistic-looking footballers". Complementing the teams are familiar renditions of famous European stadiums, complete with player shadows that vary depending on kick-off time and

whether the floodlights are turned on. Completing the TV coverage-like presentation is the commentary from ITV's finest – Bob Wilson, Brian Moore and "large" Ron Atkinson.

Out on the park, *UEFA* cuts down on the boy Owen game's special move combos to a much simpler button and direction system. It was fun pulling off overhead kicks in *World League Soccer*; but you were hard pressed to remember the necessary button presses when the ball sailed over from the corners. In

UEFA, such crowd pleasing showing off comes more naturally, hopefully without going too much towards *FIFA*'s eager-to-please simplicity.

In keeping with the recent footy game fad for '70s perms and itchy Terylene shirts, *UEFA* also features an arcade management mode that lets you create all-time greatest teams using players from a database that includes all previous winners since 1960. Bagsy Liverpool '77, safe in the knowledge that the player monickers haven't been changed to the hilarious incorrect names favoured by publishers who haven't stumped up for an official license.

FACT FILE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

- PUBLISHER: EIDOS
- DEVELOPER: SILICON DREAMS
- FORMAT: PLAYSTATION, PC
- PLAYERS: 1-4
- RELEASE DATE: APRIL



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Next Month

In May's
Arcade

Put your

foot

to the

floor

From the pulse-pounding realism of *Gran Turismo* to the futuristic thrills of *WipEout*, from the hilarity of *Mario Kart 64* to the authenticity of *Grand Prix Legends*, driving games offer some of videogaming's finest hours. Next month we get our motor running and head out on the highway.

Start your engines

The race is on as an entire virtual car park of new racing games roars into town.

Next month *Arcade* offers a bumper-to-bumper inspection of *Driver*, *V-Rally 2*, *Le Mans 24 Hours*, *Monaco Grand Prix*, *Ridge Racer 4*, *WipEout 3* and more on *Gran Turismo 2* as we embark on a quest to find the ultimate driving game.

**Arcade 6 on sale Thursday 8 April.
Reserve your copy now.**

Release Schedule

Waiting for a special game? Here's the latest on when it'll get to your local shop.

March

5th	KKND: Krossfire	Electronic Arts	PSX
5th	Populous: The Beginning	EA	PSX
5th	Rugrats	THQ	PSX
5th	Sid Meier's Gettysburg	Electronic Arts	PC
5th	South Park	Acclaim	PC
5th	Superbikes World Championship	Virgin	PC
5th	Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	GT	PC
5th	Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	PC
5th	All Star Tennis 2	Ubisoft	N64
5th	South Park	Acclaim	N64
5th	Hollywood Pinball	Take 2	CGB

12th	Kensei Sacred Fist	Konami	PSX
12th	Lander	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	Monaco Grand Prix	Ubisoft	PSX
12th	Retro Force	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	Rollcage	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	Street Sk8r	Electronic Arts	PSX
12th	Viva Football	Virgin	PSX
12th	X Games Pro Boarders	EA Sports	PSX
12th	Pro 18: World Tour Golf	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	Actua Soccer	Sold Out	PC
12th	Atomic Bomberman	Sold Out	PC
12th	Championship Manager 3	EIDOS	PC
12th	Half-Life Team Fortress	Cendant	PC
12th	Resident Evil 2	Virgin	PC
12th	Rollcage	Psygnosis	PC
12th	Viva Football	Virgin	PC
12th	World Cup Cricket	Electronic Arts	PC
12th	A Bug's Life	Disney	CGB
12th	Duke Nukem	GT	CGB
12th	Missile Command	Take 2	CGB
12th	Rugrats	THQ	CGB

19th	Live Wire!	SCI	PSX
19th	Running Wild	Psygnosis	PSX
19th	Sports Car GT	Virgin	PSX
19th	Tai Fu	Activision	PSX
19th	Tomb Raider II	Platinum	PSX
19th	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters	PC
19th	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	PC
19th	Heavy Gear 2	Activision	PC
19th	Pro 18: World Tour Golf	Psygnosis	PC
19th	Roller Coaster Tycoon	Hasbro	PC
19th	Silver	Infogrames	PC
19th	Starshot: Space Circus	Infogrames	PC
19th	TTT	Take 2	PC
19th	VR Baseball 2000 Edition	VR Sports	PC
19th	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	N64
19th	Flying Dragons	Interplay	N64
19th	Mario Party	Nintendo	N64
19th	Milo's Bowling	Interplay	N64
19th	Frogger	Majesco	CGB
19th	Holy Magic Century	Konami	CGB
19th	Looney Tunes	Infogrames	CGB
19th	Power Quest	Infogrames	CGB
19th	Shanghai Pocket	Infogrames	CGB

26th	Asterix	Infogrames	PSX
26th	Colour Dual Shock Pads	Sony	PSX
26th	Dark Stalkers 3	Capcom	PSX
26th	Kingsley	Psygnosis	PSX
26th	Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	EIDOS	PSX
26th	Monkey Hero	Take 2	PSX
26th	Player Manager '99	Anco	PSX
26th	Rally X 2	Sony	PSX
26th	Soul Reaver: Legacy of Kain	EIDOS	PSX

26th	Street Fighter Collection 2	Capcom	PSX
26th	Discworld Noir	GT	PC
26th	Global Domination	Psygnosis	PC
26th	Nations	Psygnosis	PC
26th	Premier Manager '99	Gremlin	PC
26th	Recoil	Electronic Arts	PC
26th	Redline	Electronic Arts	PC
26th	TOCA Touring Car 2	Codemasters	PC
26th	Warzone 2100	EIDOS	PC
26th	FIFA '99	EA	N64
26th	Micro Machines 64	Codemasters	N64
26th	Vigilante 8	Activision	N64
26th	Battleships	Take 2	CGB
26th	Civilisation: Call to Power	Activision	CGB
26th	Conker's Pocket Tales	Nintendo/Rare	CGB
26th	Monopoly	Konami	CGB
26th	Pocket Tales Conker	Rare	CGB

TBA	Quake 2	Activision	PSX
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	PSX
TBA	Unification	Telstar	PSX
TBA	Age of Empires 2: Age of Kings	Microsoft	PC
TBA	Championship Manager '97/'98 Premier ...	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Close Combat 3	Microsoft	PC
TBA	Daikatana	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Extreme Warfare	Broderbund	PC
TBA	Fighting Force Premier	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Flight Unlimited 2 Premier Collection	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Interstate '82	Activision	PC
TBA	Jack Nicklaus: Golden Bear Challenge	Accolade	PC
TBA	Jimmy White 2 - Cue Ball	Infogrames	PC
TBA	Joe Blow	Telstar	PC
TBA	Live Wire!	SCI	PC
TBA	Monkey Island Adventure Pack	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Prey	GT	PC
TBA	Prince of Persia 3D	Broderbund	PC
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	Microprose	PC
TBA	Star Wars: X-wing Alliance	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Tonic Trouble	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Ultima Online: Second Age	Origin	PC
TBA	Quake 2	Activision	N64
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	N64

April

2nd	Alien Resurrection	EA/Fox	PSX
2nd	All Star Baseball 2000	Acclaim	PSX
2nd	Driver	GT	PSX
2nd	Gex: Deep Cover Gecko	GT	PSX
2nd	Moto Racer	Platinum	PSX
2nd	Warzone 2100	EIDOS	PSX
2nd	Alien Resurrection	EA/Fox	PC
2nd	Command & Conquer: Tiberium Sun	EA	PC
2nd	Driver	GT	PC
2nd	Lands of Lore 3	Westwood	PC
2nd	Sports Car GT	Virgin	PC
2nd	Beetle Adventure Rally	Electronic Arts	N64
2nd	Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT	N64
2nd	Monaco Grand Prix	Ubisoft	N64
2nd	ODT	Psygnosis	N64
2nd	Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA	Midway	N64
2nd	Bust-A-Move 4	Acclaim	CGB

2nd	Dungeon Warrior	Infogrames	CGB
2nd	V-Rally	Infogrames	CGB

9th	Marvel Super Heroes Vs Street Fighter	Capcom	PSX
9th	RC Stunt Copter	Interplay	PSX
9th	Street Fighter Alpha 3	Virgin	PSX
9th	Bloody Roar 2	Virgin	PC
9th	Castlevania 64	Konami	N64
9th	Mud Monsters	Take 2	N64
9th	Live Wire!	SCI	CGB
9th	Wicked Surfing	Nintendo	CGB
9th	WWF: Attitude	Acclaim	CGB

16th	PocketStation	Sony	PSX
16th	Ridge Racer R4	Namco	PSX
16th	Starsiege	Cendant	PC
23rd	Homeworld	Cendant	PC
23rd	Kluster	Infogrames	CGB

TBA	X-Files the Game	Fox Interactive	PSX
TBA	Beneath	Activision	PC
TBA	Black & White	EA	PC
TBA	Dungeon Keeper 2	EA	PC
TBA	Fly	Take 2	PC
TBA	Giants	Interplay	PC
TBA	Grand Theft Auto - London Edition	Take 2	PC
TBA	Machines	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Messiah	Interplay	PC
TBA	Outcast	Infogrames	PC

May

7th	Carmageddon	SCI	PSX
7th	Grand Theft Auto - London Edition	Take 2	PSX
7th	Prince Naseem Hamed Boxing	Codemasters	PSX
7th	Syphon Filter	Sony	PSX
7th	Um Jamma Lammy	SCEE	PSX
7th	WWF: Attitude	Acclaim	PSX
7th	Carmageddon	SCI	N64
7th	Rainbow Six	Take 2	N64
7th	Tonic Trouble	Ubisoft	N64
7th	Carmageddon	SCI	CGB

14th	Drakan	Psygnosis	PC
19th	NHL Face Off '99	Sony	PSX
21st	X-Men	Activision	PSX
TBA	Battlezone 2	Activision	PC
TBA	Bloodshot	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Descent 3	Interplay	PC
TBA	MechWarrior 3	Microprose	PC
TBA	Shadowman	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Star Trek: First Contact	Microprose	PC
TBA	Starship Troopers	Microprose	PC
TBA	Third World	Activision	PC

June

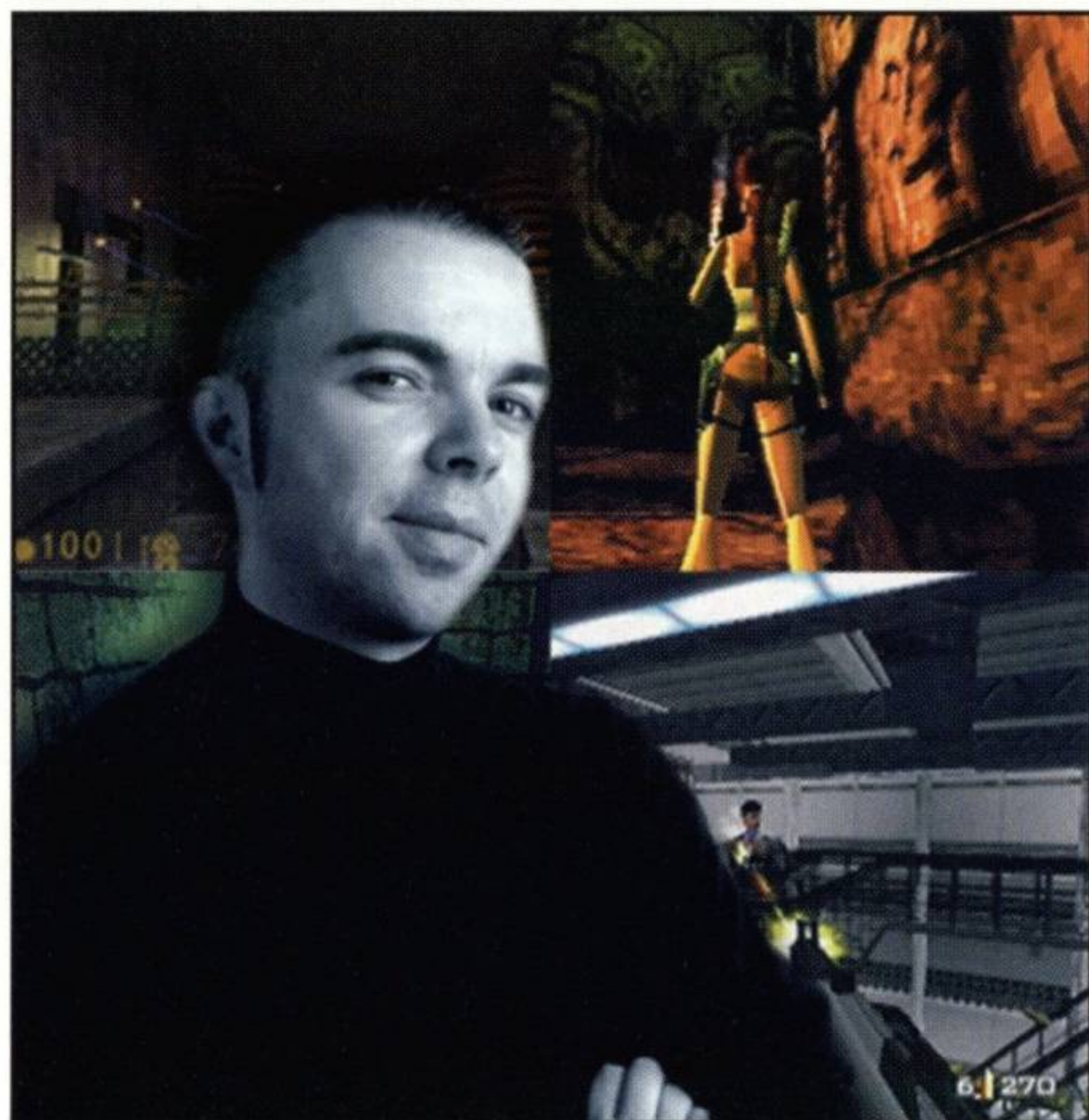
4th	Heart of Darkness	Platinum	PSX
11th	R-Type Delta	Sony	PSX
11th	WWF: Attitude	Acclaim	N64
18th	Mission: Impossible	Infogrames	PSX
25th	G-Police 2	Psygnosis	PSX
25th	Parasite Eve	Squaresoft	PSX
25th	V-Rally 2	Infogrames	PSX

RELEASE SCHEDULE IN ASSOCIATION WITH HMV



Games Insider

Four gaming obsessives. One in Japan, one in America, one who makes games for a living, and one who plays games for a living.



THIS IS HARDCORE

Stuart Campbell

Our new hardcore gamer finds *Castlevania 64* flawed but irresistible.

Hello viewers! Before we start, I'd like you to imagine something with me. Picture yourself in a cinema, watching *Titanic*. We've met all the characters, spent an hour or so in the opulent surroundings of the grand liner, had a bit of snog in the back of an old car, and recklessly steamed ahead into an iceberg field, despite several weather warnings from the ship's radio room. (It's necessary to do these things, of course, or when we hit the giant Orange Maid and everyone drowns in the freezing water, we won't give a monkey's about them.) In the cold Atlantic night, someone shouts "Iceberg! Dead ahead!" The screen goes black and silent, save for a scratchy, mechanical whirring sound. A small notice flickers up. "Loading second reel. Please wait."

Right, glad to have that little tension-shattering whinge off my chest. Now on with the real complaints. This month, I've been mostly playing *Castlevania 64*. Which is a little odd in itself, because it's a game with several gigantically irritating flaws, including the normally fatal "obscure puzzle in which a single mistake gets you instantly killed and sent all the

way back to the start of the level". And yet, I can't seem to put it down. The reason for this, I'm sure, is the presence of a factor that's still incredibly rare in video games: direction.

Y'see, most game developers think that all you have to do is stick the character on the screen

with some nice scenery and that's the job done, the world formed. But that's like putting actors on set and then having them stand still and deliver their lines in a newsreader's monotone. A video game isn't about building some sterile polystyrene-shopping-centre model, it's about creating an atmosphere, an experience. *Castlevania 64* understands this right from the start. You're only seconds into the game, running through a misty and seemingly deserted wood, with the rain beating down hard, when suddenly there's a calamitous thunderclap. There's a flash of lightning, and a mighty oak tree is cleaved into two, right in front of you, crashing noisily to the ground wreathed in flames. (Then, just to prove to you that it wasn't a fluke, the storm does the same thing again to another one.)

The effect is sobering and immediate. You're already feeling scared, tiny and insignificant, and you haven't even met any baddies yet. When you do, things get worse. The malevolent little skeleton grunts who keep on coming at you even when you knock off their heads or legs are just a taster. Barely a minute in, you'll meet an enormous one, but it's not his sheer size (or convincing, ape-like movement) that's frightening. Thanks to the game's clever use of low and swinging camera angles and superb, evocative sound, the skeleton boss tangibly comes to life, quite happily charging right over your head "into" camera and attacking you with his bone club, while you dart around in panic trying to work out where he's gone. (Some reviews have mistakenly taken this for a clumsy flaw – in fact, it's an ingenious recreation of the confusion and chaos created by exactly the kind of desperate life-or-death battle the game's trying to portray.) By now, just 90 seconds or so have flown by, and the game's already managed to introduce more atmosphere than *Final Fantasy VII* does in the first six hours.

That so few games manage this level of involvement (*Resident Evil 2* does it, *Banjo-Kazooie* does it, *Zelda* and *GoldenEye* pull it off, and then you're struggling) is a bit sad. That so few even try is downright depressing. *Castlevania 64* is still a very long way from perfect, yet despite its flaws it's more compelling and affecting to play than, in all probability, anything else you'll see this year outside of *Metal Gear Solid*. And it's all down to direction. If more game developers treated their characters as living creatures, rather than collections of polygons, imagine how much fun we could all have. **A**

■ **Stuart Campbell is a games journalist. He's also responsible for "Power Players" starting on page 47.**



BACKSCREEN

Neil Jackson

"That's it, baby! When you've got it, flaunt it!"

In the classic Mel Brooks comedy *The Producers*, Gene Wilder try to make money by producing a hopelessly over-budget, sure-fire flop and claiming on the insurance. Some people believe that videogame producers still work the same way, but what's the job really about?

In Tinseltown, producers raise the funds needed for production, financing the deal in true *The Producers* fashion, leaving the director to lead the creativity. In the games biz, a producer will be consulted when a publisher chooses game ideas to develop, but that's generally the limit of their "wheeler-dealing".

So what does a producer actually do?

Well variously, he's seen as the scapegoat, the late-payer, the credit-stealer or the corporate mole; rarely does anyone give a producer the benefit of the doubt – usually because, on the most basic level, the buck stops with them. So does the shit.

On a typical project, a producer has to keep everything in the development process on track, reporting to the publisher. They'll have to explain to the publisher why Joe Developer didn't get the 3D engine fixed in time, delaying the game's release by six months. They personally will carry the can for any pisspoor gameplay, or the appallingly tinny sound-effects. They'll have to justify why it really wasn't a good idea after all, to spend \$15 million on a game-of-the-film-of-the-plastic-dolly, and how hard it was to convince everyone to even work on the project.

Producers are also expected to guide the Quality Assurance team, during testing. They explain which parts of the game are missing, presumed unfinished, so that the testers can work around them while testing. Testers and producer work together, and with focus groups composed of unsuspecting members of the public dragged in off the streets, they'll look for weak gameplay, and things that can be made more fun, more noisy, more

We've even had a bit of a snog in the back of an old car.


exciting, more, well, more everything, right?

Aside from the fun bits, producers spend many hours tracking costs, even managing a budget sometimes, depending on the particular producer and the publisher they work for. They'll work with the marketing team to help them understand the game, giving them snappy "handles" to help them sell it. Meanwhile, they'll be frantically overseeing the preparation of manuals, and checking that the proposed advertising material bears even a shred of truth compared to what's really in the game.

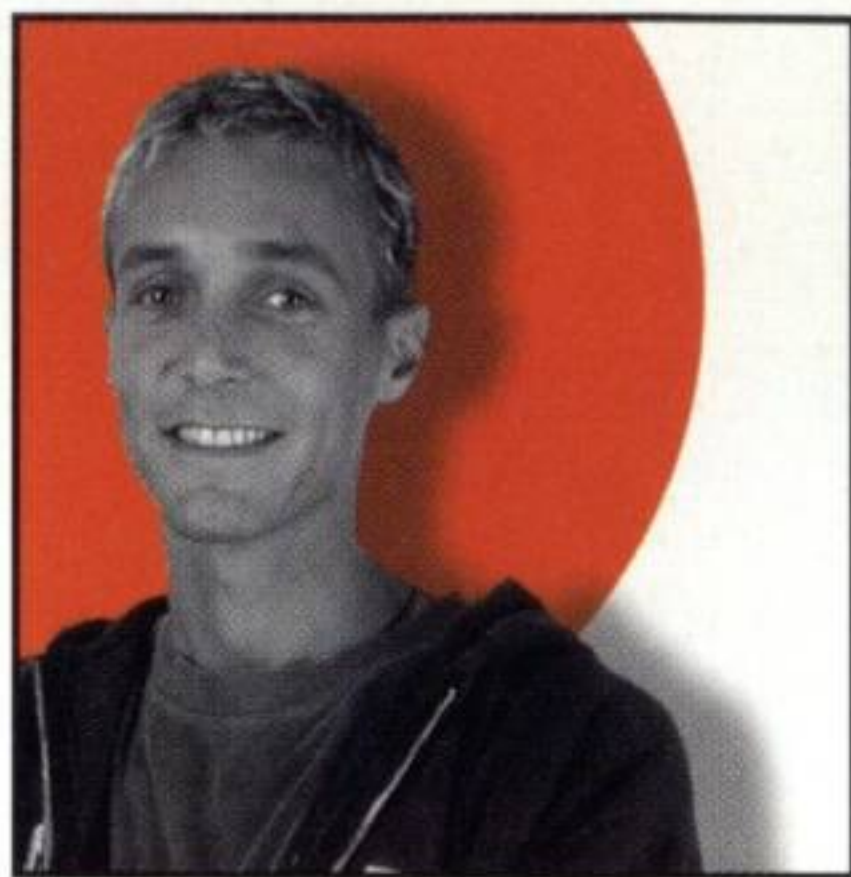
Much of the producer's real skill lies in the team-management (known variously as childminding, babysitting, or "kicking the beggars"). Depending on the level of "artiste" they're dealing with, a producer may have to deal as much with a team's combination of egos as they do with the game. So when do they actually have any creative input?

Despite the myth that the producer is part-man, part mobile phone, they can add much to the final game. In a way, nobody is in a better position than they are; able to stand back, watch, and take in the whole game experience from an objective viewpoint, while at the same time being able to estimate what's possible, what it might cost, and whether it's worth the effort.

As a reward for all this work, the salaries on offer vary wildly. £18k would be considered low, but there are producers who've worked their way up from test departments over two or three years and aren't getting much more than that. Many producers at independent developers or small publishers will be in the £20k-£35k range. The "top dogs" could be on anything up to £60k, but these guys are rare, and their term of office is often short-lived – publishers often demand retribution for a flopped game in the form of the producer's head.

Assuming that you're still interested in the job, what qualifications are you going to need to get to the top? Well, few that you'd gain at university or college. You need the gift of the gab, a neat line in manipulating people and a degree of ethics (with the ability to drop them all like hot potatoes when required). I've known producers who could barely write, were crap at maths, or had the social skills of Adolf Hitler. The things all the best producers rely on are their fervent love of games, and a complete appreciation of the brain-numbing effort required to pull them together. They know the game really will come out eventually, and when it does, It Shall Be Good. Above all, they are prepared to do absolutely bloody anything to beat the odds and to finish the game. Unless it's canned first, of course. 

■ **Neil works at Binary Asylum, where he's creating Star Trek: New Worlds. Drop him a line at backscreen@techno.demon.co.uk.**



TURNING JAPANESE

Jason Brookes

Fishing? Train driving? It's all very big in Japan.

In a country where consumerism exploits every possible niche (and indeed sub-niche) of every pastime or hobby, videogaming attracts more than its fair share of useless marketing spin-offs, accessories and stupid ideas. Pretty much every day something daft will appear in Japan's games stores, be it the latest installment of a popular dating simulator, or a remix CD of favourite RPG battle tunes, performed by the London Symphony Orchestra – no really.

The sad truth is, there are enough geeks per capita (GPC) in Japan to sustain some very dubious videogaming niches. Take trains, for example. Here the dedicated trainspotter not only has the luxury of being able to take pride in the knowledge that his country has the world's most punctual rail system – the Shinkansen (Bullet train) – but thanks to Taito's popular train simulation series *Densha Da Go!* ("Let's Go By Train!") he can also live the dream in the arcade and on PlayStation, too. Oh, the exhilaration of cruising through the Tokyo suburbs at a steady 45 miles an hour and then pulling into a station, waiting for the guard's signal and pulling out again. It's far more enjoyable, of course, when you have the proper braking and acceleration equipment, and last year those nice people at Taito made a PlayStation controller box available, replete with all the requisite knobs and buttons.

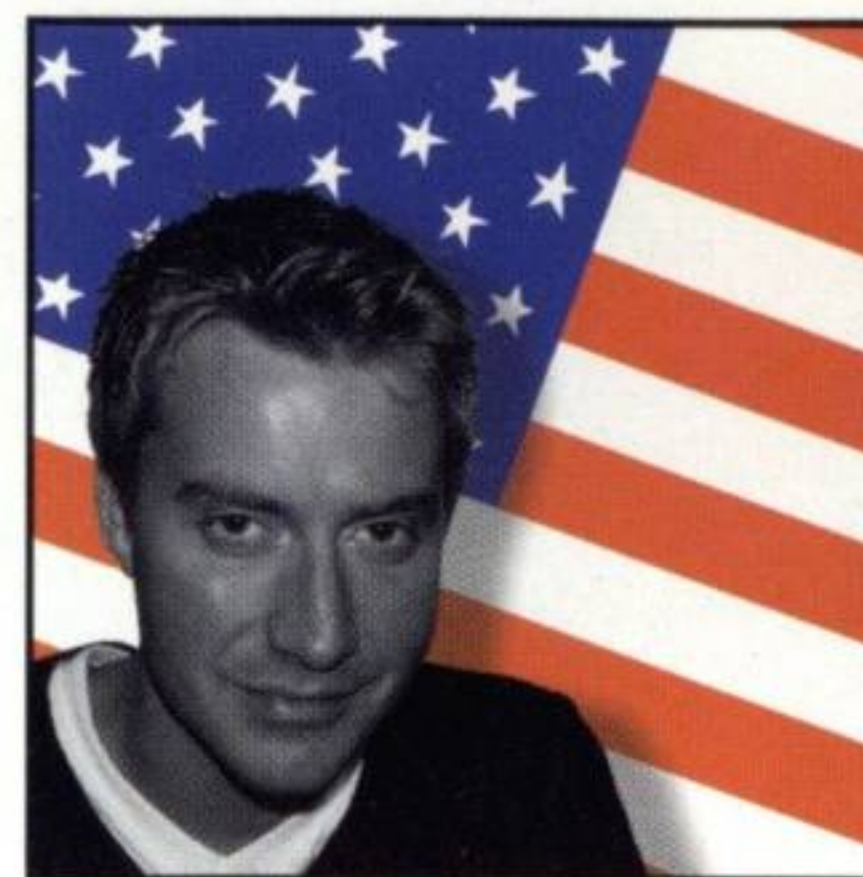
In fact, as videogaming encroaches upon almost every aspect of daily life in Japan, not even the simple pleasures of the countryside are safe from the corruptive sloop of the games manufacturers. And fishing is where it's at. Keen to cash in on the success of Sega's *Get Bass* fishing coin-op, games companies here have been smart to spot the potential for taking the most interminably dull pastime known to man and pepping it up a bit. This means that instead of sitting on a muddy riverbank, clutching a

flask of soup and looking miserable as sin, you can switch on your PlayStation and catch a freezer full of carp in about ten minutes. It's hardly sporting, but it beats frostbite.

In fact such is the popularity of videogame fishing that games companies have been beavering away on titles, and just recently a spring collection of simulations was announced – complete with the first range of dedicated controllers. Banpresto's *Bass Tsurini Kou!* (literally, "Let's Go Bass Fishing!") not only lets you catch fish with sponsored equipment from big manufacturers, but it also gives you a view from the poor old fish's perspective, as it hunts around for food (and remembers it's a fish every six seconds). Bandai's *Bass Raise*, on the other hand, lets you keep any fish you catch on your PocketStation, where you can feed them and watch them grow into big fish. Quite why anyone would want to do such a thing is utterly bewildering.

But if you think fishing games are dull, just wait until you get your hands on the new wave of business simulations for the PlayStation. Following the taut, visceral thrills thrown up by Human Software's *The Convenience Store* and *The Convenience Store 2* – games where you get to manage the Japanese equivalent of a Happy Shopper – is *Shijyou Saikyou no Menu*, or "The Family Restaurant". This new release sees players learn the business of setting up a noodle bar, and covers every angle, from choosing a suitable location and checking out the competition in the area, to designing and decorating the restaurant, hiring and training staff, and even developing a decent menu. Forget train controllers, the fun of Japanese PlayStation peripherals is a four-hub cooker with built-in noodle steamer. 

■ **Previously Editor of Edge magazine, Jason spends time in Japan. And makes worrying grinding noises come out of Neil's car.**



AMERICAN EXPRESS

Simon Cox

Lost in the complex Stateside world of on-line gaming.

Before I moved out here I remember the concerted PR effort behind British Telecom's "Wireplay" on-line gaming service. An ad with two nice-but-dull chaps gradually turning beetroot with barely concealed rage as, for the third time, they failed to get their multi-player soccer game past the kick-off without it all going horribly wrong.

Now, the on-line gaming scene is changing. Britain is, as Tony Blair probably says a lot, getting wired at an alarming rate.

But it has always been America that has lead the way. The Internet is fast becoming a feature of every American household with a computer. The growth is being driven by the twin forces of nearly-free local calls (you pay a small monthly fee instead of individual call charges) and low-rent Internet Service Providers that can hook you up for a monthly fee that's less than the price of a pizza.

So what is the average American gamer doing when they go on-line? I figured a look into "A day in the life of a young on-line gamer" might help to paint a picture of the scene here.

6pm – returns from McJob, walks straight into bedroom and slams the door before his mum can ask him if he's "met any nice girls lately?" Sticks his Everclear album on and considers dying hair green. Starts up his PC and goes looking for a game.

First stop – Origin's *Ultima Online* site, where he briefly loiters wishing he had a credit card to pay the \$9.95 subscription that would allow him to wander the world as a knight, vastly better at scoring chicks than himself. With over one million members, the chances of him lasting the night in the mythical world of Britannia are slim – he would be killed off within nanoseconds as the more experienced players gang up for a bit of hunt-the-newbie sport.

7pm – dyes hair green. It looks crap and tomorrow he'll get his head kicked in by a couple of Frat boys for looking like the wrong end of Kermit the Frog.


8pm – loads up *Starcraft* and logs on to Battle.net – a site owned and run by Blizzard, the company that makes strategy games *Starcraft* and *Warcraft*, and the hugely successful dungeon-bashing RPG, *Diablo*. It's free and fast and he gets a game within minutes. The obvious lack of control he has over his own life is forgotten as he sends 50 Space Marines to their death by 8:15pm.

8:16pm – logs on to Heat.net, which is now a free service. The top games to play this week on Heat.net are *Quake* and *Quake II*, closely followed by another RPG – this time based on the *Dungeons & Dragons* universe – *Baldur's Gate*, from Interplay. Briefly considers playing as a Thief (vastly better at scoring girls than himself). In the end opts for a quick game of *Quake II*, where he gets fragged a record 36 times in the space of just three minutes. He blames the low frame-rate (things slow down when there's a lot going on) and on the fact that he "lost the rocket-launcher".


8:30pm – decides to try one of the oldest on-line gaming destinations, MPlayer. Logs on to the site at <http://www.mplayer.com/> which loudly proclaims "Over 2.5 million members playing worldwide!" Some of them must be girls, he figures, and sticks around. MPlayer is all about "community", so he jumps into the Gamers section in the hope of meeting some like-minded individuals with whom to forge lasting, worthwhile friendships. Or, if not, then at least to exchange dirty e-mail with an anonymous babe. Is put off by the fact that this is where his Dad logs on to play bridge and poker (and possibly also to exchange dirty e-mails with some anonymous babe that's not his Mom).

9:00pm – checks out Zone.com, Microsoft Corp's very own on-line gaming service. It's free, but there are lots of ads and the only game in town seems to be *Age of Empires*. The big server game on promotion is "Sysops vs Zoners in Ants!" No mention of women anywhere. Starts to play *Age of Empires*, sends a peasant out to chop wood, figuring the rest will take care of itself. Returns half an hour later to find one peasant, a lot of wood and 300 heavily armed Romans on horseback forming a orderly line to kick the crap out of him.

10:00pm – Mom tells him to turn the computer off and go to bed. An argument ensues, which he loses. Mumbles, "I hate my parents" under breath and swears he'll never be like them when he grows up.

Ten years later – grows up. Logs on to site hosting bridge game. Is just like parents. 

■ **Simon is currently working on sinister "special projects" at Imagine Media.**



Eye Candy

Dead or Alive 2's Candy is certainly a sweetie. Unfortunately, like most sweeties, she can be alarmingly damaging to your health. Try and "unwrap" her and she'll knock your block off.

Since the dawn of time, gentleman of the Earth have had a strange fascination for women of mystery. Posh ones, scruffy ones, tall ones, small ones, it matters not what they look like – men are attracted to them because they don't quite know what's going on in their heads. What are they thinking about? What do they get up to of an evening? How come they always know what a man's thinking? Why does this annoy them so much?

This month's Virtual Fox is as mysterious as they come. Her name is Candy, she has gorgeous blue hair, big brown eyes, and a body that would send Lara Croft scuttling back to her boudoir for a Wonderbra. She's like the lovechild of Marge Simpson and Geoff Capes. Except somehow attractive.


But there the information stops.

We know she's a star of *Dead or Alive 2*, Sega's new coin-op beat-'em-up. We know that the game's being developed on Sega's "Naomi" hardware (the arcade counterpart to the Dreamcast) which would suggest that she'll be gracing a

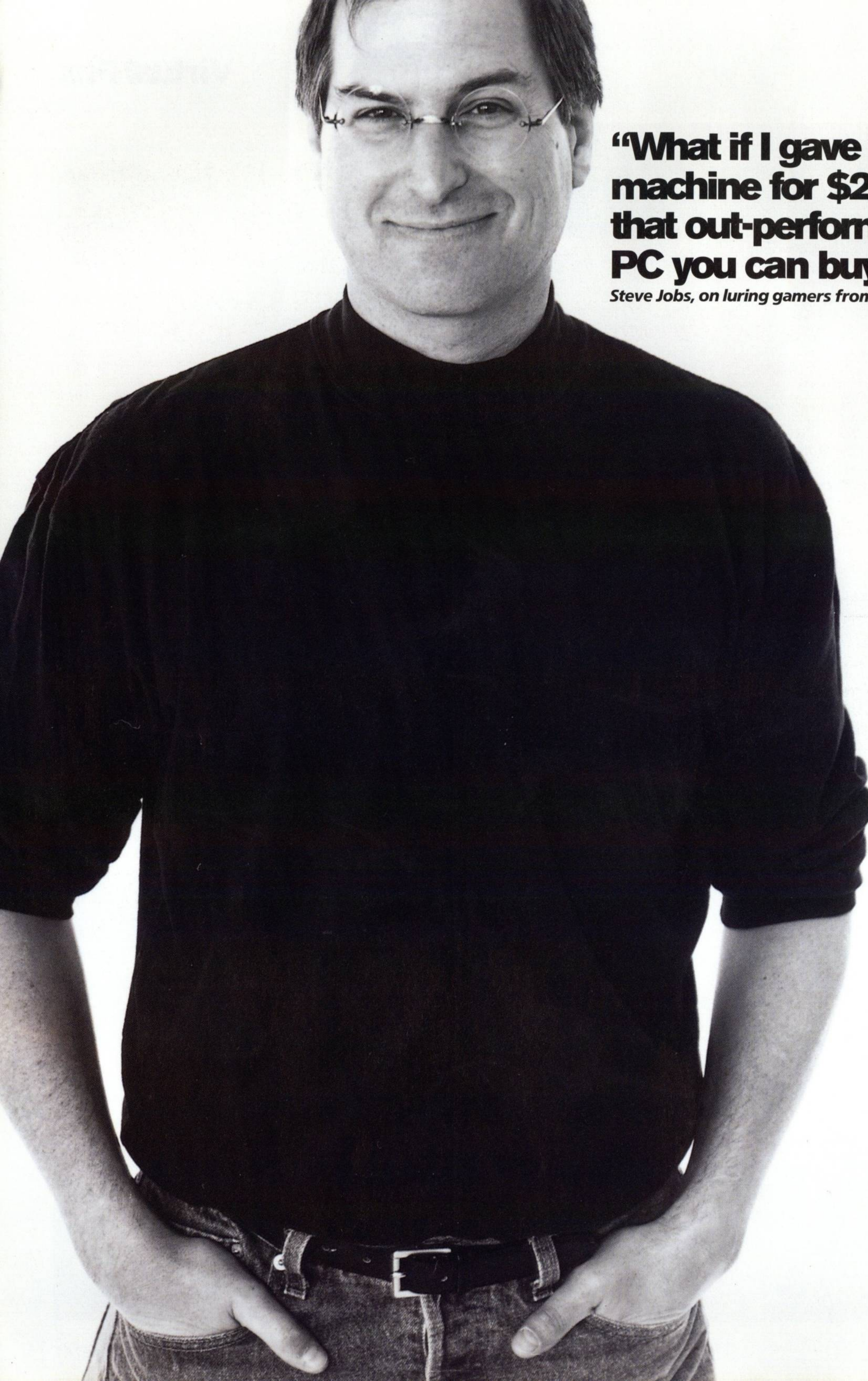
Dreamcast near you (possibly in your bedroom) come the machine's UK release this September. A PlayStation version of *Dead or Alive* might follow, but then it might not. You see, we simply can't tell. And ladies of mystery are notorious for changing their minds.

So look out for Candy in the arcades, but be aware that – as with most mysteries – part of the attraction is an element of danger. She's pals with *Virtua Fighter*'s Sarah Bryant, remember. So our advice is **A** look, but don't touch.

■ *The lovely Candy is one of the new characters in Sega's Dead or Alive 2. The coin-op should hit the UK this summer, with Dreamcast and PlayStation versions of the game to follow. Maybe. If she's not washing her hair.*



DEAD OR ALIVE



“What if I gave you a machine for \$2,000 that out-performs any PC you can buy.”

Steve Jobs, on luring gamers from PC to Mac

Steve Jobs

Interview by | Carrie Shepherd

Apple is working on the **ultimate games machine**. But can founder and CEO Steve Jobs convince you to ditch the PC? He'll certainly have a damn good try.

Apple's new videogame offensive marks a return to the game business for CEO Steve Jobs. Back in 1974 he was one of Atari's "technohippies" working with Nolan Bushnell on the development of *Pong*.

Now 25 years later, can he really turn the Mac into a killer games machine? He certainly thinks so. *Arcade* caught up with him to find out how he intends to do it.

This isn't the first time Apple's claimed to be "getting serious" about games. How do we know that this time it's for real?

All I can do is to tell you what's happening now, which is a bunch of smart people at Apple really like playing games and know that Apple's customers like playing games too. Also, we want our computers to be good at system performance and graphics in general, and games are a wonderful way to pound the system and the software to its limits. We just see a lot of advantages in trying to be the best gaming platform.

Our aim is to leapfrog the PC industry. We're investing a lot in it.

So how are you going to deliver on this promise?

We've been working with ATI Technologies Inc, one of the world's leading graphics acceleration companies, for almost a year now, to try and integrate their Rage 128 graphics card with our computers. We really believe that you have to build the technology in.

This new graphics standard will provide great 32-bit acceleration, and will vastly improve video textures, lighting, fog effects, shadows and blending in the games you play.

How do you know this is the best way forward?

We talked to some of the best game authors, and they all told us that if we could build in to our computers

something great – like ATI's card – it would make it much simpler for both gamers and for them.

It works both ways, the developer no longer has to write a zillion drivers for a zillion 3D systems and cards, and the gamer doesn't have to work out which driver to use to get the best performance out of their new kit.

Historically, the Mac doesn't have a great reputation among gamers. How will you start convincing them that the Mac's where it's at?

First, we have to deliver on our promises. Second, we have to talk to the influencers. And the number one group of influencers are probably the game authors themselves, right?

So you're courting the best developers to get the best games?

We believe that if the legendary game authors think it's cool to come back to the Mac, then they're going to act as role models for the other game authors, who will follow.

Is your goal to get more games released on Mac before the PC?

As we pick up momentum, I think we'll see more publishers putting out games for the PC and Mac at the same time. But we have to work at it because we're the underdog right now, you know? At the moment we're getting games that already exist on other systems.

Clearly, down the road we would like some games unique to Mac. Or, quite possibly, games that are cross platform but have some very unique features that only come alive on the Macintosh.

But what we're doing right now is trying to build the best gaming platform in the world so developers are attracted to write for it.

Given the small number of people using Macs compared to the huge number of people using PCs, how can you compete?

The active installed base of Macs is around 25 million, and I don't think that's a small number.

Besides, just because there are more Wintel PCs sold than Macs, that doesn't make them better. Right? I mean, there are more Fords sold than BMWs, but that doesn't mean the Ford is a better car.

Mac games to come...

■ Apple hasn't traditionally been the system of choice for the dedicated gamer, but the latest initiatives announced by CEO Steve Jobs suggest that the California-based company is determined to drastically change people's perceptions.

With the release of two new ranges of machines – the gaudily coloured iMacs and the Earth-shatteringly fast G3 desktop boxes – Apple has inadvertently created one of the fastest, most graphically capable gaming machines in the world. You just wait till you get an eyeful of *Quake III*.

The new machines are heavy on hardware and light on price. The G3 ships with ATI's Rage 128 GL graphics capability – the fastest 3D graphics on the market – built-in. And you get processors that can take you as fast as 400MHz, Internet capabilities that should make on-line gaming a doddle and an entry-level price of just £1,256.

iD Software has already announced *Quake II* and *Quake III: Arena*, but you can expect a host of other great releases from companies such as Activision, EA, Blizzard, GT Interactive, Sierra and Microprose. Games slated to appear include *Sim City 3000*, *Klingon Honor Guard*, *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*, *Falcon 4.0* and *Starcraft*.

Jobs has got a long way to go, but the foundations look solid.

Are you going to promote the new G3 as a games machine?

Right now no, but I wouldn't be surprised if we did soon. Also, it's not just the G3, an iMac is a pretty dog-gone good games machine too. It's got Rage Pro graphics in it... better graphics than any of the low-end PCs you could buy.

Generally, what advantages does an Apple system have over a PC?

Apple is the only company left that makes "the whole widget". Imagine being a car company where you get your engine from this Intel engine company, you get your body design and your seats from this other company called Microsoft, and you bolt them together with a spare tire and you ship the car.

Apple, however, makes everything. They're like BMW in that they make their own transmissions, they make this, they make that. We do the hardware, we do the software, we do the design, we do the marketing, we do everything.

Apple can take responsibility for the whole experience, and I think that's an incredibly valuable thing.

What do you think of Connectix's "Virtual Game Machine" (see *Game On, Arcade 4*) that lets people play PlayStation games on their G3 Macs?

We didn't engineer it, so the timing of it isn't some grand design, but we think it's terrific. Clearly, people don't buy a \$2,000 computer to play PlayStation games, but it may be the frosting on the cake.

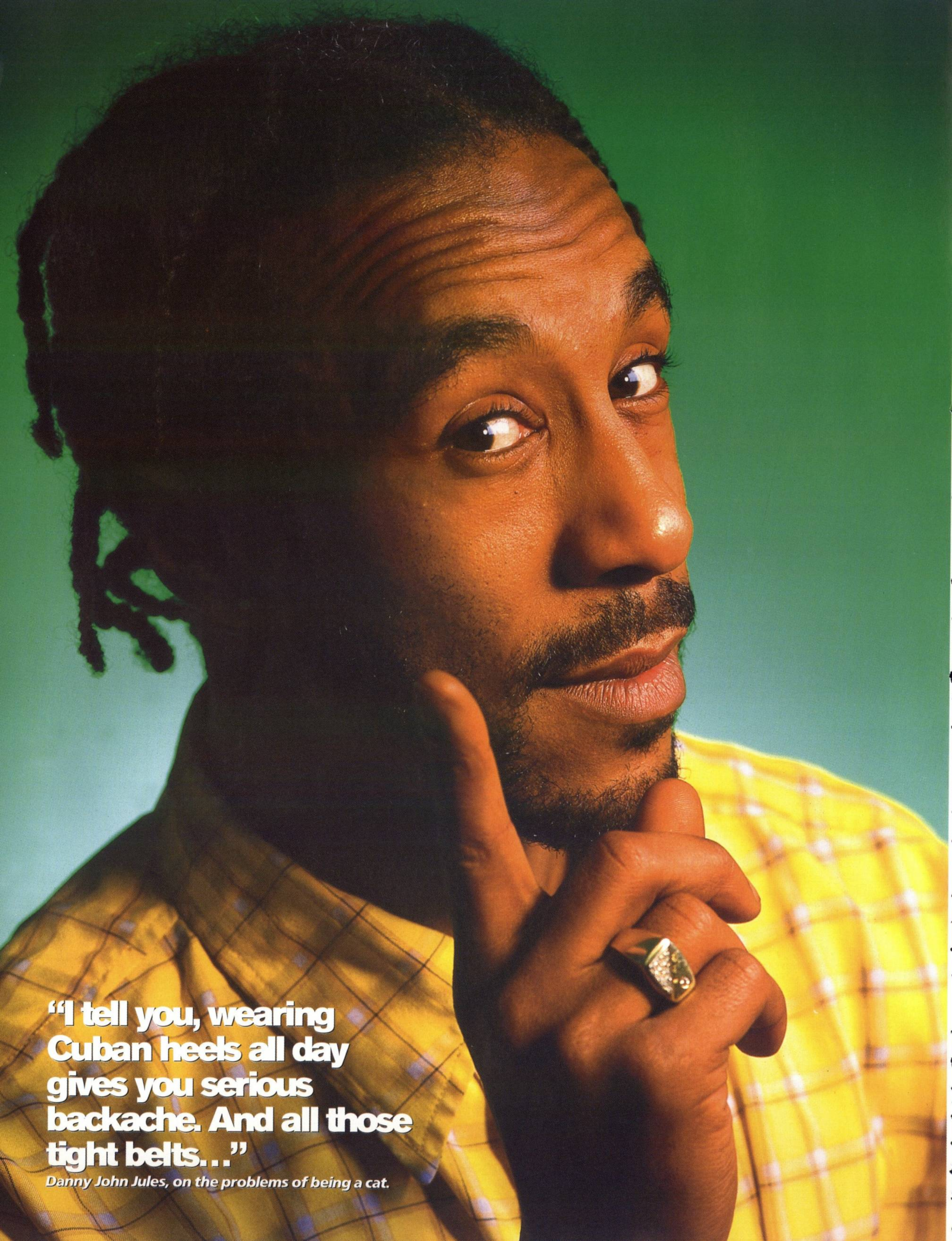
Ultimately, how will you convince hardcore gamers, with \$3,000 to spend, to pick a Mac instead of a PC?

What if we can give them a machine for \$2,000 that out-performs a PC costing \$3,000? What happens if we can give them a machine for \$2,000 that out-performs any PC you can buy?

They'll care about that.

■ *Arcade* wishes to thank Games Business USA and Alex Sommersby at Macformat.





“I tell you, wearing Cuban heels all day gives you serious backache. And all those tight belts...”

Danny John Jules, on the problems of being a cat.

Interview by | Rich Peley

Danny John-Jules

What's The Cat from *Red Dwarf* doing as the voice of everyone's favourite lizard in *Gex: Deep Cover Gecko*? There's only one way to find out...

If you're a fan of *Red Dwarf*, you're probably familiar with Danny John-Jules's guise as the fashion-obsessed, canine-protruding, self-centred Cat, and of The Cat's nerdy train-spotting alter-ego Dwayne Dibbley. But what is the man himself like in real life? What are Danny's views on the future of computers, of the *Red Dwarf* cult, and of lending his highly versatile voice to voice-overs for everything from geckos to spearmint Polos? We caught up with him in London, and asked.

So how do you do a voice-over? Do you just stand in a studio and chat into a big microphone?

Well, it's a bit more difficult than that. Not being that much of a gamer, I wasn't overly familiar with the previous *Gex* incarnations. I had to get to grips with the character and what was happening around him, to ensure that the voice sounded in sync with the game.

You said that you didn't use The Cat's voice, but invented a new one instead. How do you decide what voice to give to a gecko?

He ended up sounding kind of American and quite funky. Actually, I can't remember that clearly. When you're working in the studio you're doing stuff on the spur of the moment. The director might say "make it a bit gruffer," or "make it a bit softer". You do these things without thinking too consciously.

I'm still waiting to hear it myself. They wanted it to sound funny, so hopefully, the humour will come through.

What was your most challenging role: providing the voice-over for a small green lizard, or for a spearmint Polo advertisement?

Well, the polo was quite a funny job. With commercials, there's always the time aspect to consider. They want it funny, they want it eloquent, they want it precise. And then they'll tell you that you have to get it all in ten seconds of

talking. From the end result, it might sound easy, but there's an immense pressure on you to get it right.

Are you into videogames?

I've always wanted to get more into them than I am, but you have to spend so much time playing them to get any good. The thing with me is if I'm no good, I hate playing. I want to go straight from zero to master in one game. You get really disillusioned when a five-year-old kid comes and thrashes you. You think – right, that's it. I don't want to play this game no more.

You're a fan of Tekken though, aren't you?

I saw my mate's seven-year-old daughter destroying a room full of big, burly geezers. It was terrible. But, yeah. I like a bit of *Tekken* now and again.

How come there's never been a Red Dwarf videogame?

There has been talk of one for years. The time would be right for one now, but the writers are very protective.

If there ever was a game, Doug [*Red Dwarf*'s head writer] would have to be involved. It's a bit like mountain bikes. Mercedes mountain bikes aren't actually made by Mercedes. Porsche are the only company where the guys who make the cars make the bikes. The writers are like Porsche, hands on.

Eh? Erm, what about a film?

We're doing a film next year. At the moment we're still tidying up the new series, and after that it'll be holiday and writing. It takes a lot of time. But it'll probably happen next year. They really want it to happen.

You know Red Dwarf's AR [Artificial Reality] machines? Well, in Gunman of the Apocalypse, you use one to tap into Kryten's dreams. And in Back To Reality, we are led to believe that everything up to that point in the Red Dwarf story has been an AR videogame. Do you think games will ever get that advanced?

[Enthusiastically] Oh yeah! I reckon they will be able to do that. It's like a kind of anaesthetic. You know, breathe this for a while [makes snoring noise] and the next thing you know you wake up on the operation table. Who's to say that, in that state, you couldn't be tripping or



Many faces of The Cat

■ Although he's been in *Red Dwarf* since the very first episode, there are many other faces of Danny John-Jules other than that of The Cat. Before *Red Dwarf* he was in, er, *Cats in the West End*, as well as *Starlight Express* and *Carmen Jones*. His early TV work included appearances in *Three of a Kind* (with Lenny Henry and Tracy Ullman), and in children's favourite schoolgirl bully series *Marmalade Atkins*. You might also have seen him in BBC1's *Maid Marian and Her Merry Men*, *The Demon Headmaster*, or even, once, in *The Bill*.

The Danny John-Jules who sat opposite us in a television studio in London was a very different Danny to the one we see aboard the *Red Dwarf*. He was very friendly, in spite of the fact that he had been in interviews all day, and casually dressed with a beard and funky dreadlocks. He was exceptionally laid-back, and spoke slowly and thoughtfully, unlike the Cat – except when his 'phone rang and he got a bit over-excited.

hallucinating. If they could control your hallucinations, we'd almost be there.

What do you think of Red Dwarf's depiction of the future?

Red Dwarf is very set in its beliefs. From the first ever episode, it has maintained that there are no aliens – all the lifeforms you encounter are man-made. People, such as Rimmer, just die and there's no God or Heaven. You could almost subscribe to *Red Dwarf* as a religion.

For a long time *Red Dwarf*'s been a leader in taking chances, putting all kind of ideas out there that most people wouldn't even dream of doing because they'd be too scared of ridicule.

So, is it hard playing a cat, then? Whenever you see Craig Charles interviewed, he's almost exactly the same as Lister. But you're very different from The Cat.

When filming, you might have been waiting on set for four hours half asleep. Then, suddenly, it's "Danny, we need you down here", and it's bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, you have to get this manic character out, and that can really be freaky. I tell you, wearing Cuban heels all day gives you serious backache. [Winces a little.] And all those tight belts... Half the time I can't breathe. You should see me at the end of the day when I take that outfit off. Everything just falls out.

Who were your influences for playing The Cat?

James Brown, Richard Prior, Cab Calloway, Little Richard. The Cat's facial expressions are definitely very Richard Prior. And The Cat's cool, like those guys.

He's definitely the sort of cat who you'd find clambering up the curtains or crapping behind the couch. Which reminds us, how come there are no toilets in Red Dwarf?

Well, there are in the new series. And we discover a thirteenth floor, which we'd previously not known about because it was classified. It's the prison, the brig, or the tank as we call it. But you'll have to wait and see...



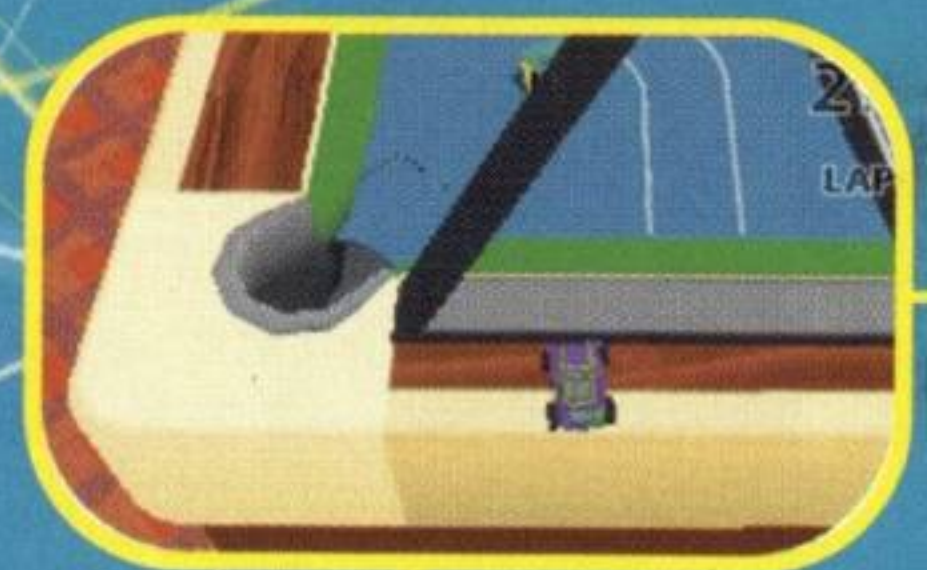
Manic Mayhem & Full On Fun... 8 can play that game.

- Round up your mates and go totally wild in mini-sized cars.
- Drive like mad all over the house... rip across the breakfast table, devastate the dining room, smash up the chemistry lab, tear up the snooker room...
- Grab your weapons, find the force fields, and fireballs and send your opponents crashing to oblivion...
- The all out, no holds barred, fun fuelled racing game where up to eight can play on one, full screen.



Micro Machines 64 Turbo.

Play it.



THE ULTIMATE MULTI-PLAYER RACING GAME.



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POWER PLAYERS

STORY BY STUART CAMPBELL

NAMED: THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE GAMES BUSINESS

Wideogaming is often berated for its lack of real-life "personalities". Where are the gaming equivalents of rock stars, famous actors or directors? It's a common complaint, but upon looking through the coming pages, the first thing you'll notice is how many of these people you *have* heard of. Quietly, and almost by accident, the games industry has built itself a cast of characters.

And this list doesn't even feature a few of the most familiar names that you'd expect to appear. There's no Dave Perry (*Earthworm Jim*), no Jon Hare (*Sensible Soccer*), no Sid Meier (*Civilisation*). Hardly any, then, of the Usual Suspects that are routinely rounded up when a games magazine feels the need for some "personalities". There's also a sprinkling of names that, on first inspection, you may think have nothing to do with games. Why? Because this is a list for the *future*. The bottom-line defining criterion we used to judge candidates was, "If they were to suddenly lose the plot, have some kind of major Benny and start doing things completely differently to the way they do now, would it affect the future of the UK games scene in a drastic way?" It's a strange methodology, maybe. But we like it.

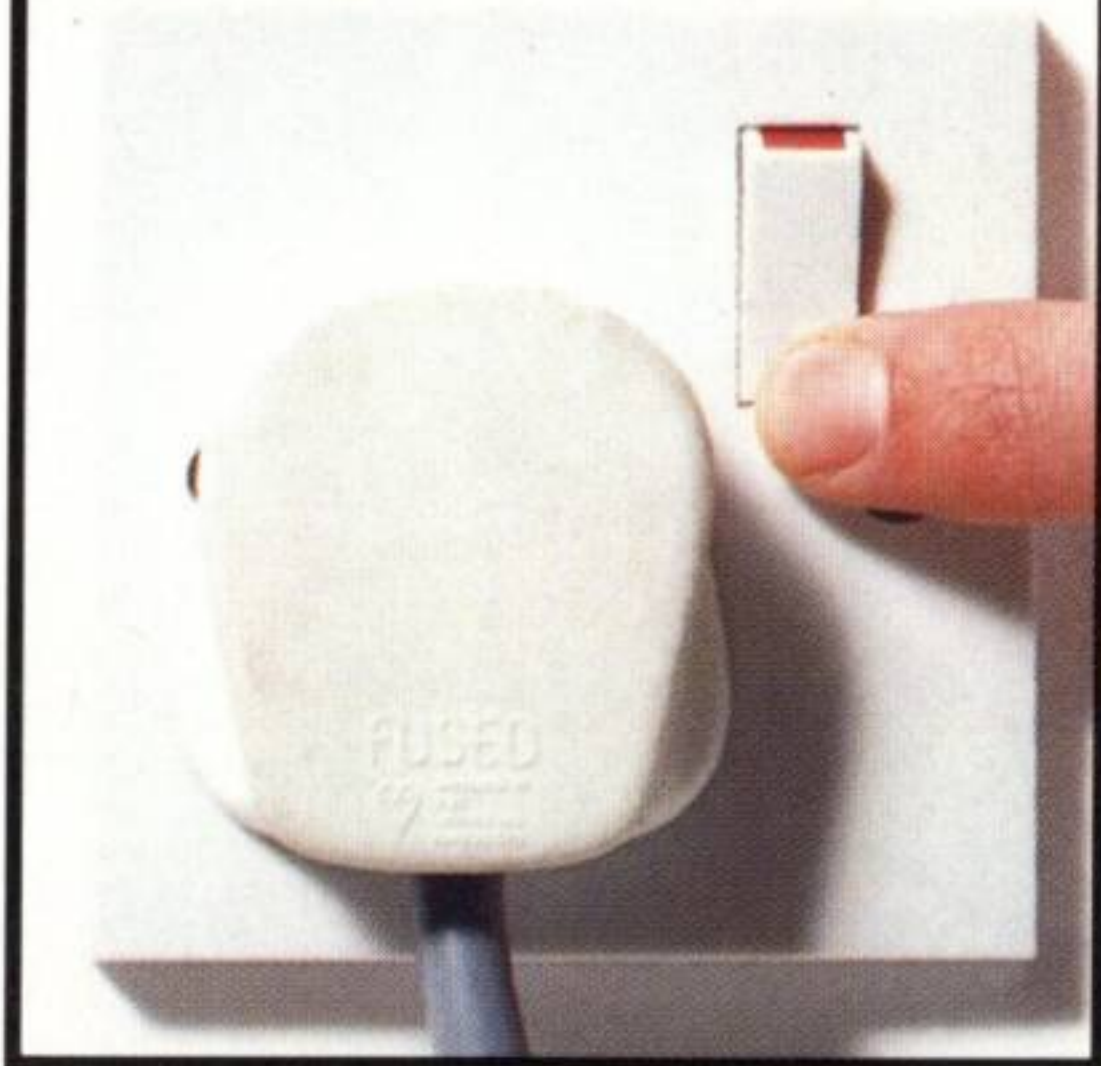
So over the next ten pages are the people *Arcade* will shortly be placing under close psychological scrutiny, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the rest of time. Or at least, until they run out of good ideas. Hey, it's a harsh world. 



■ Who really flicks the switches in the world of videogames? Find out over the next ten pages...

POWER PLAYERS

THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE VIDEOGAME BUSINESS



50 MIKE CONNORS
Job: MD, Datel Direct Ltd.

Career highlight: The various incarnations of Action Replay. **What's the big deal?** A cipher entry here, with Connors appearing on behalf of all the clever people inventing ways to make your console games do things they're not supposed to, whether it be finding game-destroying cheat codes or playing import titles the publishers would rather you waited six months for. The console companies claim to hate such manufacturers, but every time they put some clever new territorial protection or whatever into a game, that's just another cheat cart/converter you've got to buy, leaving the likes of Datel laughing all the way to the bank. **Most likely to say:** "Nice try." **Least likely to say:** "I think they've got us flummoxed good and proper this time." **Currently working on:** Ever-bigger PlayStation memory cards (the latest is 50 times the size of the standard Sony model). **Future prospects:** Until universal release schedules happen, extremely rosy.



49 HIDEO KOJIMA
Job: Producer, Konami Japan

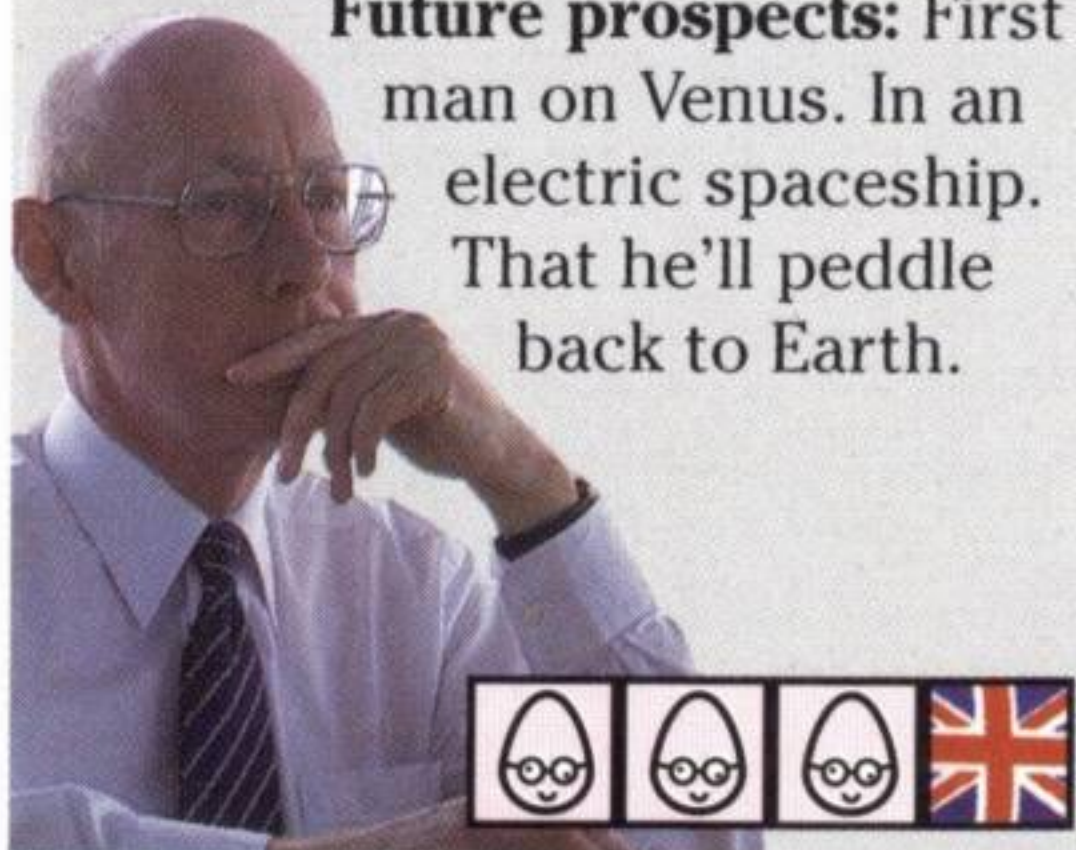
Career highlight: *Metal Gear Solid* for PlayStation. **What's the big deal?** MGS has given birth to a whole new genre: the "stealth" game. Kojima's intelligent, inventive design gives cause for belief that he might be about to enter the big league, and become PlayStation's first real design superstar (something the machine oddly lacks). His obvious personality and ease with the media won't do him any harm in that respect, either. **Most likely to say:** "Got a light?" **Least likely to say:** "Oh, just jump out and shoot him." **Currently working on:** A suntan, we imagine.

Future prospects: *Metal Gear Solid 2*. Sometime in 2007...



48 SIR CLIVE SINCLAIR
Job: President, Sinclair Research

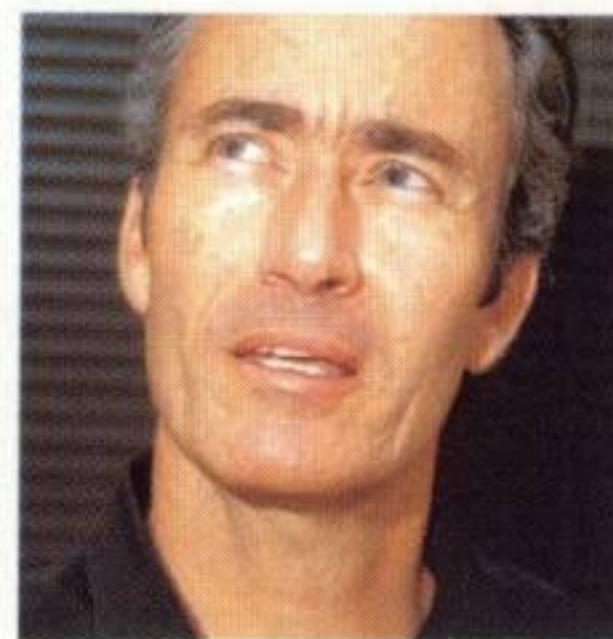
Career highlight: The ZX Spectrum, the computer that created the games market as we know it. **What's the big deal?** He's a bit of a wildcard in this list, but it's been a long time (almost a decade, in fact) since anyone's invented a successful new home computer, and the news (see *Arcade 2*) that Sinclair has one on the drawing board again got us all excited. **Most likely to say:** "...and this one's the size of a sugar lump!" **Least likely to say:** "You can't beat the system." **Currently working on:** Challenging the worldwide dominance of the PC. He thinks big, does Sir Clive. **Future prospects:** First man on Venus. In an electric spaceship. That he'll peddle back to Earth.



47 ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH
Job: Chairman, British Board of Film Classification

Career highlight: Banning the full-blooded *Carmageddon 2*, despite its mooted 18 certificate and despite the near-identical *Carmageddon* having been passed the year before. **What's the big deal?** It's practically impossible to get a game with "controversial" or "adult" content released in this country. Why? Because the BBFC have to classify it as if it was a movie, yet are drastically technically unqualified to do so and take several months to

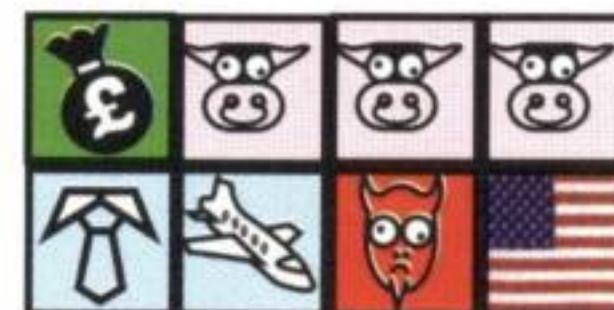
reach a decision, thus making it uneconomic for publishers to do anything other than take out any even remotely dubious content in order to bypass the BBFC altogether. **Most likely to say:** "Why can't you all just play that nice *Spyro the Dragon*?" **Least likely to say:** "Jesus Christ, we're all grown-ups, what's the problem?" **Currently working on:** Attempting to summon a rain to come and wash the filth off these mean streets. **Future prospects:** If it's true that watching violence on screen causes real-life aggression, a frenzied machine gun spree outside a McDonald's near you any day now.



46 TRIP HAWKINS
Job: MD, The 3DO Company

Career highlight: Founding Electronic Arts and turning it into the monster it is today (before leaving to found 3DO). **What's the big deal?** Difficult to say, really. Hawkins is one of the industry's larger-than-life figures and will always draw a big crowd at a press conference. His recent track record, though, isn't much to sing and dance

about. Since leaving EA, he's been chiefly involved with 3DO (giant flop), M2 (didn't-even-come-out flop), and generally a lot of noise and bluster with little result. **Most likely to say:** "I've seen the future!" **Least likely to say:** "Sorry, no comment." **Currently working on:** More games with tanks in, we guess. **Future prospects:** There's not much left he hasn't done.



45 NELL MCANDREW
Job: The "real" Lara Croft

Career highlight: Her new hair cut featured in *The Sun*. **What's the big deal?** She's a girl! **Most likely to say:** "Actually, I really want to start a career in pop music." **Least likely to say:** "You've finished all three of the games, you say? Mmm, sexy." **Currently working on:** Fluid replacement, after days on end in Lara's ultra-sweaty clobber. **Future prospects:** Channel 5.



Key to symbols

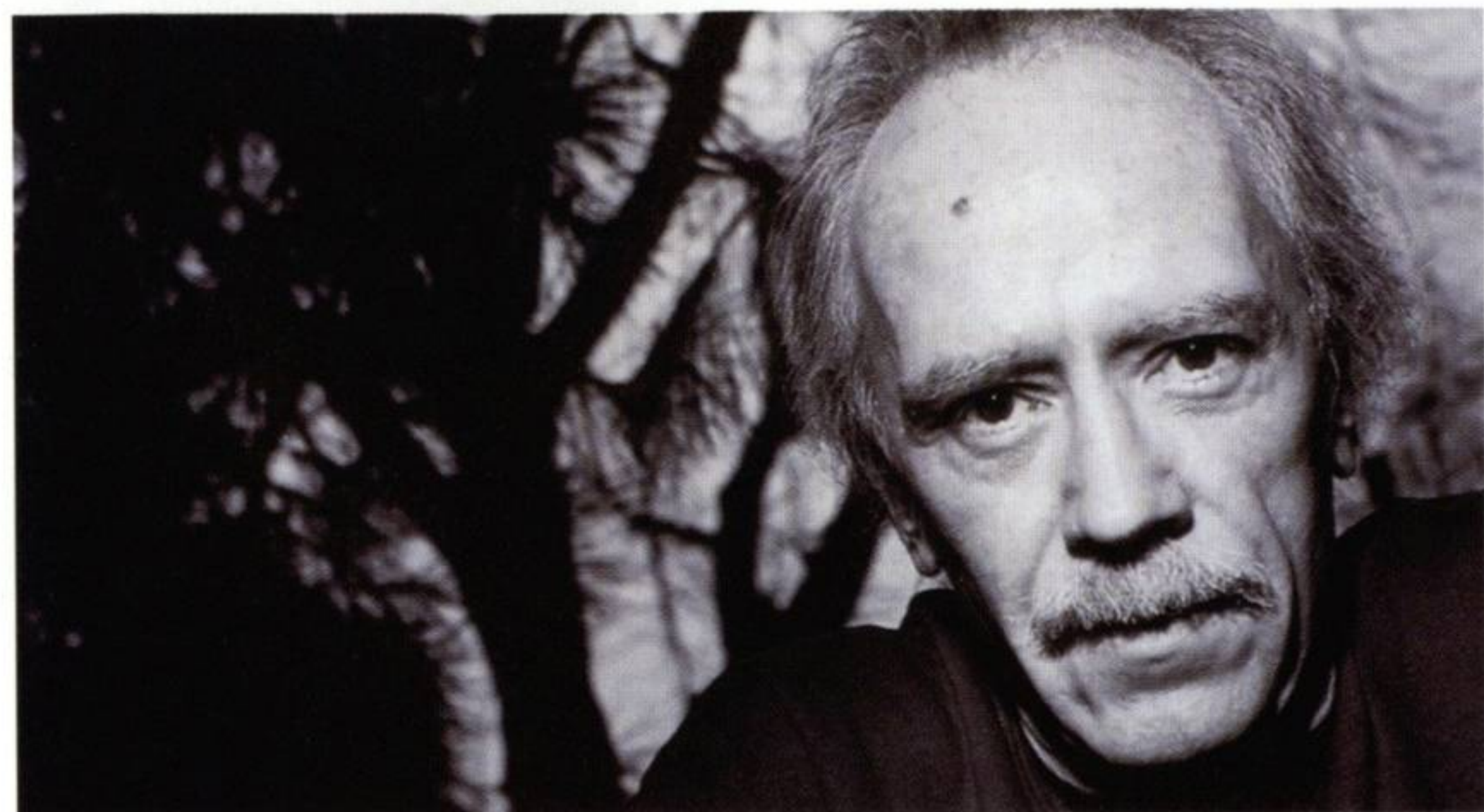


44 GABE NEWELL

Job: Director, Valve Software

Career highlight: *Half-Life*.
What's the big deal? After a year in which the PC was almost suffocated by witless, pointless, formulaic first-person shooters, Valve's astonishing debut title simply redefined the genre's

standards on the PC in the same way *GoldenEye 007* did for consoles. A one-hit wonder, or the birth of a new force? We'll see.
Most likely to say: "Feel the experiential density."
Least likely to say: "Let's put some orcs in it."
Currently working on: Console conversions, we hope.
Future prospects: The shadow of a lucrative buy-out deal by EIDOS or EA looms large.



43 JOHN CARPENTER

Job: Movie director

Career highlights: *The Thing*, *Escape From New York*, *Dark Star*, *Halloween*.
What's the big deal? While the videogame business likes to imagine it models itself closely on the movie-making community, the sad truth is that the same four directors are responsible for the entire thematic influences in about 97% of games. To an extent, then, Carpenter is here also representing George Romero, James Cameron and George

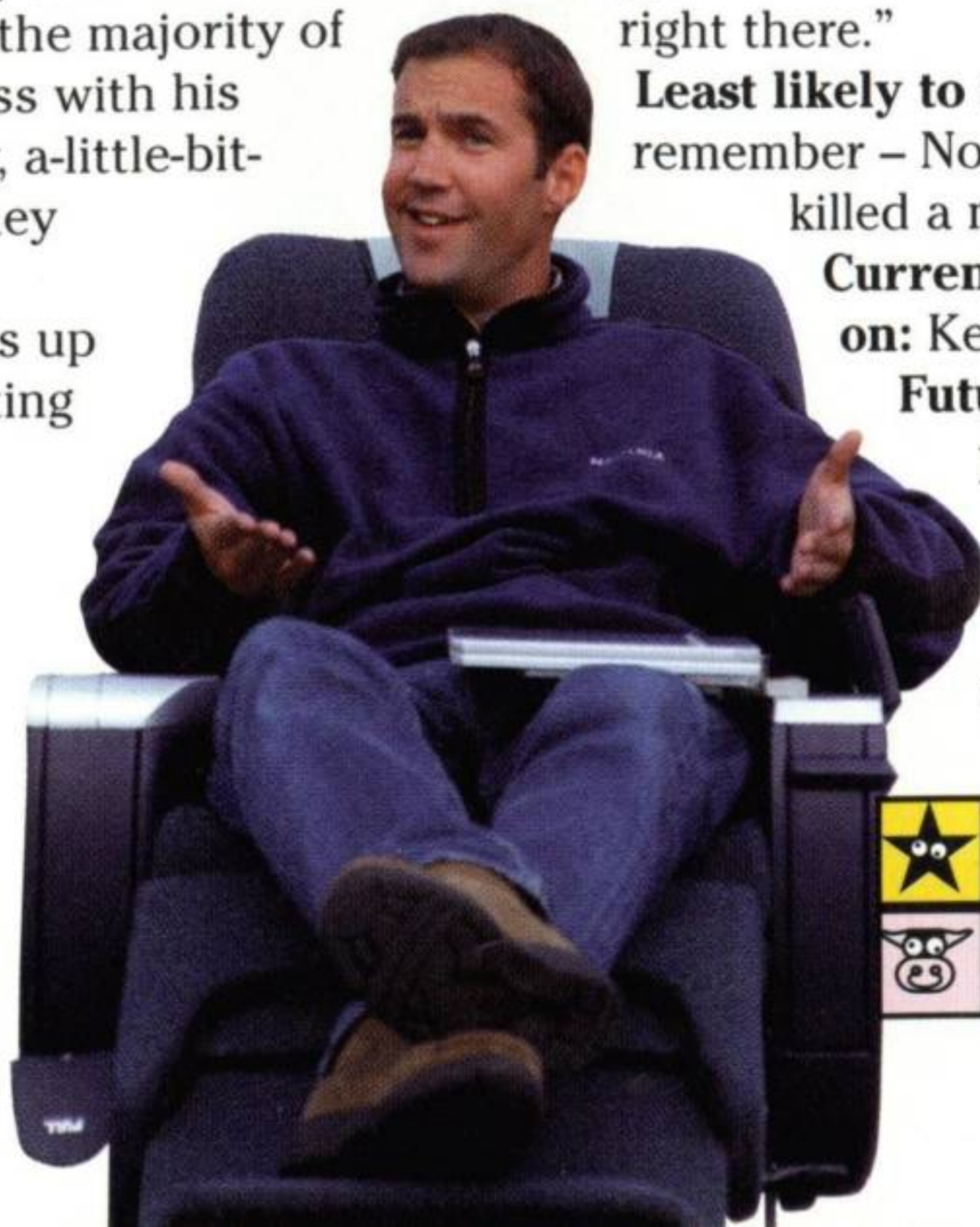
Lucas, but once you've thrown in the splattery gore of *Halloween* and the "streetwise" "attitude" of *Escape From New York* you can pretty much stop your average game's character/plot development right there.
Most likely to say: "You can stick your 24 hours up your ass."
Least likely to say: "Ooh, matron!"
Currently working on: Some rather better scripts after the disastrous flop of *Vampire*.
Future prospects: *Escape From Newport Pagnell*.



42 JOHNNY VAUGHAN

Job: Presenter, *The Big Breakfast*, Channel 4

Career highlight: Presenting *The Big Breakfast*. On Channel 4.
What's the big deal? As well as influencing the majority of the games press with his cheeky, chirpy, a-little-bit-naughty cockney laddishness, Vaughan shows up here representing the nation's trendiness barometer. If the 18-35 demographic cares about it, you can be sure he'll have something to



say about it. Coverage for games on TV shows like *The BB* is a significant step away from the for-kids image that still persists about the artform. Chris Evans? Yesterday's man.

Most likely to say: "*PaRappa the Rapper*? That's a show by itself right there."

Least likely to say: "Always remember - Noel Edmonds killed a man."

Currently working on: Kelly Brook.

Future prospects: Will eventually own Channel 4.



41 YU SUZUKI

Job: Head of Sega's AM2 development team

Career highlights: *Space Harrier*, *Out Run*, *Daytona USA*, *Virtua Fighter* series.
What's the big deal? Suzuki is the man largely responsible for two of the major shifts in direction governing the way games are played today. The "realistic" handling model now used by practically every racing game and the move into 3D for traditionally "flat" beat-'em-ups are both down to him.

Most likely to say: "It's not a racing game, it's a *driving* game."
Least likely to say: "It's just *Virtua Fighter 2* again, with slightly better graphics."
Currently working on: *Shenmue*, the game which started out life as *Virtua Fighter RPG*, but has since developed into something rather more interesting.
Future prospects: A Dreamcast failure would surely be one Sega flop too far for Suzuki. Imagine what he could do with the audience of a *successful* console to play to.



40 "MR BONGO"

Job: organiser of CLEAR ("Campaign to Leave Emulation Alone")

Career highlight: Direct action against the IDSA (see entry 39).
What's the big deal? CLEAR is a pressure group formed in response to the ongoing attempts by US trade body the IDSA to "shut down the emulation scene" (in the words of the IDSA's Doug Lowenstein). Formed when the IDSA succeeded in removing all game content from leading site Dave's Videogame Classics, CLEAR's hastily-constructed protest site drew over 14,000 visitors in just a couple of weeks prompting an avalanche of angry correspondence to the IDSA.
Most likely to say: "It's only some old Spectrum games, it's not hurting anyone."
Least likely to say: "All intellectual property is sacrosanct. Piracy is theft."
Currently working on: Standing in front of a column of tanks armed only with a carrier bag.
Future prospects: Shaky.



39 DOUG LOWENSTEIN

Job: President, IDSA (Interactive Digital Software Association)

Career highlight: E3 (the world's biggest videogame trade show).
What's the big deal? As head of the US's leading trade body, Lowenstein is in charge of E3, but also leads the campaign to wipe out the free emulation scene. The implications of this campaign are serious not only for retrogaming fans (the most obvious victims), but also for the whole cultural heritage of gaming, which the IDSA appears to want locked away and forgotten in a cupboard.
Most likely to say: "All intellectual property is sacrosanct. Piracy is theft."
Least likely to say: "It's only some old Spectrum games, it's not hurting anyone."
Currently working on: Killing worms by cutting them in half.
Future prospects: Solid.



38 STELLA ATKINS

Job: producer, *Cybernet*

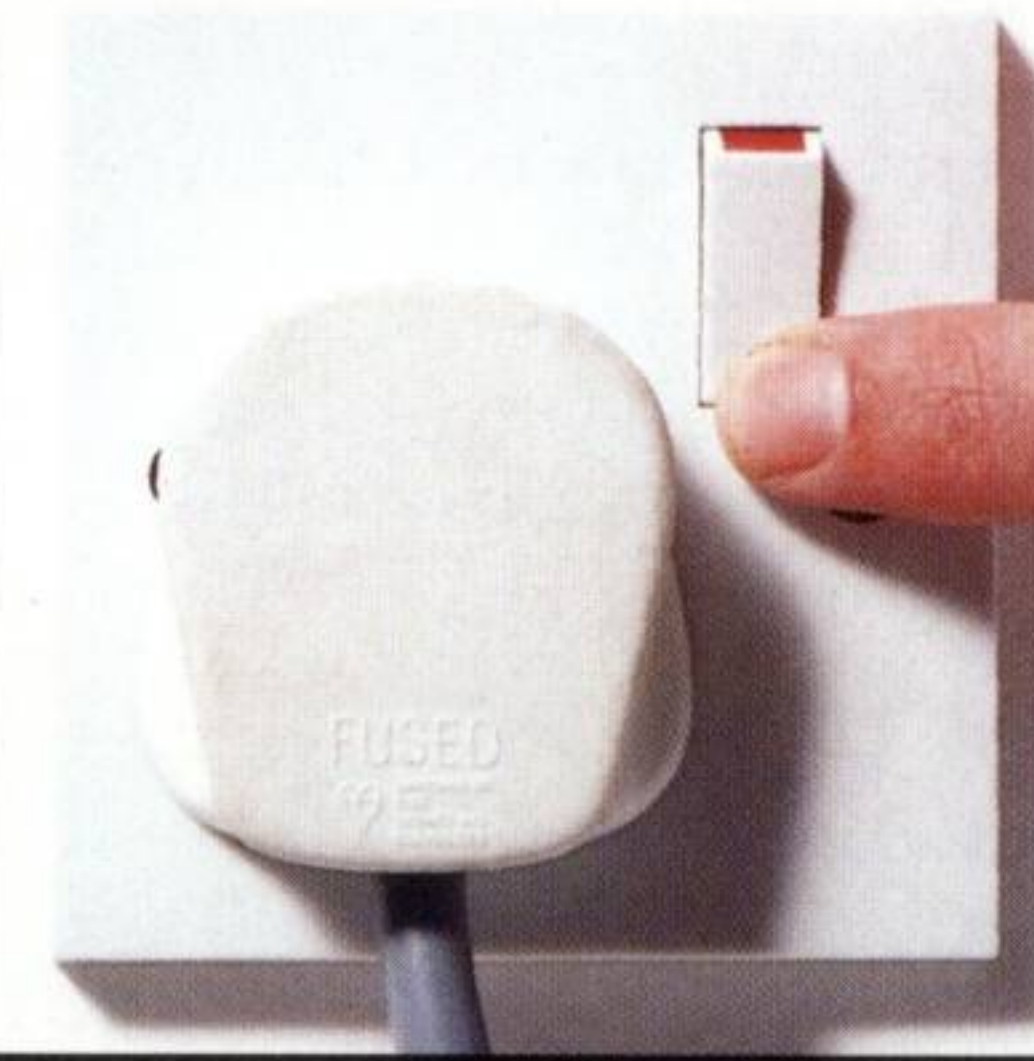
Career highlight: A videogame TV show in the face of adversity.
What's the big deal? *Cybernet* (from the maker of *Movies, Games and Videos*) is currently the only regular (in the loosest possible sense - it rarely appears on the same day two weeks running) videogames

show on terrestrial TV. It offers half an hour of news and reviews (and more footage of games than an entire series of *GamesMaster*) to anyone still awake at 3am, which is when it's shown in most regions.
Most likely to say: "Why has nobody ever heard of us?"
Least likely to say: "Tune in at the same time next week."
Currently working on: Viewers.
Future prospects: Slim.



POWER PLAYERS

THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE VIDEOGAME BUSINESS



37 PETE WATERMAN

Job: **President, PWL**

Career highlights: Rick Astley, Kylie Minogue, Jason Donovan, The Reynolds Girls.

What's the big deal?

Textbook pop impresario Waterman made a colossal fortune in the '80s from constantly flogging essentially the same utterly simple, unchallenging, superficial pop song time after time in slightly different packaging. In the process he discovered a fantastically lucrative formula that EA and EIDOS have been gratefully exploiting ever since. Sick of those thrice-yearly *FIFAs*? Blame Pete.

Most likely to say: "I'd rather jack than John Carmack."

Least likely to say: "It's only rock 'n' roll, but I like it."

Currently working on: Steps.

Future prospects: President of the Board Of Trade.



36 JEFF KAYE/ STUART DINSEY

Job: **Editors of trade newspapers CTW and MCV**

Career highlights: The voices of the UK videogames industry. **What's the big deal?** The forums where industry opinions are both displayed and formed.

Most likely to say: "Impressive third-quarter results for the last fiscal accounting period."

Least likely to say: "You're all just a bunch of wankers."

Currently working on: Things to write about in the winter "lull".

Future prospects: Novels.



35 JOHN S BRIDGEMAN

Job: **Director General, Office of Fair Trading**

Career highlight: Wait and see.

What's the big deal? A recent report by the National Consumer Council recommended that the OFT look into the issue of price-fixing by the games industry. If the OFT takes up the cause, the ramifications could be gigantic.

Most likely to say: "Forty-five quid? For *Space Invaders*? Blimey, that's a bit stiff, isn't it?"

Least likely to say: "That BT, eh? Someone ought to do something."

Currently working on: More pressing matters, unfortunately.

Future prospects: Busy.



34 JEFF MINTER

Job: **Games designer/Jonah**

Career highlight: *Tempest 2000*.

What's the big deal? Although creating one of the greatest games of all time, Minter is also the man with the anti-Midas touch. Every console he's written for since leaving the Amiga for the Atari Jaguar has been a spectacular failure. Which must be slightly worrying for the Nuon team (see entry 28).

Most likely to say: "Can I put some sheep in it?"

Least likely to say: "Hurray! Another smash hit!"

Currently working on: *Tempest 3000* for the Nuon. And almost doubtless some more sound-to-light programs.

Future prospects: Likely to be hit on head by a falling mirror, while tripping over a black cat walking round a ladder.



33 IAIN VALLANCE

Job: **Chairman, British Telecom**

Career highlight: Making more than your weekly salary by the time you've read this sentence.

What's the big deal? No matter how many tedious articles people might write about on-line gaming being the future, it's never going to happen here while local phone calls are charged by the minute. In other

countries they're not "free", as is often erroneously suggested, but you pay a simple flat rate of a few quid per month, then you can make as many calls as you like. The practice is used in much of the civilised world, but BT fiercely resists pleas to introduce such a fantastic idea in to the UK.

Most likely to say: "No."

Least likely to say: "We'll have an engineer out in 20 minutes."

Currently working on: Convincing Net users to double their bills with BT Highway.

Future prospects: Stinking rich.



32 YUJI NAKA

Job: **Sonic Team, Sega**

Career highlights: The *Sonic* series (financially), *NiGHTS* (critically).

What's the big deal? Naka is Sega's closest thing to a real innovator in the

gameplay department, and with all the other big-name Dreamcast titles slipping away into the summer and beyond, *Sonic Adventure* is the machine's only real hope of a "must play" game in the foreseeable future.

Most likely to say: "I've made it a bit faster this time."

Least likely to say: "It's just a modern-day *Marble Madness*, when you get down to it."

Currently working on: Bringing more joy to Dreamcast owners.

Future prospects: Such a speedy man has to have a classic racer inside him waiting to be let out?





31 TIM WRIGHT

Job: Production Manager, Jester Interactive

Career highlights: *Music* (Codemasters), original music for *WipEout*, *WipEout 2097* and many others, dating right back to *Shadow Of The Beast* and *Lemmings* on the Amiga.

What's the big deal? One of the leading lights in the fledgling non-game PlayStation software niche, which might yet help the machine blossom into a universal home-entertainment

tool. Also influential in the more general musical sense – the sounds of *WipEout* did a great deal to establish PlayStation's "cool" in the critical early days.

Most likely to say: "Hear the drummer get wicked."

Least likely to say: "Pass the dutchie on the left-hand side."

Currently working on: A PlayStation follow-up to *Music* and an unnamed game.

Future prospects: Misery about lack of recognition for *WipEout*.



30 RICHARD GARRIOT

Job: Founder, Origin

Career highlight: *Ultima* series. **What's the big deal?** *Ultima Online* is by far the biggest commercial attempt at releasing a game specifically for on-line play. It's already big news in the US, and could mark the way forward for the venerable *Ultima* series, all of which come straight from would-be medieval prince Garriot, aka "Lord British of Britannia".

Most likely to say: "Prithee, my Lord. Dost thou looketh at mine flagon of mead, or what?"

Least likely to say: "Techno, techno, techno, techno!"

Currently working on: Getting back to business after settling the recent *Ultima Online* court case, in which Origin lost many hit points to disgruntled *UO* players who sued the company over bugges in ye game.

Future prospects: Medieval.



29 MILES

Job: A&R and Multimedia Manager, Polygram Records

Career highlights: Getting *Bis* on *Top Of The Pops* without them having a record deal.

What's the big deal? The mysteriously single-monickered Miles is the man most involved in forging closer links between the worlds of videogaming and pop music. He's responsible for the creation of a catalogue of tracks from well-known artistes, selected and made available off-the-shelf to game developers, and will be instrumental (ha!) in the compilation of the soundtrack for the UK version of *Gran Turismo 2*. (The original, of course, having featured groovy bands like Garbage, Ash and the Manic Street Preachers in place of the Japanese version's anonymous banging techno.)

Most likely to say: "Shampoo could use the exposure."

Least likely to say: "Have you considered getting Tommy Tallarico in?"

Currently working on: *Championship Manager 3* (Miles also does database management for the footy manager series), and an unnamed football game from Perfect Entertainment.

Future prospects: as head-hunting vultures hover, well-placed to become a Pete Waterman-style starmaker.



28 RICHARD MILLER

Job: Chief Executive Officer, VM Labs/Nuon

Career highlight: Designer of Atari's Jaguar technology.

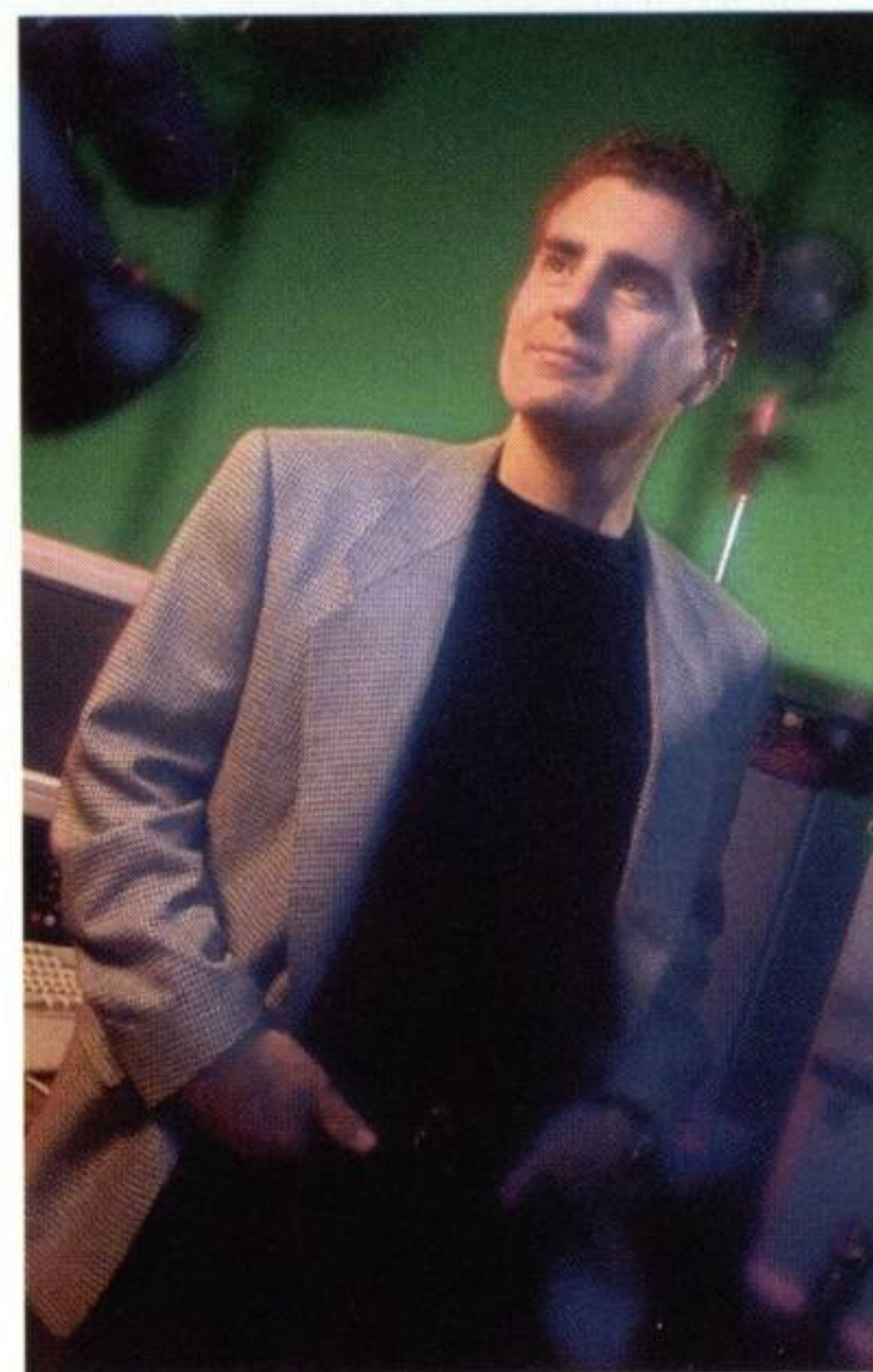
What's the big deal? Miller is now the man behind Nuon (previously known as "Project X"), a rival to Sony, Nintendo and Sega. Nuon's plan is to sneak into ordinary people's homes piggy-backed on DVD players.

Most likely to say: "It is told that great wizards from both the Aristocracy and the Guilds did come to be disillusioned with the long war. In war, the Aristocracy and the Guilds gained but the People suffered woefully. So the malcontented wizards hied forth to the land called "High Places" where they struck a truce and a pact. Together they would build a Machine and Worlds Within the Machine... and it would be good for all of the People." [Straight from the company's Web site.]

Least likely to say: "Basically, it's the new 3DO."

Currently working on: Better press releases.

Future prospects: If Nuon flops, there's always a job doing PR for Richard Garriot (see entry 30) who "likes his style".



27 BRETT SPERRY

Job: President, Westwood Studios

Career highlights: *Command & Conquer*, *Red Alert*, *Bladerunner*.

What's the big deal? On its release, back in 1995, *Command & Conquer* was the closest thing the PC had to a "must play" game to rival the consoles. So will *Tiberian Sun* be the new thing everyone wants to copy? Or will it be lost among *C&C*'s massive flood of clones? Every PC game retailer in the country is waiting for the answer – as is Electronic Arts, who paid a fortune to buy Westwood Studios from Virgin last year.

Most likely to say: "I think it needs another couple of weeks."
Least likely to say: "Trequels just never do as well as sequels, do they?"

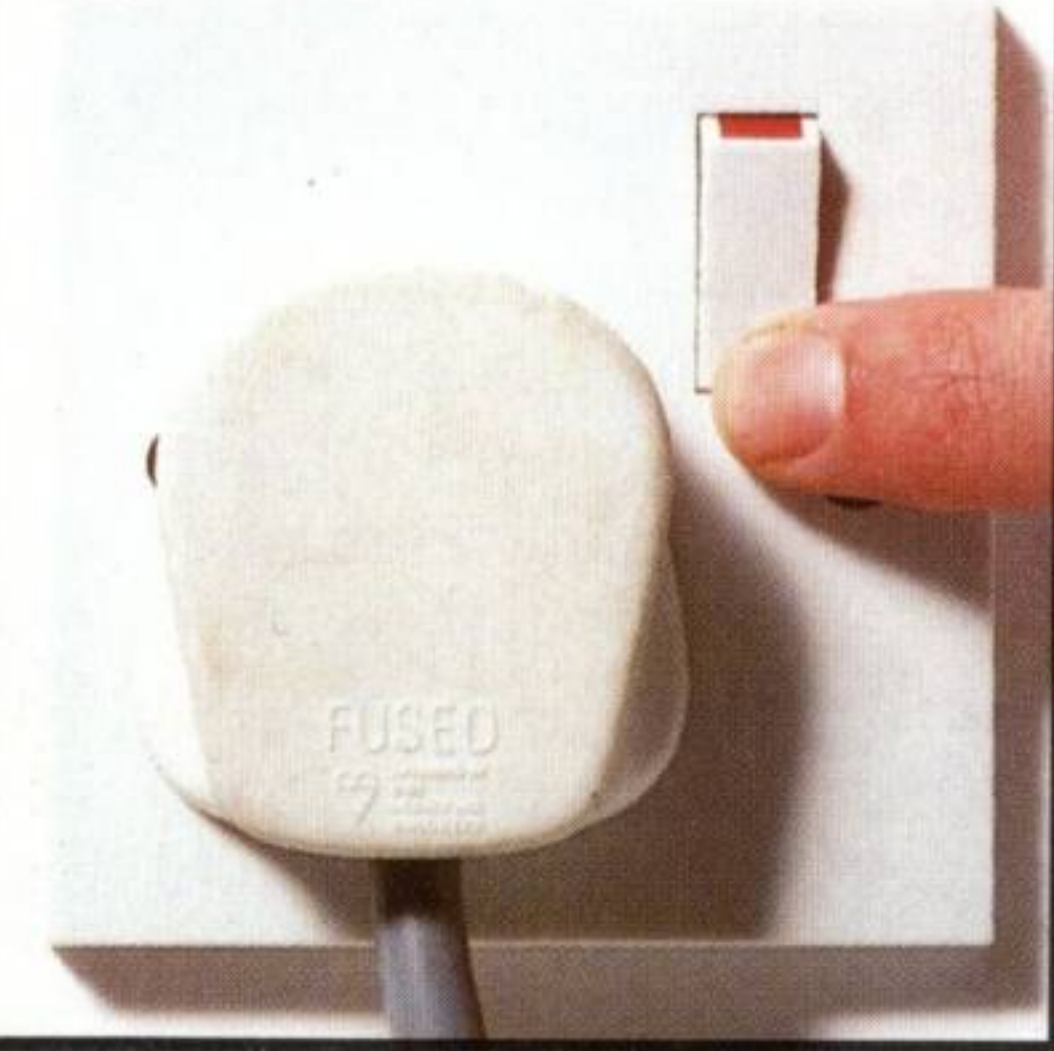
Currently working on: *Tiberian Sun*. Still. And *Lands of Lore 3*, which we'd expect about 2004 if we were you.

Future prospects: Delayed.



POWER PLAYERS

THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE VIDEOGAME BUSINESS



26 RON W CHAIMOWITZ

Job: Chairman, GT Interactive

Career highlight: The man who in a previous life, launched the musical career of Julio Iglesias. **What's the big deal?** If it hadn't been for GT, N64 owners would have had practically no games at all to play last year. Of course, looking at GT's catalogue (*Bio Freaks*, *Gex 64*, *Mace*, *War Gods*, *Mortal Kombat Mythologies*, *NBA Hangtime*, *Rampage World Tour*, *San Francisco Rush*), many of them might well have preferred it that way.

Most likely to say: "Bung it out, those poor desperate suckers will buy anything."

Least likely to say: "I don't know if it quite meets our stringent quality standards."

Currently working on: Following the company's loss of *Quake II* to Activision, GT's big hopes for '99 lie with *Duke Nukem: Zero Hour* and, um, *Rush 2*.

Future prospects: When you're head of a massive and wealthy company like GT, it's difficult to see many ways of advancing your career any further. Except perhaps in a spiritual sense.



25 TONY MOTT

Job: Editor, Edge magazine

Career highlight: Beating even the Japanese press to the first published look at *Gran Turismo 2*. **What's the big deal?** While it has one of the lowest circulations in the games magazine business, *Edge's* importance comes not from the quantity of its readers, but the quality. It's the magazine that's read by the industry, and offers ordinary gamers an insight into what's really happening and a doorway into the business – the magazine routinely devotes twice as much space to job ads as it does to game reviews, and is the only place where those not already in the industry can find such opportunities.

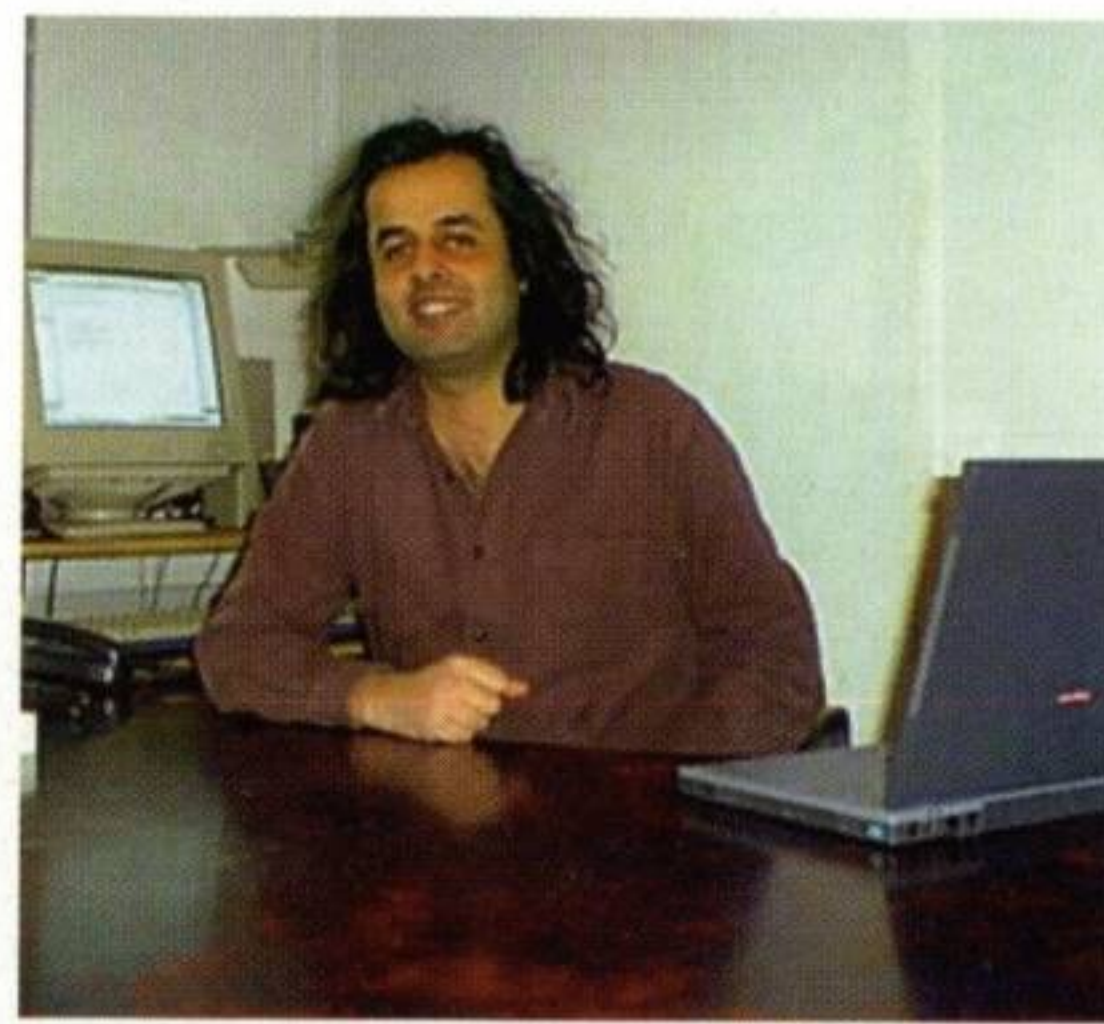
Most likely to say: "Queues in Tokyo's Akihabara district."



Least likely to say: "Why can't we just be happy with what we've got?"

Currently working on: In-depth preview stories about consoles

nobody's even thought of yet. **Future prospects:** On edge.



24 BOB DUDANI

Job: MD, Computer Exchange

Career highlight: Having £2000 Dreamcasts for sale in London on the day of its Japanese launch. **What's the big deal?** Computer Exchange, and similar chains of independent game shops growing up around the country, serve a dual purpose. They're the first stop for grey imported machines and games, but, crucially, they also represent a way of making gaming more affordable. How? By allowing you to trade in old games in part-exchange for the latest big thing. Without the existence of shops like these, a substantial proportion of people simply wouldn't be able to afford to sustain a devoted interest in videogames, and that would be bad news for the entire business. **Most likely to say:** "Actua Soccer 3 on PC? I'll give you a fiver." **Least likely to say:** "Just wait for the PAL version, it'll be cheaper." **Currently working on:** Expansion – branches of Exchange shops are becoming a more and more common sight on UK high streets with every passing day. **Future prospects:** Grey.



23 JOHN ROMERO

Job: President, Ion Storm

Career highlights: *Doom*, *Quake*. **What's the big deal?** The success (or not) of Ion Storm's *Daikatana* (see page 31) will have a huge affect on the way programming "stars" are treated

by money men in the future. **Most likely to say:** "For the last time, it's *not* just *Quake* but with grey instead of brown, okay?" **Least likely to say:** "It's *Quake*, but with grey instead of brown." **Currently working on:** *Daikatana 2* (using the *Unreal* engine), even though the original isn't finished yet. **Future prospects:** Stormy.



Will playing videogames stay "cool"? As a famous geek, the fate of Jarvis is also our own



22 JARVIS COCKER

Job: Singer, Pulp

Career highlight: Getting his arse out at the Brit awards. **What's the big deal?** Straddling the worlds of pop glamour and extreme geekdom, Cocker is the human embodiment of the rapidly changing image of the videogame player, and several in-song game references cement the connection. How the future shapes up for Cocker could well foreshadow the fate of the image

of gamers. Will we stay "cool"? It could be in Jarvis's hands. **Most likely to say:** "*Ridge Racer 4* is hardcore." **Least likely to say:** "Yes, Mr. Jackson, I'd be honoured to sing a Christmas duet with you." **Currently working on:** That difficult 14th album. **Future prospects:** Avoiding the commercial suicide that could lead to being dubbed "The Jeff Minter of pop."



21 CHARLES CORNWALL

Job: MD, EIDOS

Career highlights: Forming a huge new company out of the wreckage of two old ones.

What's the big deal? EIDOS owns three of the biggest properties in the gaming world – Lara Croft,

Championship Manager and *Michael Owen*. And isn't afraid to use them.

Most likely to say: "If only we could combine the three. How about a *Dungeon Keeper* rip-off called *Tomb Manager*, with Owen as a really, really crap monster who falls down theatrically when you so much as glance in his direction?"

Least likely to say: "I think Lara should bow out while she's at the top."

Currently working on: Recouping some of the £19 million in losses announced in EIDOS' last figures.

Future prospects: Busty.



20 GERRY BERKELEY

Job: Head Games Buyer, Blockbuster Video

Career highlight: Decides what games appear on the shelves of your local Blockbuster store.

What's the big deal? Dictating what is and isn't available on the rental shelves affects the shape of the charts, and in turn entire future release schedules. Nobody ever really notices Blockbuster in a games business context, but its influence on all of us is enormous. It could quite plausibly damage sales of the fantastic but short-lived *Metal Gear Solid*, for example.

Most likely to say: "I think we're out of *Tomb Raiders*. How about a *Psybadek*?"

Least likely to say: "*The Atari Greatest Hits Collection Volume 2*? I'll order a million!"

Future prospects: The only thing that could hurt Blockbuster is a dramatic reduction in the price of games. No worries there, then.



19 TIM CHANEY

Job: MD, Virgin Interactive Entertainment

Career highlight: Completing the management buyout of VIE and ending two years of doubt over the company's future.

What's the big deal? Before being hopelessly tangled up in a huge corporate mess, Virgin was a top three publisher and one of the world's most reliable producers of consistently high-quality original games (not to mention

entertainingly controversial ad campaigns, such as *Resident Evil*'s blood-filled bath).

Most likely to say: "We're back! Back! BACK!"

Least likely to say: "Hang on, what happened to all our development teams? Where is everyone?"

Currently working on: Working out what happened to all his development teams.

Future prospects: Well advertised.



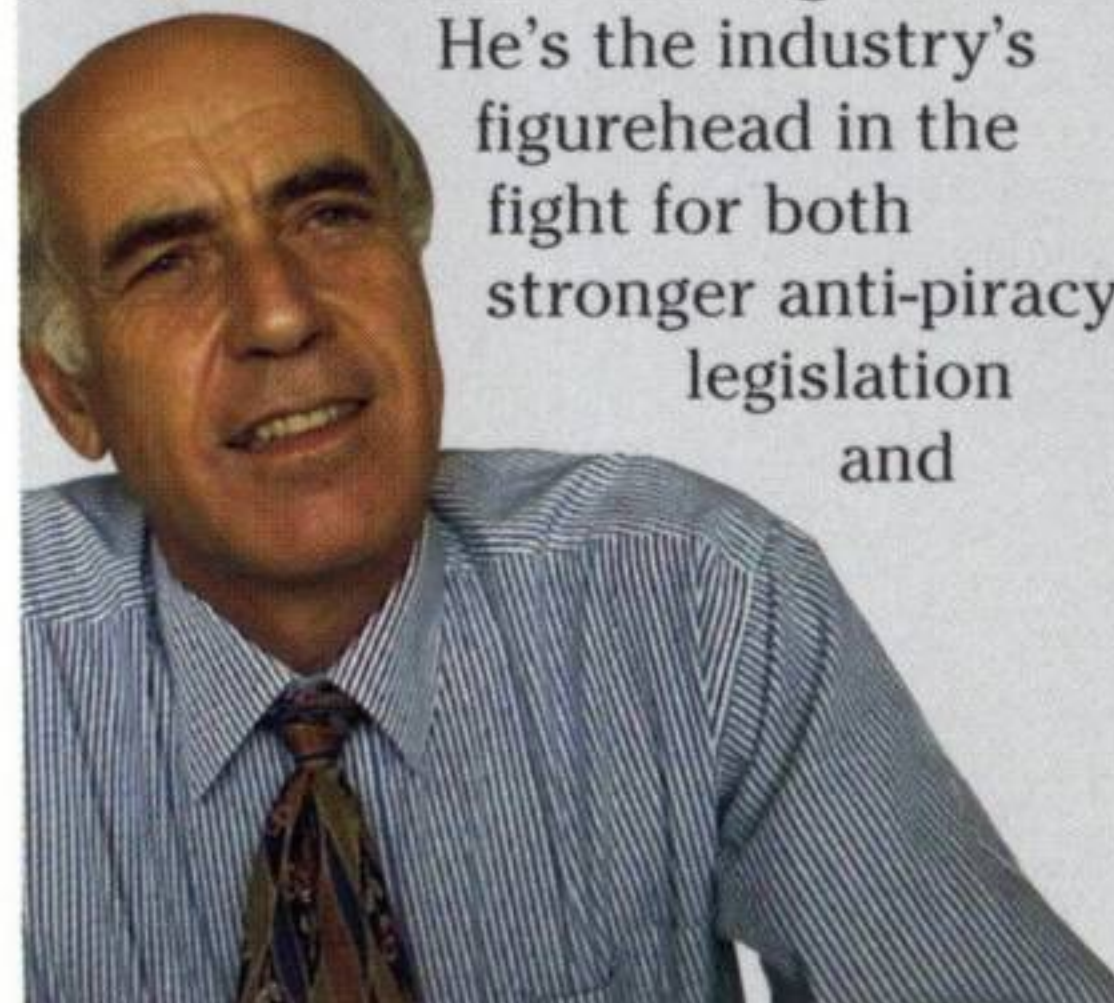
18 ROGER BENNETT

Job: Director General, ELSPA (Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association)

Career highlight: ECTS, the annual European Computer Trade Show – a gamer's mecca.

What's the big deal?

He's the industry's figurehead in the fight for both stronger anti-piracy legislation and



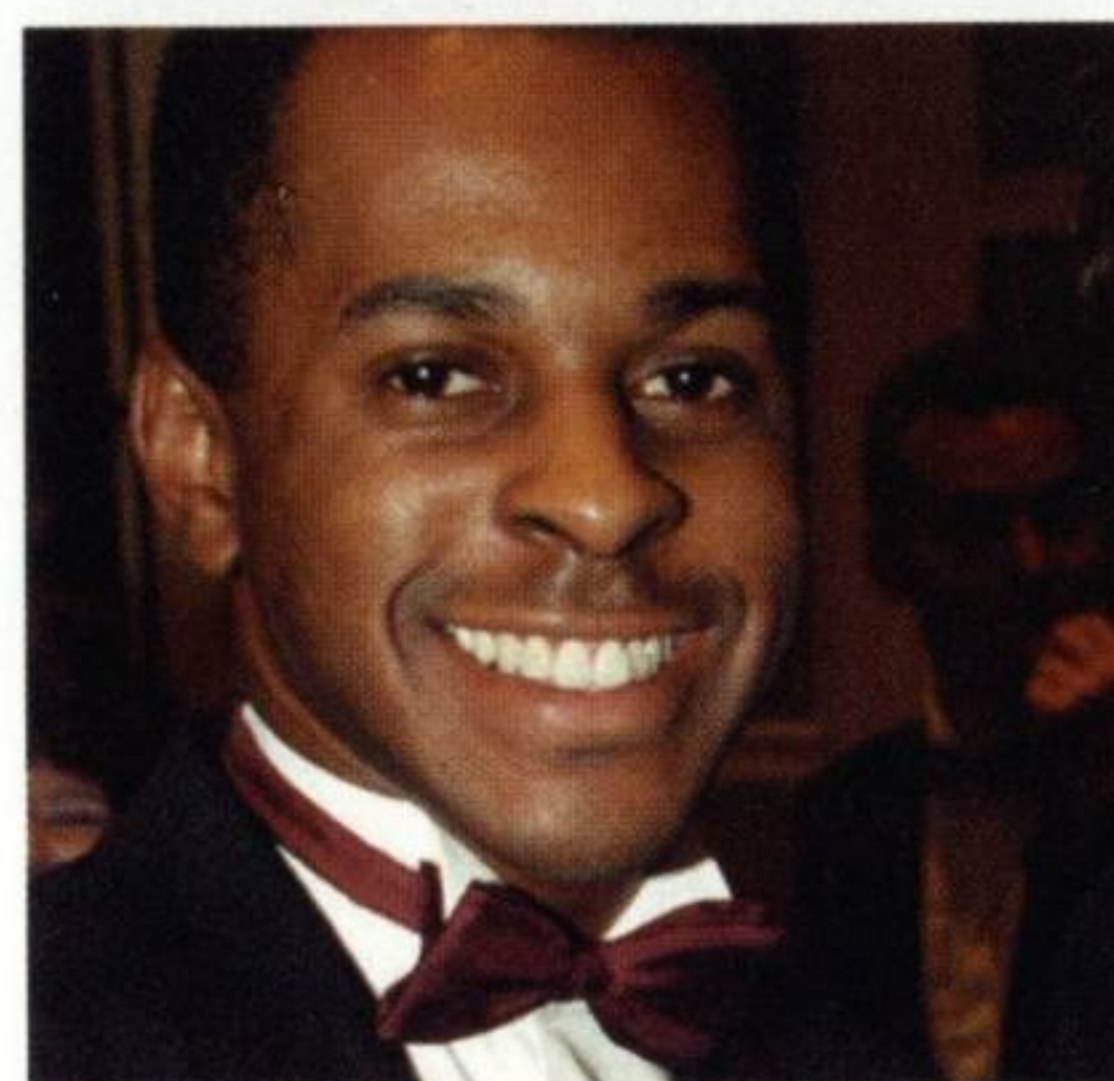
freedom for the business from the confines of BBFC censorship. He also supports high game prices, claiming that games are still better value than other entertainment media.

Most likely to say: "Personally, I'd happily pay £100 a game."

Least likely to say: "The industry's worth £1 billion a year, piracy can't be hurting us all *that* badly."

Currently working on: Skillfully deflecting media attention from the recent scandal where ELSPA accepted a £100,000 donation to its anti-piracy campaign from a fund set up to benefit sick children's charities.

Future prospects: Squeaky clean.



17 ANDI PETERS

Job: Commissioning Editor for Young People, Channel 4

Career highlight: Working with Edd The Duck.

What's the big deal? With *GamesMaster* dead for over a year, there's now no mainstream TV coverage of videogames in the UK whatsoever, an astonishing state

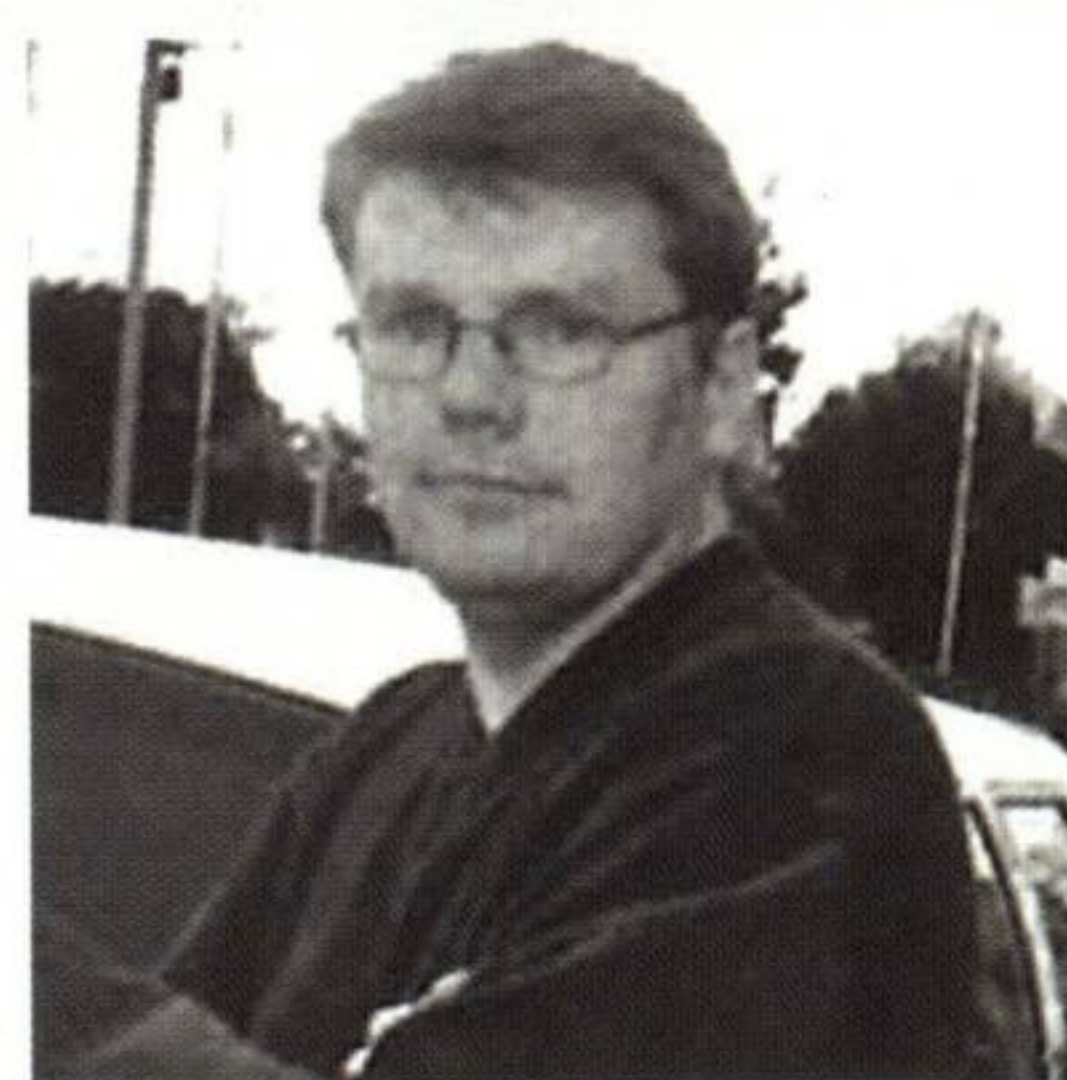
of affairs given the massive popularity of the pastime. It's not only Peters at C4 who's responsible for this, of course. It's a sad but telling fact that the BBC (supposedly a public-service broadcaster) doesn't even have a department that could possibly be imagined to be appropriate for dealing with games (when we phoned the Beeb, the best suggestion we received was the Light Entertainment division). It's a disgrace, but when you don't even know who to complain to, what can you do?

Most likely to say: "You know... for kids."

Least likely to say: "I'm all sorted out for Es and whizz."

Currently working on: Bugger all.

Future prospects: Game-free.



16 DAVID JONES

Job: President, DMA Design

Career highlights: *Lemmings*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *Body Harvest*, *Silicon Valley*.

What's the big deal? One of the few prominent design outfits currently working across all the major formats, DMA is waving the flag for all innovative and original British game design.

Despite being head of the company (now a subsidiary of Gremlin), Jones still takes an extremely hands-on creative approach to the games that are produced.

Most likely to say: "Hang on! I've had an idea."

Least likely to say: "Let's just do a beat-'em-up."

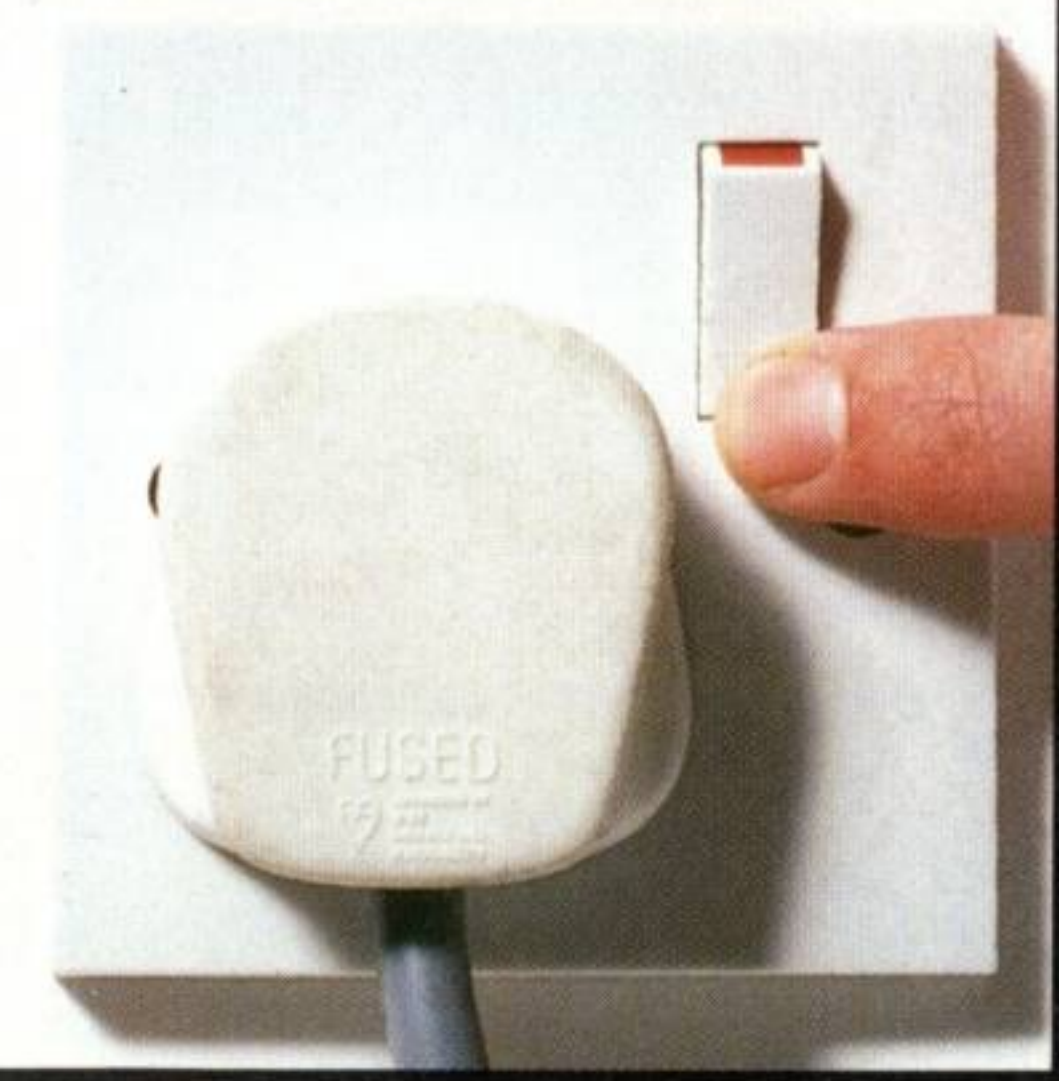
Currently working on: *Wild Metal Country*, a no-nonsense multi-player knockabout, with the added bonus of tanks.

Future prospects: With the administrative side of business now taken care of by Gremlin, the way seems clear for DMA and David Jones to concentrate on pure development. The future's bright.



POWER PLAYERS

THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE VIDEOGAME BUSINESS



15 BRUCE McMILLAN
Job: Head coach, EA Sports

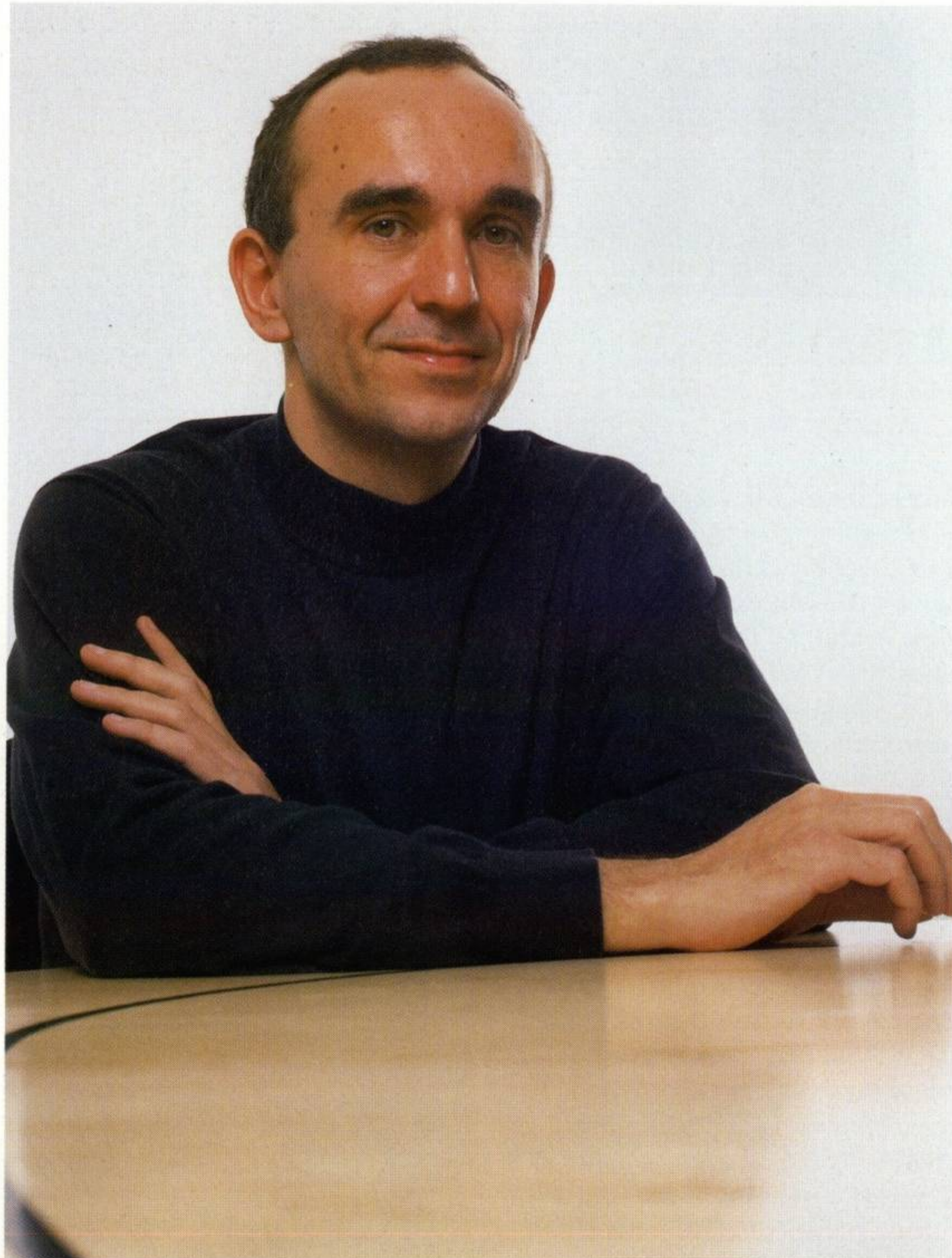
Career highlight: Getting three different *FIFA Soccer*s to the number one spot in a single year.
What's the big deal? Completely regardless of what anyone ever says in reviews, EA Sports' games fly off shop shelves as regular as clockwork, especially in America where the brand is simply a licence to print money. Even the astonishingly dreadful *FIFA 64* series wasn't enough to dissuade the general public from lapping up the licenced footy game every 12 months, until 1998 when the World Cup provided the perfect excuse for EA to get them to lap it up every six months. It's difficult to imagine what it would take to screw this deal up now – you get the feeling McMillan could buy up the *Trainspotting* licence, release a heroin-shooting game every year, and still bulge the coffers.

Most likely to say: "What say we try for four *FIFAs* this year?"

Least likely to say: "Anyone fancy a bit of a change?"

Currently working on: *FIFA 2000*, *NHL 2000*, *Madden 2000*, *NASCAR 2000*, *NBA Jam 2000*...

Future prospects: It's surely only a matter of time before EA Sports' game catalogue achieves independent sentience and has us all killed by Arnold Schwarzenegger robots. Only then might McMillan be undone by his own creation.



14 PETER MOLYNEUX
Job: President, Lionhead Studios

Career highlights: *Populous*, *Syndicate*, *Dungeon Keeper*.
What's the big deal? Maverick Molyneux deserted the safety of EA to regain his artistic freedom, thus striking a blow for all oppressed game developers.

Most likely to say: "Great! Now I can afford another bizarre Japanese toilet for my house."
Least likely to say: "Basically, it's just *G-LOC* with knobs on."
Currently working on: *Black and White*, an "all new" god sim.
Future prospects: Colourful. In a monochrome kind of a way.



13 SCOTT SELLERS
Job: Co-founder, 3Dfx

Career highlight: Inventing the Voodoo graphics chipset and making 3D accelerators standard equipment in new PCs.
What's the big deal? The pace of technological advance in the PC graphics market is terrifying and has reached a point where the development of major new graphics technology takes less

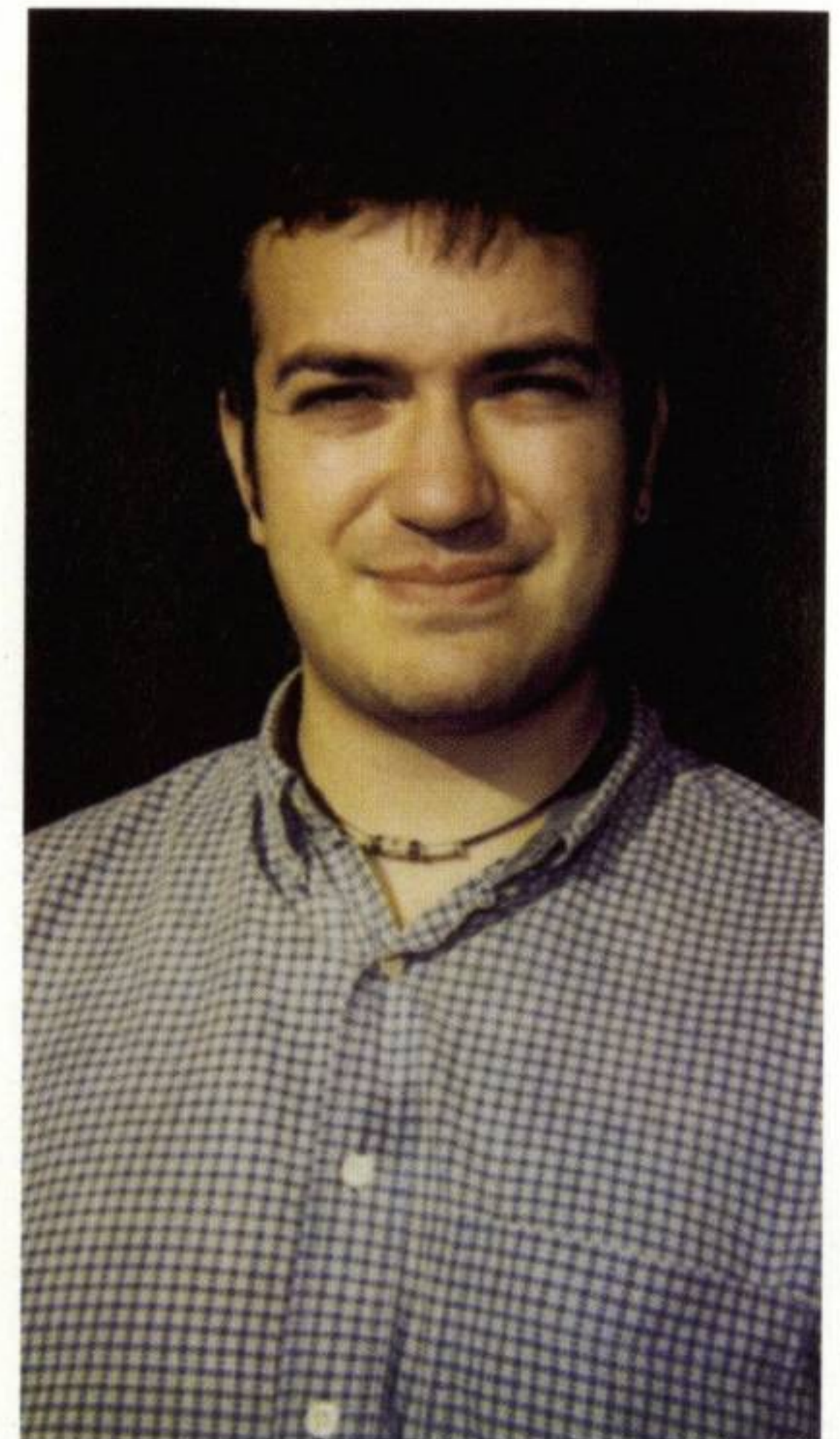
time than the development of a game, with obviously chaotic implications. As the PC falters as a games platform, a system that makes £200 graphics cards obsolete in a year isn't good news for anyone. If "progress" continues at the same rate of acceleration, it won't be long before you won't be able to buy a single new game without simultaneously upgrading your hardware. Soon, something's going to have to give.

Most likely to say: "Voodoo 2? That's so last week, man."

Least likely to say: "Couldn't we just help people to program the old one better?"

Currently working on: Voodoo 4, we bet.

Future prospects: High res.



12 PAUL ROSE ("MR BIFFO")

Job: Editor, Digitiser, Channel 4 Teletext

Career highlights: The snakes; Morse and Lewis.

What's the big deal? As the nation's only daily games magazine, *Digi* is always first to the punch with both hot rumours and hard news. Its viewing figures of 1.5 million give it more readers than every print games mag in the country put together, yet the industry still regards it as "cultish". This approach allows *Digi's* irreverent and disrespectful style free rein, since having no industry friends or advertisers in the first place means it has none to lose with hard-hitting stories and reviews. It's all presented in a densely comic style, which is at once the source of its popularity and the thing that deters those would-be readers incapable of grasping even the sledgehammer sarcasm presented by characters like "Insincere Dave".

Most likely to say: "We just hate everybody equally."

Least likely to say: "Here's a review of an early production copy we were sent by the publisher."

Currently working on: Tomorrow's issue.

Future prospects: Recently commissioned to write a movie script for Sky, Rose may eventually find the demands of coming up with *Digi* six days a week, 52 weeks a year, too much of a drain.





11 HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI
Job: Vice President, Square Soft

Career highlight: *Final Fantasy VII*. **What's the big deal?** Love its deeply involved plotline or hate its linearity and irritating battle system, *FFVII* did more than any other game in history to open up

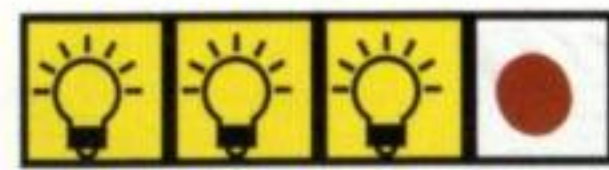
the European market to the joys of the RPG. With the groundwork done, *FFVIII* is likely to be an even bigger hit, which could turn the current trickle of console role-players into a flood.

Most likely to say: "I know, let's make an even more deeply involved plotline."

Least likely to say: "I know, let's dump that really annoying random battle system."

Currently working on: With *Final Fantasy VIII* recently released in Japan (see page 13) Mr. Sakaguchi can turn his full attention to the upcoming *Final Fantasy Anthology*.

Future prospects: Shot by a crazed stalker wearing a cape.



10 JEREMY SMITH
Job: MD, Core Design

Career highlight: *Thunderhawk* on Mega CD. **What do you think?** **What's the big deal?** Smith is the man milking the udders of the cash cow that is Lara Croft. He made the financial pages of the broadsheets last year after

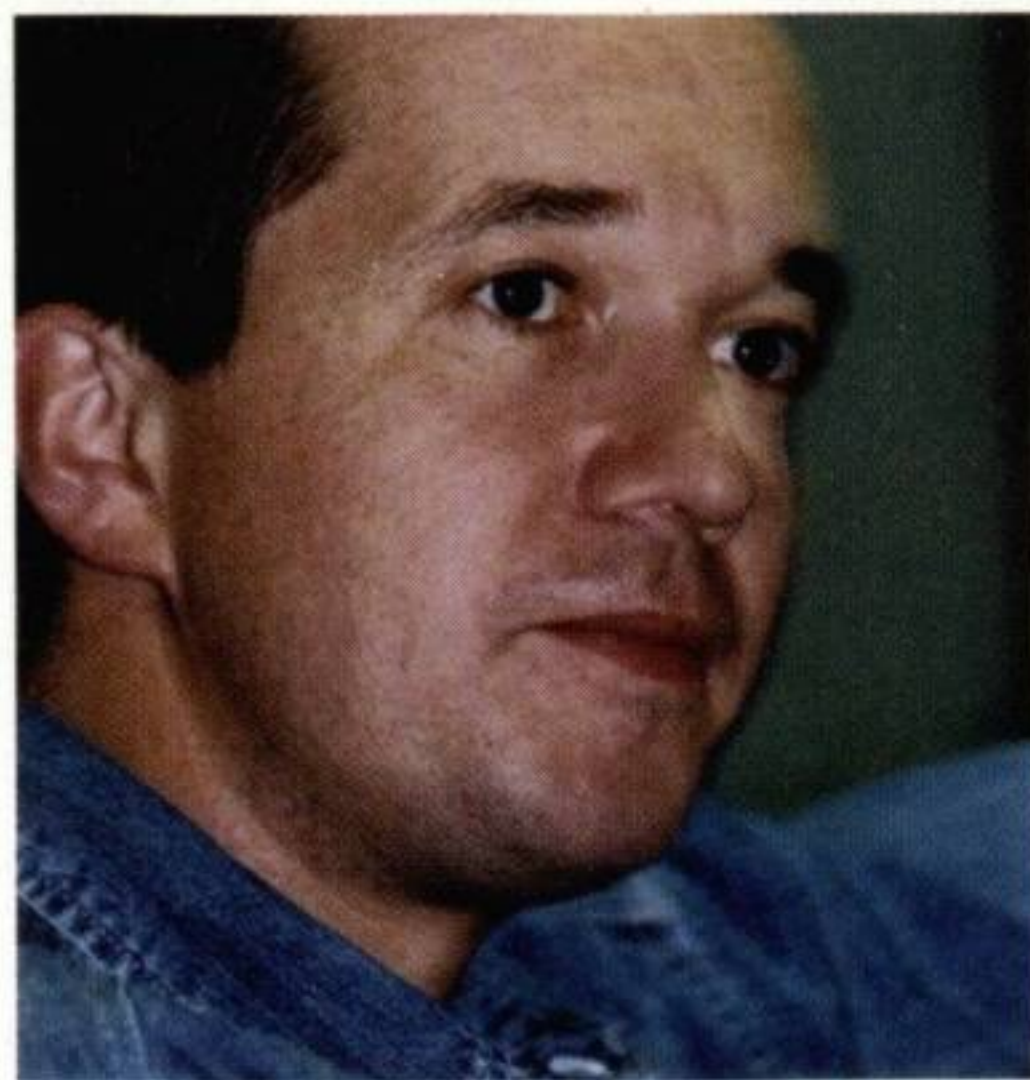
his massive seven-figure bonus.

Most likely to say: "Sales are down, make her tits bigger."

Least likely to say: "I'm skint."

Currently working on: New *TR*-related titles, not by the *TR* team.

Future prospects: Big-breasted women at every turn.



9 GILES THOMAS
Job: Head of PR, Sega

Career highlight: Managing not to screw things up yet. **What's the big deal?** After the botch-up of the Japanese launch, Sega's fortunes may well rest on how well the Dreamcast does in the west. And how well Dreamcast does in the West is largely a question of how well everyone can be convinced that

despite Saturn, despite 32X, despite the Mega CD, despite everyone being fed up to the back teeth playing *Virtua Fighter*, *Sega Rally* and *Sonic the bloody Hedgehog*, Sega really is a viable alternative to Sony and Nintendo. And this is Giles's job. The lucky man.

Most likely to say: "Ah, but by the time of the UK launch, there'll be loads of top games."

Least likely to say: "Do me a favour. Plug me into a Sega."

Currently working on: The European launch of Dreamcast, scheduled for September.

Future prospects: Depressing, especially given Sega's latest attempt to shoot itself in the face by cracking down on Dreamcast grey imports. But if he pulls it off, he'll become a videogame business legend.



8 JOHN CARMACK
Job: Owner and lead programmer, iD Software

Career highlights: *Doom*, *Quake*. **What's the big deal?** You don't know? Exactly where have you

been for the last five years?
Most likely to say: "Well, you can't go wrong with brown."
Least likely to say: "Why can't we all just work for world peace, be nice and love each other?"
Currently working on: *Quake Arena*, a deathmatch-only sequel that's arousing plentiful controversy for its lack of a traditional one-player game.
Future prospects: It's all or nothing. With *Quake's* star waning fast, all eyes are on *Arena* to put up or shut up.



Microsoft has a hand in every PC game released



7 BILL GATES
Job: Chairman, Microsoft

Career highlight: Amassing a personal fortune in excess of \$40 billion; making more money in an average minute (asleep or awake) from interest alone than most people earn in a year. **What's the big deal?** Despite Microsoft's small presence in the games market, it occupies a pivotal position in every PC gamer's life on account of the fact that almost every PC game is written to run exclusively on a Microsoft operating system. The bugged, games-hostile Win 98 has played an undoubted part in the PC's recent decline as a force in the gaming world, and

Windows 2000 will have to buck its ideas up fast if Gates is to avoid killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Clearly the PC itself isn't going to die, but it's in danger of becoming a seriously unworkable economic prospect for gaming.

Most likely to say: "No, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die. Wahahaha haa haaa!" ("Miaow.")

Least likely to say: "You know, I think I have enough cash now."

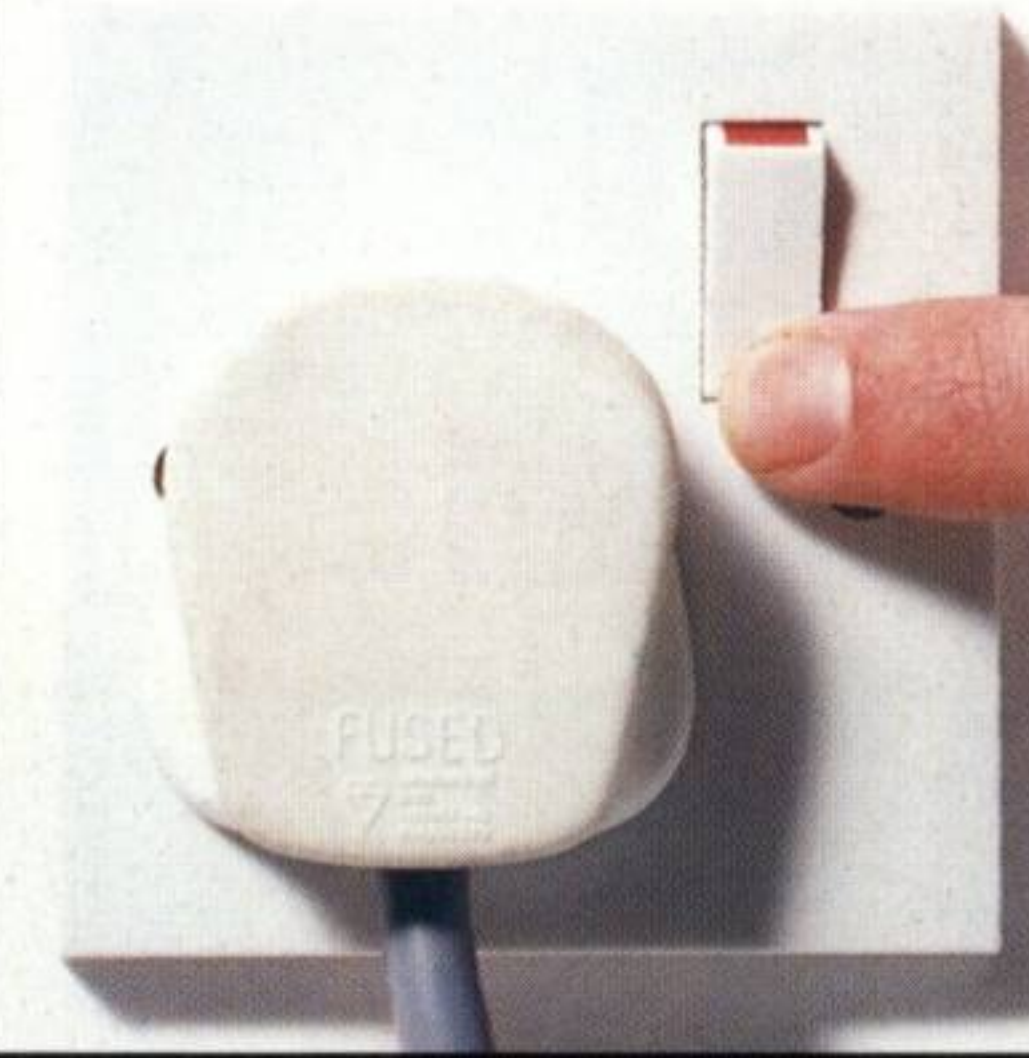
Currently working on: Total world ownership.

Future prospects: Total world ownership.



POWER PLAYERS

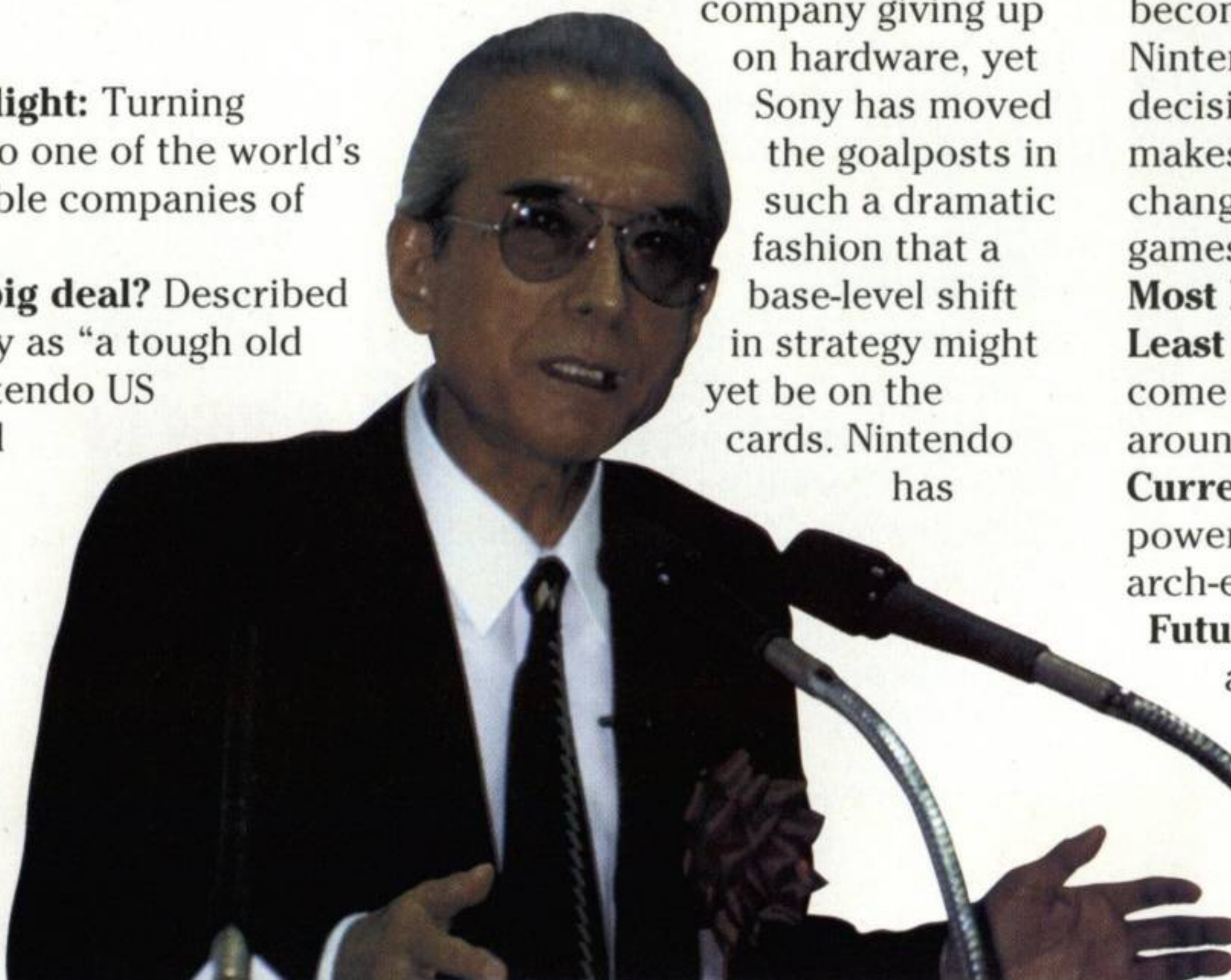
THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE VIDEOGAME BUSINESS



5 HIROSHI YAMAUCHI Job: President, Nintendo of Japan

Career highlight: Turning Nintendo into one of the world's most profitable companies of any kind.

What's the big deal? Described affectionately as "a tough old bird" by Nintendo US boss Howard Lincoln, it's quite likely that the legendarily grumpy Yamauchi's last decision as Nintendo chief will be to decide



what – if anything – comes after Nintendo 64. It's (very) difficult to imagine the company giving up on hardware, yet Sony has moved the goalposts in such a dramatic fashion that a base-level shift in strategy might yet be on the cards. Nintendo has

always made the vast bulk of its money from games for its own systems, but as cartridges become ever less practical, Nintendo faces some hard decisions. The choices Yamauchi makes now could drastically change the entire shape of the games world in years to come. **Most likely to say:** "Hrmp." **Least likely to say:** "Come in, come in! Let me show you around. Tea?" **Currently working on:** Super powers with which to battle his arch-enemy Mr. Sony.

Future prospects: Yamauchi has announced his intention to retire next year.



6 TIM AND CHRIS STAMPER

Job: Creative & Technical Directors, Rare

Career highlights: *GoldenEye 007*, *Donkey Kong Country*, *Banjo-Kazooie*, *Blast Corps*, *Knight Lore*. **What's the big deal?** The enigma-shrouded Rare is the only serious challenger to Shigeru Miyamoto's team as the world's very best designer of Nintendo games. The team's success goes right back to the Spectrum (with classics such as *Jet-Pac* and *Knight Lore*) and is barely blemished by a single, less-than-stellar title, with *GoldenEye 007* many people's choice for best videogame of all time. Rare is also unusually prolific for such a high-quality stable, with four potential classics due over the next year. **Most likely to say:** "No comment."

Least likely to say: "And here's one for PlayStation owners."

Currently working on: *Perfect Dark*, *Banjo-Tooie*, *Jet Force Gemini*, *Donkey Kong World*.

Future prospects: Being 25% owned by Nintendo might limit Rare's future growth as PlayStation increasingly marginalises all competition.



4 LARRY PROBST

Job: Chairman, EA

Career highlight: Finally beating off all the competition. To be the world's undisputed number one games publisher, that is.

What's the big deal? The really scary thing (and the reason we

have two EA entries in this listing, see Bruce McMillan at 15) is that you could split EA down the middle, making EA Sports an entirely separate company, and it'd probably simply go from being the world's undisputed number one to being the world's undisputed number one *and* number two software publishers. The model is essentially the same in both cases – get a few popular licences/franchises, and then bring out slightly updated versions of the same half-dozen games every year.

Original-formula EA has a knack of publishing standalone hits, too, such as *Die Hard Trilogy* and *Croc* (via Fox Interactive), or *Theme Park* and *Dungeon Keeper* (from Bullfrog Productions). The company is so huge and strong that when the N64 launched EA

just totally ignored it, waiting until Nintendo came up with a more agreeable profit structure. Indeed, it's probably not too fanciful to say EA's delayed support played a significant part in the machine's relatively disappointing sales performance. If you're launching any kind of new hardware, you don't want to do it without EA on board.

Most likely to say: "Steady as she goes."

Least likely to say: "I am so bored of *Test Drive*."

Currently working on: Finding ways of fiddling calendars to make years shorter.

Future prospects: Bill Gates' job.



2 SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

Job: Creative Director, Nintendo of Japan

Career highlights: Where do you start? *Donkey Kong*, *Super Mario World*, *Mario 64*, *Zelda* and so on.

What's the big deal? You could, of course, argue that someone working exclusively for Nintendo is operating in far too small a market to justify a placing this high. Big fish, small pond and all that. But Miyamoto represents something far more significant than a licence to print money for the Big N. In an increasingly corporate, conservative and mainstream-oriented business, he's one of the last bastions – and certainly the figurehead – of the purist's ideal of gameplay. Miyamoto's games have no truck with "realism" (except in obeying



3 KEN KUTARAGI

Job: Head of Technical Development, Sony Computer Entertainment

Career highlight: Inventing the PlayStation.

What's the big deal? However long it might be delayed by Sony (while the PlayStation carries on destroying all before it), one thing that's certain is that there will eventually be a follow-up machine. When there is Kutaragi will be the man who builds it.

Most likely to say: "PlayStation has not reached the end of its natural lifespan."

Least likely to say: "Actually, I've been working on PS2 for three years now and it's ready to hit the streets as soon as someone says the word."

Currently working on: Well, that's the point, who knows?

Future prospects: DVD-based.



the internal logic of their own abstract worlds) and none of the sex and/or extreme violence now used to sell most titles. These are videogames made the way videogames used to be made; as a valid artform in their own right rather than an "interactive" version of something else.

Most likely to say: "Just stick a bowl on it and do a quick trim round with the scissors."

Least likely to say: "Oh sod it, it'll do, release it now."

Currently working on: *Super Mario 64 2*. Or possibly not.

Future prospects: It's unlikely anyone else could match the twin attractions of financial reward and total artistic indulgence that Miyamoto enjoys at Nintendo, or that he'd leave even if they did.



Only bullets can stop Chris Deering now. He's *the* most important man in the UK videogame industry

1 CHRIS DEERING

Job: President, Sony Computer Entertainment

Career highlight: You really haven't been paying attention, have you? Does "The most successful console of all time, first try" ring any bells?

What's the big deal? The PSX's success isn't just in the numbers – huge though they are. The machine has been directly responsible for a massive and fundamental shift in the type of people who play videogames. The average gamer has aged ten years since the PSX came out,

and it's no coincidence. Sony targeted the older, mainstream audience and hit it right on the nail. By next year, Deering will move in for the *real* prize – PlayStation-branded consoles as common as VCRs.

Most likely to say: "It's all falling into place" (interspersed with "Saturn 2" each time he refers to Dreamcast).

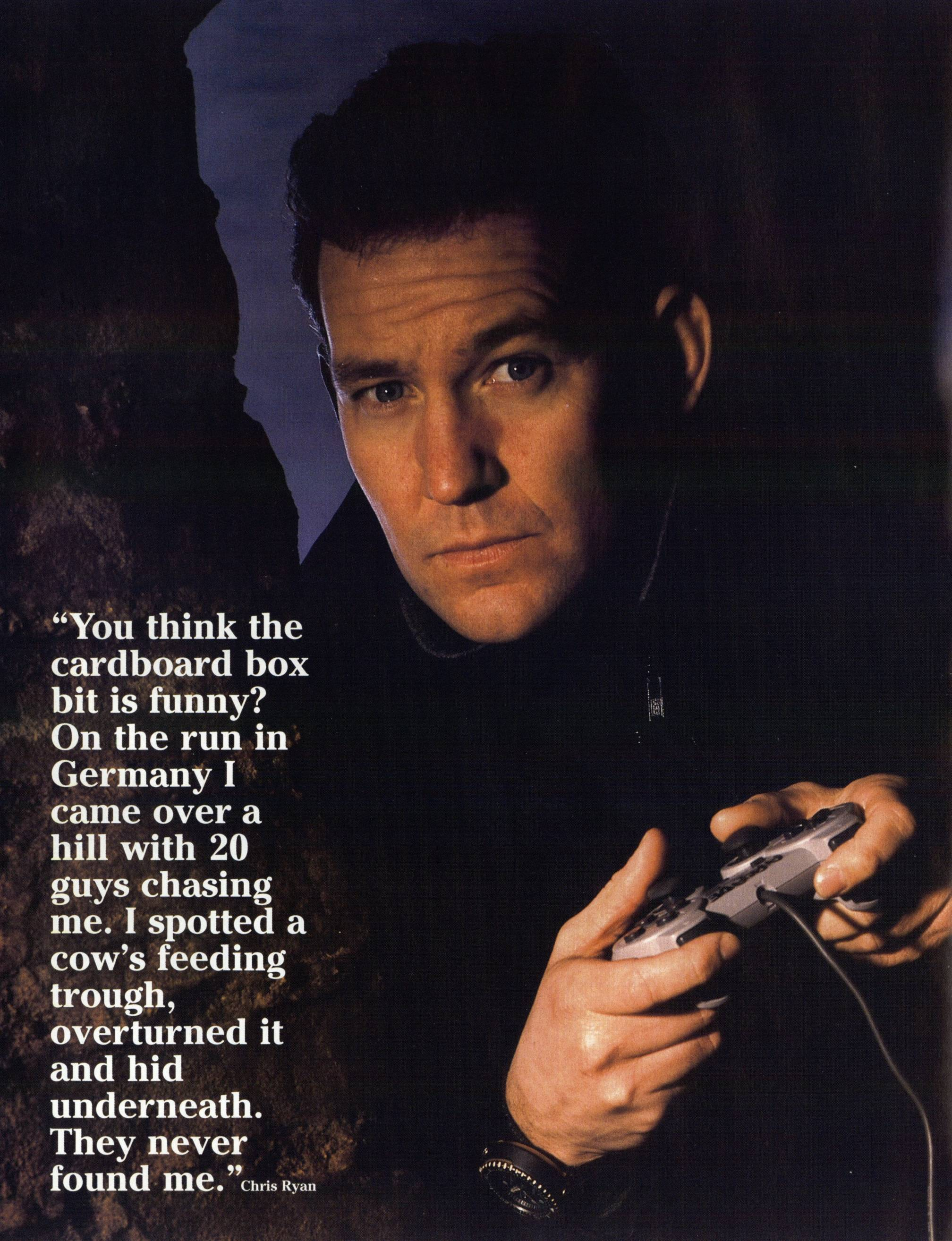
Least likely to say: "Anyone for a round of *Mario Kart*?"

Currently working on: Not the PlayStation 2. Definitely not. Absolutely no way. No, really.

Future prospects: The only tough

dilemma facing Sony's is judging exactly when and how to go about upgrading from the original PlayStation. It's doing far too well to be pensioned off just yet, but Sony can't wait forever for fear of allowing a rival to gain a foothold. As dilemmas go, though, it's a pretty nice one. As for Deering himself, of course, only bullets could stop him now. He's *the* most important man in the UK videogame industry.



A close-up photograph of actor Chris Ryan. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark jacket and a watch on his left wrist. He is holding a white video game controller with both hands. The background is dark and textured, possibly a cave or a rocky surface.

“You think the cardboard box bit is funny? On the run in Germany I came over a hill with 20 guys chasing me. I spotted a cow’s feeding trough, overturned it and hid underneath. They never found me.” Chris Ryan

THE REAL

DEAL?

STORY BY SAM RICHARDS

JUST HOW AUTHENTIC IS METAL GEAR SOLID?

■ PHOTOGRAPHY: JUSTIN SCOBIE

Arcade takes notes
as ex-SAS soldier
and Bravo Two
Zero hero Chris
Ryan puts *Metal
Gear Solid* through
its paces.

Chris Ryan joined the 22nd SAS regiment in 1984 at the age of 23. He toured the world working on counter-terrorist operations and served as Sniper Team Commander on the Special Projects team. In 1991 he joined the now-infamous Bravo Two Zero mission to Iraq, and was the only member of an eight-man patrol to evade capture behind enemy lines. He was awarded the Military Medal in honour of his perilous 200-mile trek across the deserts and mountains of Western Iraq, an experience he recorded in his first book, *The One That Got Away*. Chris now works as a bodyguard and writes best-selling military thrillers.

Metal Gear Solid's hero Solid Snake is a former Special Forces secret agent, a master

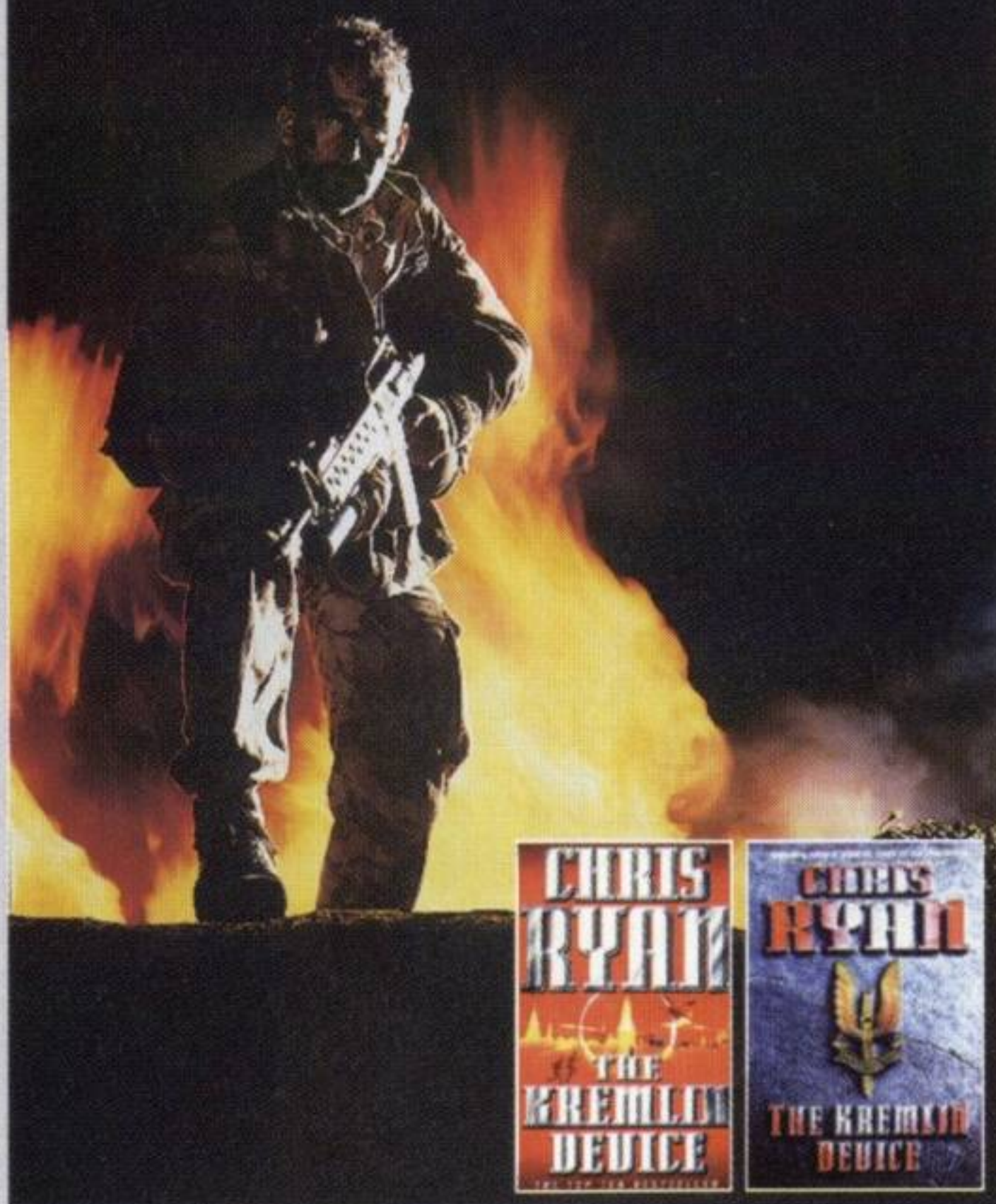


■ Chris plots a stealthy (and downright sneaky) course towards the level one elevator.

Who is Chris Ryan?

A story of blood, guns, and books

■ An altogether harder Private Ryan than the Tom Hanks version.



■ Since retiring from the SAS, Chris Ryan has authored four books. His first, *The One That Got Away*, was an autobiographical account of his escape from Iraq in the Bravo Two Zero missions of 1991. Two subsequent novels, *Stand By, Stand By* and *Zero Option* were both bestsellers. His latest work, *The Kremlin Device*, is the

story of SAS Sergeant Geordie Sharp. Sharp believes his mission in Russia is to help combat the Mafiya. He soon learns, however, of a more sinister directive – to plant a nuclear device in the sewers of Moscow. *The Kremlin Device* is out now in Century hardback. The Arrow paperback edition is out in April.

of stealth, and a trained killing machine. Until being forced out of retirement for the *Metal Gear Solid* mission, he amused himself by training huskies in Alaska.

Chris Ryan, meet Solid Snake.

“Not sure about the name!” chuckles Chris, insisting that a real soldier of stealth wouldn’t get far with such a ridiculous soubriquet. But Snake’s a hero, we protest. He’s a veteran of the NES *Metal Gear* games and is worshiped like a God in his native Japan. Chris finally concedes that, yes, it’s okay for Snake to have silly name, as long as he’s good at his job. And with that settled, we start the game.

The intro reveals that ex-Special Forces Solid Snake has been hired out by the shady “Colonel”, who claims to be working for the US Government. This is a complex relationship, though, since *MGS*’s creator Konami has been careful not to give Solid Snake a particular nationality or political loyalty. But are many ex-SAS soldiers really up for hire in this way?

“Oh sure, there’s a hell of a lot of work out there,” says Chris. “You get asked by all kinds of governments and organisations, and some of it is dodgy or illegal, although 99% of the guys wouldn’t touch the dubious stuff. Much of the work involves training military teams.”

So would Chris accept Snake’s mission?

“Myself, I’m a bodyguard now – a lot of the highest-paid bodyguards are ex-SAS men. As for special missions, I and a group of other ex-SAS bodyguards were hired through our company last year to recover a ship that had been hijacked in the Mediterranean. The British Government had an involvement with the ship, but didn’t want to deploy British troops, so off we went. So yes, this kind of thing can happen, absolutely.”

But does *Metal Gear Solid* accurately reflect what it’s like to embark on such a mission? Much of the game’s appeal stems from the creeping around aspect. Rather than coming out guns blazing in the manner of most third-person action games before it, the object is to avoid enemies and only attack them when absolutely necessary. Once a gunshot signals Snake’s presence, he soon becomes overrun.

The key word here is *stealth*. The fact that you can walk right behind guards or stand just beyond the arc of their torchlights without being seen may seem unbelievable, but Chris assures us of the game’s credentials.

“When you’re hiding out in the dark and people are using a torch to search for you, their night vision is destroyed,” he explains. “I’ve had people shine the torch on a body part or step right over me without seeing me.”

As the game scenario unfolds, we can’t resist jumping ahead to the cardboard box sequence to show him the unadulterated pleasure to be gleaned by hiding inside and then shuffling along, to the confusion of the nearby guards (this scene was in fact a Great Gaming Moment back in *Arcade 3*). Surely this can’t be standard SAS procedure?

Understandably tickled by Snake’s antics, Chris is prompted to recall an incident of similar resourcefulness. “It was like something out of an old film. I was on the run in Germany and I came over a hill with about 20 guys chasing me. I spotted a cow’s feeding trough. I

“It’s okay for Snake to have a silly name, as long as he’s good at his job.” Chris Ryan

THE REAL DEAL? METAL GEAR SOLID



■ It's scary, it's fun, it's even sexy. But just how realistic is *Metal Gear Solid*?

overtaken it and hid underneath." He smiles wistfully. "They never found me."

Let's go through the rest of *Metal Gear Solid*'s kit, then. It would be impossible to complete the game (or indeed understand the complex motives for Snake's mission) without the Codec radio contact between Snake and the Colonel. The voice of the Codec is the Colonel's assistant Mei Ling, and while her endless stream of smug Chinese proverbs becomes infuriating after a while, without the radio Snake would be up shit creek.

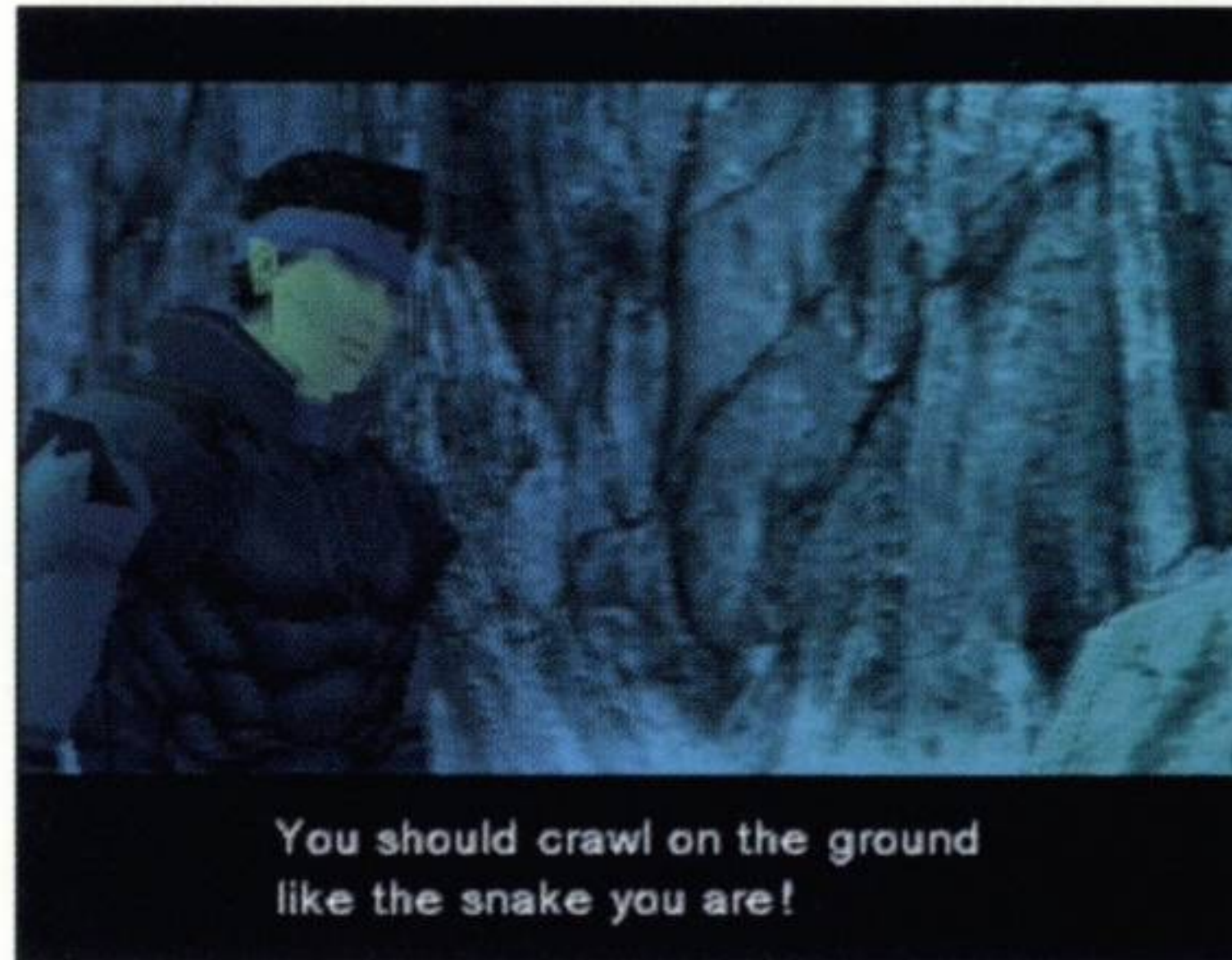
According to the game, the Codec itself uses a system of neural implants to stimulate the inner bones of Snake's ear. It's a futuristic fantasy, but how would somebody on a similar mission retain contact with the outside world?

"Radio equipment is *always* bulky," Chris explains. "You can have a satellite receiver, which, with an aerial, can relay messages anywhere in the world. However, to make it soldier-proof, the receiver is usually encased in an inch of solid steel and is probably the size of a small briefcase. Modern radio equipment now also includes a laptop computer. This can encrypt your messages automatically. Previously we used to have to sit there with a book, working all the codes out as we went."

So it's unlikely that Snake would have the benefit of Mei Ling's sweet nothings via radio on a real mission?

"Whatever the size of his equipment," says Chris, "Snake wouldn't be able to use it inside a building, so he would be on his own."

Then let's move on to the more sexy hardware. The stuff that makes loud banging noises. In his mission to search for the ArmsTech president, Snake has to dynamite his way through a series of false walls. His explosive of choice is C4, a genuine American term for plastic explosive. It's a procedure



Chris is very familiar with, but he isn't too sure that Snake's method of planting it on the floor would have the required effect in real life.

"If he laid it on the floor, all the energy would be dissipated," Chris points out. "In reality you need to use a shaped charge, which accurately directs the explosive, and then tape it to the wall. We used to make shaped charges by packing explosive into the bottom of wine bottles with the conical end facing inwards."

And would you use C4, also?

"For blowing open doors, we would use an explosive called Detcord, which looks like washing line. If you attach a strip to the middle of the door, you can stand right next to it, and when it's detonated, the door splits in half. Of course, if the hinges are visible, you can just blow them off with a 12-bore."

Once he's blown through a couple of walls, Snake finds himself in a passageway being shot at by automatic camera-controlled rifles mounted on the wall. Is this a feasible security measure? Would it deter Chris?

"Not really, because unless it's manned, the machine can't distinguish between friend and enemy. Having said that, I'm sure the technology is being worked on."

To disable any kind of electronics such as the wall-mounted guns, Snake uses a Chaff grenade. This is poetic license on behalf of the game's creators, but Chris explains the basis for the idea.

"All grenades are anti-personnel, nobody has yet invented anything that small that can destroy electronics. There is a type of nuclear bomb that creates something called an EMP (electro magnetic pulse). The EMP destroys everything containing a computer chip, and

Metal Gear Solid

The info on Konami's hit game.



Format: PlayStation | Publisher: SCEE | Developer: Konami
Price: £39.99 Special Edition £59.99 | Players: 1 | ★★★★★

■ Unless you have been living on a remote Alaskan island for the last year, you'll know all about *Metal Gear Solid* for PlayStation. It's the brainchild of Konami's Hideo Kojima, and is highly regarded for its reliance on stealth rather than shooting to ensure success. Our advice to anyone who hasn't already nabbed a copy of this five-star classic is to leg it to your nearest store pronto. It may only take a measly 13 hours to complete, but during this time, the combination of puzzles, adventure and shooting, allied with a mature and evolving plot, will have you gripped.

"Of course, if the hinges are visible, you can just blow it off with a 12-bore." Chris Ryan

so can completely annihilate a country's communication and production systems. As far as I know, nothing like that exists on any smaller scale."

What about the minefields that Snake often has to negotiate? His secret informer Deepthroat first refers to them as Claymores, is that their real name?

"No, they're something different. A Claymore mine isn't buried – it's basically an explosive device filled with ballbearings and directed toward an enemy. It can be detonated remotely or using a tripwire. The mines Snake encounters here are probably buried and activated by a spring."

And which are worse in real life?

"It depends what you're trying to achieve. Often, an army will lay mines which are designed to hit the stomach in order to wound and maim. This demoralises troops and eats into medical resources."

Nice. Snake can view the placement of the mines by wearing thermal goggles, but according to Chris this is yet another in-game contrivance.

"Thermal imagery can only detect sources of heat and obviously there's no heat emanating from the mines."

At least, not until it's too late.

"You'd have to use a mine detector or minesweeper, which is a kind of metal detector. Otherwise, crossing a minefield is a slow process, pushing a knife into the ground every few inches."

Snake also uses his thermal goggles to detect infra-red beams, but this time the

invention is less of a fairy story. "There are goggles which can be worn to see infra-red light," says Chris. "They are called Passive Night Goggles, or PNGs. I've used them."

One of the best boss scenes in *Metal Gear Solid* is Snake's encounter with Vulcan Raven's tank. The terror of finding yourself in a one-on-one situation with a huge armoured machine is ably translated, and Chris is particularly impressed by the rumblings of the Dual Shock pad, representing both the movement of the ground and the corresponding increase in heart rate. Chris knows the feeling.

"Ground troops live in fear of an attack by tank. Once in Iraq, our team was stranded and we could hear the churning of tank tracks from the horizon. It's a horrendous feeling. Tanks can fire off a round of

shots covering a huge area and if they'd fired at us, we'd have been screwed. Luckily, it was just a bulldozer."

When you're first confronted with the tank in *Metal Gear Solid*, it's difficult to know how to proceed as the main cannon can shoot you dead with one round. You actually have to disable the main gun with a Chaff grenade, enabling you to creep around the edge of the arena until you get close to the tank. As long as you keep Snake moving, you can generally dodge the machine gun fire until you reach the side of the tank, where a well-placed grenade will destroy the gunner. As the manoeuvre is demonstrated, Chris notes the ingenuity, but assures me that under no circumstances would he attempt to take on a tank single-handedly.

"You'd have to fire a rocket at the tank tracks first to prevent it from advancing," he insists. "Then the only real way to destroy it would be to get up close and plant a charge on its side. Except that as soon as a tank's been hit, it knows where the fire's coming from, and those turrets can swing round at a hell of a rate... it's going to have you. Also, there's no need for a gunner to sit exposed on top because they can fire machine guns from inside the tank. In modern warfare, when you come up against tanks, you call in the A-10s, or tankbusters. For one man to take out a tank would be an impossibility."

We encounter a particularly perplexing puzzle on Basement Level 2 of the nuclear building. Confronted with an electrified floor, if Snake steps forward he's thrown to the ground by a savage jolt of

electricity. Chris applauds the realism of Snake's reaction, because he's experienced the same thing himself.

"It's a bit embarrassing, really. I was on an exercise in Belgium and we came up against a barbed-wire fence. When I was checking for current, I must have touched it between pulses, because it seemed fine. Then when I cocked my leg over and accidentally touched the fence, it threw me into the air and ripped my thigh open. Lucky it wasn't further up my leg, I suppose."

The *Metal Gear Solid* solution to the problem of an electrified floor is to fire a remote-controlled missile (called a Nikita) over it, steering the missile through a series of rooms until it hits the generator. Does the Nikita bear any resemblance to an actual weapon in a soldier's armoury?

"No. They probably took the name from the movie *Nikita*, but nothing like it really exists. Obviously you can navigate a Cruise missile, but there's nothing handheld with the same capability. The electrified floor is certainly a standard security measure, though. Those things run at a hell of a voltage."

As we progress further into the game, Snake's encounters become more fantastic. We show Chris the amusing encounter with the guards wearing invisibility "stealth suits". Chris laughs and confirms our suspicion that they're not *entirely* realistic, but adds that Snake's method of fighting in a small space while outnumbered is much more authentic. It's almost impossible to beat this level without first throwing a stun grenade, and Chris explains that this is a standard SAS procedure for gaining a few extra seconds on your opponents.

"When making an ambush, you would first lob the grenade ahead of you through a

"Set off any kind of explosive in that confined space and you'd kill yourself too." Chris Ryan



■ This man once hid under a feeding trough to escape capture. What a cowardly custard, say us.

Your arsenal

Solid Snake's weaponry and its real-life counterparts

Metal Gear Solid is packed full of heavy weaponry, all at Snake's disposal. But would you have recourse to the same sort of firepower in real-life warfare? With his first-hand experience of combat in the SAS, Chris Ryan talks us through Snake's kit, piece by piece, explaining the differences between imagination and reality.

Just don't mistake plenty of hours spent behind your PlayStation as training for the real items. It could get messy.



Socom

■ Snake's basic semi-automatic pistol, used to mow down the guards outside the first cell and to defeat Revolver Ocelot.

■ "I think the name is made up. But this is a replica of the basic SAS weapon, the Sig Fauer 9mm, or Zig 226 for short."



Fa-Mas

■ Hefty assault rifle for action-movie style machine gunning attacks, such as those on the stairs in the communication tower.

■ "This is the MP5, a 9mm sub-machine gun, which is again a standard SAS weapon. This would be your primary weapon for a house assault, with the pistol as your back-up."



PSG1

■ A sniper rifle for those long distance sightings and vital in the shootout with Sniper Wolf. Snake can gobble Diazepam to keep him from trembling!

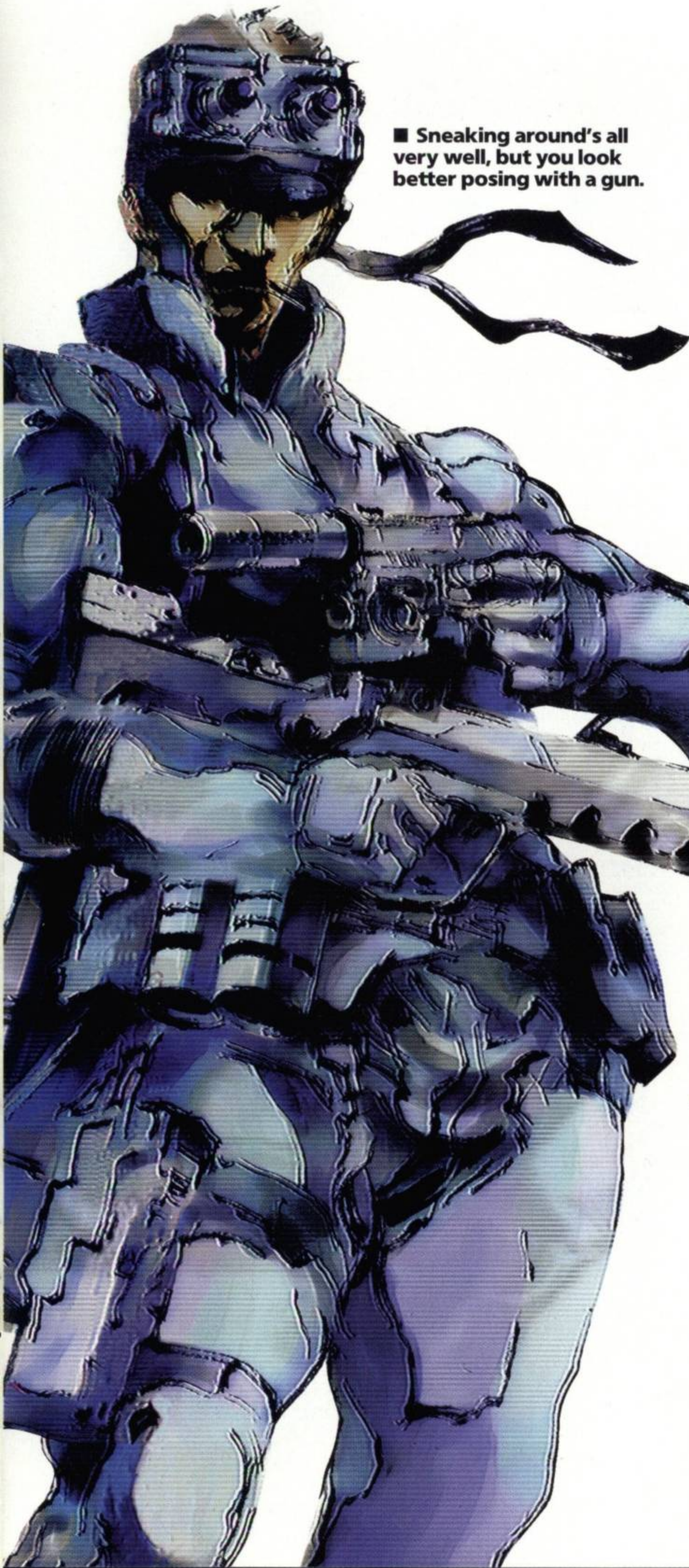
■ "This could be one of two things. The Barrett .50-inch is a long range sniper rifle, but perhaps more common is the Russian Dragunov 7.62mm. As for the Diazepam, I've never heard of that going on! You undertake a strict training course to learn the principles of sniping, and after that, you don't tremble."



Nikita

■ Used to launch remote control missiles which can be manoeuvred around corners after firing.

■ "No such things exists - only Cruise missiles can be steered after launching."



■ Sneaking around's all very well, but you look better posing with a gun.

doorway," he explains. "It explodes with a hell of a bang and a flash which disorientates the enemy for a few seconds."

And that's just the start of their problems. "There's another type of stun grenade which fires out tiny generators on detonation. The generators fly around the room whistling, and the enemy is confused and paralysed for a moment, allowing you to rush in and seize control. If you are wearing eye-pieces and ear protection, you are not affected by it. The stun grenades would be very effective in *Metal Gear Solid's* lift, as the guys wouldn't know where they were."

An additional challenge of this section is the need to continually plant explosives on opposite sides of the lift. This may finish off the game's guards, but it's not something Chris would attempt in real life. As he puts it, "Set off any kind of explosive in that confined space and you'd kill yourself too."

Overall, the combat methods of *Metal Gear Solid* get a mixed reaction in terms of realism. Chris is most impressed with the game's unfolding narrative. As Snake is propelled towards the island in his mini-sub, Chris finds the story hitting very close to home...

"They've stolen my beginning!" he jokes. "The novel I'm finishing now [which is coming out next year] starts with two guys in a mini-sub, approaching their target in much the same way Snake does. But in the novel, they're heading for a yacht, with the directive to assassinate Robert Maxwell and make it look like suicide."

When Solid Snake first infiltrates Shadow Moses Island, he believes it to be a store for defunct nuclear warheads, and he thinks that the terrorists' main goal is to strike a deal with the US Government. Later, Snake discovers that the island is home to the secret construction of Metal Gear Rex, a

transportable nuclear weapon being researched by the US Government in conjunction with ArmsTech. With the weapon now in the hands of the terrorists, obviously the entire world is in danger, yet Snake's suspicions about both the government and the terrorists mean that he is adamant not to trust anything except his own morality.

And it's the believability of this scenario which most impressed Chris about *Metal Gear Solid*, leading him to draw comparisons with his novel currently on sale.

"*The Kremlin Device* is about a group of SAS soldiers instructed to plant nuclear devices in Moscow. In the bigger picture NATO is promoting nuclear disarmament, but is secretly attempting to put one over on the Russians... only to find that the Russians have already planted similar devices in the UK. In fact, the nuclear subtext is only revealed to the SAS soldiers just before they leave for Russia – until then they believe they're on a mission to deal with the Russian Mafiya. So in that respect it's similar to Snake's position at the beginning of *Metal Gear Solid*."

Are Western Governments' military plans really so sinister?

"I have a cynical view, but I think so, yes. The general public are lied to. I have no doubt that within our lifetime a nuclear bomb will be detonated by a terrorist organisation, but the weapon will probably have been manufactured under the auspices of a Western government. You can also go to Russia these days and buy yourself all kinds of weapons with a few thousand dollars."

On this rather chilling note, we leave Chris Ryan guiding Solid Snake around the first two levels of *Metal Gear Solid*. His first reaction on being spotted by the guards was to take them on, but now he breezes through to level two like a pro, clinging to the shadows and making darting runs behind the backs of unsuspecting enemies. It looks like he's done this somewhere before.

■ A guide to all the secret bits of *Metal Gear Solid* for PlayStation is on page 82.



Stinger

■ Bulky portable missile launcher giving Snake a first-person perspective. Used to take out Vulcan Raven, Liquid Snake's helicopter and eventually the Metal Gear Robot.
■ "It's either a 66 Rocket Launcher or a Soviet RPG7: both hand-held rocket launchers. They only weigh 10-15 kilos. You'd use these to take out bunkers, to shoot at enemies behind walls, to fire at vehicles, or to destroy tank tracks. The helicopter situation is plausible – during the Somalia conflict, the Americans lost about five helicopters to RPGs."



C4

■ Plastic explosive used to blow through walls.
■ "C4 does exist, but it's probably not what you'd use to destroy walls. You'd need to at least pack the explosive into a shaped charge."



Grenades

■ Pull the pin, lob it towards the target and it explodes! Neat.
■ "Yes, the grenades are used in the game in the same way as you'd use them in real life, although their effectiveness is exaggerated in the examples I've seen."



Stun grenades

■ Knock your enemies out for a couple of seconds gaining that vital advantage.
■ "These are common practice. You'd lob one ahead of you into a room and follow in after the grenade, wearing eye and ear protection. The enemy would be stunned and confused for a few seconds."



Chaff grenades

■ These disable all kinds of electronics, from camera-controlled guns to radar systems.
■ "This is a figment of the designers' imagination as no weapon that small could destroy electronic chips and magnetic currents. It would be very useful if it existed, though!"

A Charts

That new game you bought. Is it popular? Or does everyone else hate it?

Official Top 40

Sales information from the delightful month of February

Import Zone

With Department 1 (0171916 8440)

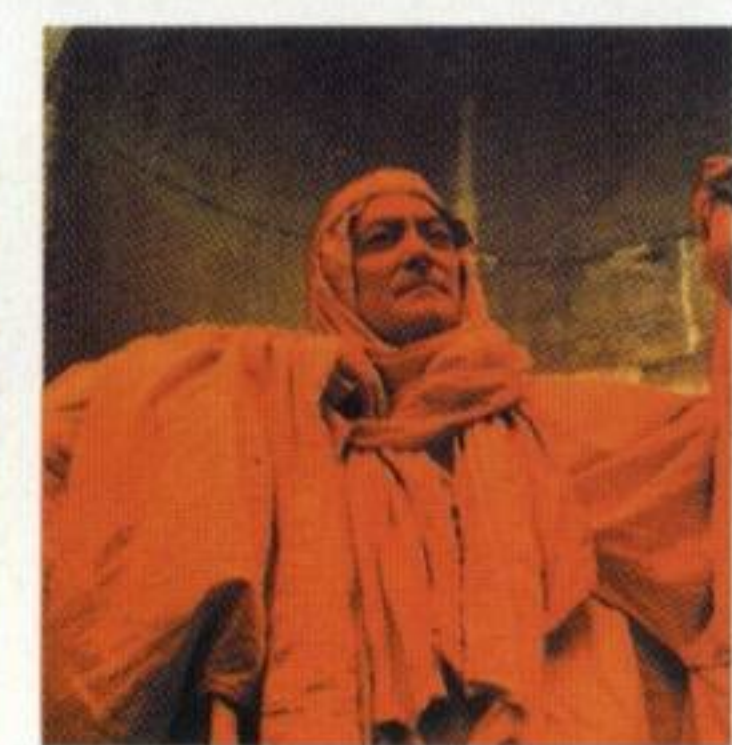


Castlevania: Scary.

"Knock, knock!" Who's there? "Anthony." Anthony who? "Anthony from Department 1." Well, that wasn't very funny. "No, I'm just here to tell you what's happening on the import scene." Aah, yes. Go ahead. "On the PlayStation, we're getting hundreds of calls about spooky adventure

game *Silent Hill*, which has just been released in Japan." What about the N64? "The US version of *Castlevania 64* is doing very well for us. *Mario Party*'s selling like hot cakes, partly because of the European release date being put back, and *Smash Brothers* is flying out." Marvellous. How's the Dreamcast? "Sega *Rally 2* literally trebled our profits in one day, and *Sonic Adventure*, *Incoming* and, surprisingly, *Tetris 4D* are still doing well. We're really looking forward to *Blue Stinger* on that format." Okay. Thanks very much.

Vox-Pop | On the streets of Bath

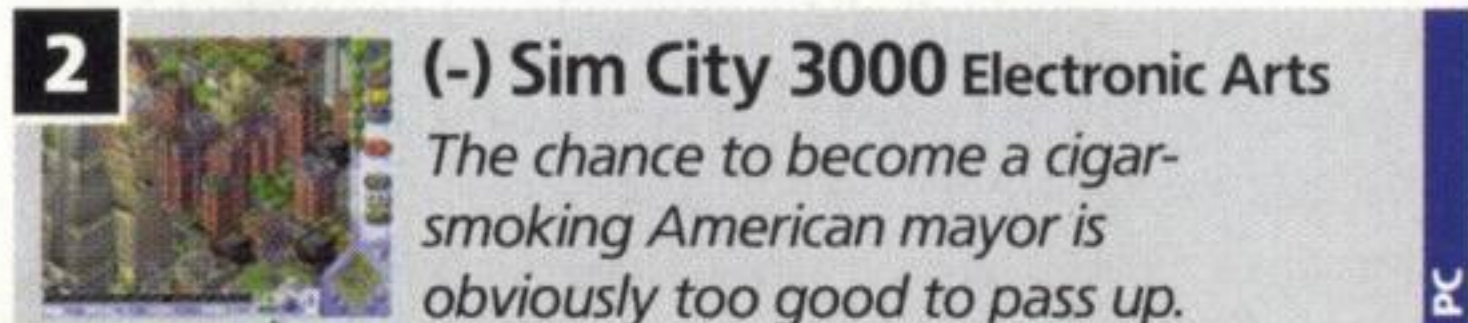


"Hello. Would you like to join the AA?" No thanks, we're already members. We joined three months ago, and we've called you out seven times already. "Oh." In the old days, you'd have had to salute us. Are you into videogames? *Grand Theft Auto*, maybe? "Not really." Oh. Bye.

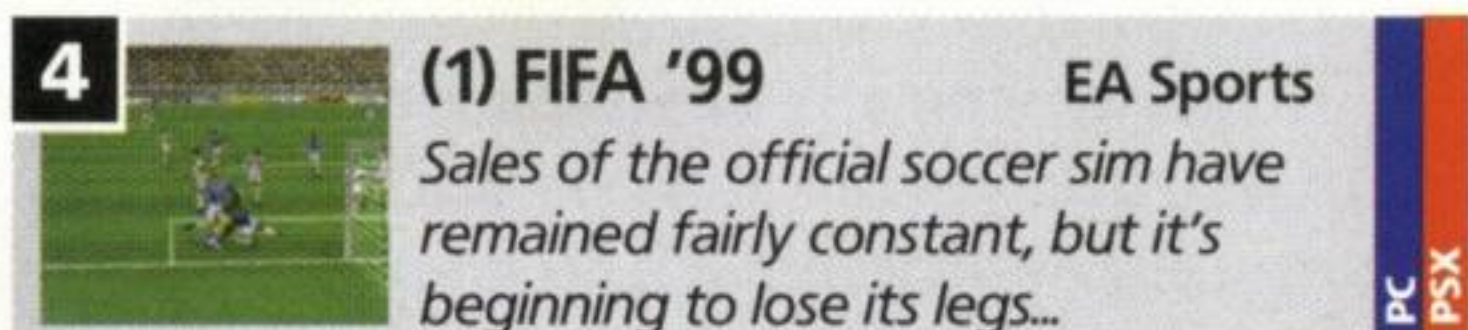
Hello. What y'doing? [No response.] Have you played *Tomb Raider III* or *Zelda*? They've both got statues that leap to life and attack you. There's one in *Resident Evil 2* as well. [Starts to move very slowly]. You're scary. We're going. Bye.



1 (-) *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* LucasArts
The Force is strong in this one. With Episode 1 creeping its way toward a cinema near you, *Star Wars* fever is as potent as ever.



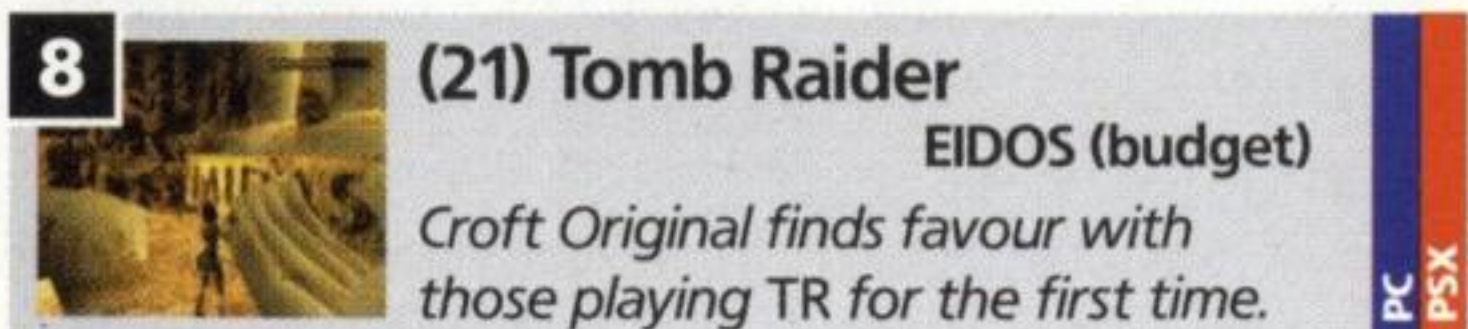
2 (-) *Sim City 3000* Electronic Arts
The chance to become a cigar-smoking American mayor is obviously too good to pass up.



3 (-) *Premier Manager '99* Gremlin
The annual round of footie management sims has begun.



4 (1) *FIFA '99* EA Sports
Sales of the official soccer sim have remained fairly constant, but it's beginning to lose its legs...



5 (-) *Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* Nintendo
Now that THE has got around to sending some copies to the shops, Link's doing the N64 proud.



6 (6) *Grand Theft Auto: The Lost and Damned* (budget)
The Platinum price of this crime-laden oddity is helping it no end.

11 (7) *V-Rally* Infogrames (budget)

12 (15) *Worms* Infogrames (budget)

13 (9) *Colin McRae Rally* Codemasters

14 (17) *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus* GT Interactive

15 (11) *Rayman* Ubisoft (budget)

16 (29) *Cool Boarders 3* SCEE

17 (-) *Delta Force* Electronic Arts

18 (12) *Mickey's Wild Adventure* SCEE (budget)

19 (13) *Resident Evil* Virgin (budget)

20 (8) *Brian Lara Cricket* Codemasters

21 (29) *Croc* Electronic Arts (budget)

22 (-) *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* (budget)

23 (16) *Die Hard Trilogy* (budget)

24 (14) *Baldur's Gate* Interplay

25 (-) *Worms Armageddon* Hasbro

26 (20) *Spyro the Dragon* SCEE

27 (4) *Turok II* Acclaim

28 (30) *Half-Life* Sierra

29 (27) *Time Crisis* SCEE (budget)

30 (19) *Tekken 2* SCEE (budget)

31 (18) *Gran Turismo* SCEE

32 (24) *WWF: Warzone* Acclaim

33 (31) *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* GT Int (budget)

34 (10) *Crash Bandicoot* Sony (budget)

35 (-) *Soul Blade* Sony (budget)

36 (35) *Micro Machines v3* Codemasters (budget)

37 (34) *Apocalypse* Activision

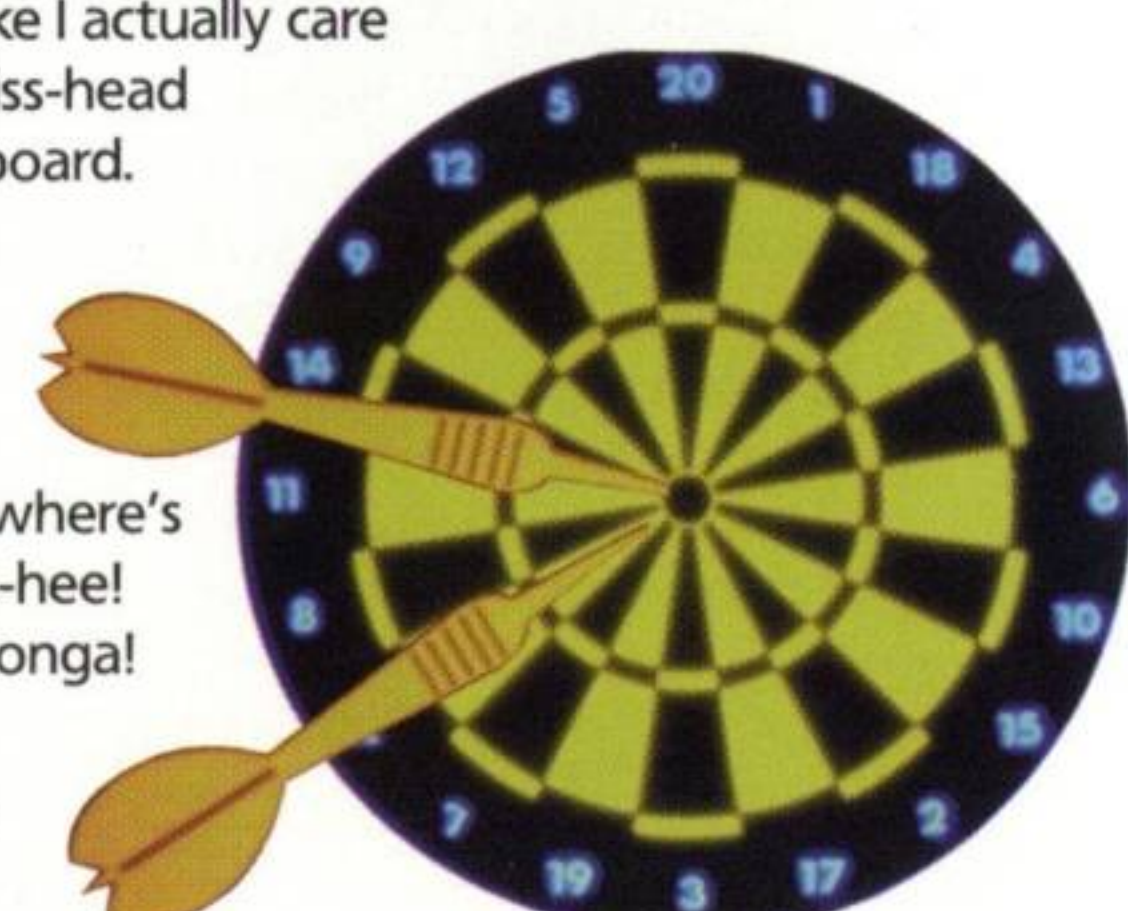
38 (-) *Football World Manager* Ubisoft

39 (-) *Combat Flight Simulator* Microsoft

40 (39) *Command & Conquer* Electronic Arts (budget)

Chart Analysis | From Bullseye

"Hello, readers. I'm that bloke from *Bullseye*. No, no, not Jim Bowen – the other one. Oh, Christ, you know – (deep breath) one huuuunndred aaaeeennnd eeeighhhttyyyyyy (choke). Yeah, that's right, him. I'm here to make some tenuous link between darts and this month's Top 40 chart, and you'll be pleased to know that I've been paid an obscene amount of money to do it. Ha! That'll teach that Bowen bastard. I've been living in his shadow for years, having to shout out darts scores like I actually care about some fat beery piss-head chucking pins at a cork board. Er, anyway, on with the link... [dramatic pause] The word "darts" rhymes with the word "charts"! Geddit? Right, where's my cheque? Thanks. Tee-hee! Look at all that lovely wonga! There you go, Bowen!! Feast your eyes on that, you little motherf--"



Japanese Top 10

1 (-) Sega Rally	2DC, Sega
2 (-) Nintendo All-Star Smash Brothers	N64, Nintendo
3 (-) Super Hero Battle	PSX, Banpresto
4 (3) Yu-Gi-Oh! Dual Monsters	GB, Konami
5 (7) Dragon's Quest Monsters: Terry's Wonderland	GB, Enix
6 (-) Digital Monster World	PSX, Bandai
7 (-) Sound Evolution Vol.3	PSX, Chun Soft
8 (5) Crash Bandicoot 3	PSX, Sony
9 (-) Bass Landing	PSX, ASCII
10 (9) Pokemon Cards	GB, Nintendo

US Console Top 10

1 (-) Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time	N64, Nintendo
2 (-) Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	N64, Nintendo
3 (4) Crash Bandicoot: Warped	PSX, Sony
4 (-) Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	N64, Acclaim
5 (3) Tomb Raider III	PSX, EIDOS
6 (5) Metal Gear Solid	PSX, Konami
7 (-) Gran Turismo	PSX, SCEE
8 (-) GoldenEye 007	N64, Nintendo
9 (7) Twisted Metal 3	PSX, Sony
10 (8) Knockout Kings	PSX, EA

Get it out of my sight!

The ten games most often exchanged for something else.



■ **Apocalypse: clogging up second-hand games shops everywhere.**

Some games will last you a lifetime, some games you want to trade in for something else pretty sharpish. Arcade conducted a survey of second-hand videogame shops to find out which games get passed on quicker than a dose of the flu. (Our shop of choice, Pink Planet).

1. Descent

■ **PC** ■ It seems that weaving a spaceship through a mind-alteringly complex cavern network can cause fits of Jim Carrey-esque proportions. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "It made my head hurt."

2. Apocalypse

■ **PSX** ■ The sight of slap-headed celeb Bruce Willis strutting around in digitized form is far from pleasant. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "I thought it would be like *Die Hard*."

3. Tomb Raider III

■ **PSX** ■ Not a game for people who faint at the sight of young ladies bleeding, or whose brain turns to mush at the sight of another rolling rock/hidden switch "problem". ■ *Typical customer comment:* "I'm tired of staring at her arse."

4. GT64

■ **N64** ■ As a simulation of driving, this is slightly less accurate than your broken Scalextric. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "I thought GT stood for *Gran Turismo*."

5. Mortal Kombat Trilogy

■ **N64** ■ As shoddily put together as *Hollyoaks*, but with more broken spines and detached heads. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "I found I couldn't stop laughing at it."

6. World League Soccer '98

■ **PSX** ■ Michael Owen's endorsement of *WLS '99* has made the previous instalment as obsolete as Christopher Lillcrap's rainbow-hued guitar strap. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "Please can I have the new one?"

7. Forsaken

■ **PC** ■ A wildly confusing futuristic jetbike shoot-'em-up, which failed for the exact same reasons as *Descent*. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "I got all lost and confused. And my fingers hurt."

8. Fluid

■ **PSX** ■ A dolphin collecting ambient sounds? We'd rather have a Stylophone and a Rolf Harris tutorial tape. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "You know Flipper? He was a git."

9. Premier Manager '98

■ **PSX** ■ The curse of the sequel sees last year's footy management sim sent off, just as Hoddle was bundled home in a jiffy bag. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "Playing it felt like I was being punished for sins in a previous life."

10. F1 '98

■ **PSX** ■ As tedious as Nigel Mansell and about as rich as well. Unsuspecting punters bought this in droves. And then brought it back. ■ *Typical customer comment:* "Thanks Psygnosis. Cheers."



Top 10 things said by people trying to use the Internet

1. "Is it working? What's going on?"
2. "I'm waiting."
3. "Why... doesn't... it... WORK?"
4. "I'm giving up after this go."
5. "Finally! It's worki..."
6. "...oh. No it's not."
7. "Sooooo sloooooow."
8. "I can feel my will to live draining away."
9. "Hey - cat, don't stand on the... nooooo!"
10. "This is shit."

Q & A

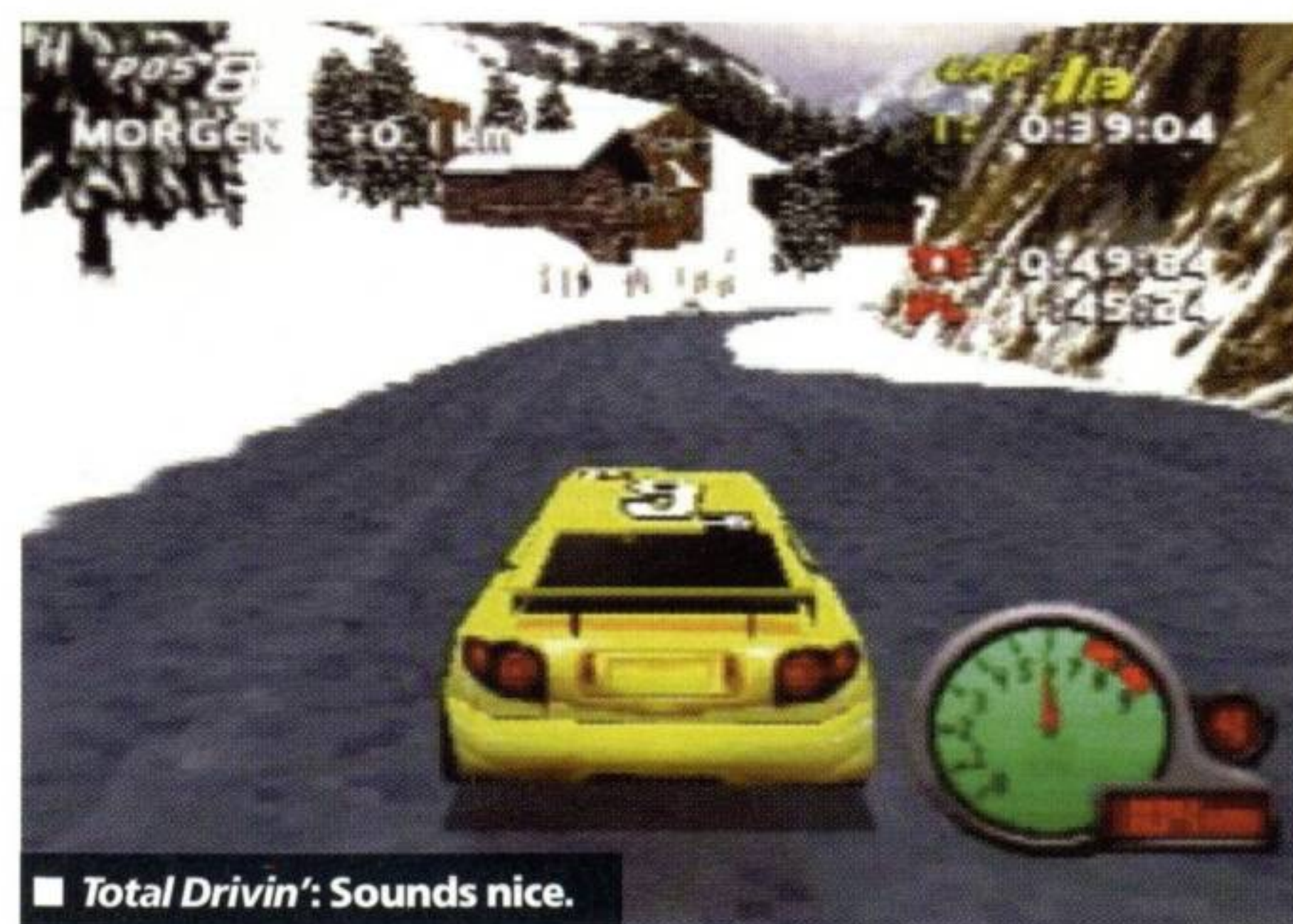
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Lost? Confused? Stupid? Dry your tears - Mark Green's here.

Q I am writing to say that the music you hear when you have finished *Tomb Raider II* is really cool, and I was wondering if you could tell me who it was by? I'm also interested in the *Total Drivin'* soundtrack. Is there somewhere that you can buy all these game tunes? *Daniel Coultas, Morecambe, Lancashire*

A Weeeell, yes and no. You're kind of in luck when it comes to getting your first question answered - the PR guy from EIDOS has literally just walked into the office - but the bad news is that he doesn't think there are any plans to release the *Tomb Raider II* soundtrack, despite a number of calls they've had regarding that very subject. Most game



■ **Total Drivin': Sounds nice.**

soundtracks are generally to be found cluttering up Japanese and American record outlets, and don't often find their way over here, because there's simply not a big enough market. If you ring a good importer, they should be

able to get their hands on anything you require, but bear in mind that only the biggest games are honoured with a CD release. So, *Total Drivin'*... er, no. Why not record it on to tape yourself? Oh, that's illegal, is it? Oh, well.

"Another 10p mum?" | Old coin-ops



heavily on *Asteroids*, Atari's earlier arcade success, *Space Duel* was pure shoot-'em-up, featuring triangular spaceships blasting at psychedelic wobbling shapes.

Q As a child on holiday, my brother and I played an arcade game that featured colour wire-frame graphics. It had two ships that were linked by a rod, so they could rotate and thrust in unison, blasting huge Spirograph-style asteroids and other aliens. We never saw the game anywhere else. Can you help me with the name of this game, around 18 years later? *Stephen A Graham, Carlisle*



There were four game modes, including a head-to-head "battle" where each player controlled their own ship. You were playing the two-player "Space Station" mode, where the two craft were joined by a flexible wire. With one player's movement dragging the other player about, avoiding and aiming at the enemy craft became a nightmare task.

It used the "vector graphics" line-drawing system that was the in thing at the time, but *Space Duel* managed to draw its mind-bending shapes in full colour, and represented a major leap forward for vector gaming. Have a gander at the Atari Vector Games collection at <http://www.atarihq.com/>

A You were playing *Space Duel*, an Atari title which found its way into seaside amusement arcades in the summer of 1982. Based

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PLAY LIKE A PRO

WORDS BY MARK GREEN

ILLUSTRATION: MATT KENYON PHOTOGRAPHY: RICK BUETTNER, CORBIS



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More people in the UK own a PlayStation than own a colostomy bag. And they're far keener to share what tricks they can do with it...

PC



Fear not electrocution. Laugh in the face of exorbitant damage repair bills. Your PC just needs to be shown who's boss. We show you how...

HOW CAN I MAKE GAMES LOOK BETTER?

N64

■ If you're squinting to make out *Mario* on a TV the size of a matchbox, using a TV lead that's regularly to be found in the dog's mouth, you're not doing yourself any favours. Go out and buy yourself the biggest telly in the world.

Failing that, head to your local games emporium and purchase an **N64-to-TV S-Video lead** (£10) or, even better, an **N64-to-TV Scart lead** (£10) for that crystal-clear picture (after checking that your TV's got the appropriate sockets). Oh, and wipe the display with a dry, lint-free cloth – that's your dead skin all over the screen, you know.



■ 1. Take off lid.



■ 2. Remove box.



■ 4. Put lid on.

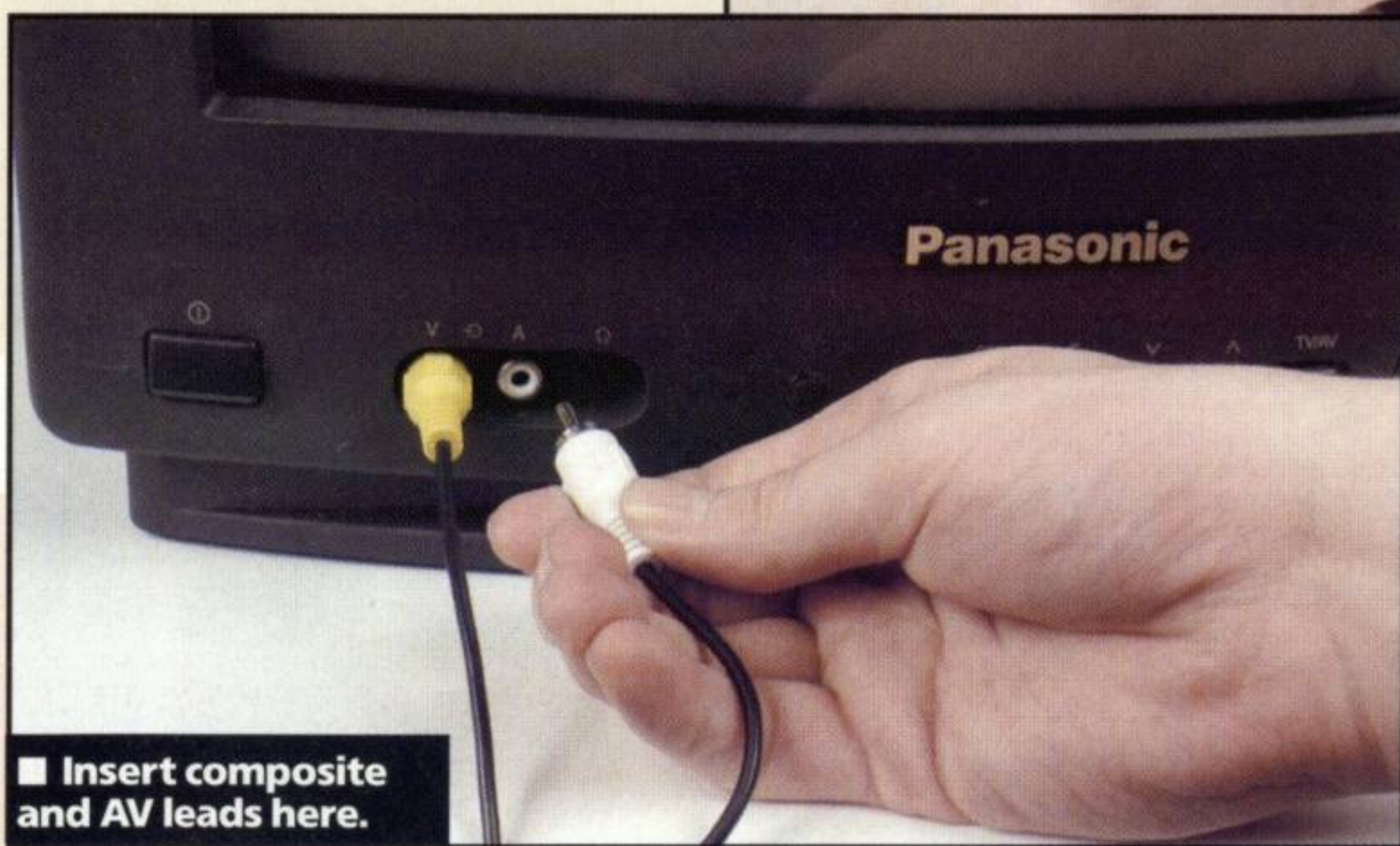


■ 3. Insert your new 4Mb Pak.

■ **Open up that little hatch** on top of your N64. Go on, don't be scared. You should find a sticker that threatens all sorts of nasty things if you dare to remove the knobby thing sitting underneath. Heed that advice – unless you've already bought a **4Mb Expansion Pak** (£30), which is designed to

replace that knobby bummer and make game visuals clearer, sharper and more detailed.

Be warned, though, only games specifically designed for the Pak will show any visual improvement, although most new titles are putting it to good use. Sadly, it doesn't work on girlfriends.



■ Insert composite and AV leads here.

■ **We don't review games on a portable TV** we bagged for £5 at a car boot sale, so you shouldn't be playing them on one either. You should also throw away the inadequate TV lead that came with your PlayStation and buy a **PSX-to-TV Scart lead** (£10) or **S-Video lead** (£10) from your local games shop. This will force your lazy TV into producing the clearest picture possible (although make sure you've got a Scart/S-Video socket first). Then find a cloth and check that the thick mist in *Metal Gear Solid* isn't in reality a three-inch coating of dust on your TV screen.



■ The Scart socket and Scart lead. Nice.

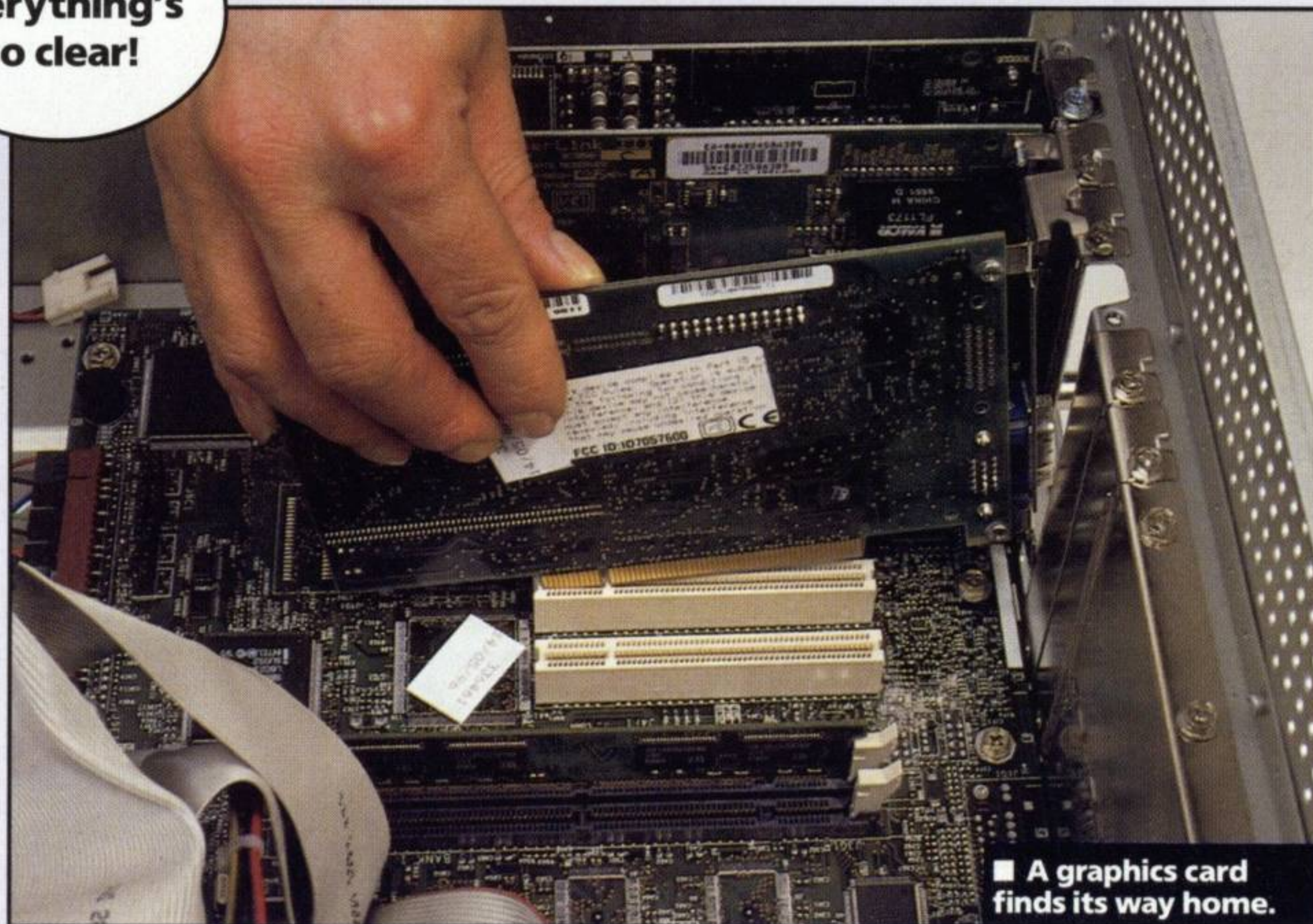
Scart lead, you say? How very interesting.

Find a cloth and check that the thick mist in Metal Gear Solid isn't in reality a three-inch coating of dust on your TV screen



PC

Suddenly everything's so clear!



■ A graphics card finds its way home.

■ **Are looks all that important to you?** If so, you'd be well-advised to look into the area of **3D cards**. These have the power to make games look better than George Lucas's most vivid dreams and are actually a requirement for many games.

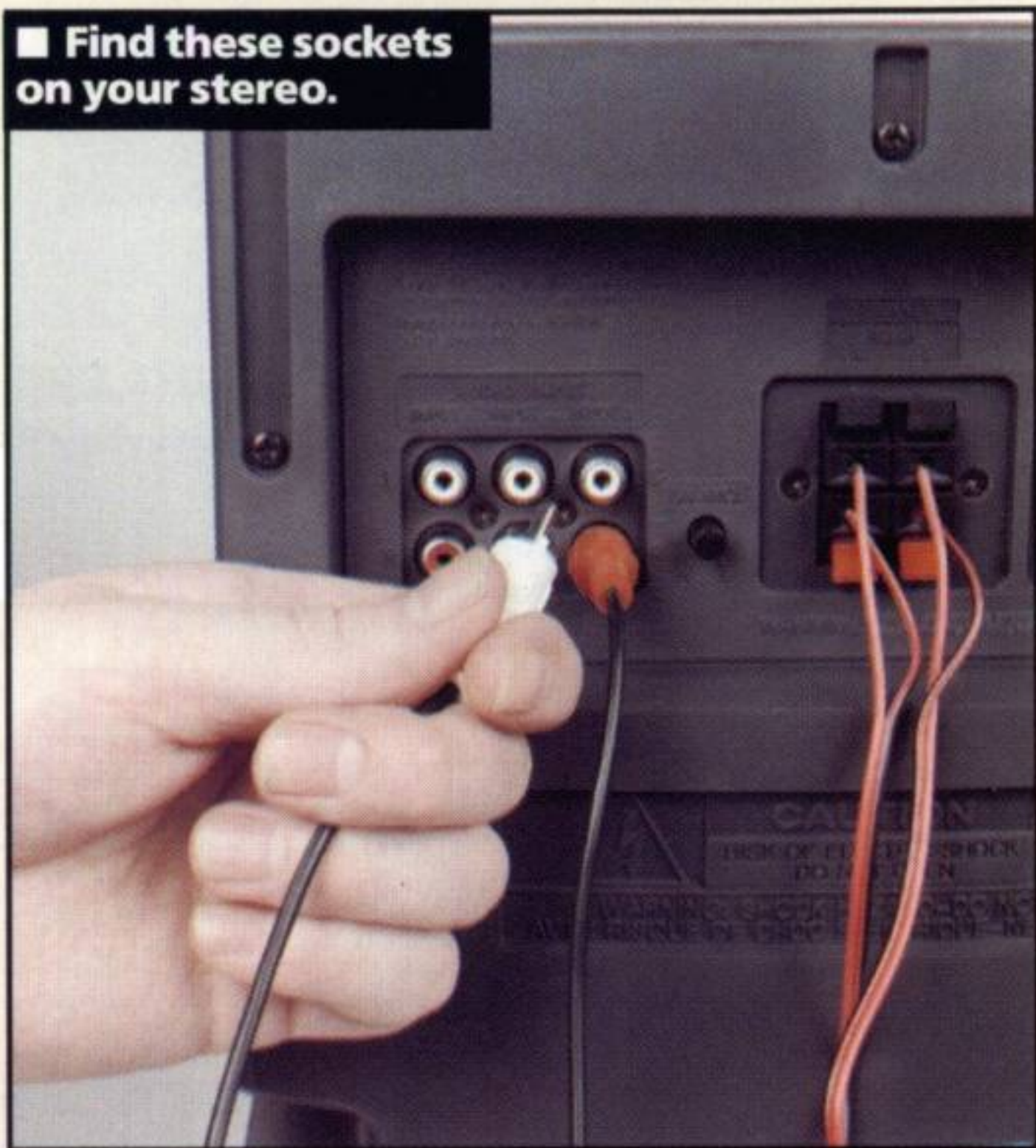
These clever bits of circuitry deal with the complex business of creating and manipulating 3D shapes, making games quicker and more eye-pleasing in the process. We hate to say it, but you're best off going for the most expensive – **3Dfx's 3D Blaster Voodoo 2** (£230) is our recommendation – which will please the guy at Dixon's as he looks forward to his meaty monthly commission.

HOW CAN I MAKE GAMES SOUND BETTER?

■ **Most N64 games come equipped with full digital-quality stereo surround-sound**, while you're probably still filtering these beautiful noises through your telly's pathetic pin-sized loudspeaker. So wander to the games store and swap some money for an **N64 composite lead** (£10), which will enable you to run the soundtrack through your music centre or amplifier, giving you a more satisfying aural experience.

If you've got an over-sized wallet that needs emptying, rush out and buy a nice **Stereo TV** instead, which will give much the same effect. Otherwise, simply plugging a decent pair of **headphones** (£15) into your TV should make your ears a bit happier.

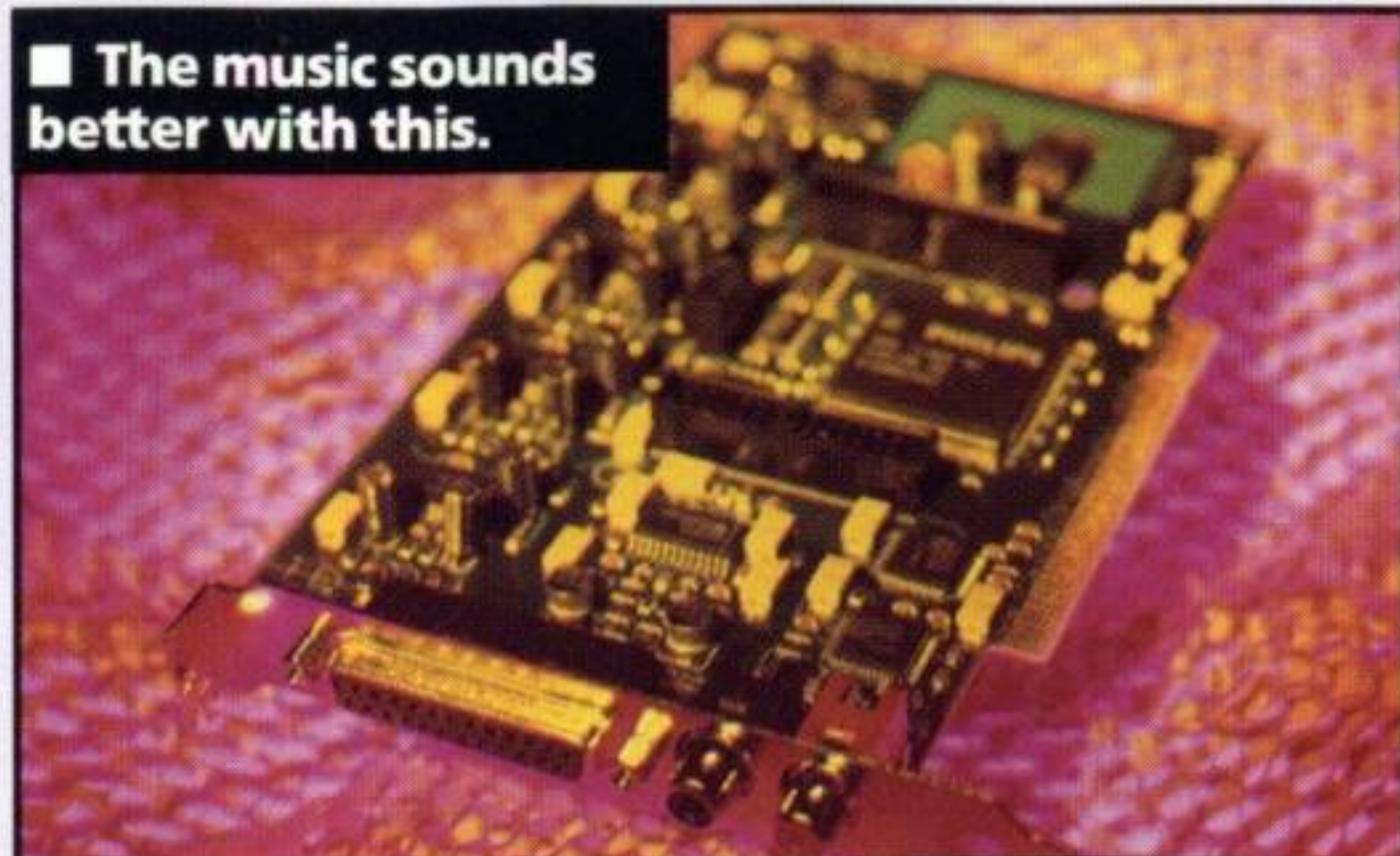
■ **Find these sockets on your stereo.**



■ **Your PlayStation's full-on stereo sounds** will be thankful if you play them through a proper stereo system, so hop over to your games shop and buy a **PlayStation AV Lead** (£10), which will help you to do just that. If it's too wet to go shopping, your **stereo TV** can do a good job of maximising those block-rocking beats – consult the telly's manual and check you've got it running on stereo or surround sound during play.

If you're too stubborn to do even that, again your best bet is to get some **headphones** (£15) for the TV and appreciate the fuller, closer sounds.

■ **The music sounds better with this.**



■ **Hey, DJ, where's the bass? Still listening to games through the PC's death watch beetle internal speaker?** First, you need a **soundcard**, a fancy piece of circuitry that fits in your PC and enables the computer to deal with both proper music and sound effects. The **Sound Blaster Live!** (£150) is our favourite. Then, grab yourself a pair of **PC speakers**. Sadly, speakers costing less than £50 and acting under 15W are not worth the hassle, so get some top-of-the-range **£100 Yamahas** and you'll gain maximum pleasure for your lugholes. Or, once again, invest in a good, £50+ pair of **headphones**.

HOW DO I CONTROL GAMES BETTER?

■ **If you're a big fan of driving games**, invest not in a pair of safe driving shoes or some leather gloves, but in a **steering wheel**.

Wheels are generally of no use for cutesy driving games such as *Mario Kart 64*. But if F1 style games are more your bag and you're desperate for added realism when steering/crashing around the streets of Monaco, most

wheels should work with all your existing games, without giving you any trouble. We recommend the **Formula Race Pro** (Thrustmaster, £70), but it's a good idea to test out a potential purchase before you buy it.

As long as you can tolerate the embarrassment of sitting on the shop floor going "Brrmm", that is.



■ **Make driving games a joy with Thrustmaster.**

■ **Sheepishly hitting** a plastic button with your stumpiest digit doesn't make driving games feel very realistic, so consider a **PlayStation Steering Wheel**.

They work with all driving games, but some are more suited to specific titles. They're rather pricy, too, with the cheaper examples tending to feel like you're driving with a giant Polo.

We recommend the **Formula Race Pro** (Thrustmaster, £70).

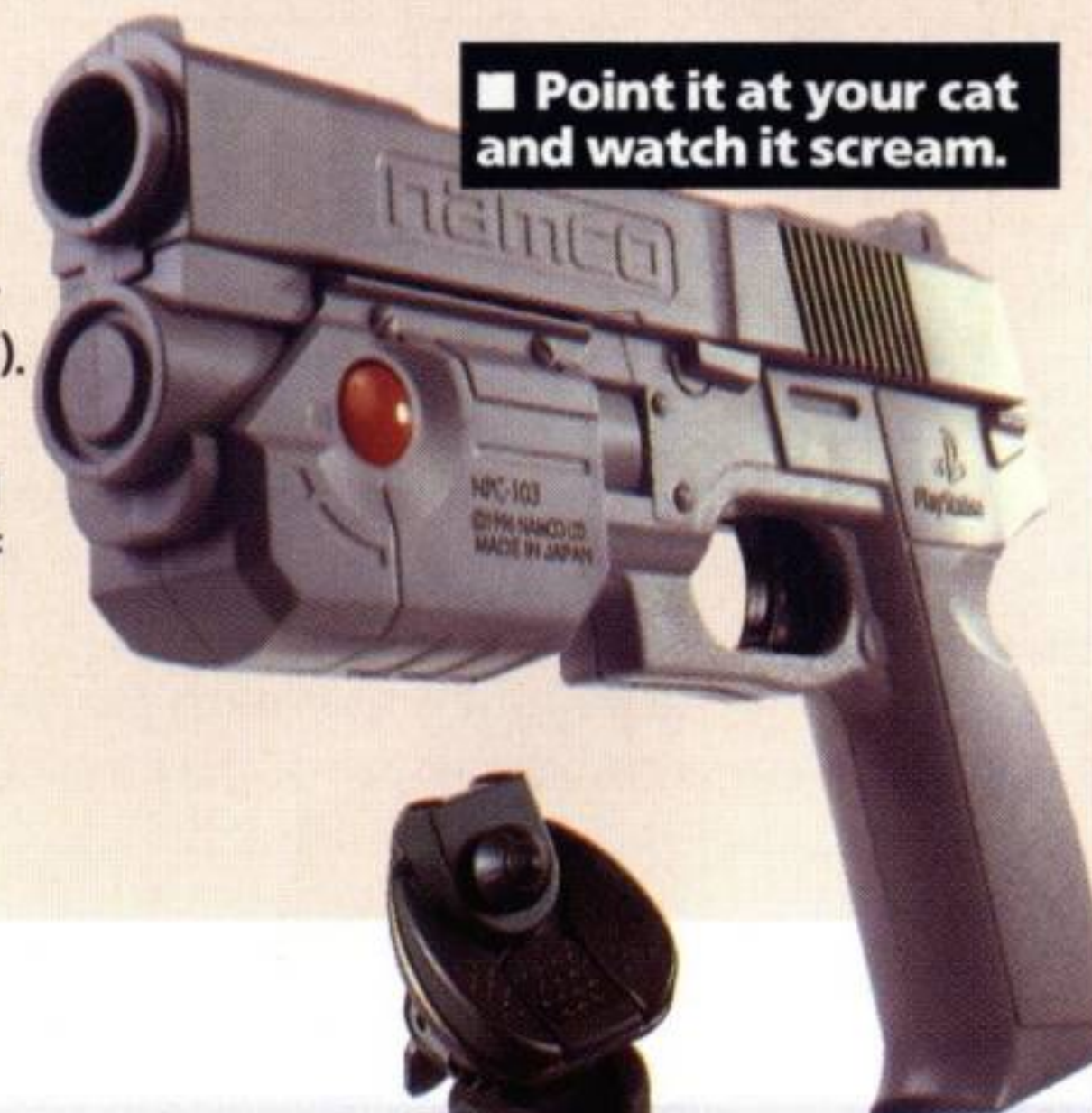


■ **The official Dual Shock pad.**

■ **If you're struggling to sneak Solid Snake around that guard**, you need Sony's **Dual Shock Pad** (£20). Not only does it wriggle about in tandem with big explosions in games, it also comes with two protruding "analogue" joysticks to give you more intricate control over your character. You can control, for example, exactly how fast your character walks.

■ **There are few more enjoyable pursuits** than shooting the intestines out of bad guys with a **light gun** (a revolver-shaped device which you point at the TV).

We rate the original **G-Con 45** (Namco, £30), but bear in mind that you'll need a "Multi-Out" socket on the back of your PlayStation, and a **Multi-Out Converter**. A light gun only works with games designed specifically for it – try Namco's *Point Blank* for maximum fun.



■ **Point it at your cat and watch it scream.**



■ **Our PC steering wheel of choice.**

■ **Because of its better graphics and sound**, PC driving games tend to act more realistically than their console counterparts. So you'll be wanting something to make them even *more* realistic, then. Seatbelt? Not available. Gearstick? Er, no, sorry. **Steering wheel?** Now you're talking.

There are more wheels available for the PC than you'd find in the local car showroom, and each one caters for a different taste and a different style of driving game, so don't just pick one off the shelf willy-nilly. But for all-round gaming, we recommend the **Formula Sprint Wheel** (Thrustmaster, £35). Now all you need are some dice on a string.



■ **Analogue joysticks are officially great.**

■ **Ah, the twisty, phallic world of the analogue joystick.** These help give you more accurate control over your games, and come equipped with so many knobs and buttons that they wouldn't look out of place in Sid's House Of Sexual Accessories.

Make sure you hold a potential purchase in your hands before you buy it, and ensure that the buttons and "shaft" (snigger) don't feel too stiff or loose for your purposes. We recommend the **Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro** (Microsoft, £50).

With this, I win every time. It's amazing!

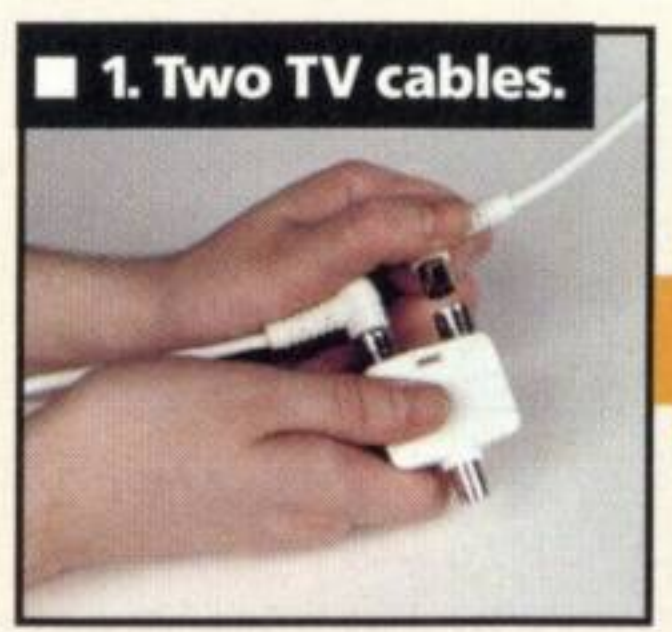


HOW CAN I PLAY WITH MY FRIENDS?

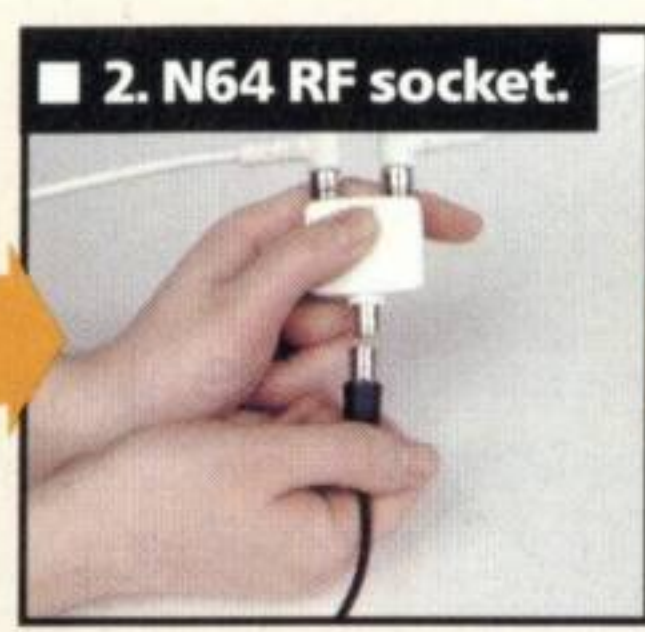


■ Get four for maximum fun.

When you've got friends round, and you've run out of Pringles and Hooch, the time is ripe for a spot of two, three or four-player gaming on the N64. You'll need more controllers, but don't even think about buying any of those revolting third-party monstrosities. Nintendo's official pads (£20) look the best, feel the best, last the longest and come in a range of pleasant colours. And yellow. Make sure to wipe out the edge of the little joystick with a lightly damp cloth every so often, otherwise some ring-around-the-edge-of-the-bath-style gunk may appear in the crevice. And make you feel a bit queasy. Especially if The Maggots come to visit.



■ 1. Two TV cables.



■ 2. N64 RF socket.



■ 3. Plug a lead into each TV.

N64 multi-player games have one disadvantage – as everyone's looking at the same screen, the likelihood of cheating is increased, as a particularly cunning player can sneak a peek at another player's display. Luckily, *Arcade* has the solution. First, you need four televisions. Next, head to Tandy's and buy an aerial split adaptor, which can send the N64's TV signal to more than one telly at once. Then, sit each participant in front of their own TV and, using cardboard or paper, cover up the areas on each screen that show the other



■ 4. Apply paper.

players' displays. A cheat-free multi-player game is now yours, although if someone uses chloroform to their advantage, don't come crying to us.



■ The link cable goes here.

The main problem with two-player games is that your opponent can momentarily focus their eyes on your half of the display and see what you're doing. And your view of the screen is halved. There is a solution – Sony's link-up cable (£8) is a brilliant add-on for PlayStation that's been somewhat ignored since its release. You need two PlayStations, two TVs and two copies of a compatible game to put in them (Codemaster's *TOCA 2* is a good example), but the benefit is that each player can have their own full-screen display, and you can't see what the other player is doing. Great stuff.

Multi-player games are all the rage, but ask the PlayStation to deal with four-player action using its two controller ports and it'll blush deep red and hide in the corner. Luckily, help is at hand in the form of Sony's oft-neglected Multi-Tap (£25).

It's a boomerang-shaped piece of plastic that fits into your controller socket and enables you to plug up to four controllers into one port for games that support it. And – yes! – with two Multi-Taps you can have eight-player games. Not many titles cater for this kind of excess (Codemaster's *Micro Machines v3* being a rare exception) and if you want to experience the unique smell that comes from squeezing eight people around a PlayStation, then good luck to you.



■ How to amuse three friends.

So, you want to do the multi-player thing on your PC without sending your phone bill through the roof with Internet charges or fiddling around with scary things like local area networks and Ethernet cards? You're in luck, then.

As long as you're happy to just play head-to-head with one other player (and you either have two PCs or an obliging mate who's happy to lug his PC over to your house), it can be done with a null modem cable (£10) available from any computer shop worth its salt. Plug one end into your PC, the other end into a second PC, and Bob's almost your uncle. At least, he will be once you've installed *Direct Cable Connection* from *Windows Setup*. Having problems with that? Study *Windows Help*, or go to <http://php.indiana.edu/~jrrricha/dcc1.html> – there's plenty of help there. Just be aware that not all games will let you play via a null modem, and it's not the sort of thing that typically gets pointed out on game packaging.

If you're already on-line, why not try gaming on the Net? Services such as *Wireplay* (<http://www.wireplay.co.uk/>) are the easiest way to get started, and you can play whenever you want, rather than just on the rare days your friends are speaking to you.



■ Plug this into the serial port on your PC.

HOW CAN I CHEAT?

Most games come with built-in cheats that you can activate with a few simple button-presses. But for the true Maradonas of the world, that's just not enough. Such people spend all their hard-earned pocket money on a cheat cartridge, which fits on to the N64 and opens up a whole new world of skulduggery via the entering of alphabetical "passwords" that come with the unit.

If you buy the *Action Replay Pro* (Datel, £40), you can even create your own personalised cheats, so it's finally possible to chop off Mario's ears and make him dance the Charleston with a monkey.

■ Simply plugs into your N64.



But can cheats ever prosper?

If you're tired of following the exhaustive walkthroughs in our Kick Ass tips section, and thinking of turning to the Dark Side, then consider getting yourself a cheat cartridge. These slot into your PlayStation and enable you to cheat in most games by tapping in alphanumerical codes.

You can find these on the Internet or printed in magazines (except ours – we're far too noble). Recently, Datel has come up with the *Action Replay Pro* (£40), which can help you search for your own cheats – if you're patient. You can even change *Tomb Raider III* to make Lara appear with no clothes on. "Hubba!"



Because there are no cheat cartridges for the PC, games usually come with very comprehensive built-in cheats. Often, tapping in a special password on the keyboard will bring up a small window that enables you to access a plethora of cheat codes. You'll find these passwords in *Kick Ass*, starting on page 84 this issue, or on the Internet (try <http://pc.ign.com/>).

Failing that, you'll need to delve into the murky world of tampering with the game's code. Some magazines (such as our sister mag, *PC Gamer*), very occasionally publish ways of cheating by altering the game files on your hard disk. It's laborious, hit-and-miss and not really worth the hassle – you might as well just breathe in deeply and fight through the game without any help. You'll feel better, too.

■ Enter the disturbing world of type-in cheat codes.

PC POWERSLIDE

■ You need to enter the following codes while playing *Powerslide*. You'll need to hold Alt as you type. The codes don't have to be capitalised.

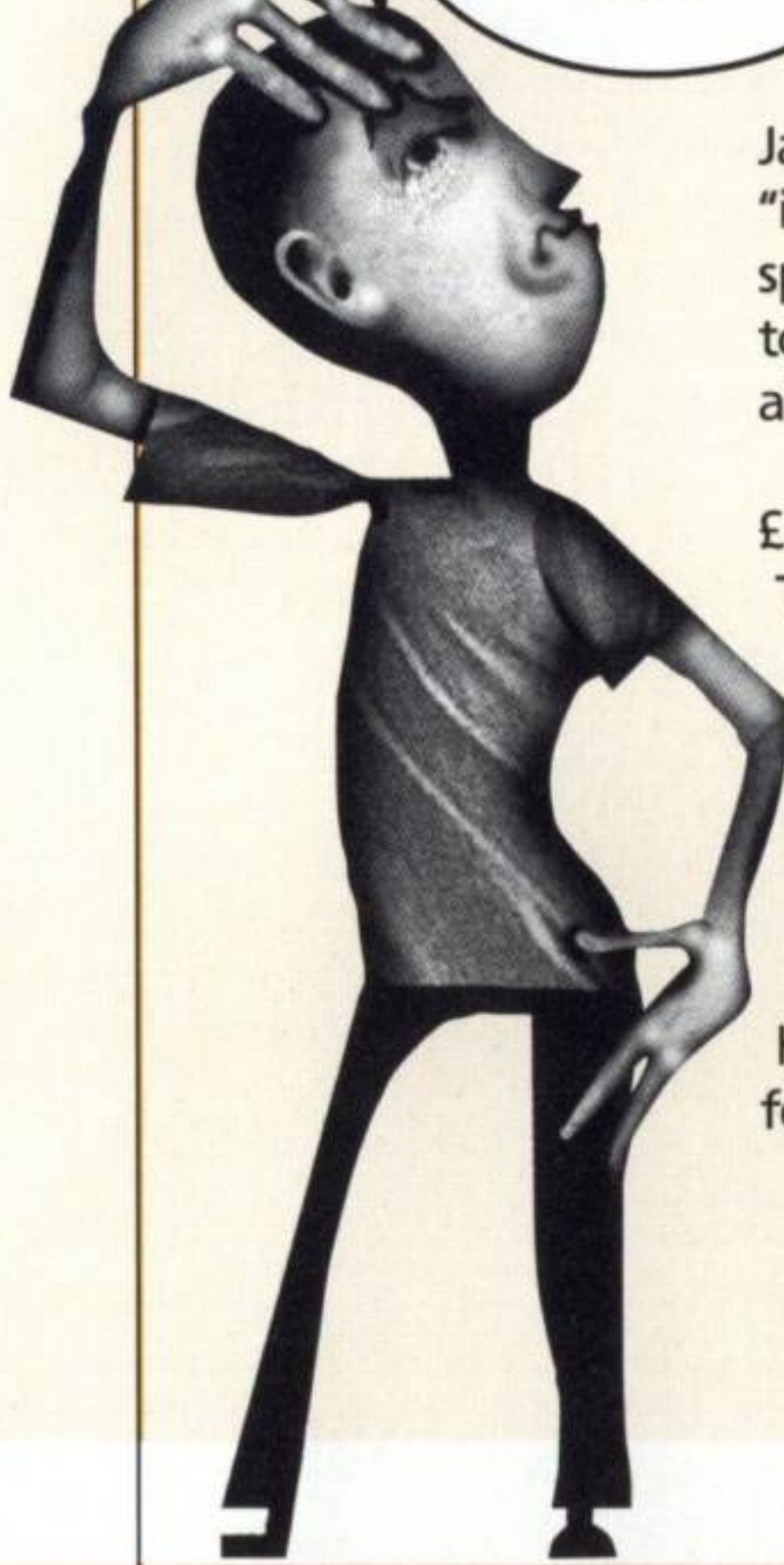
BOMB Fires a bouncy grenade that detonates after three seconds. On detonation the grenade creates a blast that affects nearby racers

BURN Fires a ball of fire directly from the front of your car and explodes on impact

LAUNCH Forms an out-of-body experience. Use the m...

HOW DO I PLAY FOREIGN GAMES?

How can I play the best games first?

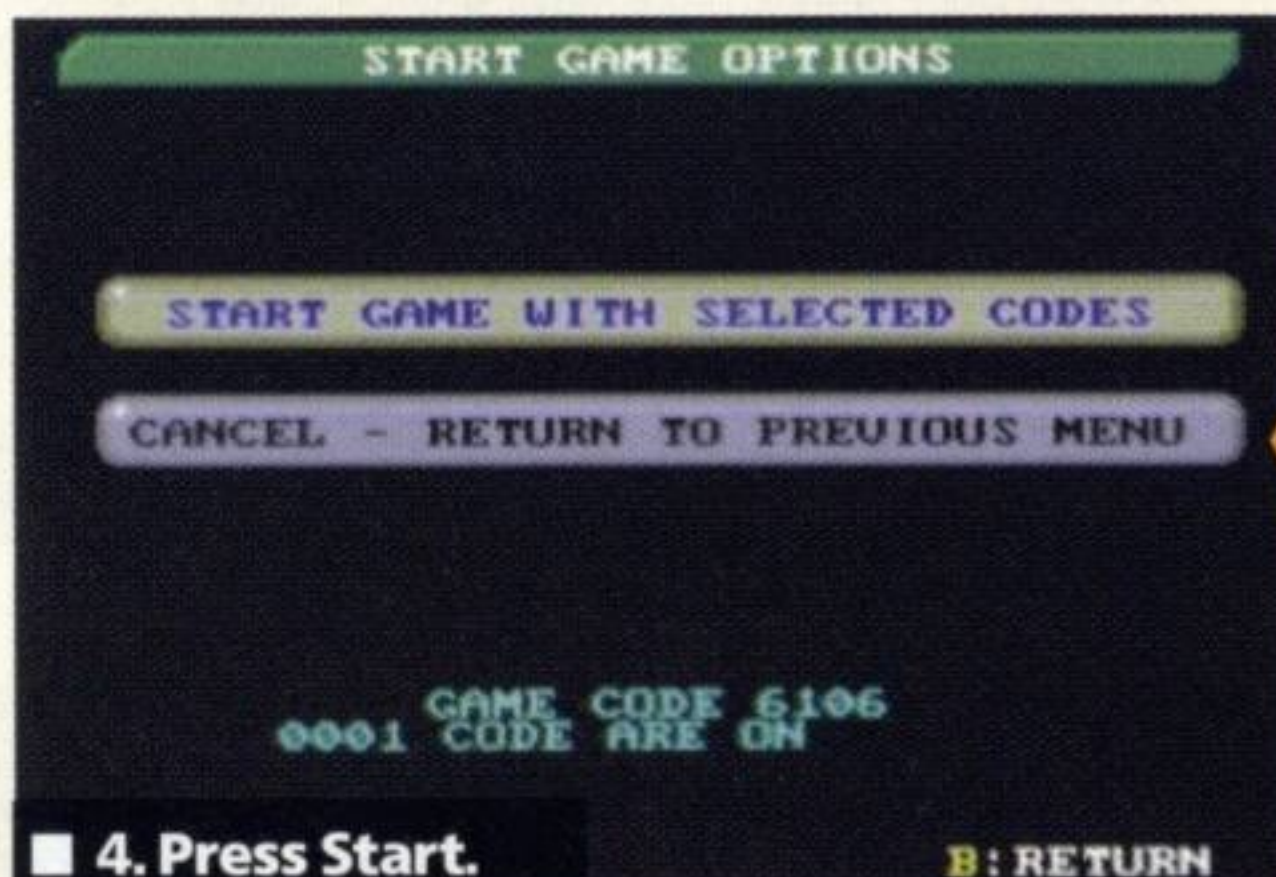


Just as America will be swooning over the next *Star Wars* films months before we get a sniff, so games are released months earlier in Japan and the US than over here. These "import" games are sold in the UK by specialist games shops, but you won't be able to play them on your UK console without the aid of a special adaptor. We recommend an N64 Passport (Visions, £30) which plugs into the top of your N64. The catch is that as soon as game developers become aware of a new converter cart, such as this one, they design new games to be incompatible with it, leaving you with no choice but to buy an updated cart. So it's your choice – is the pleasure of playing games before most other UK gamers get hold of them worth coughing up £30 every few months for a new adaptor?

1. insert UK cart.



2. Foreign cart in the top.



4. Press Start.



3. Choose code.

1. Put blu-tac on circular button.



2. Insert UK disc, turn your PSX on, when it spins fast, swap discs over.



4. When it speeds up, put the foreign disc in.



3. It'll slow down, speed up, then slow down again. Put the UK disc back in.

Your PlayStation is designed to only play PAL (the UK TV standard) games, but games are frequently released earlier on the NTSC format in territories like the USA and Japan and then sold as "imports" in the UK. You can often play these games on the PlayStation using the "Disc Swap" method. It's tricky to explain how, and even trickier to pull off, but let's have a go. You'll need: 1) the foreign disc; 2) any UK game disc; 3) some Blu-Tac. Got 'em? Okay. First, we recommend that you watch and listen to the PlayStation loading a few UK games, to recognise when the CD motor is spinning the disc at the sedate single-speed and when it spins at the faster double-speed. Now, open the PlayStation's lid and look for a small "button" with a hole in the middle – it's towards the back-right. Stick Blu-Tac on it to press it down, as this will trick the PlayStation into thinking the lid is closed. Then insert a UK CD and turn

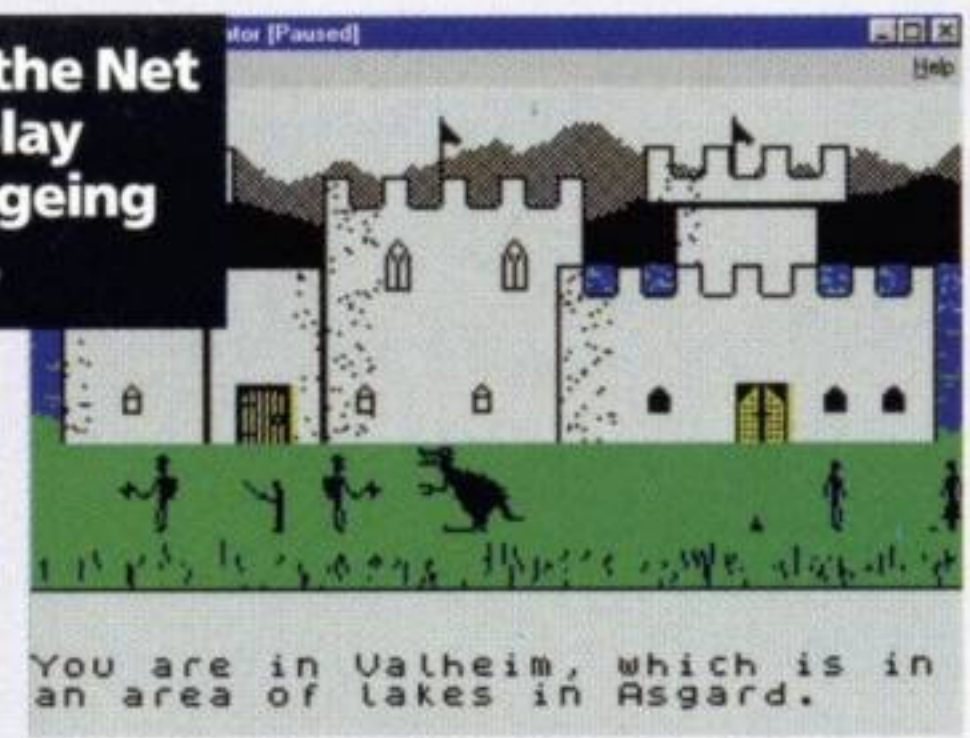
the PlayStation on. As the motor starts spinning at double-speed, take out the CD and quickly replace it with the foreign game. At this point the black PlayStation screen should appear. The motor should slow down, speed back up to double-speed, then slow down again. Now take out the foreign CD and put the UK CD back in. Wait until the motor speeds up again, then replace the foreign CD, which should load normally. Just like that. If you can't get this to work, the last resort is to get your PlayStation "chipped" (the insertion of a chip that enables your machine to play games of any nationality). Flick through any PlayStation mag and you'll find adverts from companies willing to carry out this procedure, but be warned: it invalidates your warranty and if your PlayStation breaks, Sony won't touch it with a bargepole. We don't recommend doing this at all, but it's an option.

Old games could be the key to my plans.



If you're bored with the games that you find for the PC on the shelves of Electronics Boutique, you can get access to games designed for every machine that gaming history has thrown up. Hook yourself up to the Internet or a Bulletin Board, or

make friends with a Public Domain library (a company that advertises in PC magazines and can supply you with games for the price of a blank floppy disc), and you can gain access to a whole range of emulators. These are programs that make your PC act like



another, older computer or console, enabling you to play all their games from the relative comfort of your PC's monitor. Visit Pete's Computer & Video Game Page (<http://www.netaxis.com/petebuilt/videogames/emulate.html>) or any of the other MAME-based sites. But don't blame us if the rozzers come knocking – playing games you've downloaded from the Net is probably (no one's entirely sure yet) illegal.

Blag some emulation software for your PC and you can play any game designed for any system. But it might be illegal...

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

■ **How can I turn my Nintendo 64 into a Game Boy?** Here's where the world of N64 add-ons gets a little bit crazy. Slot this **Game Boy Emulator** (Datel, £40) into a controller and your 64-bit wonderconsole will sigh under its breath and pretend to "be" Nintendo's little handheld buddy.

The emulator invisibly converts the code on any Game Boy cartridge into a format that the N64 can understand, enabling you to insert and play any Game Boy game without having to stare at a screen the size of a matchbox. The sound quality is awful, but most games look identical to their Game Boy counterparts and work like a dream. As a bonus, the emulator comes with a host of built-in cheats for every Game Boy game under the sun. But wouldn't it work out cheaper just to buy a Game Boy? The answer is: yes, it probably would.



■ You'll need to slot an N64 game in the back.

WHAT EXTRA GIZMOS CAN I BUY?

■ **Only Nintendo could make a success of a** small piece of plastic which wobbles in your hand like an excited gerbil. Practically every new game takes advantage of **Nintendo's Rumble Pak** (£15), which plugs into your controller and vibrates when there's an explosion in a game, as well as occasionally serving a useful purpose – in *Legend of Zelda*, for example, the rumbling can help you to detect secret areas.

It's best – dare we say it – to avoid Nintendo's official, battery-guzzling Pak, and head for the **Shockwave** (Datel, £25), a self-charging model which also acts as a memory card, avoiding the need to swap tediously between the Rumble Pak and Controller Pak during a game.



■ Slots on to the back of your PlayStation. Easy.

■ **How can I watch movies on my PlayStation?** The **PlayStation Movie Card** is a little box that enables your machine to play Video CDs (VCD, aka normal Compact Discs with a movie on instead of *Crash Bandicoot* or the lovely *B*Witched*). It's not difficult – simply plug it into the I/O port on the back of the PlayStation (the long thin slot that looks like a set of metallic teeth), insert a VCD and turn on.

If you decide to buy a Movie Card from an importer, you should be able to buy plenty of discs from them too, but the trouble is that most Hollywood movies need to be squeezed annoyingly on to two discs. By the way, VCDs are *not* the same as DVDs, which are a different format that can easily hold a whole movie – and much, much more – on a single disc.

■ **Real-time strategy titles such as *Command & Conquer*** can never be persuaded to get on with the PlayStation's normal controller, so you'll undoubtedly find a **Sony Mouse** (Sony, £25) helpful.

If you've never seen a mouse, it's a small rubber ball in a plastic body. You move it around the table to guide your troops (or whatever) around the screen. PC owners swear by (and occasionally at) them.



■ If you like strategy games, you'll love this.

The Internet isn't rubbish after all!



■ Click to download great free stuff.

■ **How do I try out all the best games for free?** One of the beauties of owning a PC is that you can get your hands on a wealth of free games. If you point your Internet browser at a search engine (something like Yahoo! at <http://www.yahoo.com/>) and type in "freeware" or "shareware", you'll gain access to whole libraries of completely free games and programs – although you might need to pay a small fee to keep them after you've used them for a while. One of the

best sites is at <http://www.freewarefiles.com/>, which also links to many other freeware sites. Also, head to an on-line magazine (such as IGN at <http://pc.ign.com/>) and you'll be able to download fully-functioning demos of the latest games, for *gratis*. As well as that, you can use Yahoo! to find the site of your favourite games publisher where you'll find plenty of free stuff – sometimes even complete games. Ain't life grand?



■ Installing a CD drive: Pull out, push in. Simple.



■ **If you've been playing a game** that features video snippets between levels, you might have wondered why they seem to be displayed with such annoying jerkiness. It's all the fault of your embarrassingly slow **CD drive**. A quicker CD drive is easy to find and affordable; eight-speed or above should be fine. Those new-fangled DVD drives, which can handle three squillion times more information, are still a little too expensive to consider at the moment.



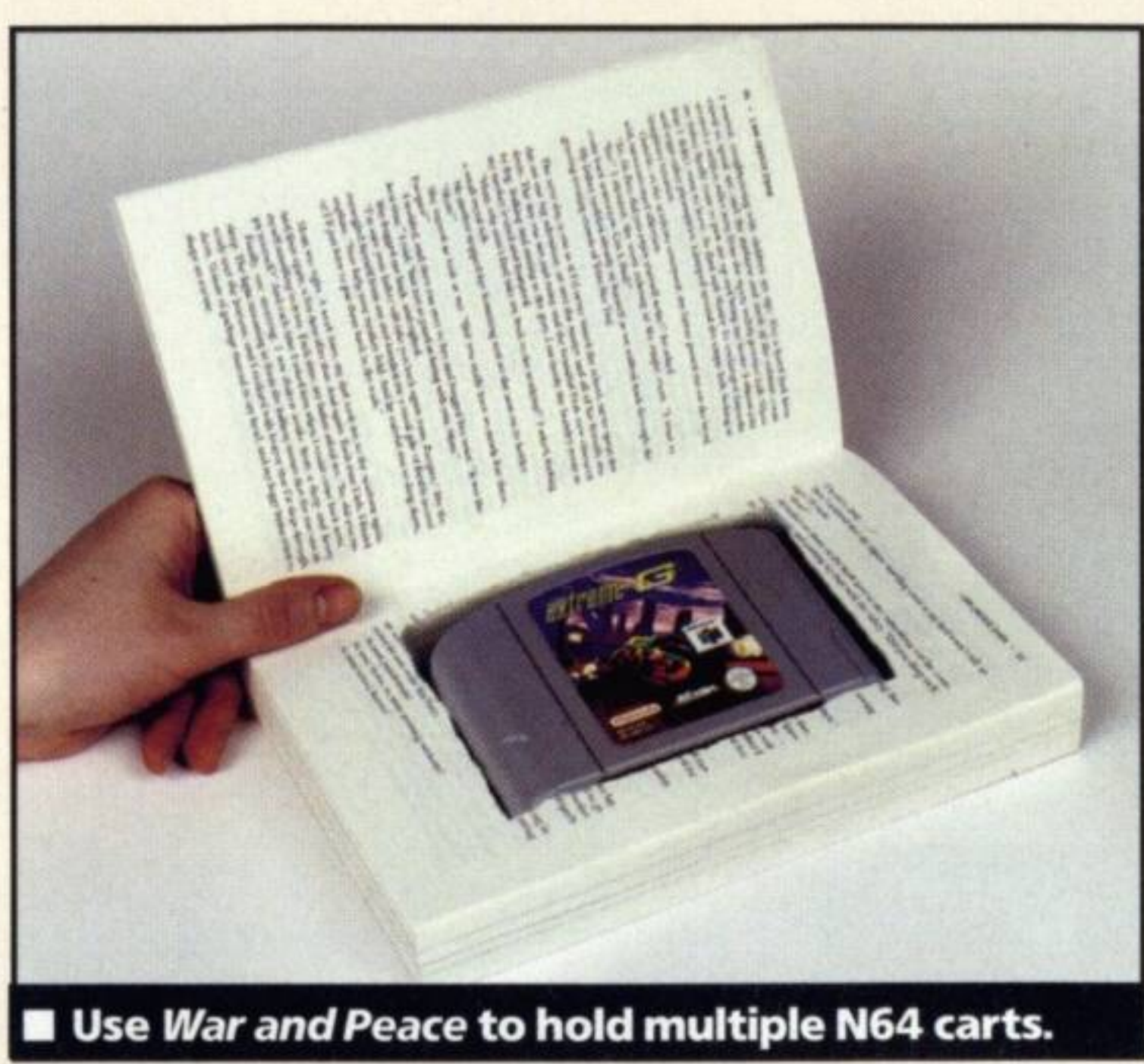
■ Nintendo's Pak has the best feel, but it eats up batteries horribly quickly.

"FUNNY" STUFF

Why didn't I think of this?



■ **How do I replace the crappy N64 game boxes?** The boxes that N64 cartridges come in are rubbish, aren't they? So why not try this fail-safe method of keeping your games neat and tidy. Simply take any normal book (300 pages, minimum) and use a sharp knife or decent saw to cut a hole in the pages. You know, like in the movies. Not only does this provide a snug home for your favourite Nintendo game, it's also one in the eye for spoilsports who insist you turn off the N64 and pick up a good book. No? Okay, it's your loss.



■ Use *War and Peace* to hold multiple N64 carts.

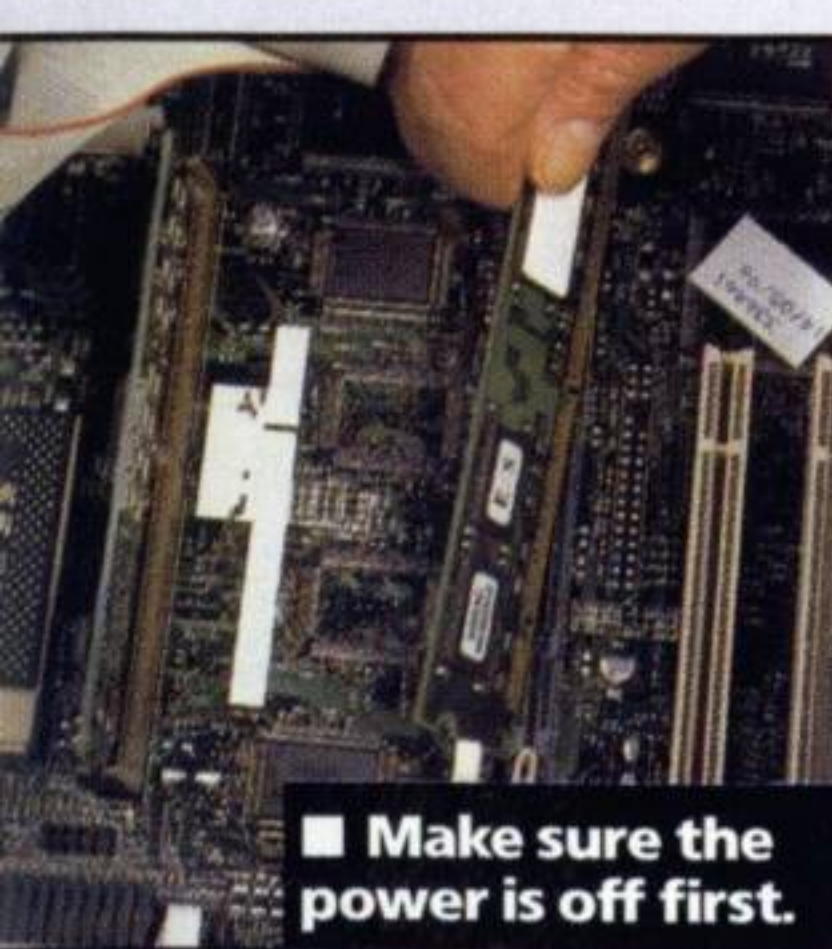
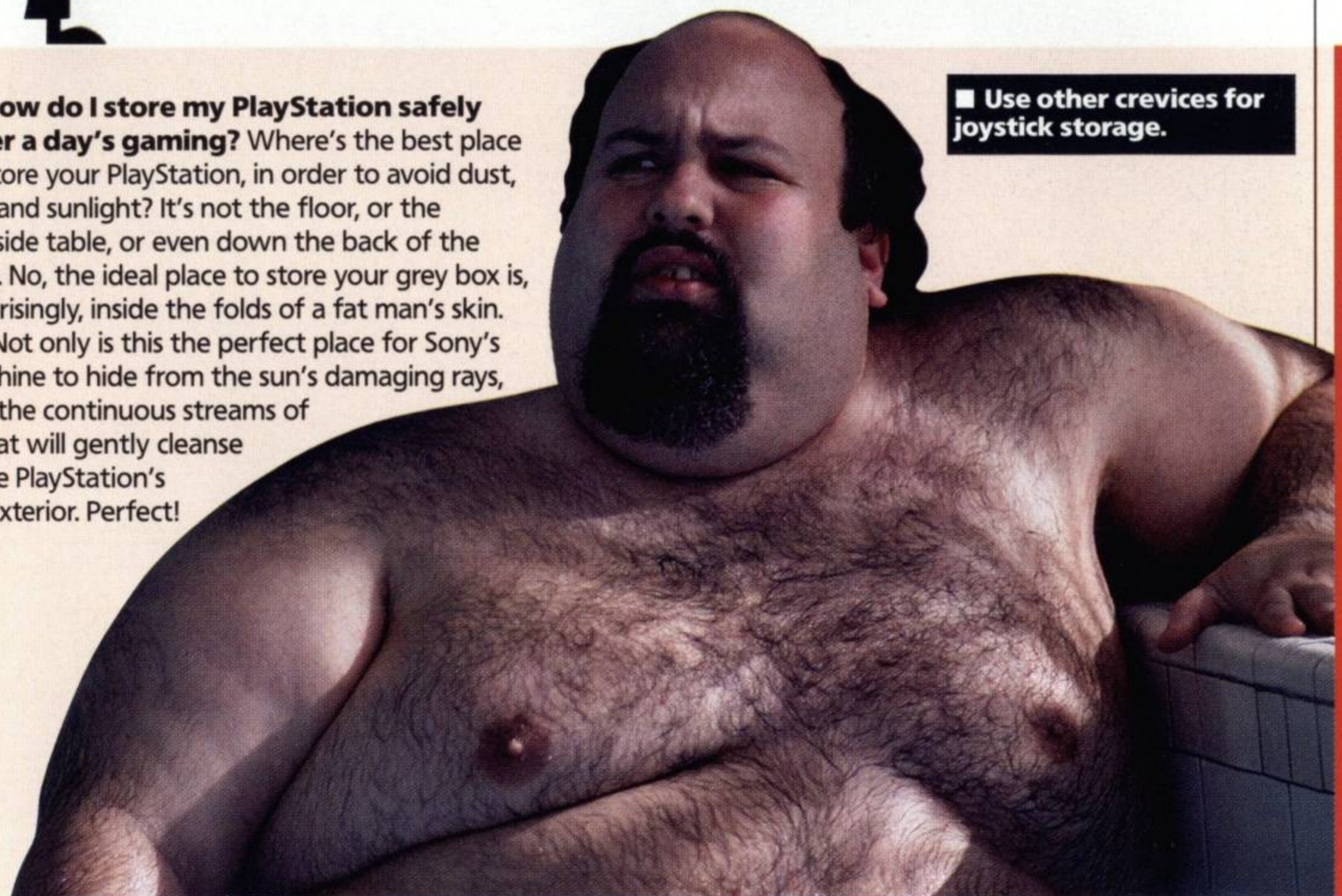
A mouse on my desk? Yoinks!

If you like real time strategy games then you need a mouse. PC gamers swear by (and occasionally at) them.



■ **How do I store my PlayStation safely after a day's gaming?** Where's the best place to store your PlayStation, in order to avoid dust, grit and sunlight? It's not the floor, or the bedside table, or even down the back of the sofa. No, the ideal place to store your grey box is, surprisingly, inside the folds of a fat man's skin. Not only is this the perfect place for Sony's machine to hide from the sun's damaging rays, but the continuous streams of sweat will gently cleanse the PlayStation's exterior. Perfect!

■ Use other crevices for joystick storage.



■ Make sure the power is off first.

■ **If your PC is crying out for a present, memory (RAM)** is the first thing you should be thinking of. The less memory you have, the slower a game will run, so check the System Performance of the Control Panel Settings to see how much you've got. With memory prices dropping all the time, you've got no excuse for anything less than 64Mb of the good stuff.



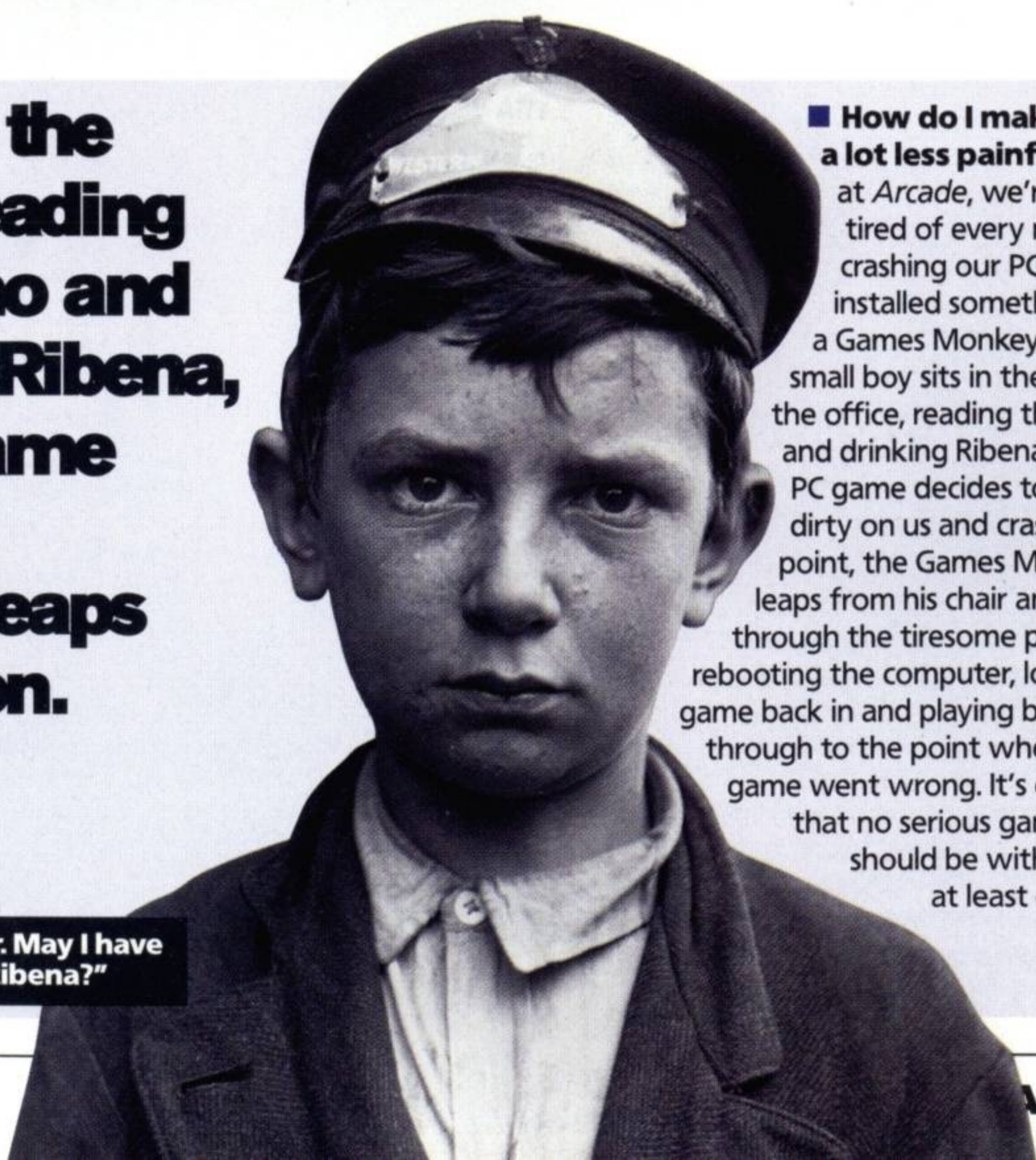
■ Bzzzztt! "Ow!" We warned you.

■ **The speediness of your PC** is dictated by its processor, and Intel's Pentium processor is the industry standard. Check the number that appears after the word "Pentium" – a "II" or a number larger than 200 will be okay for the current generation of titles. Haven't got either of those? It's shopping day, then.

He sits in the corner, reading *The Beano* and drinking Ribena, until a game crashes. Then he leaps into action.

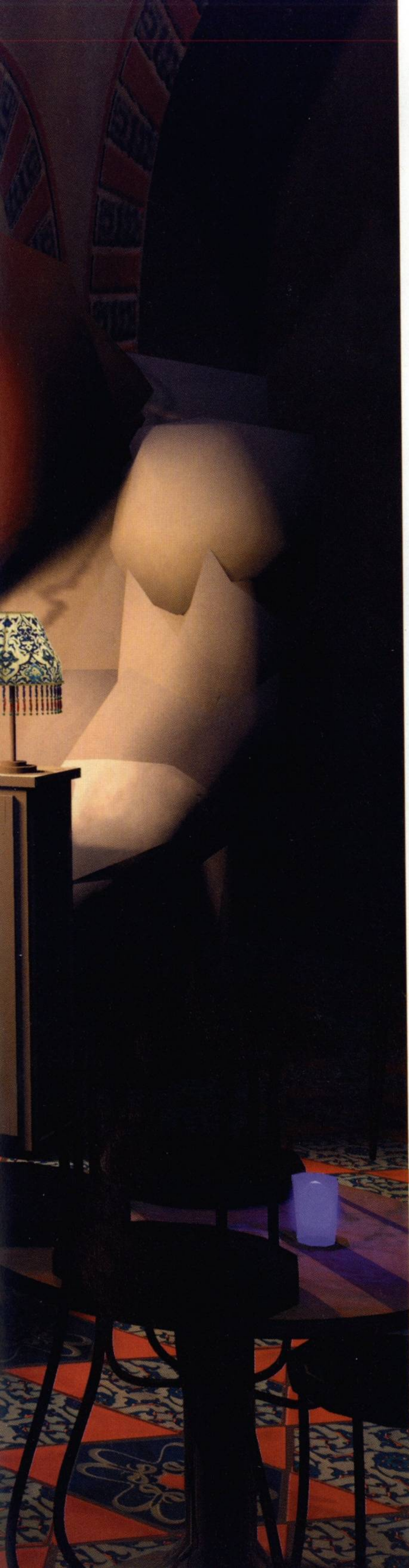
■ **How do I make a crash a lot less painful?** Here at *Arcade*, we're rather tired of every new game crashing our PC, so we've installed something called a Games Monkey™. This small boy sits in the corner of the office, reading the *Beano* and drinking Ribena, until a PC game decides to do the dirty on us and crash. At this point, the Games Monkey leaps from his chair and goes through the tiresome process of rebooting the computer, loading the game back in and playing back through to the point where the game went wrong. It's our belief that no serious gamer should be without at least one.

■ "Please, Sir. May I have some more Ribena?"





■ "Good evening, and welcome one and all to *Grim Fandango*. This evening's presentation will feature some reasons for buying *Grim Fandango* forthwith, confessions from LucasArts' Mr Tim Schafer followed by some regrettably inane rambling. Then we move to the highlight of the performance: how to escape to the Ninth Underworld without cheating. Should this not be sufficient for your needs, we also tell you exactly how to cheat. Bon appetit."



GRIM AND BEAR IT

STORY BY JONATHAN DAVIES



IT'S ONE OF GAMING'S BEST KEPT, HILARIOUS, AGONISING, TOE-CURLINGLY DIFFICULT SECRETS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A MASOCHIST TO PLAY GRIM FANDANGO. BUT IT HELPS.

On a rooftop high above a busy city, a figure stands unseen. He wears an anonymous blue-grey suit – the same blue-grey suit no doubt worn by hundreds of those who fill the streets below, unaware of the events unfolding above their heads. In fact, there's nothing remarkable about this figure at all.

Nothing, that is, except that he has no skin.
Or muscles.
Or hair.
Or eyes.
Or tummy button.

But he has teeth, which remain fixed in a rictal grin as his skeletal hand reaches into a tangle of twigs and rubbish lying in a ventilation outlet and gently scoops up two pigeon eggs.

"You must come with me, young ones," he whispers, with just a trace of a Central American accent, "for I am the Grim Reaper."

Later, the same figure is standing beside a table in a smoky club. Now he's wearing black trousers and a white dinner jacket, like Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*. Over a haze of freeform jazz he's talking to a group of beatniks in berets.

"Can I borrow this book?" he rasps, indicating with a bony finger a copy of *Labour*

Organisation and Revolt Made Easy lying in a pool of absinthe.

"Why?" asks its owner. "So you can freak on our plans for organising labour and go rat us out to your pal, Chief Bogen?"

"Hey, I'm just looking for something to read on the can, all right?"

"No dice, Cumberbund."

But the beatnik's words are drowned out by a louder voice: "Arse," it says. "ARRRRSE." Hang on. That's *your* voice. And then before you know it your finger has jumped out and stabbed the quit button in frustration. An options screen appears, and then the Windows 95 desktop, and then everything goes black. *Grim Fandango's* Blue Casket puzzle has claimed another victim.

And you love every minute of it.

Grim Fandango is the latest graphic adventure from LucasArts, and is therefore, almost by default, The Greatest of All Adventure Games. Like *The Curse of Monkey Island* before it, and a whole line of LucasArts games before that, it's had PCs glowing eerily into the small hours in bedrooms, studies and offices around the globe. But why?

It's not the voluptuous graphics that make *Grim Fandango* so engrossing, although they certainly help. By turning all the characters into 3D models, dropping them into rendered

GRIM AND BEAR IT



Following a fine Lucasarts tradition

Grim Fandango is the latest in a line of lovingly-crafted graphic adventure epics.



Adventure games have come a long way. Certainly they never used to be as sophisticated as *Grim Fandango*.

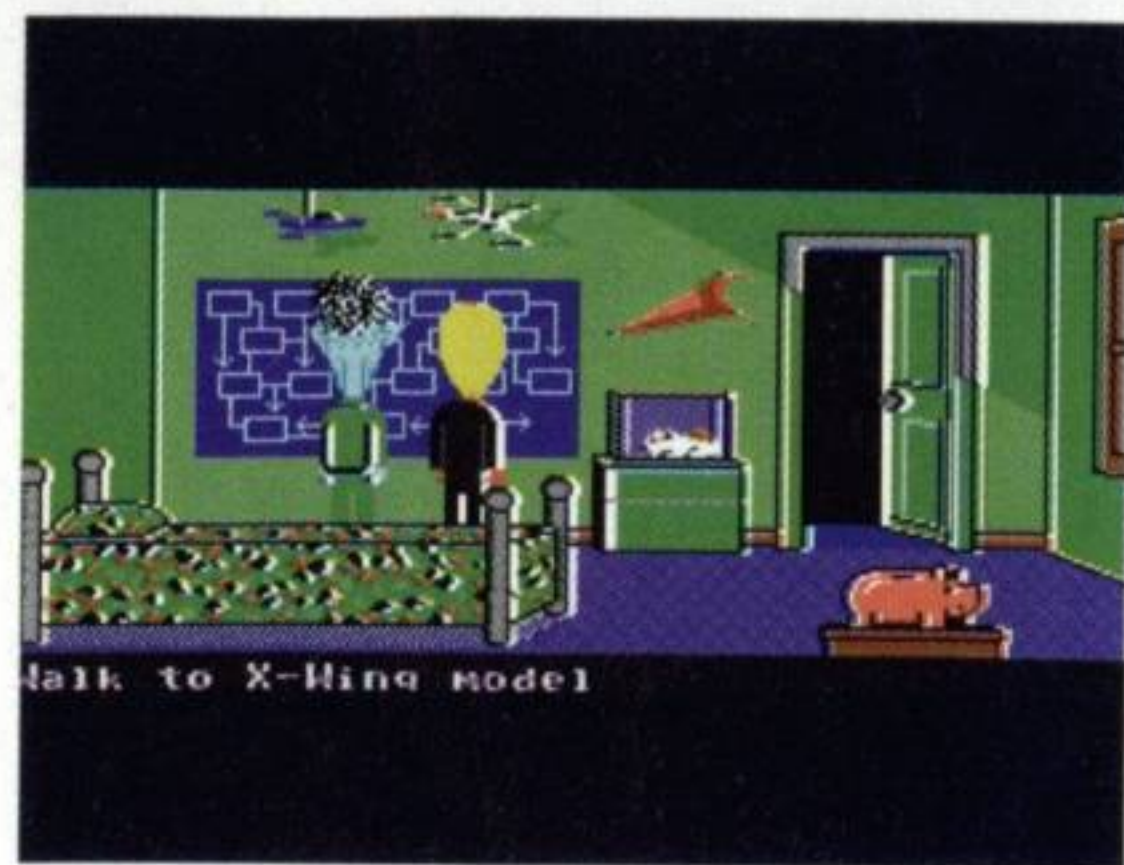
In the 1970s, you'd type "HIT BABOON WITH HOCKEY STICK" into your VDU. That wouldn't work, so you'd try "USE HOCKEY STICK ON BABOON". Then "ATTACK BABOON

WITH HOCKEY STICK". Then you'd give up and do some more work on your 10 PRINT "JIM IS A GIT" 20 GOTO 10 program. Now you just rummage through your inventory 'til you find the hockey stick, walk up to the baboon and press the "Use" key.

Looking through the LucasArts back catalogue you can see how this evolution came about. The company's first adventures simply listed any applicable words on the screen, so there'd be no doubt. You'd click on "Use" and then on "Hockey Stick", and then on the unfortunate baboon. By the time of *Full Throttle* in 1994, words had been done away with. As had baboons. Actually, there never were any baboons. But *Full Throttle* made up for this with a cursor that

changed as you moved it around the screen, and served to perform actions and handle your inventory with no need for words at all. Now, with *Grim Fandango*, even the cursor has gone the way of the baboons. Yet you can still perform the complex operations necessary to crack those puzzles.

Weirdly, while adventure games have been getting more like action games, action games have been getting more like adventure games. The way you walk up to a skeleton and press the "Use" key to start a conversation in *Grim Fandango*, for example, is identical to the way you walk up to a scientist and press the "Use" key to start a conversation in *Half-Life*. There's probably some universal truth in there somewhere.



Maniac Mansion (1987)

A few players of *Maniac Mansion* are likely to survive in nursing homes and bingo halls. But it's unlikely they'll remember much of Lucas's first adventure game, an entertaining tale set in a house plagued by tentacles. Perhaps a viewing of the spin-off TV series would jog their memories.



backgrounds and positioning the camera to give the most cinematic view of the action, LucasArts has once again rewritten the graphic adventure rule book. And done it with a blend of film noir, Art Deco design and Latin American flair that has you walking from screen to screen not because you need to, but because it looks good. You can almost taste the guacamole. Pretty soon, however, you start to take all this for granted. This is the way graphic adventures should be, surely. (By the way, why do people still say "graphic adventure"? No-one's written a text-only adventure for 15 years. It's like saying "horseless carriage", or "talking picture". Anyway. I digress.)

And it's not *Grim Fandango's* novel user interface, which tosses the whole notion of point-and-click into the bin, that keeps you coming back for more. You just walk around with the joystick, your character automatically "looking" at anything interesting. It's so obvious you wonder why no-one's thought of it before. Apart from the French, who did it years ago with *Alone in the Dark* and *Little Big Adventure*. Except now you can walk around with the joystick and do all the brilliant stuff you can only do in LucasArts adventures.

It looks so good you can almost taste the guacamole

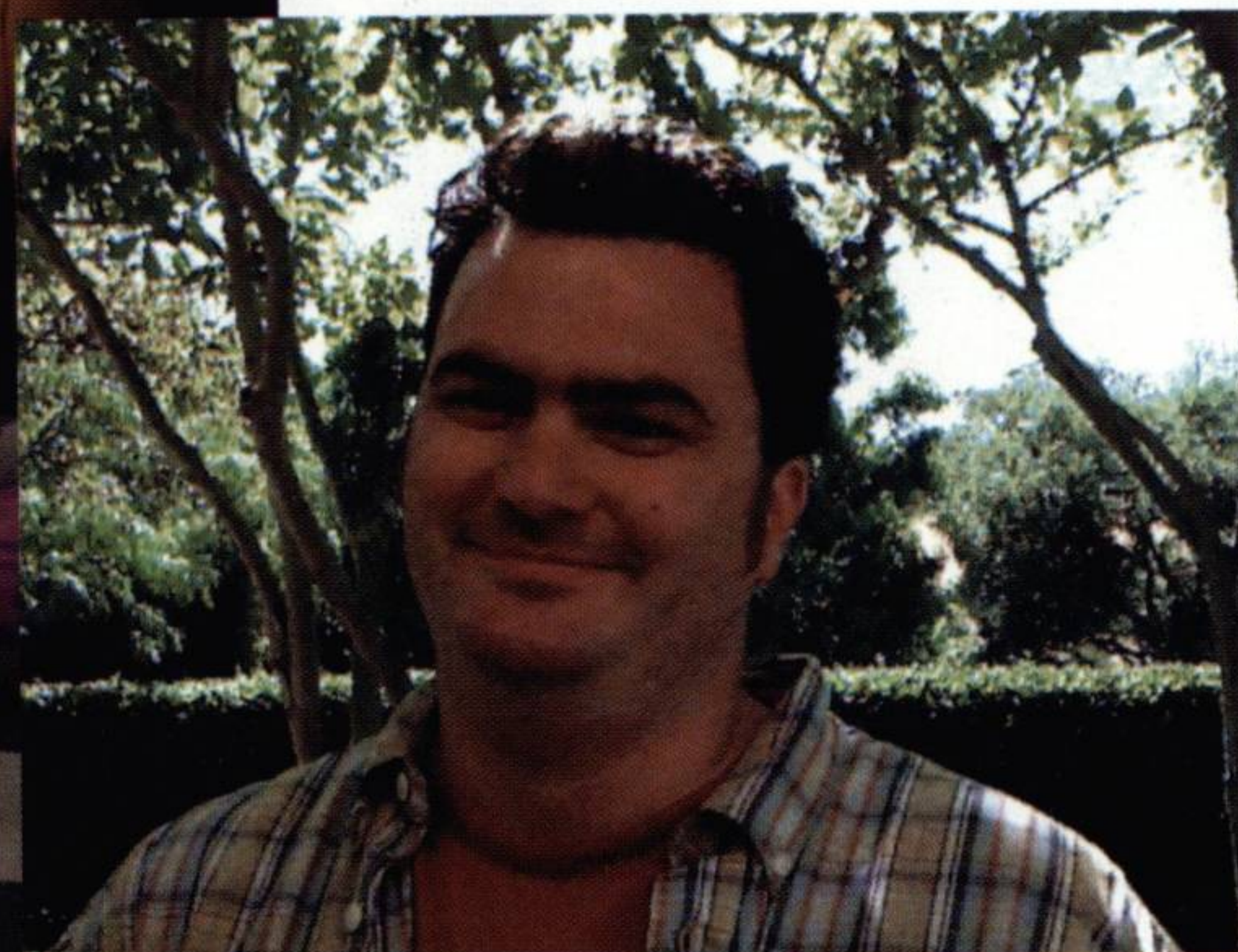
Nor is it the dialogue, though it naturally sparkles with the polish you'd expect from the company that brought us *Monkey Island*, *Full Throttle* and *Sam & Max* – and, for that matter, *Star Wars*. The cast is as three-dimensional as the graphics; from impassioned revolutionary leader Salvador Limones ("Precisamente, amigo. Our revolution can spread now across the land,

carried on the shimmering wings of justice...") to hep poet Olivia ("The flesh dream is over, Daddy!"). And the wisecracks come as fast as they did in *Monkey Island*, albeit rather more darkly. ("Why is it," asks Lupe the casino receptionist, "that all the people who don't go home are the same people who just love to gamble?" "Well," sighs our hero Manny, "I guess when you've got nothing to go home to, you've got nothing to lose.") But, again, you come to expect all this after a while. You forget that in most other adventure games you're lucky if "its" and "it's" are spelt right, let alone if the jokes are even vaguely funny.

No. What makes *Grim Fandango* The Greatest of All Adventure Games is the puzzles. Are the puzzles. Hang on. What make *Grim Fandango*... makes... Er.

It's the puzzles, okay? No-one does puzzles like LucasArts, and the ones you'll encounter in *Grim Fandango* are their meanest, most infuriating and at the same time most inarguably logical yet. As well as The Greatest of All Adventure Games, *Grim Fandango* is also The Hardest. One minute you're trying to work out how to get a forklift truck out of a lift, the next you're... well, still trying to get a forklift truck out of a lift. But eventually, after inspiration has struck, it's all change, and you're gnashing your teeth over a giant crocodile that's blocking your path of you and your chauffeur Glottis.

Presiding over this cranial cruelty is überfiend (technically *Grim Fandango's* "project leader") Tim Schafer, who's responsible not just for the original idea and the 7,000 one-liners, veiled hints and



■ Project leader Tim Schafer poses with the cast of *Grim Fandango* (far left) and "in the flesh" (above).



Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders (1988)

■ Even back in the '80s, LucasArts was providing value for money. Zak McKracken was sent to Miami, Mexico the Bermuda Triangle and finally Egypt in pursuit of those aliens, and was backed up by three other characters, all playable by you. A must for all 286 owners.



Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)

■ It's odd that it took till 1989 for the LucasArts adventure division to begin plundering LucasFilm's back catalogue. No surprise, though, that that the company came up trumps with a game that somehow stuck to the film's story but was no walkover even if you were completely familiar with every last whip-crack of the Ford-Connelly script.



Loom (1990)


■ The one nobody remembers. That's possibly because LucasArts opted for the same fantasy wizards and magic setting everyone else was using at the time, though managing to be rather less po-faced about it.



The Secret of Monkey Island (1990)

■ The one everybody remembers, notably for the sword fighting where proficiency with verbal ripostes, rather than a blade, was what counted. ("I usually see people like you passed out on tavern floors." "Even BEFORE they smell your breath?") Buying a ship involved the "Three Trials", three taxing sequences of puzzles that you could tackle in any order. These have since passed into legend, and set the template for the LucasArts adventures that followed.

GRIM AND BEAR IT




Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge (1991)

■ Sequels are always worse than originals. Everyone knows that. Except, that is, in San Rafael, as was proved first by *The Empire Strikes Back* and then by *Monkey Island 2*. Bigger, more headache-inducing and – incredibly – even funnier than *Monkey 1*, it most notably included a spitting contest.



Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (1992)

■ Along with *Monkey 2*, this was one of the first truly huge LucasArts adventures, with around 200 locations. And just when you got to the end and thought it was all over, it turned out there were actually three different ways of completing it.



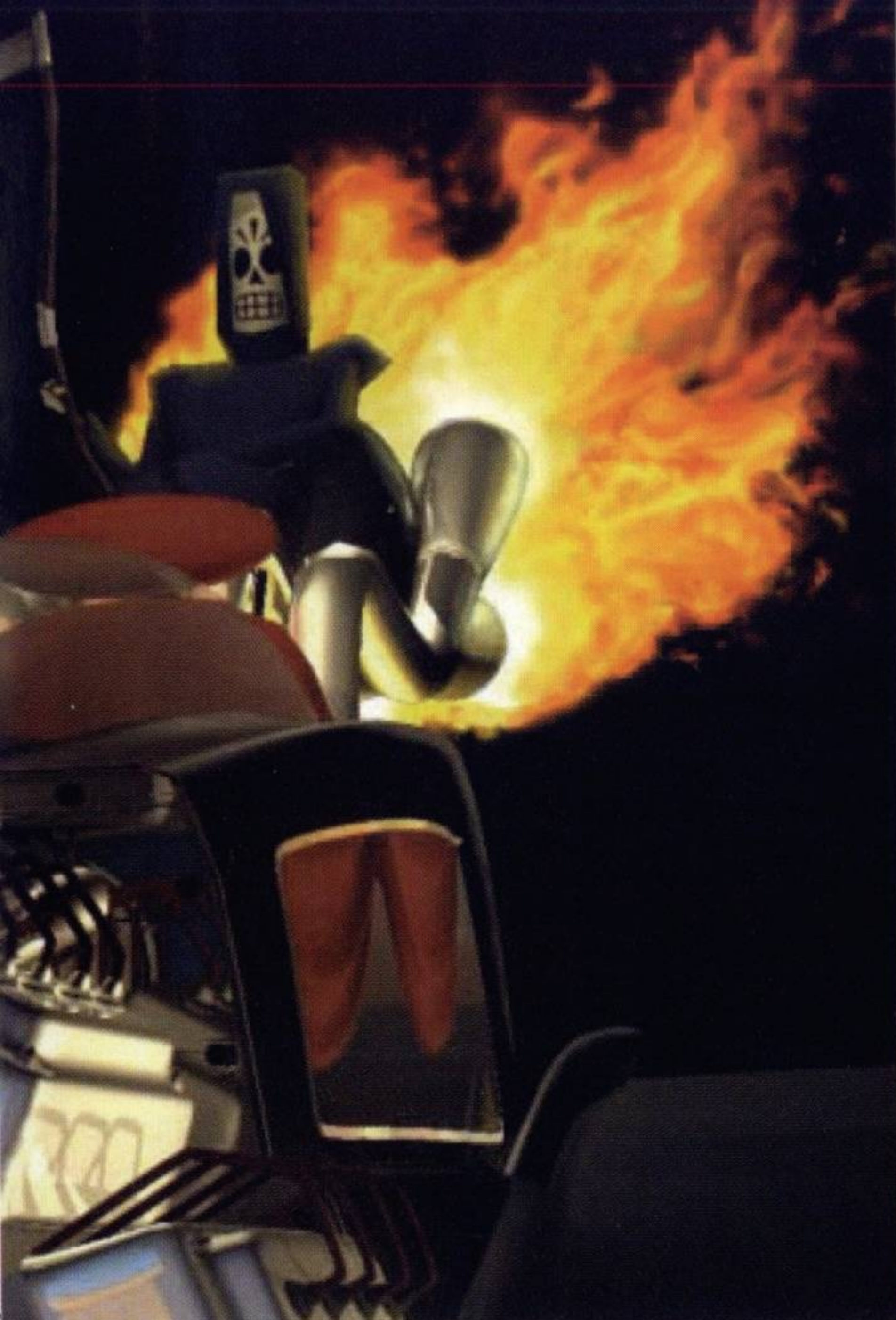
Day of the Tentacle (1993)

■ The enemy: Dr Fred's mutated purple tentacle. The solution: some clever switching between three characters, one in the past, one in the present and one in the future. The solution to a problem of Bernard's, for example, might involve Hoagie doing something 200 years previously. This set up led to some fearsome conundrums.



Sam & Max Hit the Road (1993)

■ One of the more self-explanatory of titles, although it's worth adding that Sam and Max are a dog and a rabbit, the Road stretches all around America, and the game's crammed with jokes and dubious sub-games like "Wak-a-Rat" and "Carbomb".



philosophical truths that comprise its script, but – if you're looking for someone to blame – the puzzles, too.

"The puzzles aren't any harder than in my last game," protests Tim. "There are just more of them, and you can work on more of them at one time." He's referring back to the knotty *Full Throttle*, a game he masterminded along with other LucasArts adventures like *Day of the Tentacle*. "It's hard for me to judge *Grim's* difficulty," he admits. "A lot of people tell me they've finished it, but most say they used some form of walkthrough from the Net."

Walkthroughs are bad.

Using a walkthrough is like peeking at your Christmas presents early, or sneaking \$500 notes from the *Monopoly* box while no-one's looking. Tim agrees. "When I play a game with a walkthrough, I feel like the experience is diminished," he says.

"I feel wrong if I use them. Dirty, even." But he betrays a chink in his ruthless inquisitor's facade – sympathy, even – for the Weak Ones. "What are you going to do?" he sighs. "Regular people, who aren't dedicated gamers, just don't have the time to agonise over a puzzle.

For them, walkthroughs help them finish the game and get back to their lives. Whatever makes them happy."

Pah. Softy. It's not as if *Grim Fandango* is impossible. Indeed, much effort went into ensuring that, while you might contemplate joining Manny on that rooftop yourself at times, you'll always pull through in the end.

"For testing our adventure games LucasArts has what's called a 'pizza orgy,'" explains Tim. "Towards the end of a game's development, we get a bunch of pizza and invite people from all over the

company to play it and then discuss the fun parts and the not-so-fun parts. We also have testers who take the game home and play it. They write up their comments, we take in all this feedback, think about it, and then ignore it all because we're pretty tired and irritable by that point in the project."

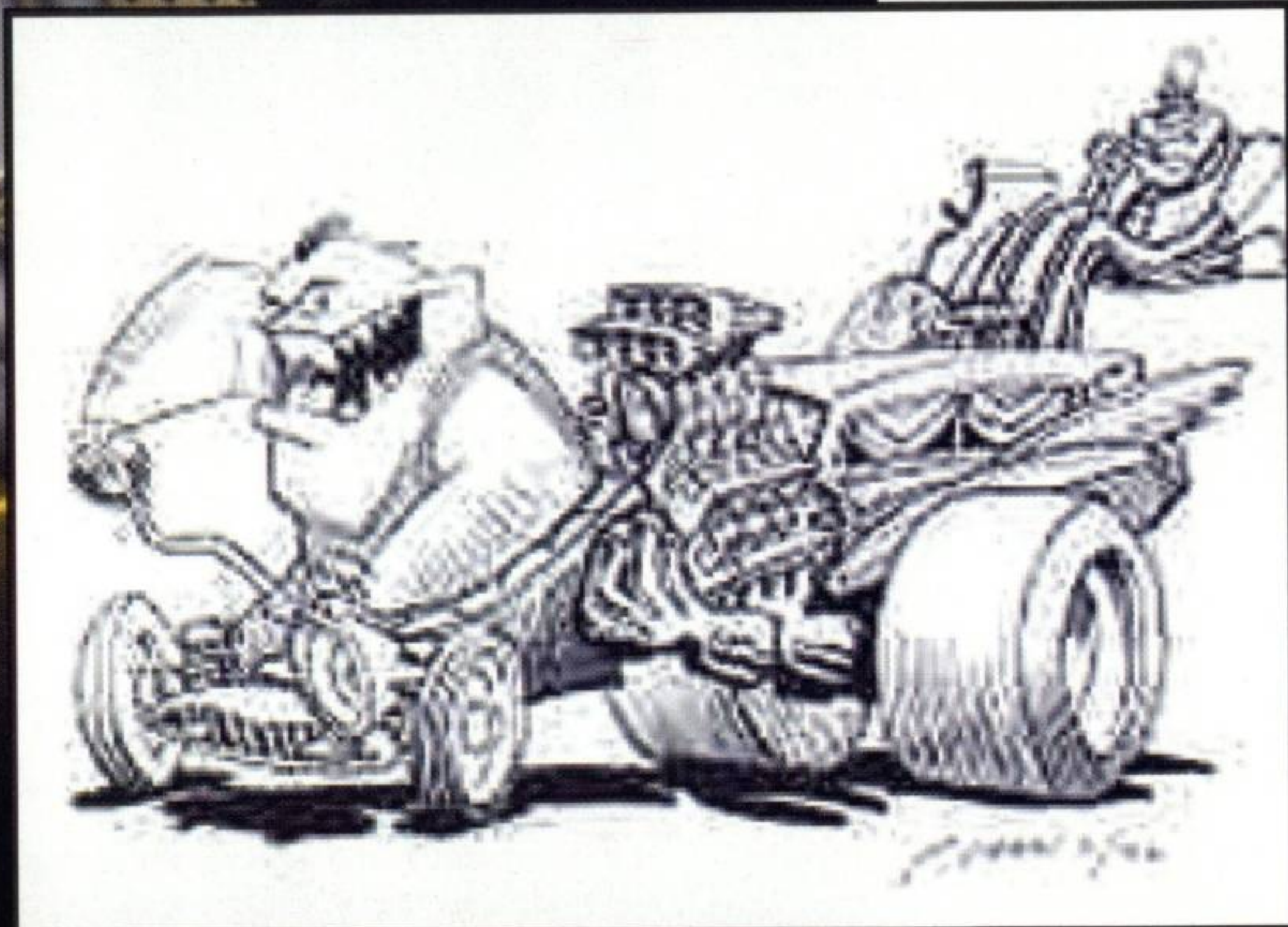
Back in the days when videogame magazines still felt a touching duty to

Blame Tim Schafer for the scripts's 7,000 one-liners and philosophical truths

individual readers, there were help columns. You'd write in pleading for help with a particular part of a particular game, and a concerned and/or downtrodden staff writer would ponder your problem and reply in the next issue. But these columns had to stop because all the letters were about getting Guybrush Threepwood off Melee Island in *The Secret of Monkey Island*. If the same thing happens with *Grim Fandango* there'll be no more Q&A in *Arcade*. Got it?

And yet, it's kind of inevitable. In common with *Monkey Island*, and most LucasArts adventures, in fact, *Grim Fandango* first sets you a gentle, step-by-step series of puzzles, and then, just as you get comfortable, dumps three seemingly infeasible tasks on you all at once. To secure passage out of Rubacava you've got to join the union, get Seaman Naranja out of the picture and find Glottis some tools. And each of those tasks consists of solving a series of inextricable mini-puzzles.

"No two LucasArts adventure games have ever had the same puzzle structure, but we do repeat certain sub-structures over and over," Tim confesses. "Every design I've ever done has stolen from the 'Three Trials' section of the original *Secret of Monkey Island*. There, each trial consisted of roughly seven linear puzzles, and could be worked on simultaneously and independently of the other two. Everybody loved the Three Trials, so I rip it off constantly. Rubacava's puzzles are directly based on that exact pattern, and Rubacava is usually people's favourite part of *Grim*. There's some mysterious magic to the



■ Early sketches show that Manny's new motor was a gas guzzler from offing.



Full Throttle (1994)

■ This seedy tale of grizzled bikers was far too short, yet what there was of it was just superb – funny, atmospheric and hard. "You'd be surprised how many people played *Throttle* up until the junk yard and then quit," says Tim Schafer, who designed this, too. "People spend so much time on the mine road, but you can beat almost everybody right away. It's a puzzle game, not an action game, for crying out loud! When we do *Full Throttle*, special edition, I'll put in another hint for this one."



The Dig (1995)

■ This one's selling point: it was based on an idea supposedly germinated in Steven Spielberg's bathroom. A giant asteroid is heading for Earth – no, wait, this was four years ago – and NASA is sent up to investigate. The result? A curiously sober game, largely free from the jokes we expect and demand from George's boys. Smashing special effects by Industrial Light and Magic, though.



The Curse of Monkey Island (1997)

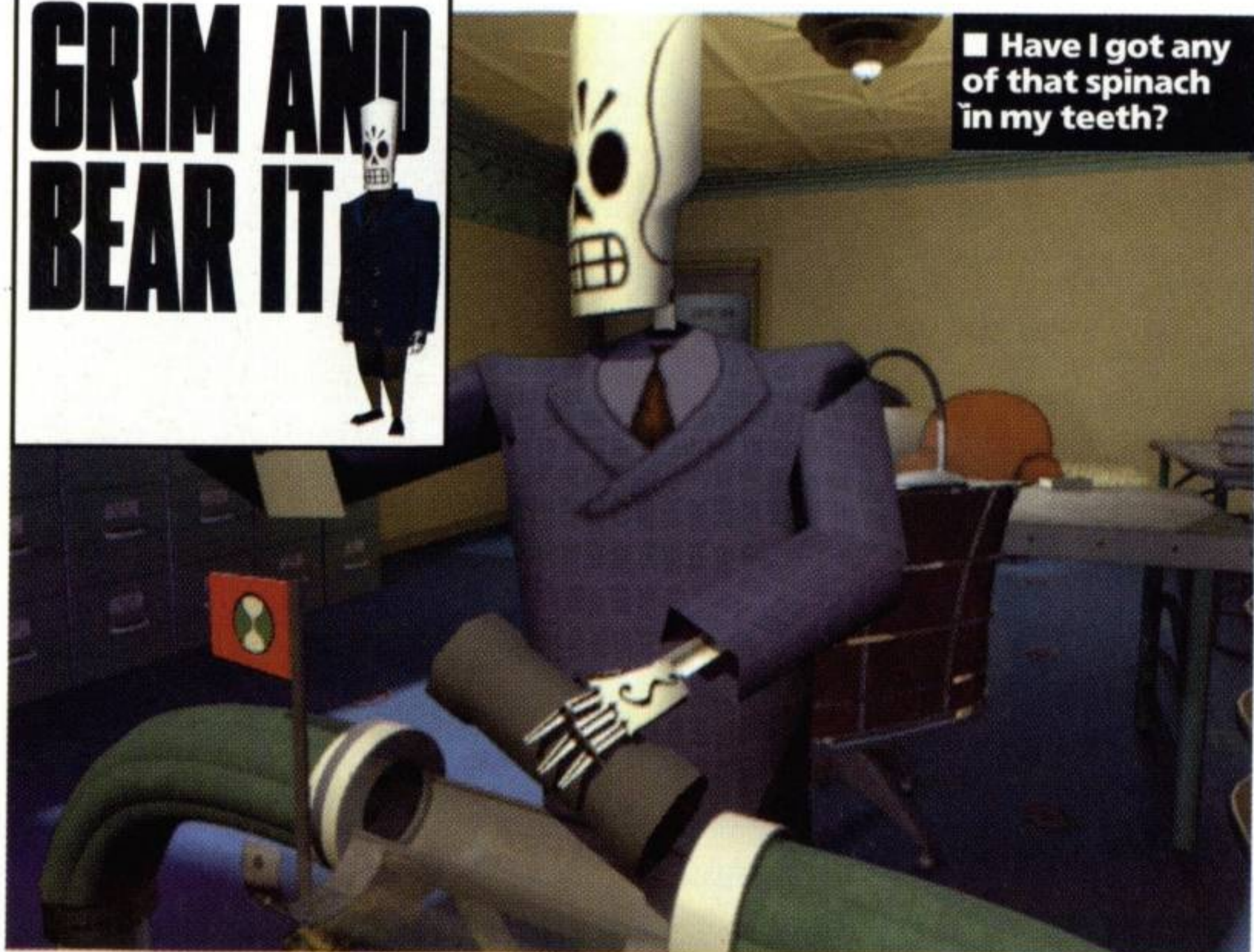
■ The loss of *Monkey Island 1* and *2* designer Ron Gilbert didn't seem to matter a jot as Guybrush Threepwood returned in a third adventure just as amusing as the first two. With Arnold from *Diff'rent Strokes* among the voiceover cast, and a pirate barber shop called the Barbary Coast, this is well worth tracking down when you've finished *Grim Fandango* and given your brain a chance to cool off.



Grim Fandango (1998)

■ That's it. That's the end of the story. Well it is until *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*, which is set to take LucasArts adventures to a whole new level of 3Dness sometime this summer. For more information about this, head back to our preview in *Arcade 4*.

GRIM AND BEAR IT



“Everyone loved ‘The Three Trials’ from *Monkey Island*, so I rip it off constantly”

Three Trials template. Don't ask me what it is. It probably has something to do with the fact that three and seven are lucky numbers. Or maybe because they're set in towns near water. And both sections deal with tattoos and booze. Put all those elements together and you got yourself a game.”

Ah, well that explains that, then. Easy. Except for one more thing. *Grim Fandango* is LucasArts' first adventure to be constructed entirely in 3D – which means not just prettier graphics, but a whole new dimension (quite literally) to the puzzles, too. Now you find fiery beavers leaping over your head, conveyor belts dragging you underwater – and that meddling forklift truck. Using this third dimension to its full potential involved something of a rethink at LucasArts, and the drawing of inspiration from a familiar source.

“We designed the puzzles in *Grim* after playing a lot of *Mario 64*,” says Tim, “so I think we were all thinking in a new way. With a 3D game, the player is *in* there, really in the space. When you're creating a painting, you might think to yourself, how would someone feel when they look at this? But when you're an architect of a 3D world, you have to ask yourself, how would someone feel if they were *inside* this? And this move is kind of a big difference.”

And so exactly how would it feel to be *in* there, right inside *Grim Fandango*? Are you gamer enough to venture where into a world where the challenges are big but the rewards even bigger? Would your brain withstand the withering onslaught of the sunken ship at the Edge of the World, or the maze in the Petrified Forest? Would you be reduced to tears before you'd even escaped from El Marrow? Or would those luscious graphics and catchy salsa rhythms keep dragging you back till you'd cracked every last individual secret? There's only one way to find out, amigo.

■ *Grim Fandango for PC is published by LucasArts, distributed by Activision, is priced at just £40 and is on sale now.*

■ “Yer name's not dahn, you're not comin' in.” Glottis the driver makes a point.



The *Grim Fandango* survival guide

How to make it from El Marrow to the Ninth Underworld without excessive suffering or peeking at the solution.

■ You've taken the plunge. You've effected a skeletal expression, shouldered a scythe and inserted the first of the two *Grim Fandango* CDs into your PC. And you're stuck already. The trouble is, being the Hardest of All Adventure Games, *Grim Fandango* will often have you pacing up and down the landing in frustration. But for precisely the same reason it'll make you whoop – yes, whoop – with joy when you finally crack a puzzle. If, that is, you crack it of your own volition. If the strain is too much, however, and you give up and – heaven forbid – look up the answer in a walkthrough, you'll feel worthless. Like a weasel. A dead weasel. So don't do it. Do the following instead:

If you've been stuck for a week:

■ Okay. So none of that's worked. You know the streets of Rubicara as if you grew up there, you can recite Manny's witticisms backwards and your monitor is starting to suffer burn-in. On your shoulder sits a little red imp with a pointy tail, whispering in your ear: “Cheat! Look up the answer! Go on – no-one'll know.” You start to nod in resigned agreement. But be warned: give up now and you'll be left with a deflating sense of self-loathing. So give it one last shot before reading on.

Below are the solutions to the ten hardest puzzles in *Grim Fandango*. Before each solution you'll find a couple of clues. Reading these isn't technically cheating, but you won't feel comfortable afterwards. To deter wandering eyes, everything's in code. (No cipher is provided – if you can't crack the code there truly is no hope for you.)



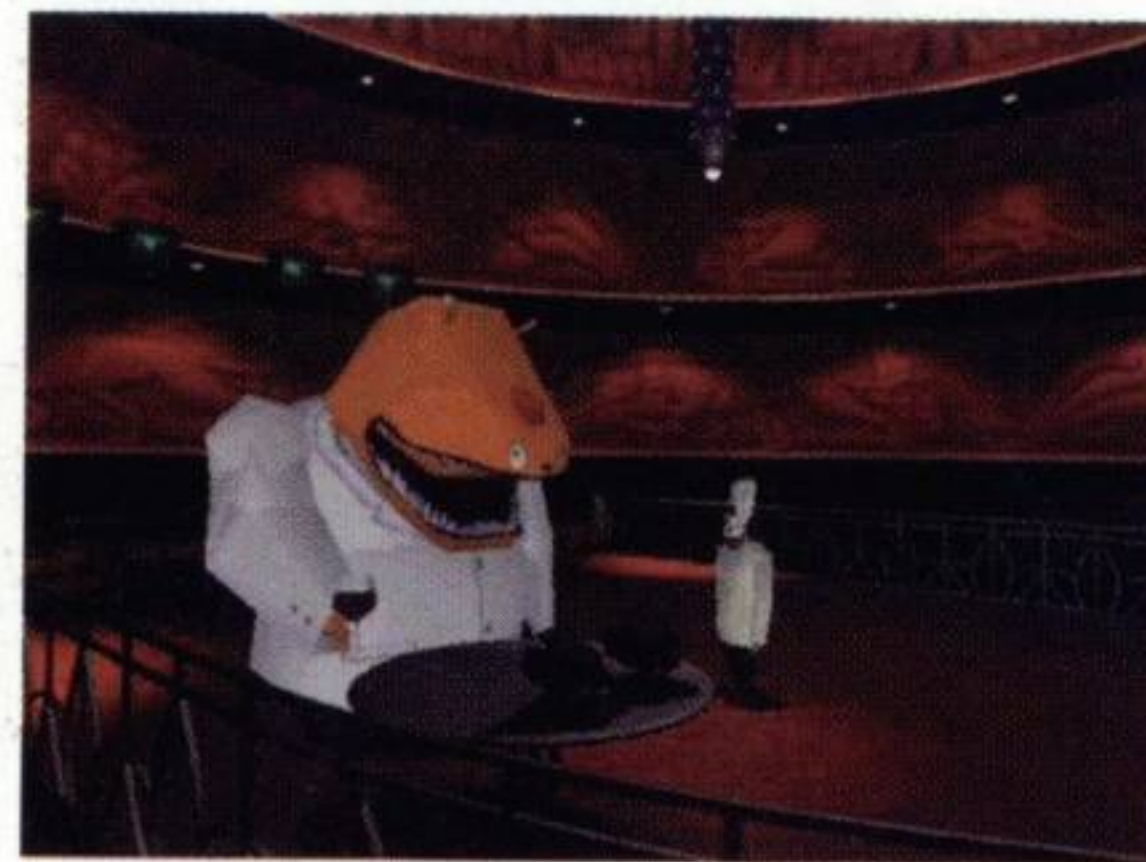
1. What's with this tube-switching machine? How do I get in there?

According to the LucasArts hint line, this is the bit of *Grim Fandango* the company is getting most calls about. Probably because it's where the manual help runs out. So you're not alone. Even so, don't give up now. You'll hate yourself.

Clue 1: Eht gnikap s'moor tog ot eb eehrt rof a nosaer.

Clue 2: Ebyam eht noollab relles dluoc pleh.

Solution: Ksa eht noollab relles rof a daed mrow. Neht ksa rof rehtona. Llif eno morf hcae elzzon fo eht enihcam ni eht gnikap moor. Ekot eht snoollab ot ruoy eciffo dna pord meht otni eht liam elcatpecer. Neht ev'uoy tsuj tog ot pots eht rood gnisolc nehwh eht s'namydnah dehsinif.



6. All right, all right. How do I get Glottis out of the casino?

How indeed. It's dead simple but, unless you've been keeping your ears pricked for clues, would take a flying leap of logic to work out. Have a go before you shut up shop, though, eh? No?

Clue 1: S'erehw eh gnitteg sih yenom morf?

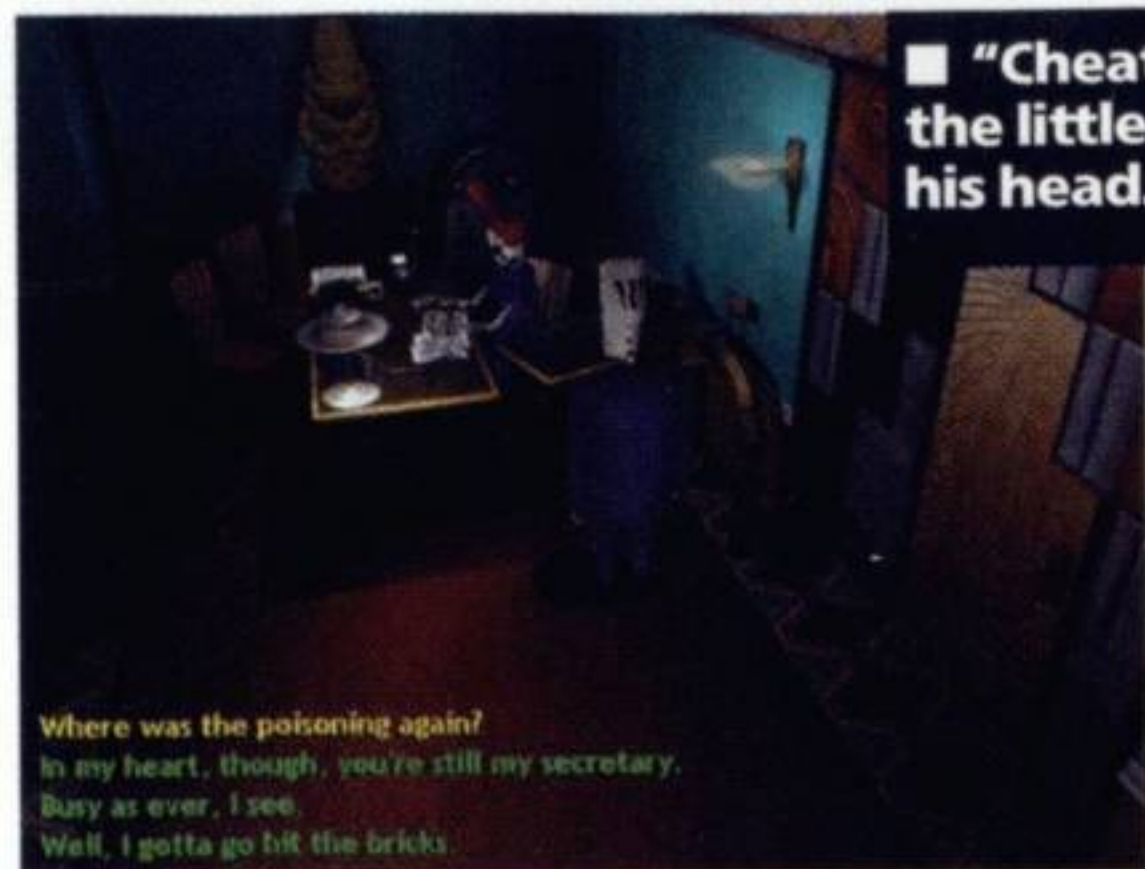
Clue 2: Sa Xam syas, ll'eh ylno evael fi ruoy nwo onisac sesolc nwod.

Solution: Og ot ruoy onisac dna ll'uoy dnif Feihc Negob ereht. Og sriatspu dna nepo eht lenap no ruoy ksed. Evom eht tengam yawa morf rebmun owt.

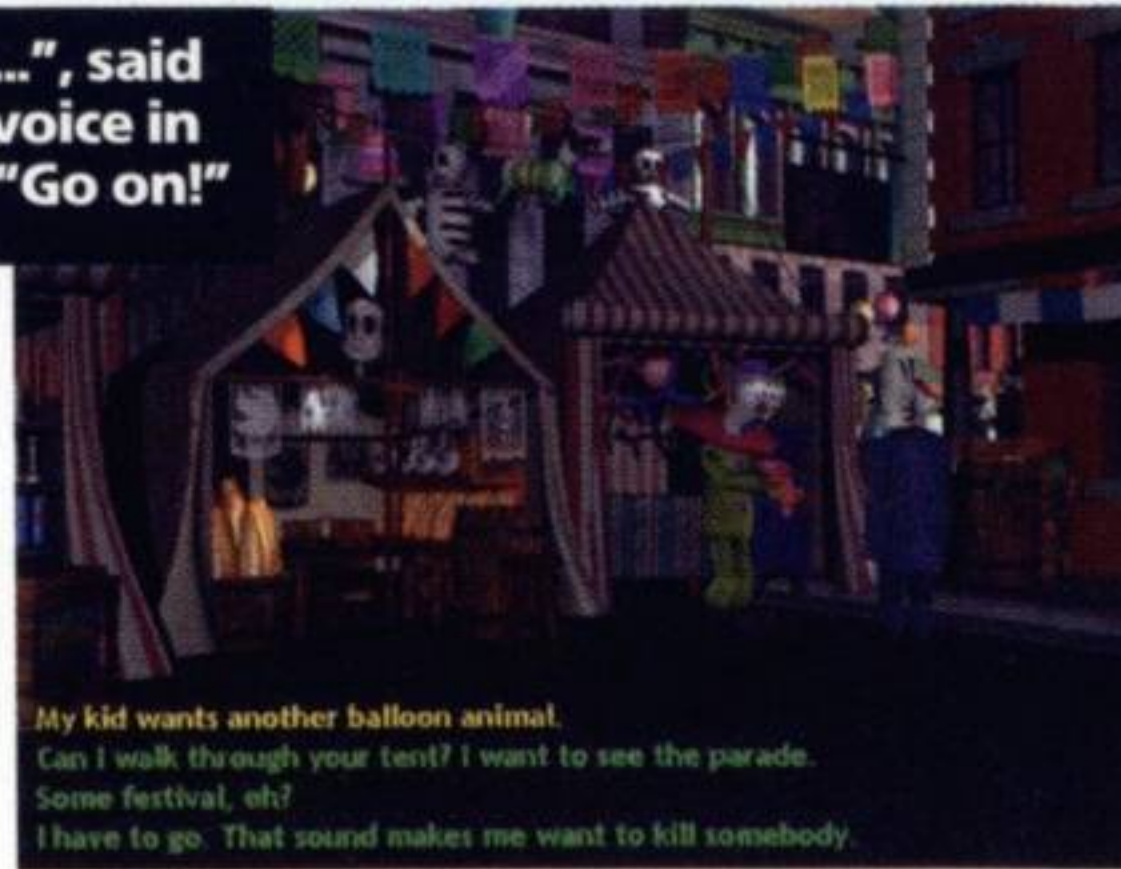
If you've been stuck for a hour:

■ The euphoria of solving the previous puzzle has faded, and you're wandering around wondering what you're supposed to do next. What do those diabolical minds in San Rafael have planned for you? There are three ways of finding out:

- Talk to absolutely everyone. There's usually someone around who'll give you a hint – Glottis is often a particularly good bet.
- Have you explored everywhere? The exit points around the edge of the screen aren't always obvious, so make sure you've really investigated everything even vaguely door-like or pathwayesque.
- Watch Manny's head. No, really. As he walks around, he might fleetingly notice something you've missed.



■ "Cheat..." said the little voice in his head. "Go on!"



If you've been stuck for a day:

■ You know what you're *meant* to be doing. But you'll be jiggered if you can work out *how*. If you try to go to bed now, without having worked it out, you know you'll be tossing and turning all night. Hope is fading, and you've half a mind to reach for that magazine walkthrough. But don't. Run through this checklist and you're guaranteed to crack it:

- Does any character seem to be in need of something? Read through the last few conversations you've had (by pressing F1 and

then D) and see if anyone's lacking anything – even if they don't seem to realise it.

- You're watching something happen on the screen, but you can still move Manny about. Should you be doing something, rather than just standing there?
- Study every object in your inventory using the Examine key, and listen carefully for clues in Manny's descriptions.
- Is anything in your inventory a container? Should it be filled with something? Or is there something hidden inside already?

■ Rather than refusing with a simple "I can't do that" when you try to do something, is Manny hinting that you're on the right lines? If so, maybe you need to do something else first or be cleverer with your timing.

- A suggestion from Tim Schafer: "One thing I think helps is to play adventure games with somebody. It's more fun to have someone in the room that you can talk about the puzzles with, and alternate who sits down at the PC and who paces the room, shouting out ideas."
- If all else fails, grab your scythe. No, really.



2. Okay, I surrender. I've been walking in and out of trees in this Petrified Forest clearing for as long as I can remember.

There's even a hint in the manual for this one. No? Well, here goes...

- Clue 1:** Evah uoy daer eht ngis?
- Clue 2:** Ekat ti ot eht gniraelc.

Solution: Kcip pu eht ngis dna tup ti nwod ni tnereffid secalp ni eht gniraelc. Ti syawla stniop ot eht emas tops. Tnalp eht ngis ereht.



3. How do I get this blasted forklift truck out of the lift?

Come on, you can do this. You've missed something obvious, and you'll want to stick a fork in your eye when you realise what it is.

- Clue 1:** Uoy t'nod. Ti skrow retteb ni eht tfil.
- Clue 2:** Hctaw ylluferac sa eht tfil seog pu dna nwod.

Solution: Sa eht tfil seog pu, ylkciuq evird eht tfilkrof rednu eht pag ni eht etag. Nehw eht tfil smaj, teg ffo eht tfilkrof dna esiar eht skrof.



4. Come on, then. How do I bump off Naranja?

Okay, so this one's pretty convoluted. And yet, at the same time, it's elegantly logical, in classic LucasArts fashion. Perhaps you should sleep on it one last time before you peek.

- Clue 1:** Ebyam eh t'nseod deen ot eid. Ebyam uoy dluoc ekaf sih htaed.
- Clue 2:** S'eh ton gniyap hcum noitnetta ot taht knird fo sih.

Solution: Llif eht yekrut retsab htiw retawhsid ta eht Eulb Teksac. Tcartsid Ajnaran yb gninepo eht egdirf rood, dna tcejni sih knird. Nehw s'eh peelsa, ekat sih sgatgod dna tnalp meht no a noteleks ni eht eugrom. Evig eht latem rotceted ot Ollirbmem.



5. Sigh. This cat race/ticket stub business, then.

Ah yes. This is indeed a tricky one. Not completely infeasible, mind – try to picture the answer – but it's possible only in the loosest sense of the word.

- Clue 1:** Ev'uoy tog eht otohp fo eht ecar, thgir? Eht noitsequ si, nehwsaw ti nekat? Yduts ti drah rof seulc.
- Clue 2:** Eht pihisria dehsarc no sti nediam egayov. Tub nehwsaw taht? Dna tahw yad od elpoep raew yttik stah?

Solution: Kcehc eht Foorpsnas lairomem: eht s'pihsria nediam egayov saw ni eht dnoces keew fo gnica. Dna, sa s'enyoreve gniraew yttik stah, ti tsum eb Yttik Tah Yad – a Yadseut. Eht ecar s'rebmun ysae: xis. Laid esoht otni eht enihcam dna ekat eht buts ot eht ecar eciffo.



7. These anchors. Huh?

It's possible to spend entire evenings wrestling with the controls of the Limbo, winching anchors up and down. If only the wretched ship would move – just one knot would do it.

- Clue 1:** Ees fi uoy nac elgnat eht srohcnarehtegot.
- Clue 2:** Neht s'ti emit ot hcaer rof ruoy elbispalloc muhc niaga.

Solution: Esiar eht thgir rohcna, evom eht pihstfel dna pord eht thgir rohcna. Yeht lliw elgnat pu. Esiar eht tsel rohcna. Kooh eht srohcnarehtegot. Esiar eht thgir orhcna dna esrever eht pihst.



8. Okay, I've been locked in this vault since last Thursday.

You've dragged that axe backwards and forwards for hours, yes? This one's really, really hard, but you'll still feel drained if you cheat.

- Clue 1:** S'erehw eht retaw gniog?
- Clue 2:** Doolf eht moor, niard ti dna hctaw erehw eht s'retaw gniog.

Solution: Esu eht ehtycs no eht retaw elzonnih eht gnilliec. Nrut eht pat ot doolf eht moor, niard ti niaga, dna hctaw erehw eht s'retaw gniog. Pord eht exa ta siht tniop.



9. If Glottis doesn't get this boat going soon I'm going to kill him.

The Edge of the world is a phenomenally confusing place, and you're surely fed up with riding backwards and forwards on that crane. *Grim Fandango* certainly has its ups and downs.

- Clue 1:** Eht taob sdeen gnihtfil tuo fo eht retaw wohemos.
- Clue 2:** Ebyam eht enarc dluow eb erom lufesu htiw eht tib no eht dne.

Solution: Rewol eht enarc ta eht hcaeb no eht thgir, dna esu eht Tsub-Lla no eht dne. Evom eht enarc tsel dna rewol ti otno eht retawrednu royevnoc tleb, hcihw dluohs eb gnivom nwod otni eht retaw. Pilf eht revel os eht niahc selgnat pu, dna pilf ti niaga ot kooh eht rohcna. Yllanif, esiar eht enarc.



10. I can't believe it. I need a gun. Again.

And you're wandering around El Marrow without the first idea where to find one, right? It must be tempting to take a leaf out of Bowsley's book and run away.

- Clue 1:** Did uoy eciton yelslwob lliips gnihtyna sa eh delf?
- Clue 2:** Tahw dluoc uoy esu ot laever secart fo Alletuorps?

Solution: Bmilc pu ot eht wonis enihcam dna tup eht yllaitrap-detuorps s'tnega dnah otni eht rednirg. Kcip ti pu (gnisu P) dna esu ti dnuora eht hctap fo tliips Alletuorps yb eht Enob Enihcam. Wollof eht liart. Nehw eht retsnom skcatta uoy, esu eht etomer lortnoc ot part sti liat. Ll'uoy dnif Yelslwob, nopuerehw uoy dluohs... pots gnidaer siht dna revocer emos ecnalbmes fo fles-meetse.

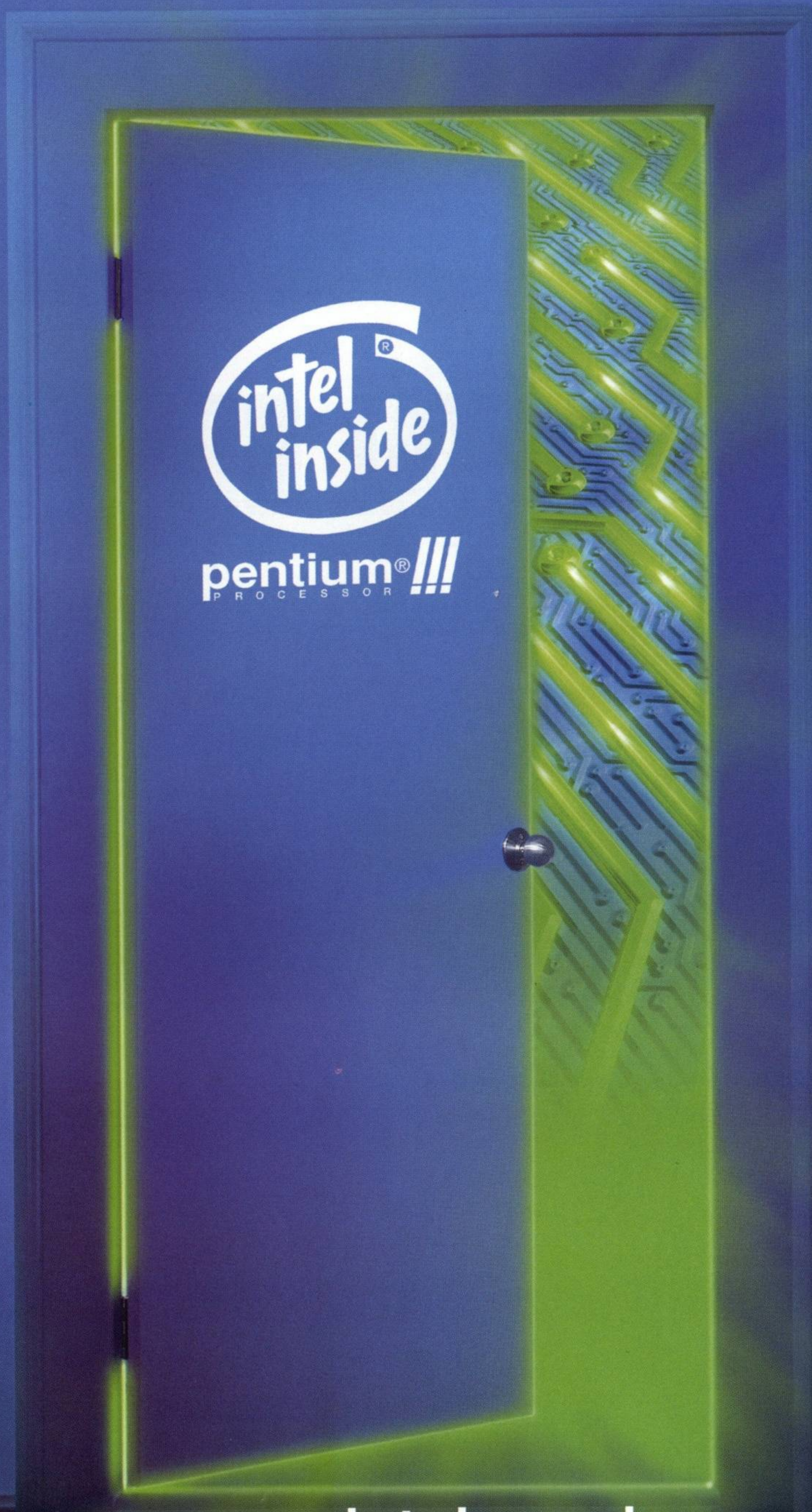
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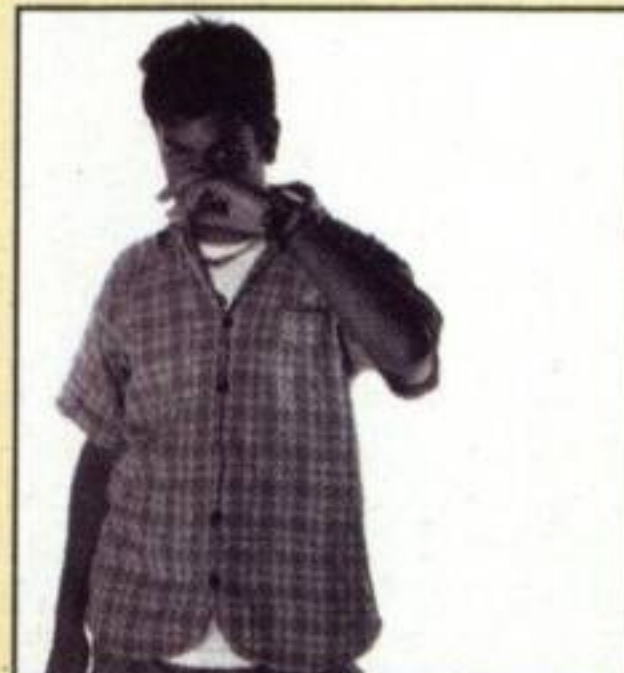
KICK ASS

BECOME A DEMON GAME PLAYER OVERNIGHT

WELCOME TO KICK ASS

OUCH, MY HEAD!

Edited by Rich Pelley



Strokes of genius can come to you in the most bizarre manner. For example, Archimedes discovered displacement in the bath; Isaac Newton discovered gravity under an apple tree; and Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin on a lemon. But the idea to do tips on *Metal Gear Solid*, *Rival Schools* and *Zelda* hit me while I was sitting at my desk. I'll try having a bath next month.



HOW TO BEAT METAL GEAR METAL GEAR SOLID

| Words: Dan Griffiths

Format: PlayStation | Publisher: SCEE | Developer: Konami | Price: £39.99 (Special Edition £59.99)
Players: 1 | ★★★★★

Anyone with half a brain and a dextrous pair of thumbs can waltz through *Metal Gear Solid*, but you'll miss out on half the action...

THE BOSSES

REVOLVER OCELOT

■ Breaking up the monotony of trudging about, hiding under bits of the central heating system and touching up guards with your feet are *Metal Gear's* bosses. Here's the best way to tackle each:

REVOLVER OCELOT

■ Revolver has a fat man in a box to taunt, and a mesh of wires and pulleys that will kill Mr Porty should Snake come into contact with them. The solution is to ensure that you remain in the square corridor around the bomb trap's edge.

As you should in all boss battles, enable the medikits in your left inventory so that if you

die you'll automatically have your energy topped up and the battle will continue.

Revolver will try and escape by running round and round. The best way to catch (and shoot) him is to change direction, run and meet him head-on. Given the square nature of the "track" that you're both competing on, you'll find it easier to use the right angle-based D-pad here, rather than the whizzy analogue stick.

Don't forget, in *MGS* it's possible to take shots at enemies that are off screen so, after rounding a corner and sensing Revolver isn't too far ahead, fire off a shot with a quick tap-and-release of the Fire button (don't hold and aim with the laser sight). You might get lucky.

Time your turn-arounds to perfection and you'll meet Revolver face to face, enabling you to get three shots into his back as he runs for it. There's plenty of ammo dotted around (including some just inside the bomb traps wires – be careful), so you'll have more than enough to deliver the ten-or-so shots required to finish him off.

VULCAN RAVEN

VULCAN RAVEN

■ Vulcan will fire preposterously powerful tank shells at you if you're too far away, but up close he won't bother. Your first job is to get up the snowfield, then make sure you're level with the tank. Use the mine detector to show the position of the mines, then remember where they are (if you stick to the far right you'll

■ There he is over there. Get him!

■ Stock up on grenades to see this lunk off.

Snakes don't belong in Alaska...

■ The mighty man himself. In all his head-banded glory.

16 GAMES TIPPED THIS MONTH

PLAYSTATION

- P84 METAL GEAR SOLID
- P88 RIVAL SCHOOLS: UNITED BY FATE
- P93 X GAMES PRO BOARDER
- P93 RALLY CROSS 2
- P94 APOCALYPSE

PC

- P83 WIPEOUT 2097/XL
- P83 SETTLERS 3
- P84 STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON
- P84 DELTA FORCE
- P84 JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES 2

NINTENDO 64

- P90 LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
- P92 SOUTH PARK
- P93 BATTLETANK
- P94 STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON
- P94 GLOVER
- P95 NFL BLITZ



NOW PLAYING

TUROK 2: SEEDS OF EVIL
P92 WE SHOW YOU HOW TO RIDE THE DINOSAUR WHENEVER YOU WANT AND HOW TO GAIN INVINCIBILITY
THE ARCADE CHALLENGE
P95 DON'T CONSIGN YOUR OLD GAMES TO THE BIN, THERE'S PLENTY OF WEAR IN THEM YET. TAKE UP THE ARCADE

CHALLENGE FOR THE FOLLOWING GAMES: MAX POWER RACING, ASTEROIDS, CRASH 3: WARPED, METAL GEAR SOLID, GOLDENEYE 007, F-ZERO X, SOUTH PARK, WIPEOUT 64, JEDI KNIGHT, HEDZ, SENTINEL RETURNS AND WETRIX.

NINJA



■ Keep running right and left, dishing out a pasting as you jog by.

PSYCHO MANTIS



■ Put the controller in Port 2 then shoot Mantis when he appears.

be okay). Next equip the medikits to your left inventory and grenades to your right. It's worth watching out for that medikit off to the left of the battlefield, too – you may need to jog back and get this midway through the battle (avoiding the mines).

Once you've caught up with Vulcan's tank, begin running around it anti-clockwise in a large circle. The tank will turn toward you (don't get too close or it'll catch and crush you). As it turns to face (and shoot) you, quickly turn back to face it and lob a grenade at it. Time your throw right and the grenade should pop into the open hatch on the top of the tank. Repeat this a few times and you'll finish this boss off.

Don't forget to pick up the extra supplies in this area; you'll find more grenades at the top left and another set at the top right, along with a medikit.

NINJA

■ What initially seems impossible is actually very easy. You must fight Ninja hand-to-hand, so put all your weapons away. While you

can stun him with chaff grenades, this just seems to make him angrier and attack more viciously – it's not worth the bother.

Run left and right along the "corridor" at the base of the screen. Every time you meet Ninja give him three taps of the Attack button, releasing a flurry of three punches and kicks, then run past him, turn around when you reach the wall and run back.

Eventually Ninja will take to teleporting around the room, hiding from you. Try checking the top left and top right – you'll soon spot him. Thump him and then return to running left and right at the bottom.

Ninja's next tactic is to beam down right next to you and thump you. The best way to cut down his options is to stand right in one of the bottom corners (left or right). He will now appear to your side, so wait until he's there, hit the direction on the D-pad to face him and lash out with a punch and kick.

Finally he goes electric bonkers. At last you can open fire on him. Pick a choice weapon, give him a few extended pluggings and he's out of it.

SNIPER WOLF



■ Best beware the laser-gaze of Sniper Wolf.

PSYCHO MANTIS

■ Tricky one, this. First of all, take out Meryl with a stun grenade (Psycho will resurrect her halfway through the battle, so just do the same again). Psycho will disappear whenever you aim at him, so unplug your joystick from Port 1 and plug it into Port 2. He can now "no longer read your mind". Incidentally, if you struggle with this puzzle for ages, Donald Anderson will eventually appear and give you this tip.

Simply watch the pattern of Psycho Mantis's furniture

flinging (staying well out of reach of the up- and down-screen furniture swoops and the spiral of chairs in particular). Stick around the top half of the area (he beams down in front of the desk a lot) and keep plugging him with the machine.

SNIPER WOLF

■ Easy when you know how this one. First you've got to go back and get the sniper rifle from the basement back in the first building (doh!) Got the Diazepam from the cavern, too? Now use

LIQUID SNAKE



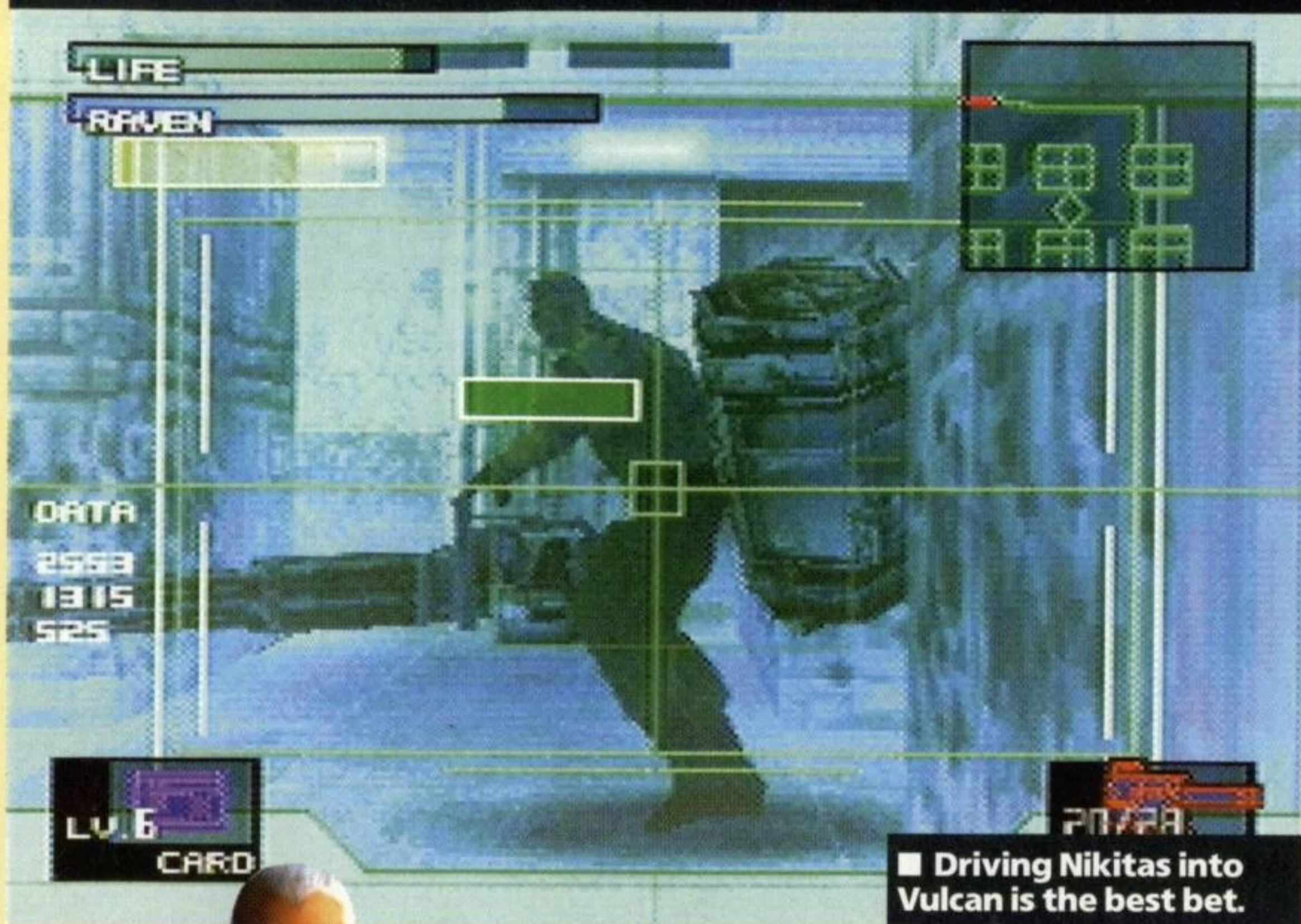
■ Make sure you get a missile lock before you fire.

LIQUID SNAKE

■ Remove Liquid's chopper with Stinger missiles. You should have picked up the launcher and missiles prior to this battle. A top-up of missiles awaits on the gantry toward the bottom right.

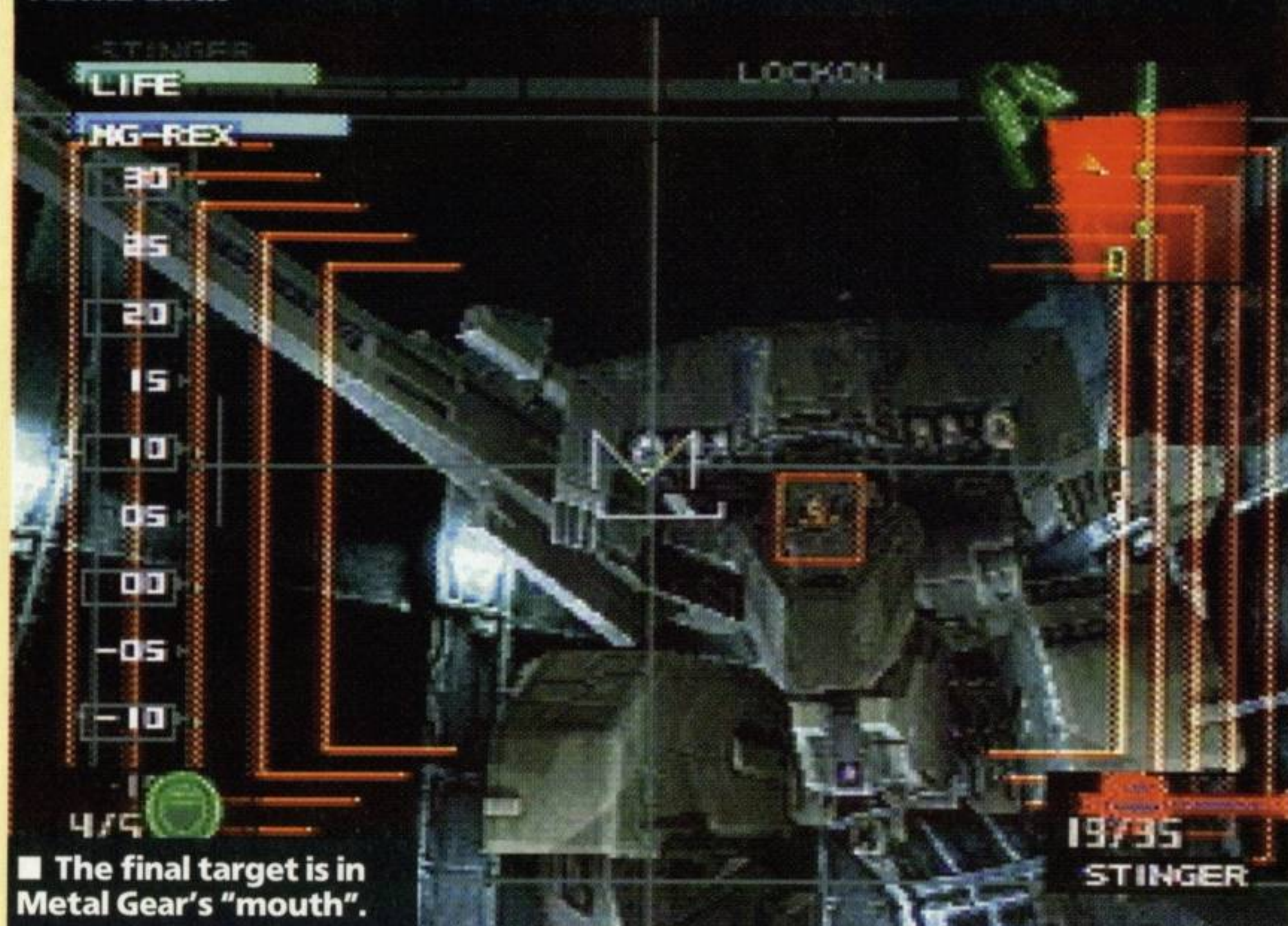
Enable the Stingers in your right inventory and quickly switch between running and aiming by pressing R1. Use the metal container on the roof as a shield, popping out from behind its left-most side to nuke the helicopter as it flies by on the right. Don't fire until you've got a missile lock.

VULCAN RAVEN



■ Driving Nikitas into Vulcan is the best bet.

METAL GEAR



■ The final target is in Metal Gear's "mouth".

Liquid will twice fire huge missiles at the roof. When he does, run to the bottom left of the screen to avoid the blast.

Halfway through the battle Liquid will take to flying below the level of the roof and popping up suddenly.

When he's out of sight, go to the top-right corner of the

roof, engage your Stinger,

look down and use the

sights to find him (you'll

get a red sight and a

steady "beep" when

you're on target). Use

the analogue control

to track him (it's much

easier than the D-pad) and

be ready when he pops up.

Follow the sights up, let a

missile go as soon as you

have a lock and then run for

it back behind the metal box.

VULCAN RAVEN

■ Keep an eye on the scanner. If Vulcan catches you in his line of sight he'll shoot you mercilessly. There are three ways to take him out. One is to place C4 or

land mines (see later) at easily memorable points (so you don't end up wasting yourself), detonating them as appropriate.

A good place to put these is on either side of a box in the corner. Now just wait nearby, watch the scanner and let them fly when Vulcan walks by them.

Alternatively, you can use the Nikita missiles to drive around and chase him. Try to anticipate the direction he's walking so you can surprise him from behind.

METAL GEAR

■ When Gear has assumed position in the centre of the playfield, begin running round him in a large anti-clockwise circle. He'll turn to face you, letting fly three missiles. These will land behind you, provided you keep moving. Keep going until the missiles are landing a good ten feet behind you, then pop up your Stinger (as you did with Liquid on the rooftop). Turn left to face the brute and take aim at the large circle on his left shoulder. You should get a missile lock on it. If not, fire anyway.

Quickly remove the Stinger and continue running. Provided you have stayed far enough ahead, the next set of three missiles should once more fall short.

In the second phase of the battle you'll need to repeat this trick once more, aiming instead for Metal Gear's open mouth (with Liquid visible, piloting). Incidentally, don't do anything during the stalemate between Liquid and Ninja.

LIQUID SNAKE (AGAIN)

■ Keep running left and right or up and down, past Liquid. As you pass each time give him the old three-attack-button-tap special. Keep going 'til he's dead. It's impossible to fall off here – you'll always grab the edge.

THE JEEP CHASE

■ Play from first-person view (its *much* easier) and be ready, aimed forwards and a bit to the right, during the bits between the roadblocks.

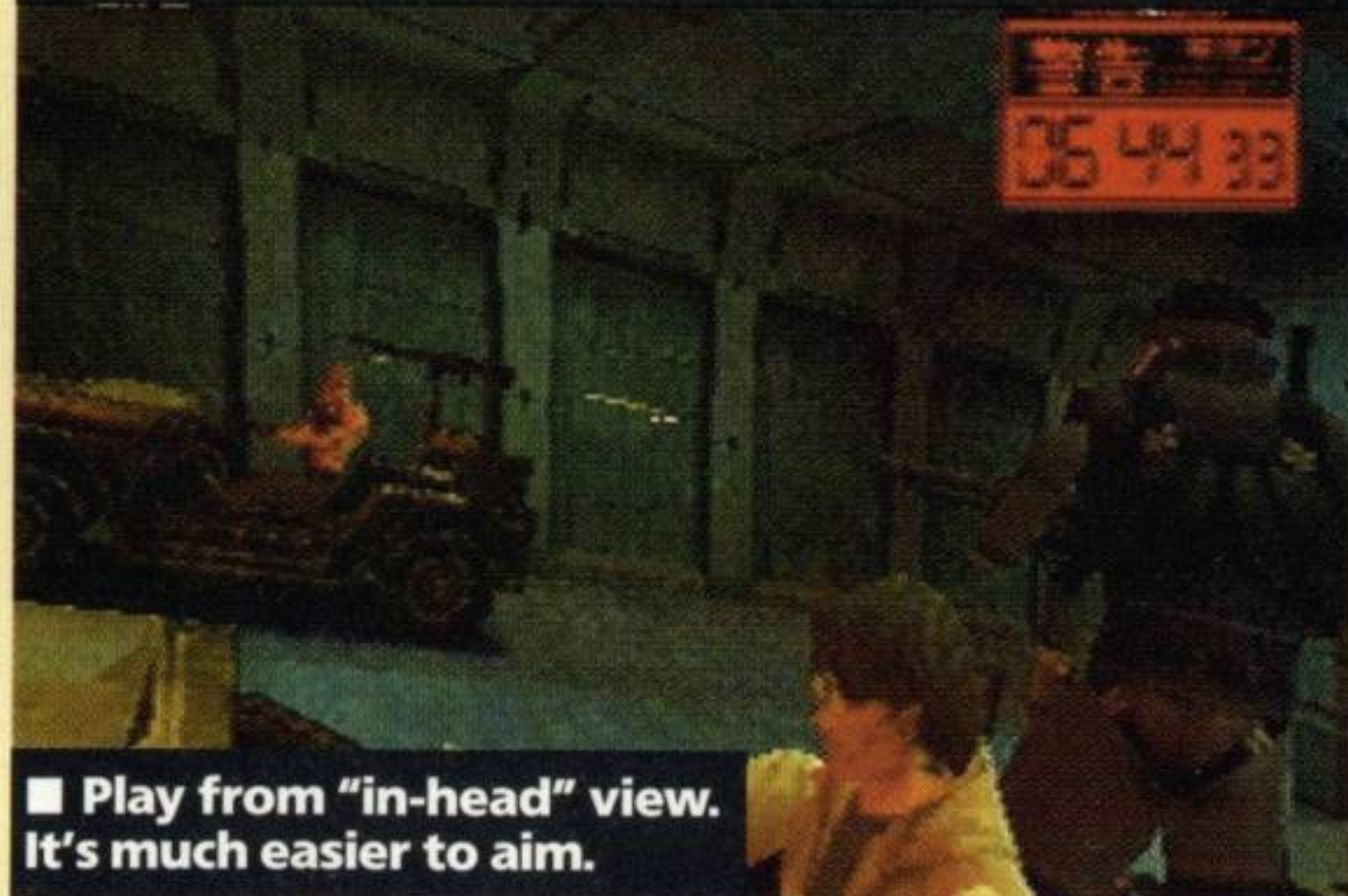
Just keep plugging Liquid during the end stretch. Easy.

LIQUID SNAKE (AGAIN)



■ Keep moving and keep hammering "attack"!

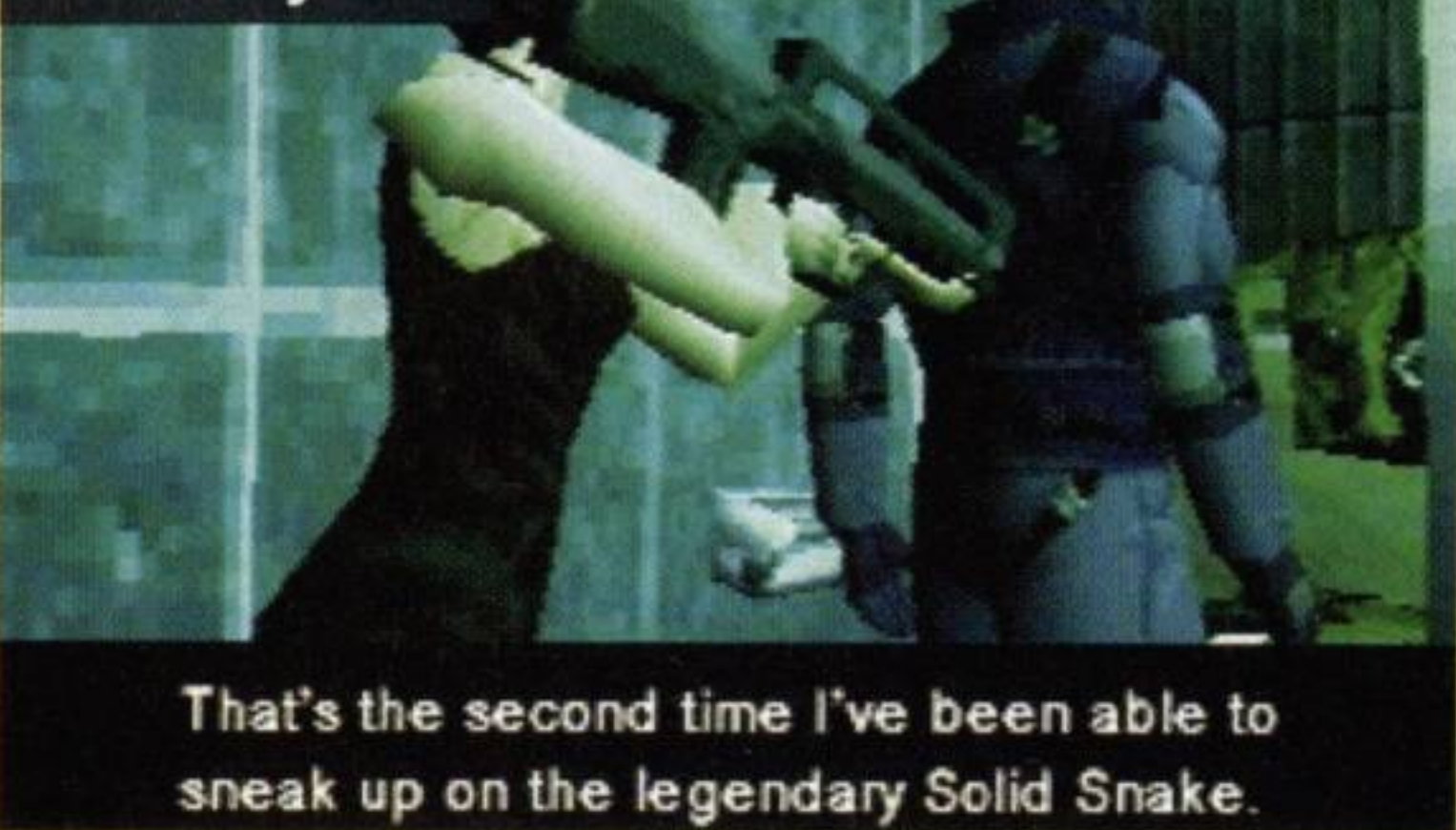
THE JEEP CHASE



■ Play from "in-head" view. It's much easier to aim.

FINAL SOLUTIONS

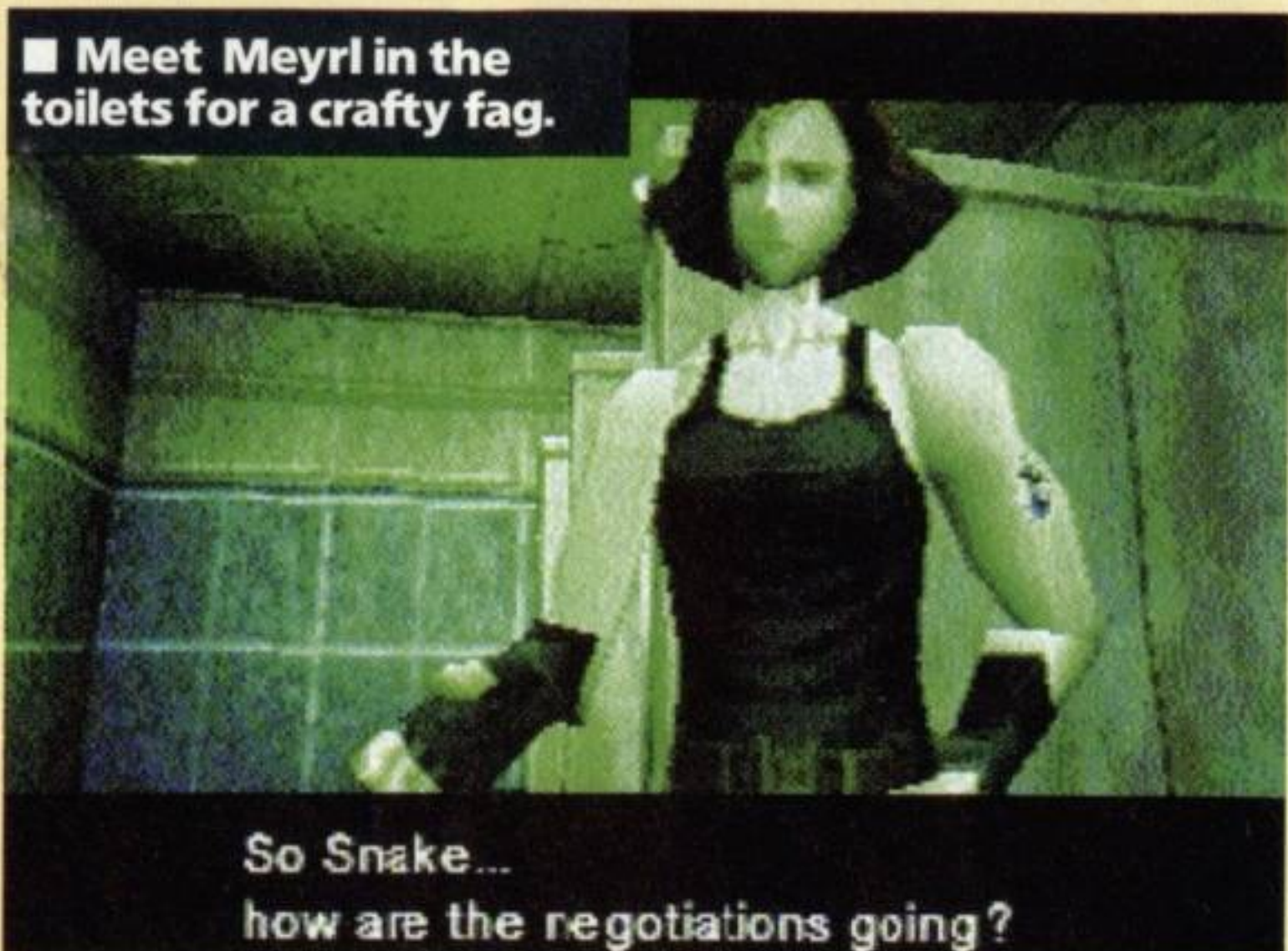
■ Take out all the guards and you'll finally meet Meryl.



That's the second time I've been able to sneak up on the legendary Solid Snake.



■ Pop on the gas mask and pop out a Nikita.



■ Meet Meryl in the toilets for a crafty fag.

So Snake... how are the negotiations going?

■ So you've beaten the boss but you're still stuck? Here are the solutions to a couple of *Metal Gear Solid's* most notorious sticking points.

Meryl's frequency

■ Still not sussed it? After disposing of Revolver Ocelot you have to summon Meryl to open

the tank hanger doors for you, enabling you to go outside. Her frequency is "on the CD case" according to Donald Anderson. But you haven't got the CD case, right? Of course you have! He means the *actual box for the game*. There's a screenshot on the back of the box that shows Snake and Meryl speaking. The code? 14015.

The electric floor

■ So how do you get down that gas-filled, electrified corridor? Simple. Fire a Nikita missile down the corridor, left, and right up the lab, right through the door, and left into the floor's control panel to take it out.

You can drive the missile from the familiar top-down view (slow it down with repeated taps

in opposite directions, to get your bearings). Alternatively, you can switch to first-person view and drive the missile to its target.

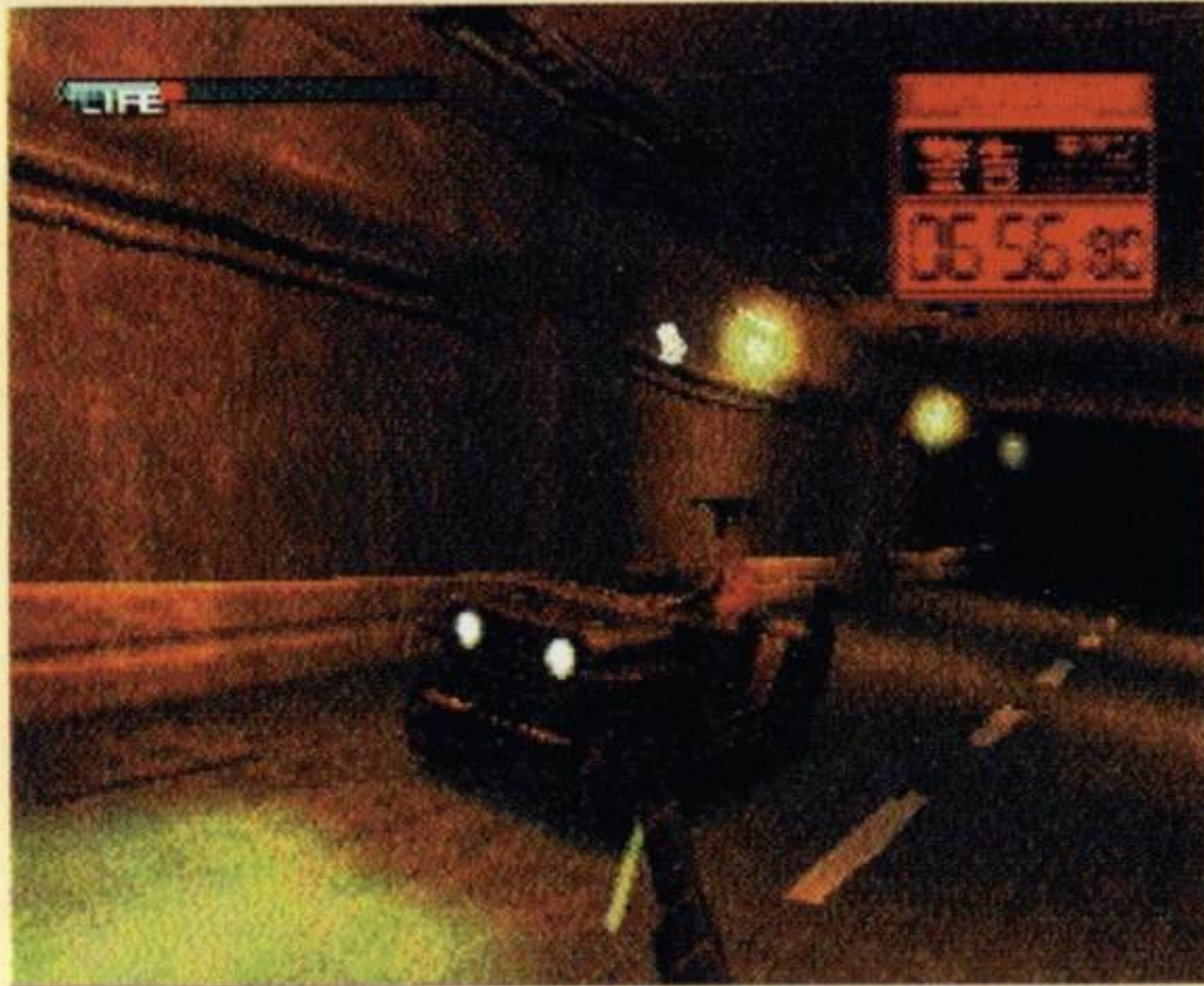
Which one's Meryl?

■ After taking out Ninja you have to find Meryl again. On the middle floor of the building (the one with the toilets) there are

five guards patrolling – one is Meryl in disguise. You've got to kill four of them, leaving Meryl standing. Remember the way she wiggled her ass as she sloped off last time? Well, she's at it again, the minx! Use the first-person view to look at each and kill any that don't wiggle. A good place to hide is down at the west end of the long east-to-west running

corridor – behind the block. Press against the block and slide left and right to spot guards on their way to the loo. Pop into first-person view (or use your Scope) for a closer look, before wasting the non-wigglers.

When Meryl's alone she'll go into the ladies loo (down at the other end of the corridor the unlocked gents). Follow her.



■ **Vulcan Raven. Penultimate boss and bird fancier.** Lay land mines in his path but, for Solid's sake, remember where you've put them.

THE EXTRAS

■ **Metal Gear Solid features certain special objects as rewards for expert players.**

The bandana

■ As a reward for getting the "good" ending (saving Meryl) you get a save which enables you to start the game again with the bandana in your left inventory.

Wearing this bandana gives you infinite ammo for your selected weapon, making the game far more trigger-happy.

The stealth unit

■ Get the bad ending (by failing Revolver's torture test and escaping with the disappointingly male Otacon) and you'll be rewarded with the stealth unit. Enabling this turns Snake into a green shadow, so he can run around undetected. It's great fun walking up to guards, smacking them and watching them run around baffled. For five minutes.

The tuxedo

■ The final trick is to play all the way through *MGS* again with either the bandana or stealth save and you'll be rewarded with a third save. Start the game *again* with this save and when Snake removes his diving gear in the lift (near the start of the game), he'll reveal a rather natty tuxedo which he will continue to wear throughout the game.

The body armour

■ The body armour awaits you on the other side of the steam room in the blast furnace.

The camera

■ Near the first battle with Revolver there's another wall to

blast and two gun turret-guarded rooms. One of them contains the camera. This peculiar device enables you to take still screenshots and save them to a memory card. Useless? Not at all. Hidden throughout *MGS* are ghost images of the game's programmers *only visible* through the camera. Here's where to point the beast in order to capture 12 of them – but there may be more:

1) The heliport

Take a shot of the sleeping guard, top left in the heliport.

2) Holding cell

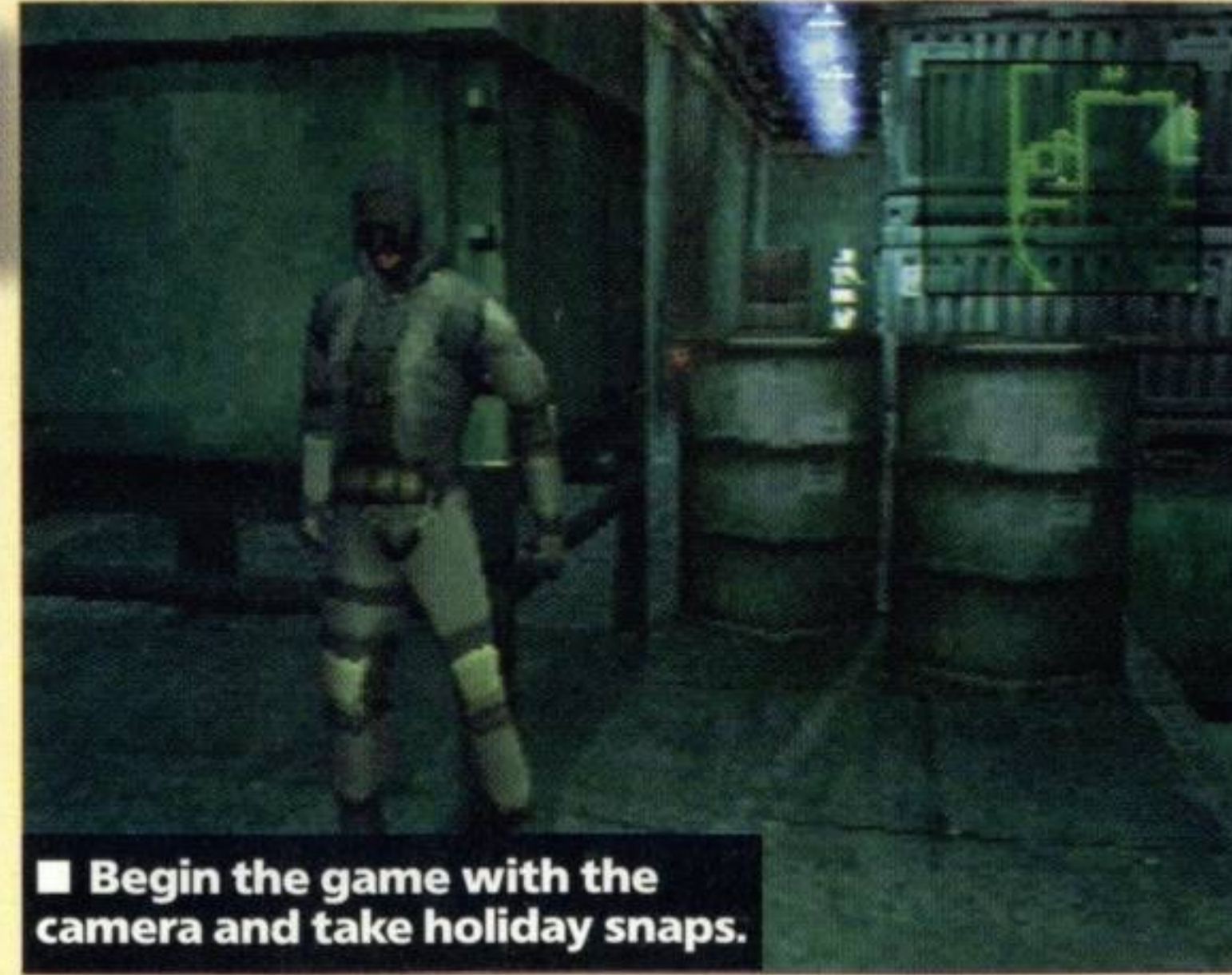
Take a pic of the unconscious naked guard.

3) Holding cell

Take a shot of the dead Darpa chief.

4) False walls

Snap the ArmsTech President while fighting Revolver.



■ **Begin the game with the camera and take holiday snaps.**

5) False walls

And photograph the ArmsTech President dead, too.

6) Tank hanger

Shoot the front of the tank in front of the elevator.

7) Nuclear warhead storage

Take a shot of the missiles in the bottom-left corner.

8) Lab facility

Photograph the Policenauts poster in the room where you fight Ninja.

9) Office B1

Take a snap of the three urinals while the guard is having a whizz.

10) Office B1

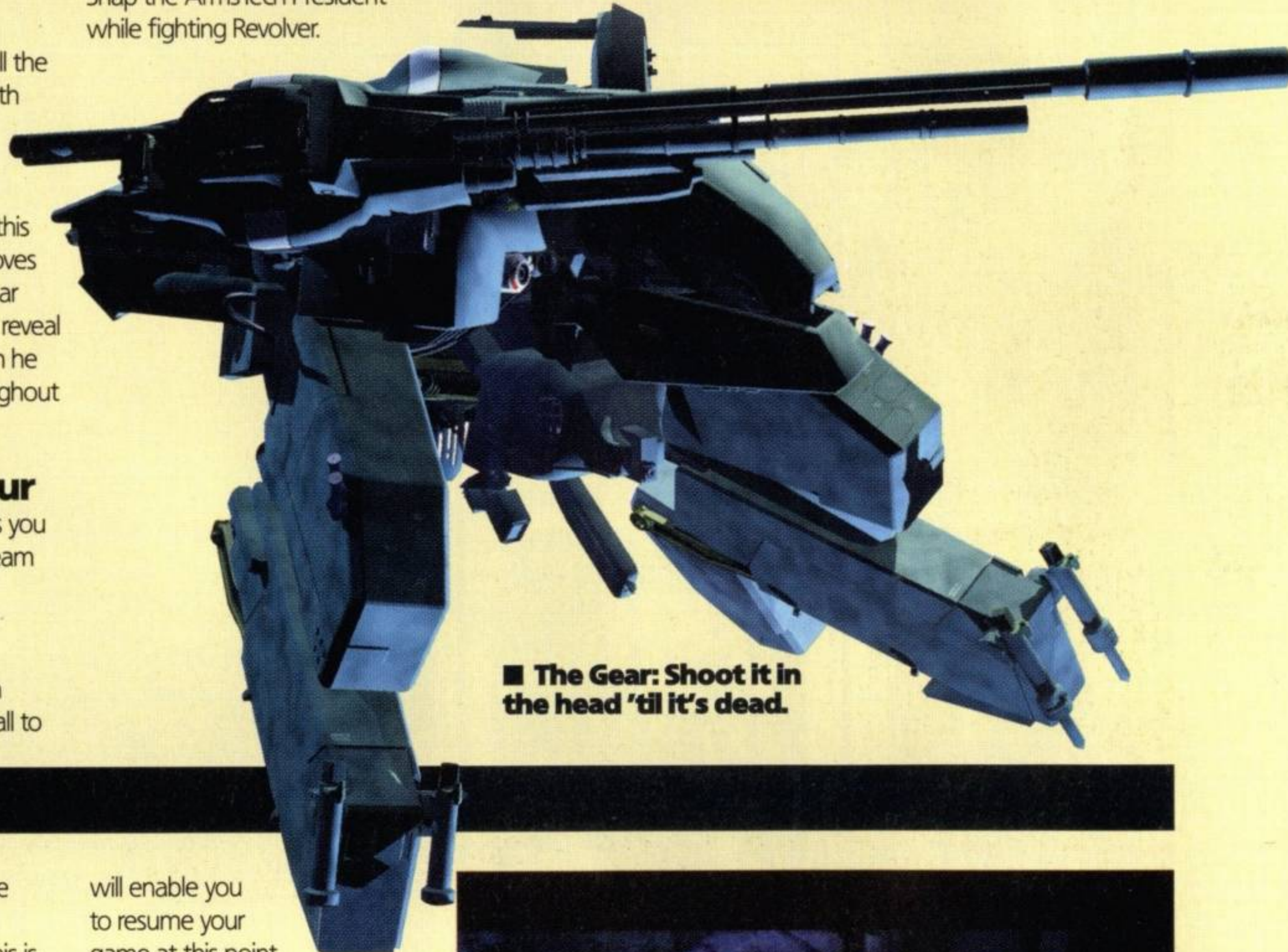
Take a picture of your reflection in the mirror. Brrr...

11) Launch room

Take a pic of *Metal Gear's* arm-based rail gun.

12) Launch room

Take a shot of the world map.



■ **The Gear: Shoot it in the head 'til it's dead.**

METAL GEAR TRICKERY

■ **Handy hints and tricks to aid you along the way.**

Medikits and ammo top-ups

■ *MGS* is ridiculously clever and, depending on how you're doing, it'll deliver helpful top-ups for both health and ammo. The result of this is that there's no way of amassing hundreds of medikits and stacks of ammo – you're only dispatched what the game thinks you need. Sorry.

The medikit trick

■ You can only carry a maximum of three medikits and won't be able to pick up others you find, even if you have a near-empty energy bar. A good trick is to kill a guard (with silenced Socom, sniper rifle, your bare hands or by other secretive means) and, if he drops a medikit, quickly use one of your kits to up your partially (or even fractionally) depleted health bar before picking up the new one. There you go, max health and max medikits.

Stealing land mines

■ Did you know you can pick up the land mines and use them yourself? Enable the mine detector (showing you the position of the mines), then lie flat and slowly crawl up to one. It should disappear and reappear in your inventory.

You can then drop these where you like. They work like C4, only you don't need to detonate them yourself, instead they trigger when touched. Try them during the second Vulcan Raven battle. Neat.

Cardboard boxery

■ Noticed that the cardboard boxes have words written on them? Words like "To The Heliport"? Well, if you get into a cardboard box while its in the back of a truck, you'll be transported to the truck in the location described on the box.

The only real use for the boxes is when – near the end of the game – you have to backtrack for the sniper rifle,

using the heliport box in the truck in the missile silo. It's debatable as to whether this is actually any quicker, though.

More cardboard boxery

■ After getting past the wolves in the cavern and meeting Meryl on the other side, hop into a cardboard box. The little yappy dog will take a leak on the box. True. Now, when you have to backtrack and get the sniper rifle, hop back into this urine-stained box – the scent means that the wolves will leave you alone.

Torture chamber

■ Revolver Ocelot's torture session, about three-quarters of the way through the game, is where the storyline branches, producing the two different endings. If you survive the test, you'll escape with Meryl; if you fail, you make it out with Otacon.

Save your game immediately after defeating Sniper Wolf the first time you play through. This

will enable you to resume your game at this point (just before being captured) once you've finished for the first time. Now you can have a crack at getting the other ending.

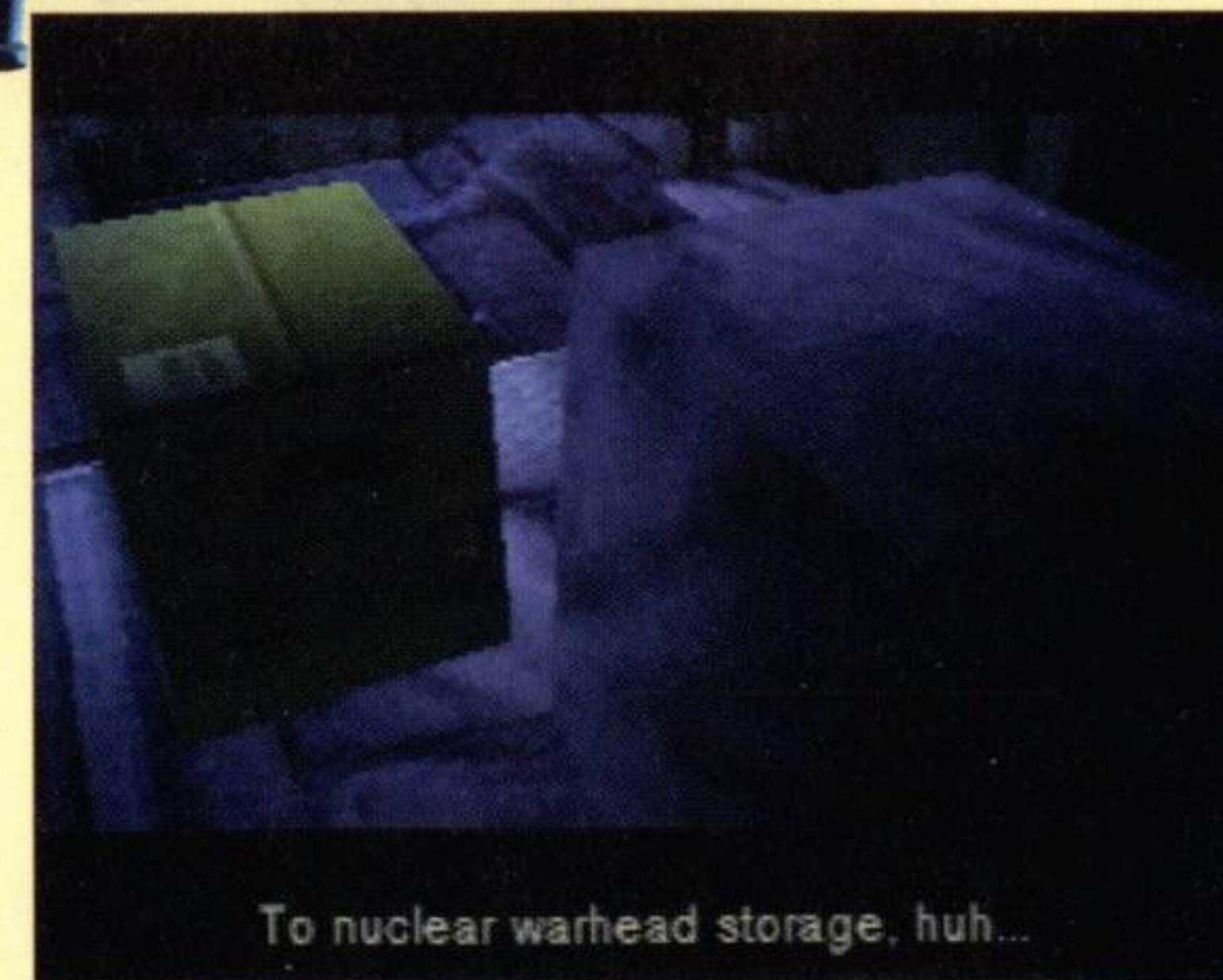
A top trick to surviving the test (should you want to) is to keep hammering the button even after the test has ended. The controls are still read for a couple of seconds after each test, meaning that you can top up your energy surreptitiously.

Blast furnace shortcut

■ You can go in the lift (opposite the entrance) and make it down to the exit, not bothering with the other 99% of the room.

Air duct shortcut

■ You can get to the tank hanger without chaffing the camera and avoiding the two guards on the heliport stairs, by crawling through the duct behind the sleeping guard at the top left.



■ **Engage one of the cardboard boxes in the back of a truck to be transported to the location written on the box. The torture scene is where the ending's split – try out the air-vent shortcut to the hanger.**



■ "Hello, ladies."

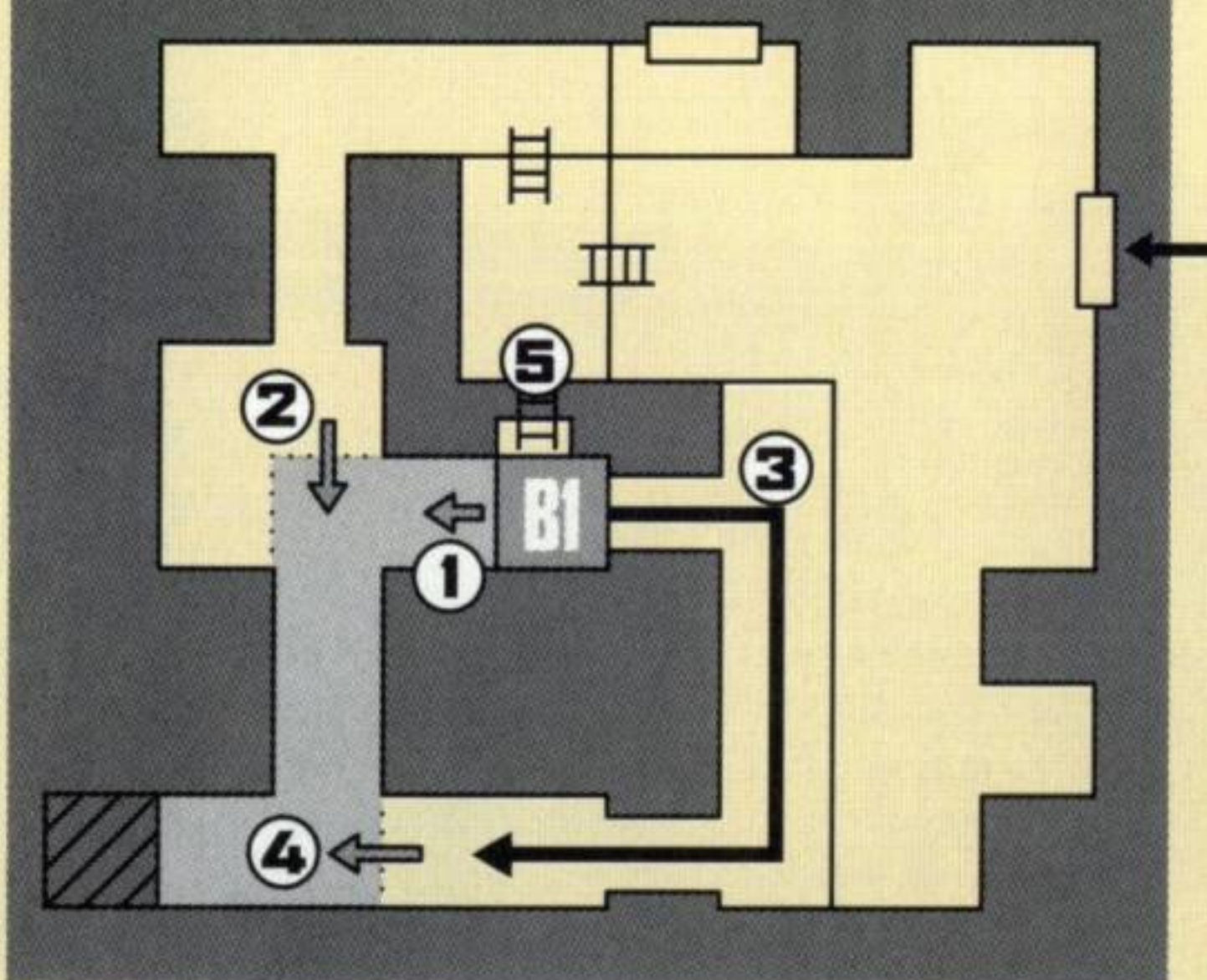
HOW TO LIVE BY THE SWORD IN... LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE

Format: **Nintendo 64** | Publisher: **Nintendo** | Developer: **Nintendo** | Price: **£49.99** | Players: **1** | ★★★★★

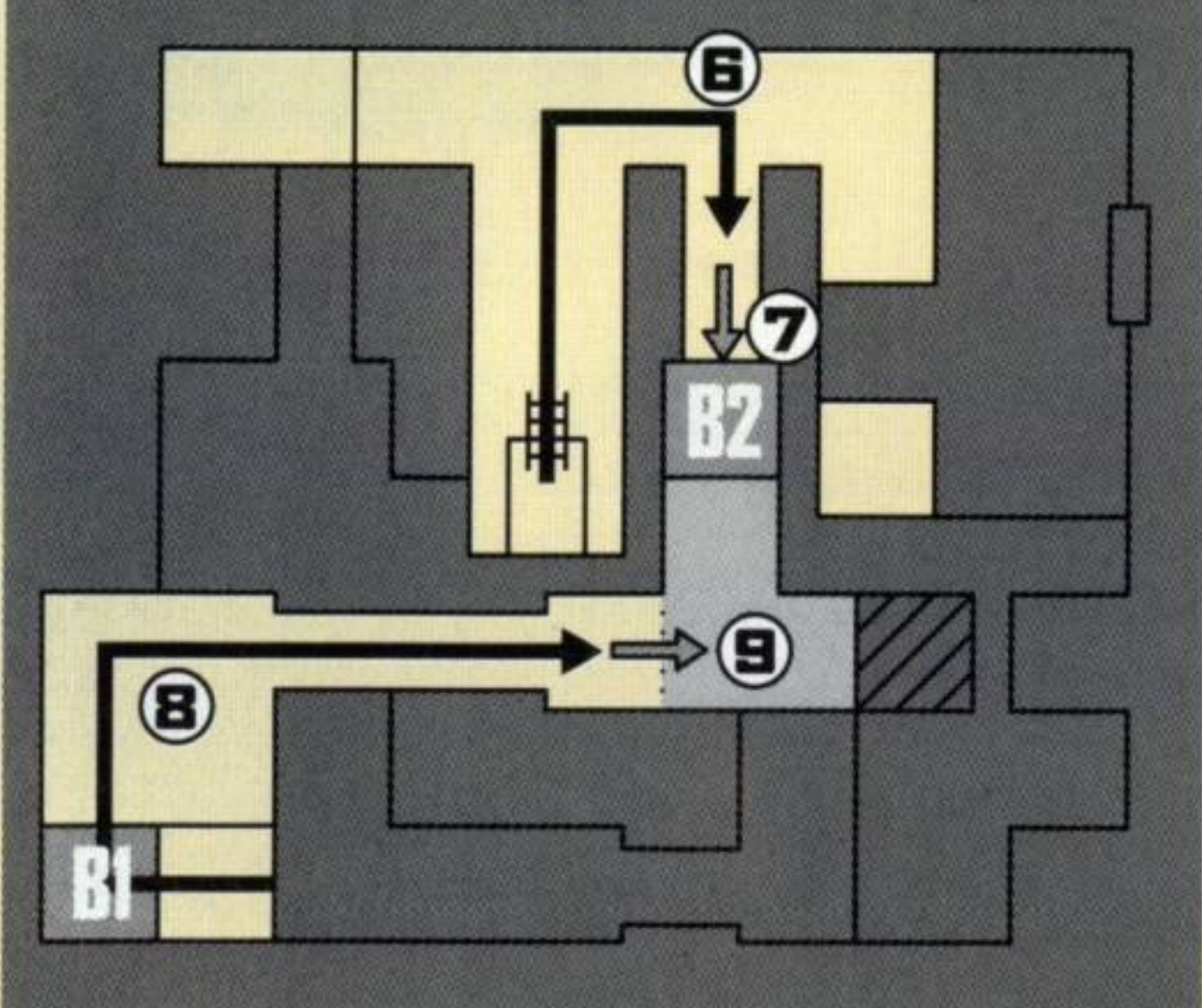
■ The doc's here to cure your most common *Zelda* complaints. Talk to the game characters if you get stuck elsewhere...

TEMPLE QUEST

Floor 1



Floor 2



→ ■ Push block
→ ■ Walk

Q. I'm in the Forest Temple, at the bit where you push all the blocks about. What am I supposed to do?

A. After you've entered this room, killed the green skull, and climbed up the two ladders, take the first left, wander along a longish corridor to the south-west of the room, then look right. You should see an indent in the floor – this is where the block on this level needs to go. You'll need to push the block right up against the south wall, then run back (taking three

right turns) to push it west into the slot (see Floor 1).

You should have passed another ladder on your run back. Climb it, and follow the corridor round to find an arched door and a block in front of you. This block needs to be pushed until it stops. Go back down the ladder and climb up the block you were pushing earlier, then hoist yourself up on to the ledge above. Follow the corridor and you'll find the second block. Push it forward to drop it into another slot in the floor. Now you can climb up into a new room (see Floor 2).



■ Mark's got this picture hanging on his wall. Gimp.



Q. Where's Princess Ruto?

A. There's a bottle near the pillars in Lake Hylia – dive to grab it and you'll see it contains a note from Ruto. Show this to King Zora and he'll let you through to Zora's Fountain where you'll find Ruto. You'll need to give Jabu-Jabu a fish before he lets you in. Wander back to the partly-submerged torch in Zora's Domain and use a bottle to catch one.



Q. I'm completely stuck inside Jabu-Jabu's belly. What's Princess Ruto for?

A. Follow Ruto and keep talking to her until she lets you pick her up. Carry her through the door behind you and keep going until you reach a stretch of water. Jump in, throw Ruto across to the other side, then press the switch, lifting the level of the water so you can jump out and carry on.

Eventually, you'll reach a series of branching corridors. To activate the switch at the end of the right-hand corridor, just run over it carrying the Princess, and kill all the enemies in the next room to get the boomerang. The switch at the end of the left corridor won't stay down, so leave Ruto sitting on it as you run through the door. Once you've killed all the tonsil-type baddies, you can find the door to the first boss by going back to the room with the holes and falling through a newly accessible hole in the corner.



Q. How do I get the horse?

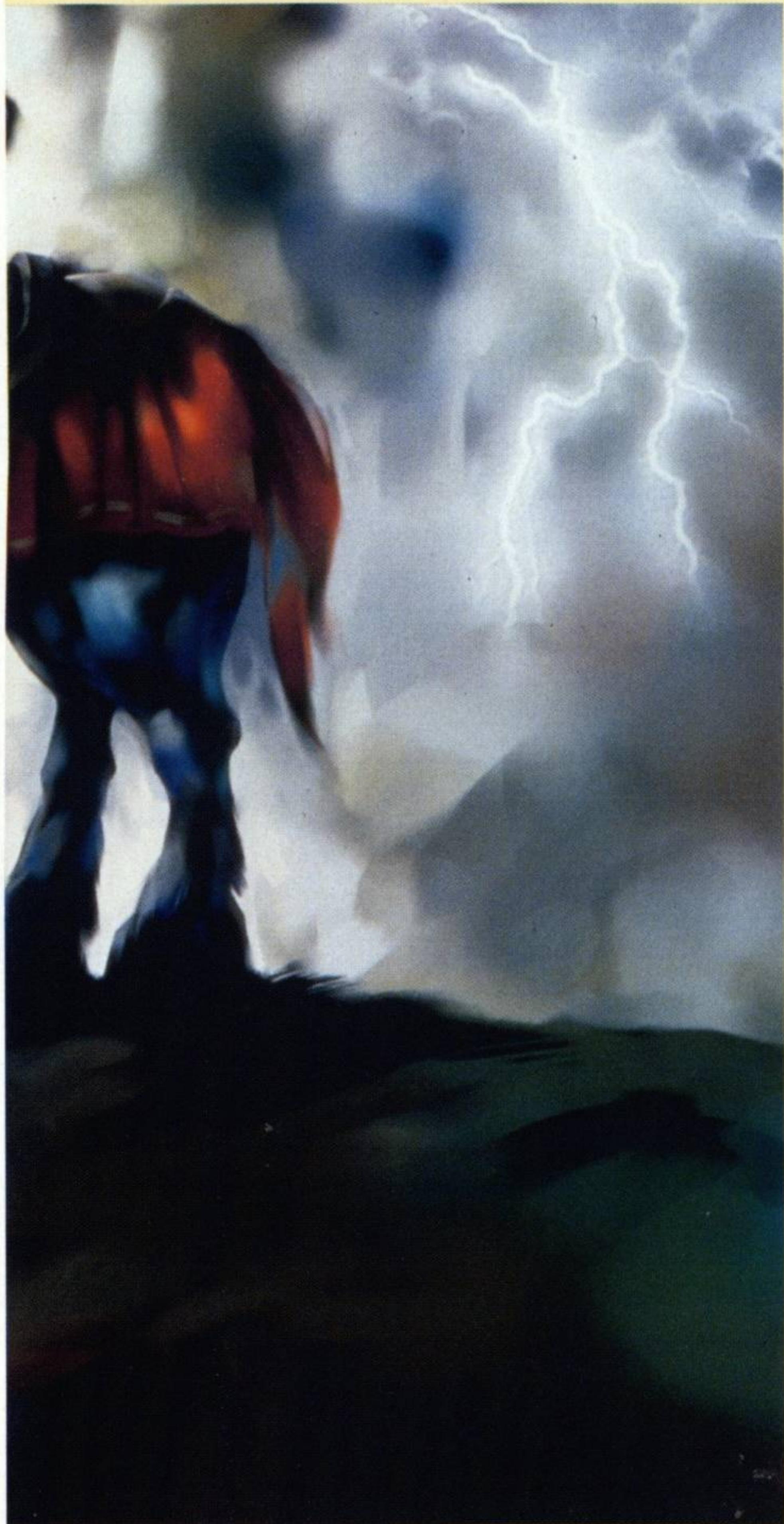
A. You'll have to wait until you've collected all three Spiritual Stones and warped forward in time. Once that's done, head back to the ranch, pay Ingo the necessary Rupees, then play Epona's Song to identify your horse friend. Mount her, ride around for a little bit, then use the Z-button to target Ingo and talk to him. All you need to do

Ocarina of Time

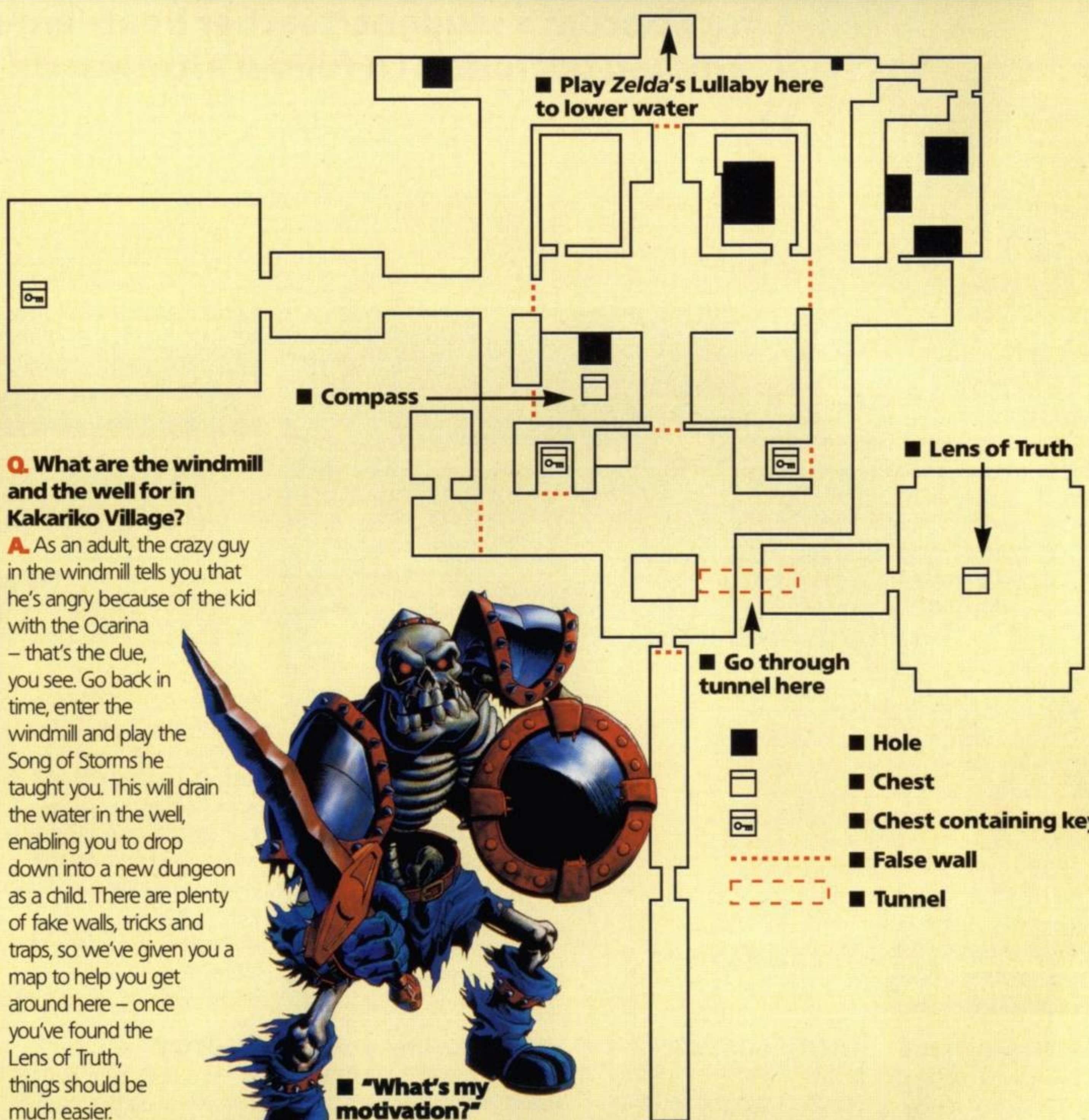
Written by | **Mark Green**



■ Zero fillings.



WATERWORKS



Q. What are the windmill and the well for in Kakariko Village?

A. As an adult, the crazy guy in the windmill tells you that he's angry because of the kid with the Ocarina – that's the due, you see. Go back in time, enter the windmill and play the Song of Storms he taught you. This will drain the water in the well, enabling you to drop down into a new dungeon as a child. There are plenty of fake walls, tricks and traps, so we've given you a map to help you get around here – once you've found the Lens of Truth, things should be much easier.

now is win in both of the races he challenges you to and the horse is yours. To escape from the ranch whip Epona with A and jump over any of the perimeter fences.

Q. Sheikh's told me to go to Kakariko Village and learn a new skill. Where is the Village?

A. If you've visited Dampé's hut in the graveyard, you'll know that the old man's waiting for you in his grave – it's the one on the raised section to the left of the entrance, with flowers lying next to it. Grab and pull it from behind, and enter the hole that appears. Inside, Dampé will challenge you to keep up with him, which shouldn't be too difficult, and

you'll receive the hookshot as a reward. Now run out of the room and get rid of the blue block barring your way by playing the Song of Time. You can use the hookshot to pull yourself up to the top of the tree in the Sacred Forest Meadow (where Saria taught you her song as a child).



Q. How do I travel back in time?

A. After you've rescued Saria from the Forest Temple, go back



■ Pull on Darunia's statue to get to Death Mountain.

to where you grabbed the Master Sword in the Temple of Time and Sheikh will tell you everything you need to know.

Q. Navi's hinting about the cloud over Death Mountain, but when I go inside the mountain, I get killed by the heat. What am I doing wrong?

A. You're don't need to actually go inside Death Mountain just yet. Head to Goron City instead, and place a bomb in the path of

the rock that's rolling around on the second level. This "rock" is actually a young Goron, who'll cry for a bit and then open up Darunia's throne room. Head in there and pull on the statue to find the secret entrance to Death Mountain. You'll also get your hands on a heat-resistant tunic, which should stop you from being microwaved inside the Mountain Crater. Use the hookshot on the hanging section of the broken bridge to pull yourself over the gap.



■ "That's the beauty of gas."

Q. How do I light all of the torches after warping to the Shadow Temple?

A. You'll need the Din's Fire spell from the Great Fairy in Hyrule: as a child, walk from Hyrule Market and climb up the vine, drop down behind the gate, and place a bomb beside the rock in the "dead end". Once you have the spell, stand in the centre of the torches and use it.

■ "I am pure evil."



HOW TO RIVAL

GET TO MAXIMUM GRIPS WITH...

Written by | **Arron Taylor**

SCHOOLS: UNITED BY FATE

Format: **PlayStation** | Publisher: **Virgin** | Developer: **Capcom** | Price: **£39.99** | Players: **1-2** | ★★☆☆

Gather round in a circle and shout "Scrap!" until the dinner ladies arrive, as we present a lesson in the art of fighting for Capcom's student/teacher beat-'em-up. Questions on chicken buffering to follow afterwards.



KEY

- LP.....light punch
- HP.....heavy punch
- LK.....light kick
- HK.....heavy kick
- b, f, u, d.....back, forward, up, down
- qcf.....quarter circle forward (d, d/f, f)
- qcb.....quarter circle back (d, d/b, b)
- (**)...Use the bracketed move as an alternative

VITAL FEATURES



■ Sakura performs a rather useless tardy counter from a distance.

Most beat-'em-ups include in-game features and language that are common to a variety of other games. Counters, reversals, parry openers, linkers, tardy counters, and even chicken buffering all apply to one beat-'em-up or another – and indeed to real-life fighting. Find yourself a martial arts expert and get them to give you a lesson or two. Not only must you learn what each one of these arcane terms means, but you must also learn how to perform the associated moves at a moment's notice. What follows is our guide to the most instantly useful fighting manoeuvres and practice modes.

Text-book combos

These are combos which follow a set pattern, normally two light attacks and a heavy attack, followed by either forward + heavy or a special move. Although this is a good description of this basic combo, it doesn't necessarily apply to all the characters in the game.

Tardy counter

If you want to attack your opponent, but you find that you are constantly blocking, try a tardy counter attack. When you see the block diamond appear, simply perform a special move or a Burning

Vigour attack. This will come out very quickly, and will nearly always hit your opponent.



■ Team up attacks inflict massive damage.

Team-up attack

This involves your partner coming to your aid to help attack your opponent. To do a team-up move, press LP+LK or HP+HK. This attack will either cause massive damage to your opponent, restore your own energy, or build up your Burning Vigour meter.

LEARNING MODE

RESULTS					
LESSON 1-3	Energy	Accu.	Agil.	Total	
PUNCHES	100	100	100	S	
Mastery Percentage				3%	
	1	2	3	4	5

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls: welcome to the Learning Mode. Here you will learn all the finer arts of *Rival Schools*. After you complete your chosen lesson, the game will rate your performance in the following three areas, all on a 0-100 scale.

Most of the details are explained in the game, but some things can be confusing:

Energy

This is how many buttons it took you to do the move. To get 100 here, minimise the number of keystrokes. If you get 98 or 99 instead of 100, just try again, sometimes the Learning Mode thinks there were too many moves, when there really were not.

Accuracy

You will have 10 seconds (or 20 on some) to complete each move yelled out. If you fail to do so in that time period, your score will suffer.

Agility

This is how much time the move took you. There's a target time for each exercise, and if you're over it, this score will suffer. It is different to Accuracy (above), because you also receive a letter grade, similar to those that you would receive in school. The Ratings are S, then A through to E. You gain an S grade for scoring all 100s; A, B and C are "pass" grades; D and E are "fail" grades.

You will also see a Mastery Level rating. This score is related to the percentage of levels you complete at S grade.

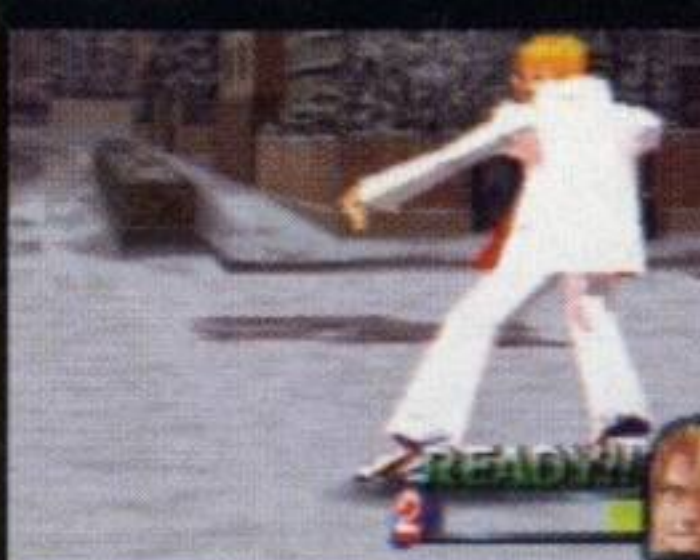
LEARNING TIP

Some of the moves will leave you "facing" the wrong way but, as soon as you execute the move (after the big red circle appears over the screen), you can keep entering button strokes without apparently causing detriment to your score. Use this facility to get yourself facing the right way for the next move (during the current move) and you can save yourself a few seconds.

SUMMARY LESSONS

Here you'll find nine lessons that are summaries of past moves. The teacher will shout out a seemingly random set of previously executed moves and you are expected to re-execute them. Actually, each Summary lesson has sequences that the teacher will choose from. These sequences are important to learn, as only by picking up the patterns will you manage to get an S rating.

QUICK TIP



Fight the real boss

When you get to the seventh fight (normally your last), defeat your opponents with a team-up super and you will go on to fight the real boss. After beating him you will receive a different ending.

QUICK TIP

Secret characters

To unlock the secret characters (who are Hinata in a swimsuit, Natsu in a school uniform, Tiffany in a school uniform and Keiko in pyjamas), simply beat the Story mode with Hinata, Natsu, Tiffany and Keiko.

ADVANCED SKILLS

Once you've got the basics sorted, you'll need to learn the advanced skills. These are what separates the ordinary player from the expert. Combos come in two sorts, chain and air. Chain combos are not, in the strictest sense, combos, as they can be broken, but they are still important to learn. Air combos are often called juggles, and are a great way of scoring free hits on an airborne opponent.



Chain combo

This is a string of moves which, although not completely unblockable, fit together nicely and will keep your opponent on the back foot. Every character has several chain combos, so learning them all will take you quite a while.

Air combos

Certain moves will catapult your opponent high into the air. This is your chance for an air combo. By tapping Down, then Up quickly, you can jump amazingly high. Use this to hit your opponent before they land. With careful timing and use of air-supers you can get over ten hits in an air combo.

CHAIN GANG

The key to winning at *Rival Schools* is to get your chain combos together. Rather than printing a boring move list, we thought we'd bring you some cracking combos for each character. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it should get you started down the correct road.



Kyosuke

- LP, LP, HP, f+HP (b+HP)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, f+HK
- d+HK, fdf+LP(HP), qcf+LK(HK)
- d+HK, qcf+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, f+HK, fdf+LP(HP), qcf+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, df+HK, u, LK, LP, LP, LK, qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, df+HK, u, LP, HP



Shoma

- LP, LP, HK, f+HP
- LP, LP, HK, f+HK
- LP, LP, HP, b+HP
- LP, LP, HK, df+HP, u, LP, LK, qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LP, LK, HP, f+HP



Batsu

- LP, LP, HP, df+HK
- LP, LP, HK, f+HK
- LP, LP, HP, b+HP, qcf+LP(HP) or fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HK, f+HP, qcf+LP(HP) or fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HK, df+HP, u, LP, LK, LP
- LP, LP, HK, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, LK, HP, f+HP



Natsu

- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HP, qcb+LP, u, LP, LK, b+HK, LP, LK, b+HK, LP, LK
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LK, b+HK, LP, LK, LP, LK, b+HK, LP, LK, b+HK, f+HP



Hinata

- LP, LP, HK, f+HK
- b+HK, fdf+LP(HP) or qcb+LK(HK)
- df+HK, u, LK, LP, LP, LK, f+HP
- LP, LP, HK, df+HK



Roberto

- LP, LP, HK, df+HK, u, LP, LK, LP, qcf+LP(HP) or fdf+LK(HK) or qcf+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, b+HK, qcf+LK(HK) or fdf+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, df+HK, u, LP, LK, LP, HP, f+HK
- HP, f+HK



Roy

- f+HP, qcf+LP(HP) or qcb+LP(HP) or fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HK, f+HK
- LP, LP, HK, b+HK
- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, any finisher listed above in top combo
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, LK, HP, f+HP



Tiffany

- qcf+LP(HP), LP
- d+HK, df+HK
- LP, LP, HK, f+HK
- LP, LP, f+LP, HP, b+HP or f+HP
- LP, LP, HK
- LP, LP, f+LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LK, LP, LK, HP
- LP, LP, f+LP, HP, fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, f+LP, HK, b+HK, qcb+LP(HP) or fdf+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HP, f+HP



Boman

- LP, LP, HK, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LK, HK, qcb+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, HP, f+HP
- LP, LP, HP, f+HK, qcf+LP(HP), qcf+LP(HP)



Edge

- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, b+HK, f+HK, f+HK
- LP, LP, HK, f+HP
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LK, LP, LK, f+HK
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LK, B, df+HP



Akira

- LP, LP, HP, f+HP
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, LK
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LK, LP, LP, HK or f+HK or HP



Gan

- LP, LP, d+HP, f+HP, qcb+LP(HP), LK, LK
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LK, qcf+HK
- LP, LP, HK, qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, d+HP, qcf+LP(HP)



Kyoko

- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, fdf+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, df+HK, u, LP, LP, LP, LK, HP, qcb+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, df+HK, u, LP, LK, f+HK, LK, LP, HP, qcb+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, b+HK, qcb+LK(HK) or fdf+LK(HK)



Hideo

- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, HP, f+HP
- LP, LP, HP, b+HP, qcb+LK(HK) or fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LP, LP, HP, qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, qcb+LK(HK)



Raizo

- LP, LP, HP, qcf+LP(HP) or fdf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HP
- LP, LP, HK, f+HK
- LP, LP, HP, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, LK, qcf+LP(HP)



Hyo

- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, qcb+LK(HK) or fdf+LP(HP) or qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, b+HP or fdf+LP(HP) or qcb+LK(HK) or qcf+LP(HP)
- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, df+HP, u, LK, LP, LP, LK, HP, qcf+LP(HP) or qcb+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HP, b+HK, f+HP, qcf+LP(HP), qcf+LP(HP), LP or fdf+LP(HP) or qcb+LK(HK)

There is no picture of Sakura here as she isn't a *Rival Schools* character. She does, however, appear in the *Rival Schools Evolutions* disc, and is a very strong character. She came from the *Street Fighter* series, and is a massive fan of Ryu's.

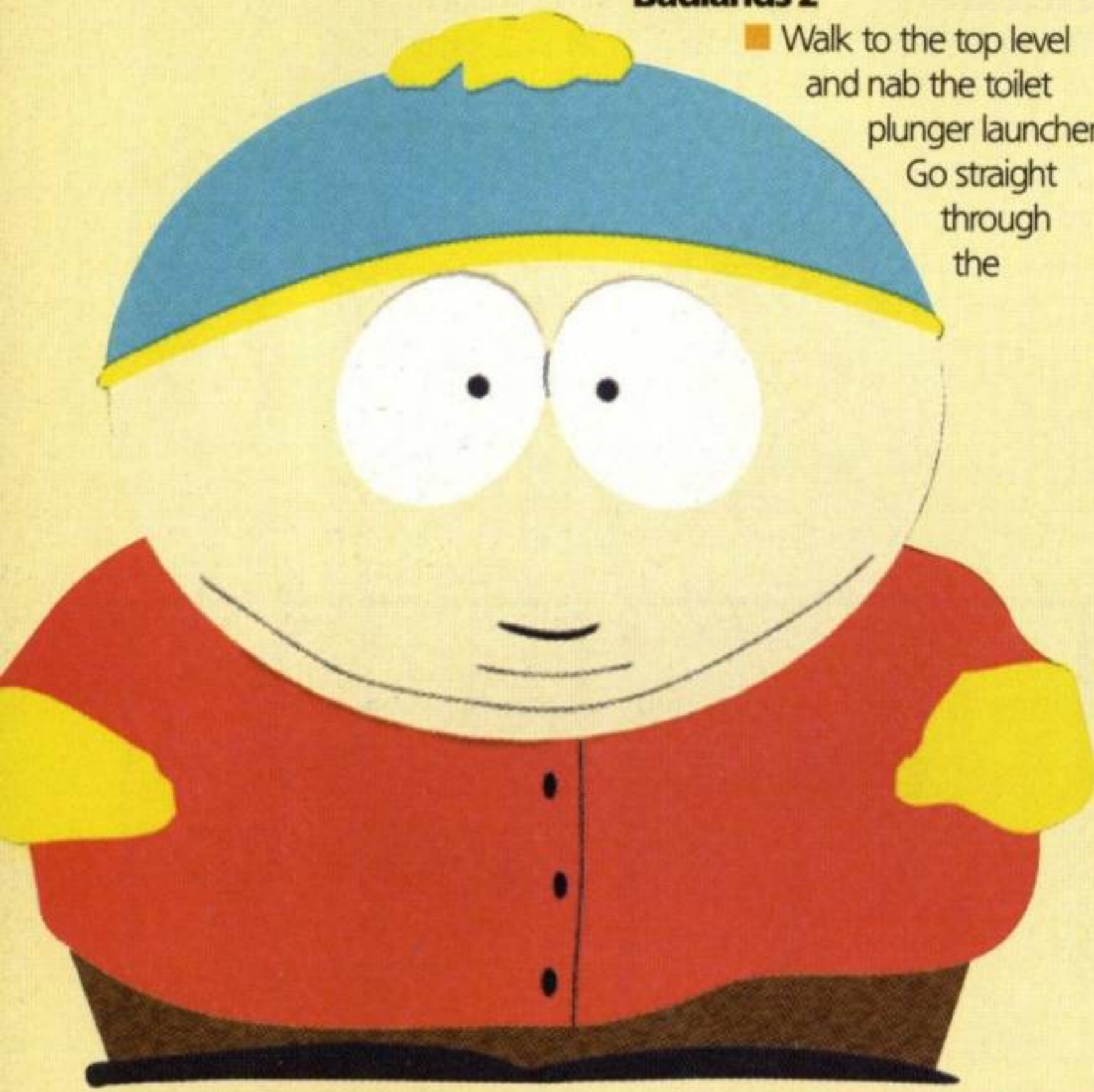
Sakura

- LP, LP, HP, f+HP, qcf+LP(HP) or qcb+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, f+HK or df+HP
- LP, LP, HK, df+HK, u, LP, LK, LP, LP, qcf+LP(HP) or qcb+LK(HK)
- LP, LP, HK, df+HK, u, LK, LP, LK, LP, f+HK

HOW TO UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF... SOUTH PARK

The definitive guide to *South Park*'s hidden treasures.

■ How do the cast of *South Park* smell?



Badlands

■ Walk off the upper level, head down next to the pool and find the lone flower by the wall. Walk through the normal-looking wall behind the flower, then go through the portal. You'll find a cow launcher, sponge-dart gun, football pads and sponge darts.

Badlands 2

■ Walk to the top level and nab the toilet plunger launcher. Go straight through the

plunger to the transporter. You'll find a Super Sniper chicken, cow launcher and ammo, and receive a doubled firing rate.

Dugout

■ Walk down to the lower level to the small rock and keep on going. You'll find a cow launcher.

The Hill

■ From Badlands, walk up the blocks. Go to the left ladder and then to the wall. Walk off the snow by the wall. You'll find a Super Sniper chicken, Terrance and Phillip farting dolls, and some sponge dart ammo.

The Hill 2

■ Walk up the wood blocks and go to the left ladder. Walk to the wall, and when you get there walk off at a steep angle so you are just about touching the wall. You'll find a Super Sniper chicken. Take a right and go through the transporter. Take another right and you'll find some Phillip and Terrance farting dolls.

Neighbours

■ In Badlands, walk to any of

the houses. Go up the ladder and jump on the chimney. You'll find a Super Sniper chicken, Terrance and Phillip farting dolls and ammo.

The Ravine

■ Walk to the hole and drop down to where the Cheesy Poofs are. Then take a left and walk into the wall. You'll find a cow launcher.

The Ravine #2

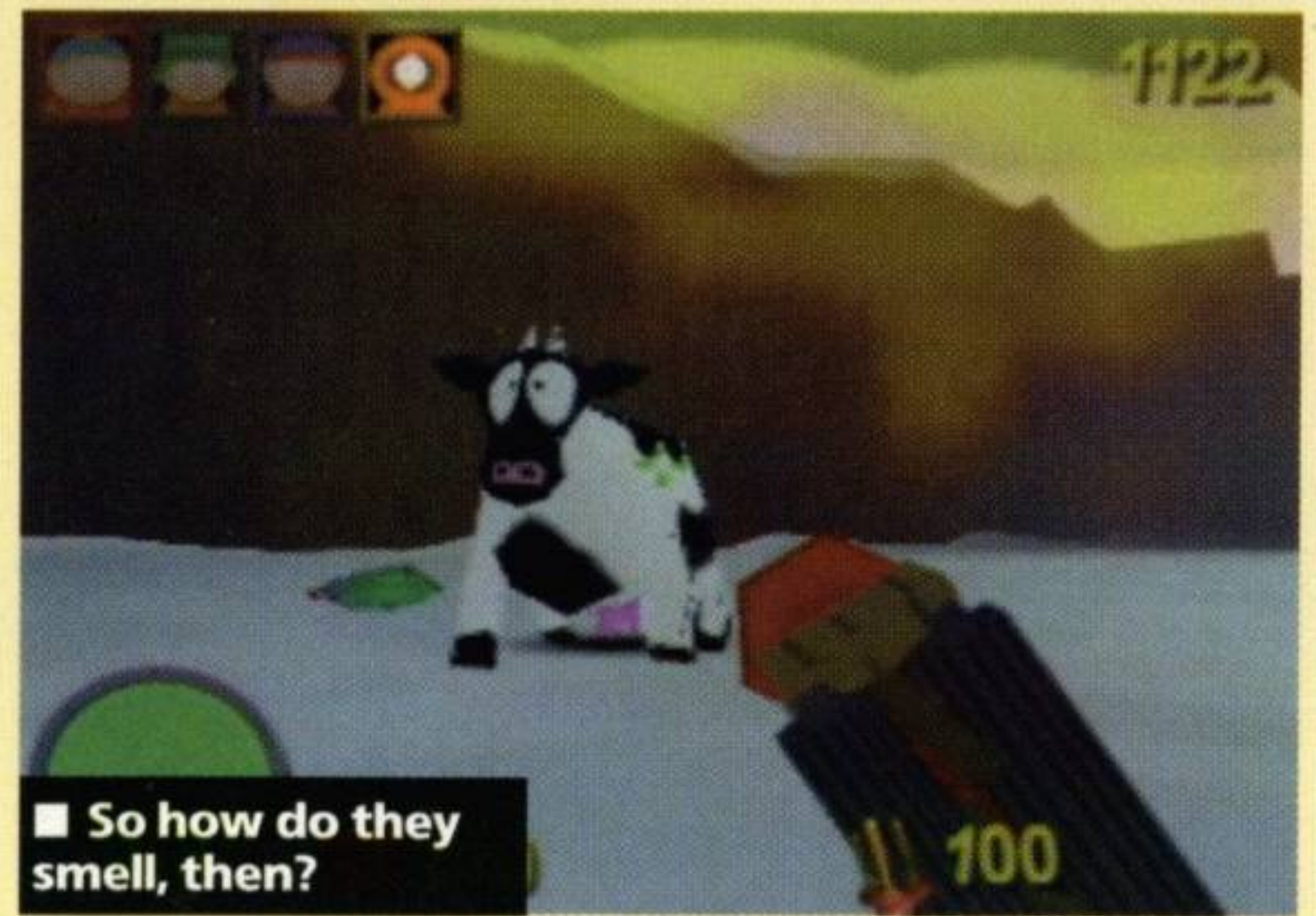
■ Look for two flowers next to the wall – you can walk through the normal-looking wall behind the flowers. Here you'll find the Warpo Ray and some appropriate ammo.

Floating Terrance fart dolls

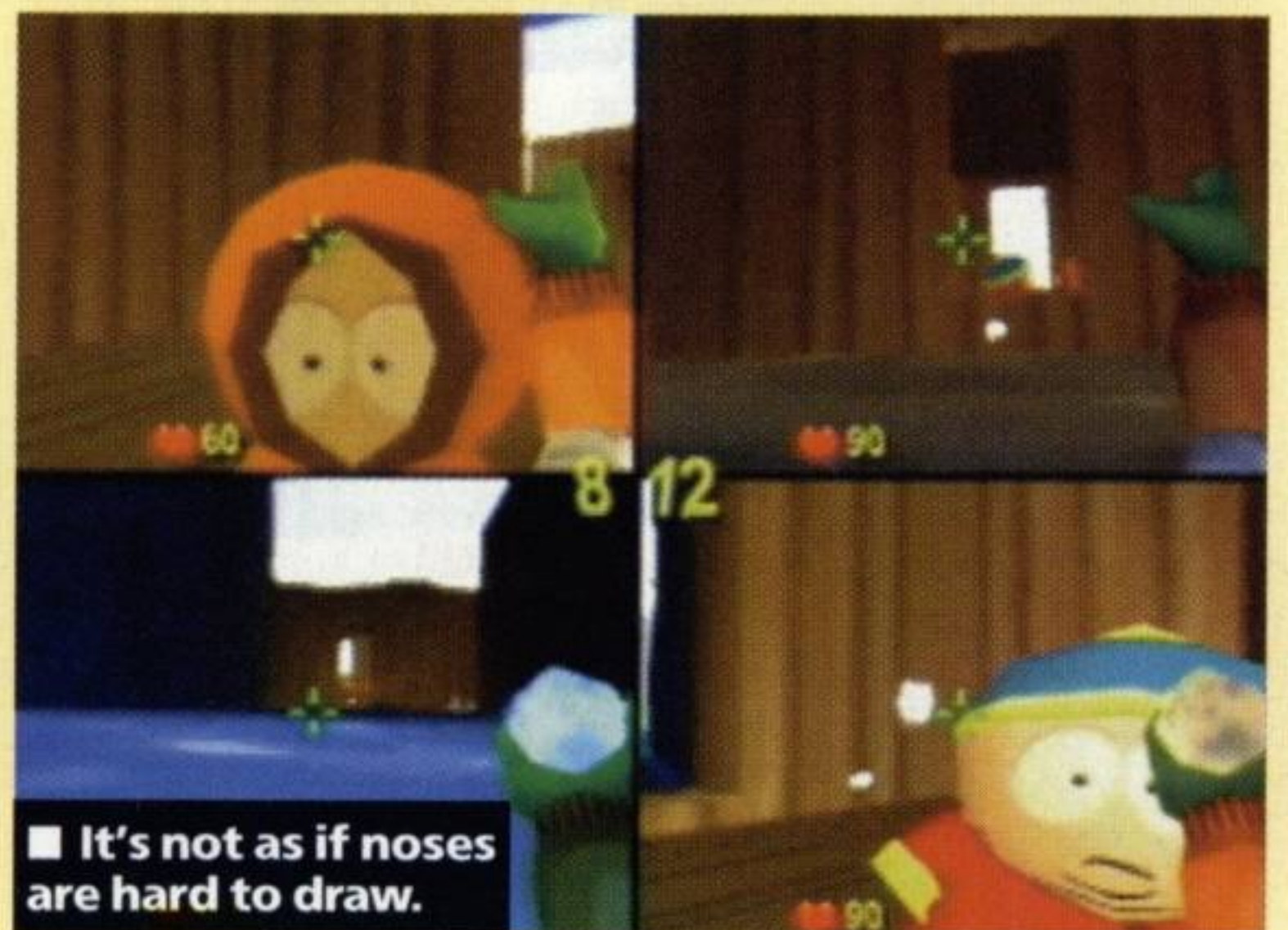
■ To get Floating Terrance fart dolls, go to episode three (where you fight cows and UFOs). Pick up some fart dolls, and then when you see a UFO dropping cows, press Up to change to the red Terrance doll. Head under the UFO, look up and lob a fart doll. It will stick to the UFO but it won't explode. Shoot down the UFO and you will leave the doll hanging mysteriously in mid-air.



■ They've got no noses, you see.



■ So how do they smell, then?



■ It's not as if noses are hard to draw.

IT'S EASY WHEN YOU KNOW HOW!

NOW PLAYING

TUROK 2

Format: **Nintendo 64**



■ *Turok 2* – the greatest excuse to blast dinosaurs into hell and beyond since the cast of *Jurassic Park* got a bit rowdy at the premiere party.



How to ride the rhino dino and gain invincibility.

Here are the cheats from last issue. You'll need to use these before you can do any of the tricks at the end. Type these codes in at the Cheat menu:

- BEWAREOBLIVIONISAT
- HAND Big cheat (invincibility and all weapons)
- LIGHTSOUT Blackout mode
- UBERNOODLE Big head mode
- HOLASTICKBOY Stick men mode
- STOMPEN Big hand and feet mode
- PIPSQUEAK Tiny enemy mode
- IGOTABFA Pen and ink mode
- WHATSATEXTUREMAP Weird colours
- AAHGOO

- Zack's face appears on the gold crystals
- HEERESJUAN
- Juan's face appears on the red crystals
- FROOTSTRIPE Rainbow colours

When you first start Level Two, you'll see a pen containing a rhino-like dinosaur creature. Here's how you can ride it even after you've nuked it into oblivion:

- Put in the "Big cheat" code.
- Warp to Level Two.
- Use the nuke to shoot the rhino creature.
- Before it blows, clamber on top of it and don't move.
- When the nuke explodes, move away and you'll see air filling the space where the dinosaur should have been reduced to lumps of meat.
- Now walk around. The guns should still be on your shoulders and you should still

be sitting high up in the air – but with no dino.

- To get rid of the guns head back into the little barn where the dino was, or go to the barn near the Save point.
- You should now be able to walk as fast as Turok, and even to climb up ladders.

Try this next odd little trick to gain invincibility.

- When you find a Save point, enter but then exit.
- Find a dinosaur by the Save point, but don't move – let him kill you instead. You should then fall back into the Save point. Now exit.
- When you come out, your health will be zero but none of your enemies will be able to harm you. You will remain invincible until you pick up more health – doing this returns you to normal.

For invincibility in multi-player, pick a level with portals and scorpion launchers.

- Get the other player to nab a scorpion launcher and meet you at the portal.
- Stand directly in front of the portal and make the other player drain all but the last drop of your energy and then shoot you into the portal with the scorpion launcher.
- Your energy should be reduced to zero but, as before, you'll be invincible until you pick up any more.



■ They say personality counts. Up to a point.



WIPEOUT 2097/XL

■ At the main menu type:

XTRACK	All tracks
XTEAM	Play as the Piranha team
XCLASS	Bonus Phantom-class vehicle
FRAMERATE	Display frame rate
RUSH	Silly ships

■ While paused, type:

PSYPROTECT	Infinite energy
PSYTICKER	Infinite time
PSYMEGA	Infinite weapons
PSYRAPID	Machine gun

■ Earn a downright vicious early win. At the beginning of the race, before you cross the start line, turn around and shoot your opponents until you're the only one left. You can now come in first every time.



■ Recreate the effects of *Wipeout* at home by lying on the kitchen lino (for the chequered floor effect) and propelling yourself onto the hall carpet past the dog. Or just play the thing for real.

SETTLERS 3

■ To aid quick building, press F12 to pause and advance the game one minute. Continue pressing F12 to speed up the in-game time.

X GAMES PRO BOARDER

■ Enter these passwords:

- ⊗, ⊙, ⊗, ⊕, ⊕, ⊙ Unlock all normal circuits
- ⊕, ⊗, ⊙, ⊗, ⊕, ⊙ Play as Ollie B
- ⊕, ⊗, ⊙, ⊗, ⊕, ⊙ Unlock the super circuit and secret boarders

RALLY CROSS 2

■ Enter these codes at the New Season Enter Name screen for access to the bonus tracks:

- SISAO Oasis track
- ELGNUJ Jungle track
- FOSTER Little woods track
- NIVEK Frozen trail track
- MIT Dusty road track
- KCIN Rock creek track
- CIRE Dry humps track
- BSIRHC Hillside track

BATTLETANX

■ Shoot the UFO in the multi-player Area 51 level to get a cool gyrating lightshow. There should be another UFO between the upper left and right corners. Shoot that up and drive into the light show to warp between the two points. To get better multi-player weapons, collect 15 or more of any weapon (other than grenades) and press A and B at the same time.

You can do some weird stuff with the camera as well, once you have earned Annihilation Mode. Start a two-player game on any team or clan of your choosing and enable two computers. Play the game normally, but have one side lose its entire team very quickly. When the screen says "Loser" it should stand still. Now you can use the analogue stick to take a tour of the streets, follow the other player, or just watch the action as it develops.

■ And the level passwords? Enter these at the Password screen:

Level 1	FRHBWNTNTK
Level 2	LHTTTBKRLS
Level 3	RCJRWPCLGM
Level 4	VVSLGGVHRF
Level 5	LPFFLNHJJF
Level 6	CTMGPRWGBH
Level 7	HPJMKGMCIJ
Level 8	WHSNKNFRGS
Level 9	CRPHGCTKP
Level 10	HHRBKPVVWB
Level 11	WFHMKCFVLB
Level 12	SPLJTLRFS
Level 13	LTSLSGNGS

■ And for access to the all-women Storm Ravens game, with lasers and cloak power-ups, enter **WMNRSRTR** as a password.

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HOW TO GET POWERED UP IN... STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON



■ The legendary TIE fighter, which bears an uncanny resemblance to the Remington Super Hairdryer 5000.

Need more power or ammo? We know where to find them.

Defection at Correllia

■ After you finish the bombing run at the Tech Centre, make your way back to the Capital Tower. On your way, you'll come across several cities. The first houses a maze-like structure toward the back end. In the back of the maze is a yellow box with a red line through it – a power-up box. Swoop on through the back of the maze to reach some advanced torpedoes.

Jade moon

■ When you fly through the trench on your way to the Shield Generator, take the left fork first.

Blow up the building at the end – it contains the advanced Shield technology.

Imperial construction facility

■ In the construction facility, there are two landing platforms; the first has an AT-AT in front of it and the second has a shuttle parked on it. Fly behind the landing platform with the shuttle. There are two storage containers: one on the left and one on the right. Blow up the one on the left to reveal advanced bombs.

Prisons of Kessel

■ On the second Kessel mission

you have to rescue prisoners. The power-up is close to the second prison. Once you have begun the second rescue, fly close to the surrounding cliffs and watch your radar. You should notice two red stationary dots in what appears to be a small indent in the top of the cliff. The dot on the right is a missile launcher, the left dot is a bunker full of Seeker torpedoes.

Blockade on Chandrilla

■ From the hover train, fly to the other side of the city. You should see an AT-ST shooting at three towers. Destroy the AT-ST to reveal another advanced-bomb power-up.

Raid on Sullust

■ On Sullust you will see a central landing platform. On the opposite side of the platform from where you started out, there is a large factory building – destroy this building to pick up Seeker torpedoes.

Moff Seerdon's revenge

■ After destroying the Imperials, turn around and fly straight to the back of the city. You should notice a large Rebel building and a few Imperial bunkers. Destroy the Imperial bunkers and you'll find that one of them contains Seeker cluster missiles for you to collect.

PC

DELTA FORCE

■ Press ~ to call up the console window, then type your desired code and press Enter.

- IWILLSURVIVE
God mode
- TAKEITTOHELIMIT
Never out of ammo
- HITMEWITHYOURBEST SHOT
Smarter computer
- CLOSETOYOU
Invisible to the enemy
- RAINDROPSKEEP FALLINGONMYHEAD
Artillery (five shots)

PLAYSTATION

APOCALYPSE

■ Pause the game, hold L1 and press:

- ⊙, ⊙, Up, Down, ⊙, ⊙
All weapons
- ⊙, ⊙, ⊙
Checkpoint select
- ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙
Infinite lives
- Down, Up, Left, Left, ⊙, Up, Right, Down
Invincibility
- ⊙, Up, ⊙, Down
Level select
- Down, Down, ⊙
Statistics report

NINTENDO 64

GLOVER

■ Try these. Pause the game and press:

- C-Up, C-Left, C-Left, C-Up, C-Right, C-Left, C-Down, C-Up
To call the ball towards you
- C-Right, C-Down, C-Right, C-Down, C-Up, C-Up, C-Right, C-Left
To rotate the camera to the left
- C-Left, C-Right, C-Up, C-Up, C-down, C-right, C-Down, C-Right
To rotate the camera to the right
- C-Left, C-Right, C-Left, C-Right, C-Up, C-Down, C-Right, C-Right
To control the ball
- C-Up, C-Up, C-Up, C-Up, C-Up, C-Right, C-Down, C-Right
For infinite lives
- C-Right, C-Right, C-Down, C-Right, C-Right, C-Right, C-Up, C-Left
For infinite power
- C-Left, C-Left, C-Up, C-Left, C-Right, C-Up, C-Up, C-Up
For low gravity
- C-Up, C-Right, C-Right, C-Down, C-left, C-Down, C-Up, C-Right
To open all the portals and gain access to all the levels
- C-Up, C-Down, C-Up, C-Down, C-Up, C-Down, C-Left, C-Up
For the powerball

To turn the cheats off, pause and press C-Down eight times



■ Recreate the effects of Glover at home by lying on the living room floor with a glove stuffed with cotton wool attached to a coat hanger. Or something.

PC

JEDI KNIGHT DARK FORCES 2



■ Recently re-released for a tenner, and packed-full of cheats. Press T while playing, then type:

- JEDIWANNABE ON Enable God mode
- JEDIWANNABE OFF Disable God mode
- REDS All weapons
- WAMPBAT All items
- ERIAMJH Flight mode
- BACTAME Full health
- YODAJAMMIES Full mana
- SITHLORD Dark Jedi
- IMAYODA Light Master
- RACCOONKING All force powers
- 5858LVR Reveal map
- DEEZNUTS Level skip
- PINOTNOIR X Warp to level X
- SLOWMO ON Slow motion
- SLOWMO OFF Resume normal speed
- THEREISNOTRY End level
- WHITE FLAG ON Disable AI
- WHITE FLAG OFF Enable AI

There's no worse feeling than reaching the end of your favourite game and consigning it to the cupboard, never to be seen again. So let us ease the pain you feel by serving up a packed menu of delicious challenges.



PLAYSTATION

MAX POWER RACING

Challenge: Look out below!

How many times have you had the computer cars edge past you on the final straight for a sneaky win? Time to get your revenge. Choose a single race on a course where it's possible to fall off the track to your death and attempt to shove all the computer opponents into oblivion without toppling off yourself. The fun potential is increased if you laugh menacingly throughout.



PLAYSTATION

ASTERIODS

Challenge: No more speed

Classic blasting doesn't get much better than this, thanks to Activision leaving most of the original features relatively intact in the process of moving the game to 3D. But how would things go if you were playing the game without being able to use your ship's thrusters? Now's the time to find out. Simply get as far as you can using only Fire, the rotational controls and that risky Hyperspace button. Rock hard.



PLAYSTATION

CRASH 3: WARPED

Challenge: Who's the boss?

The end-of-level bosses in these latest adventures of the mad marsupial get very tricky, very quickly. For this challenge, make your way to N Trophy (the boss on the third level), and wipe him out without receiving one iota of damage. It's "simply" a case of using your Spin Attack, double-jumping over his missiles, learning the sequence of his magnetic laser blasts, and crossing your fingers tightly. While holding your pad. Hmm.



PLAYSTATION

METAL GEAR SOLID

Challenge: Hold your fire

Undeniably one of the finest PlayStation games ever, but avoiding those guards is a right old task, isn't it? Shooting them dead is obviously a whole lot easier. However, we want you to finish the entire game without using your gun to harm anyone. Sneaking around without killing – fine. Grabbing guards and strangling them – acceptable. Pumping multiple machine-gun rounds into the soft flesh of your helpless victims – most definitely not.



NINTENDO 64

GOLDENEYE 007

Challenge: Control freak

The Control level in Rare's Bond masterpiece is a waking nightmare, and we're going to make sure you suffer as much as possible with this challenge: complete the level with a 95%+ score for general accuracy. Getting as far as the main control room shouldn't be a problem, but as soon as Natalya sets off the alarm, you're in trouble, with guards streaming into the room like locusts and very little time for accuracy.



NINTENDO 64

F-ZERO X

Challenge: Painless pole position

Nintendo's space-age racer is a painful experience, as the speed dial is turned up to 11 and corners appear out of nowhere. So you can imagine the difficulty you're going to have finishing the King Cup without taking the slightest bit of damage. You can use your energy for boosting with the B button, but if there's a collision with another vehicle or a rendezvous with Señor Wall, you'll have to start again.



NINTENDO 64

SOUTH PARK

Challenge: Tanktics

Acclaim's console interpretation of TV land's favourite bad-mouthed brats isn't the most difficult of games, so we're here to help make it a whole lot harder. Choose a level, and give the "tank" characters the cold shoulder, enabling them to complete their journey to the warp at the start or end of each level. This means you'll have to battle every single one in the "Save the Town" bonus level. Which is not easy.



NINTENDO 64

WIPEOUT 64

Challenge: Kamikaze Klies

Choose the Klies Bridge course and race backwards around it as fast as you can, causing as many hits to the other players as you can within two minutes. A "hit" could be a direct head-on collision, or a weapon shoved in their face, but you can only count damage that you actually see taking place. If you're going for collisions, remember to pick up shield replenishment as you go – you won't last long otherwise.



PC

JEDI KNIGHT

Challenge: Don't use the Force.

This Star Wars blaster has just been re-released on the Activision Classic label, so the time's ripe for a fresh challenge for the young Skywalker to embark upon. Simply shun Obi Wan Kenobi's advice and complete the game without using the Force – unless it's to solve puzzles where only the Force will do. If that's too easy, try completing the challenge while avoiding the death of a single innocent civilian.

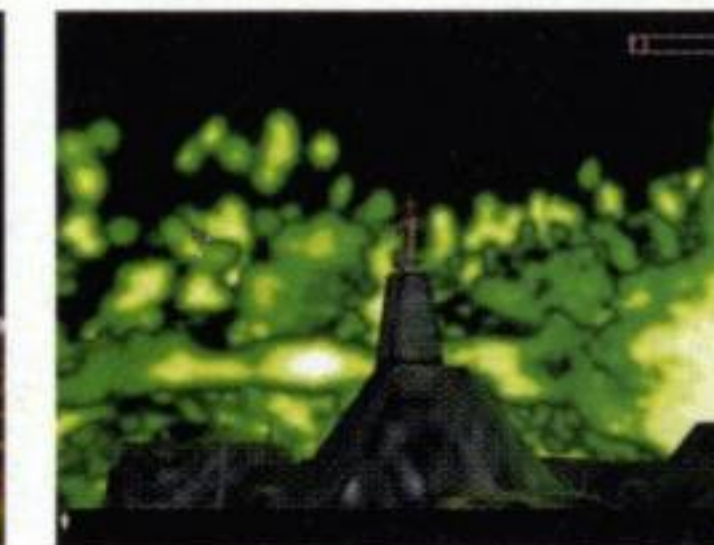


PC

HEDZ

Challenge: Head master

We didn't think too much of this "hilarious" third-person shoot-'em-up when it appeared a few months ago, but as there are plenty of you out there with the game, here's a task: get as far as you can without having to spend credits on a new head from your rucksack. Avoiding harm is the simplest way to achieve this, but the correct choice of heads for each level can also help see you through.



PC

SENTINEL RETURNS

Challenge: Suck on this

Choose a level with at least two sentries, absorb everything you can get your hands on, and aim to have as much energy as possible after two minutes – without absorbing the sentries or the sentinel. There are obviously plenty of trees scattered around, so if you can get high enough, scan the landscape and suck up everything below. You should avoid the Sentinel's piercing stare at all times.



PC

WETRIX

Challenge: Wet, wet, wet

This water-based puzzler is a favourite in the Arcade office – barely a day passes without Sam screaming like a madman as another earthquake scuppers his high-score attempt (either that, or another steering wheel has arrived for him to review). Why not try beating Sam's highest score – a very respectable 2 million? Using Uppers and Downers to maintain a fairly level playing field is the key.

NINTENDO 64



Recreate NFL at home by... you get the idea.

NFL BLITZ

It's possible to make it look like you have about 50 dones of your player. Start a regular game and select any team. At the opening kick, instead of running up the field, run backwards into the endzone, hang a left and press B to jump off the field and out of the endzone. While the word "Safety" is



flashing on the screen, run into the wall angled diagonally from the side to the back. The camera angle should then change to show you running, followed by 50 dones. However, if you do this, a safety is ruled and your N64's team gets two points and the ball.

CLOCKING OFF

Lawks almighty. As usual, that nearly killed us. Next month we'll be... Oh, we don't know. Probably doing much the same sort of thing, but with different games. Until then, tell us if you've any tips that the world should know, or if there's a particular game that you'd like us to tip.

Write to us at
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For every new PlayStation or N64 classic, there'll be an obscure Spectrum or C64 game that someone remembers as being better



PHOTOGRAPHY: RICK BUETTNER, TONY STONE IMAGES

Do you remember the first time?

Your host | **Rich Pelley**

Old games. You know, those blocky, four-colour “classics” from your youth. Are they as good as you remember them? Or, like *Pacers*, are they best left quietly decomposing on the compost heap of time? Arcade goes round to Rich Pelley’s house to find out.

If you were to visit the *Arcade* office and listen to the banter flying through the air, you’d be surprised to note how much of it funnels back to the old days. Leave the office stereo unattended for too long, for example, and you might return to find someone has put on *Now ‘87*. Rick Astley will still be refusing to “Give You Up”, M/A/R/S/ will still be “Pumping Up The Volume”, or – even worse – Bananarama’s *Love* will still be in the “First Degree”.

Films are another touchy subject, with every new movie aspiring to a place in the *Arcade* hall of fame alongside masterpieces such as *Die Hard*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Back To The Future* and, er... *The Sound of Music* (no really, it’s Neil’s favourite movie). Children’s TV programs are also frequently discussed. *The Magic Roundabout?* *Choc-a-block?* *Mr Benn?* Nothing’s as good as it used to be (back when all this was fields as far as the eye could see).

And then there are videogames. Ah. They don’t make them like they used to, do they? You can guarantee that for every new PlayStation or N64 game that we get to play in the *Arcade* office, there’ll be an obscure Amiga, Spectrum or Commodore 64 game that someone remembers as being better. And work will stop, heads will loll, and the reminiscing will begin. The conversation will turn to thoughts about how someone ought to do an update of *Skool Daze* from the classic age of the Spectrum; or how *Metal Gear Solid* actually nicked its idea from ancient 8-bit game *The Great Escape*; or how *Mario Kart* and *Mario World* on the Super Nintendo were actually *better* than their N64 counterparts.

The time has come, then, to put the big debate to the test. So, laydeez and gentlemen, for one night and one night only, *Arcade* chucks out our fancy new PlayStations, N64s and PCs, to make way for dredging up fond memories and trying to find an “ear” lead for our Spectrum. Cue Mr Astley...

Games Night



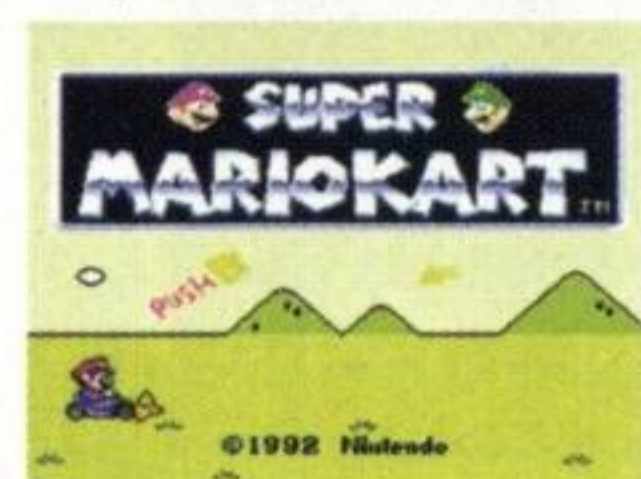
Mario Kart



■ Ah, we remember when *Mario Kart 64* came out. "The SNES *Mario Kart* is better," some said. It isn't.

6.25pm

Super Mario Kart, SNES (Nintendo)



Born in the early nineties, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System remains the middle brother in the

Nintendo Family. It's more mature than the NES, but still trying to grow stubble and get served in off licences, while the grown-up N64 has graduated from university and moved in with its girlfriend. The SNES we

used was supplied by Yours Truly and heralded from a trip to America in 1991. Choosing a game (out of the selection of three) was easy, for nothing can beat the two-player hilarity that is *Super Mario Kart* – the game that laid the track for all good novelty driving games to follow.

Mark: "Blimey. This joypad feels really light."

Rich: "Look at mine. It's got big teeth marks in it. That's from where I was playing *Super Mario World*. Remember the level where you had to fly under a bridge to reach the secret exit? That was possibly the hardest moment in any game ever. Every time I

missed and died, I ended up taking a chomp in my joypad out of frustration."

Mark: "Come on, Pelley. Let's race."

The race begins. Too many wasted youthful nights when we should probably have been out talking to girls seem to pay off, and we sail through the first two tracks and on to the Ghost House course where things get decidedly trickier.

Mark: "Oh, buggeration. Who put that hole in the track?"

I pick up the feather and use it to take a sneaky short-cut.

Rich: "Did you see that? Hey Mark! Did you see me?"

Mark: "That's what people said at school, 'did you see me'. You're acting like a child. How old are you, Pelley?"

I'm old enough to remember when *Mario Kart* came out, that's for sure. People couldn't believe it, Mario in a driving game. And I'm still quite good at it, too. Within minutes I'm stood on the winner's podium being sprayed with confetti by a big fish. Those whacky Nintendo programmers, eh?

The other great way to play *Mario Kart* is, of course, in Battle mode. Here you race around an open arena with three balloon-lives attached to your kart, picking up power-ups to fire at your opponent. Up stepped *Arcade's* new Art Assistant Kerry, ready to take on Mark.

Kerry: "I'm going to lose horribly at this."

They start playing. Red Koopa shells are fired, balloons are burst and lives are lost. Unhelpfully, though, Mark and Kerry are so engrossed that conversation is brought to a near standstill.

The joypad jury

When you judge a book by its cover, then you judge the look by the lover

■ Those of us old enough to have lived through the '80s would probably prefer to forget New Romantics, ra-ra skirts, leg warmers and stone-washed denim, and rather remember, with fondness, the glory days of the Specky and Commodore 64.



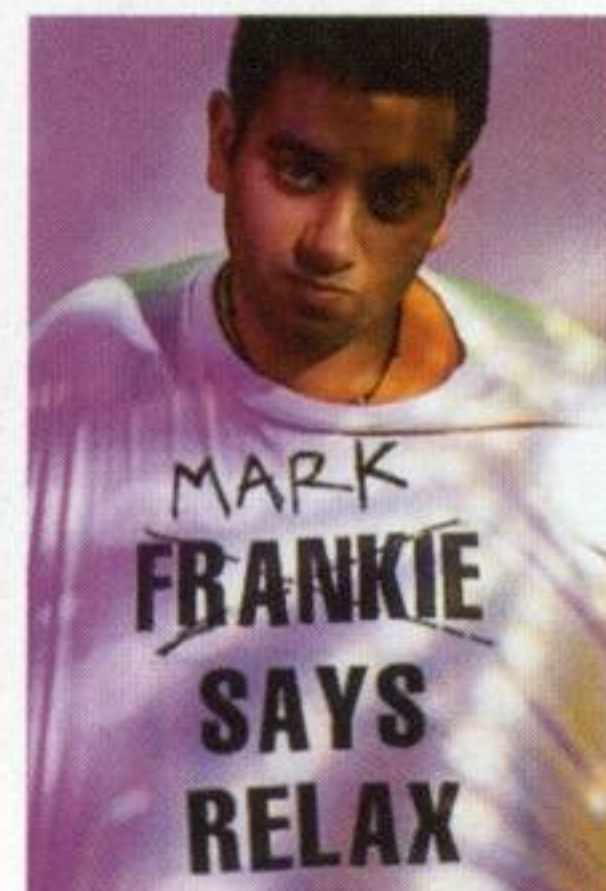
Mark
You might think that a man who doesn't like *Star Wars*, choc-ices or chips would have struggled to enjoy the '80s, but he dislikes the '90s even more.



Sam
You might not have thought it, but back in the '70s Sam sported a large afro and flared trousers all the time. Even though he was only four years old.

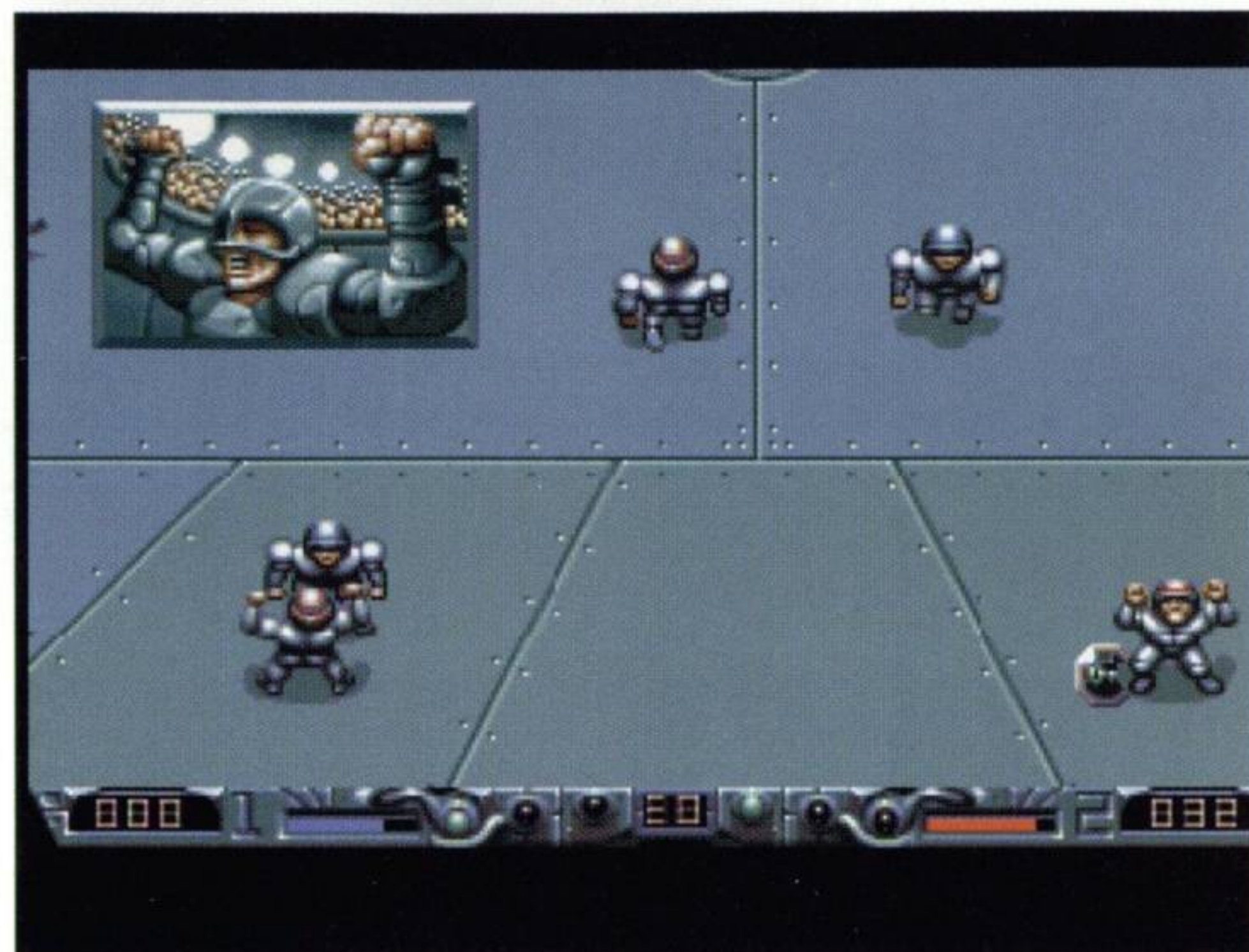
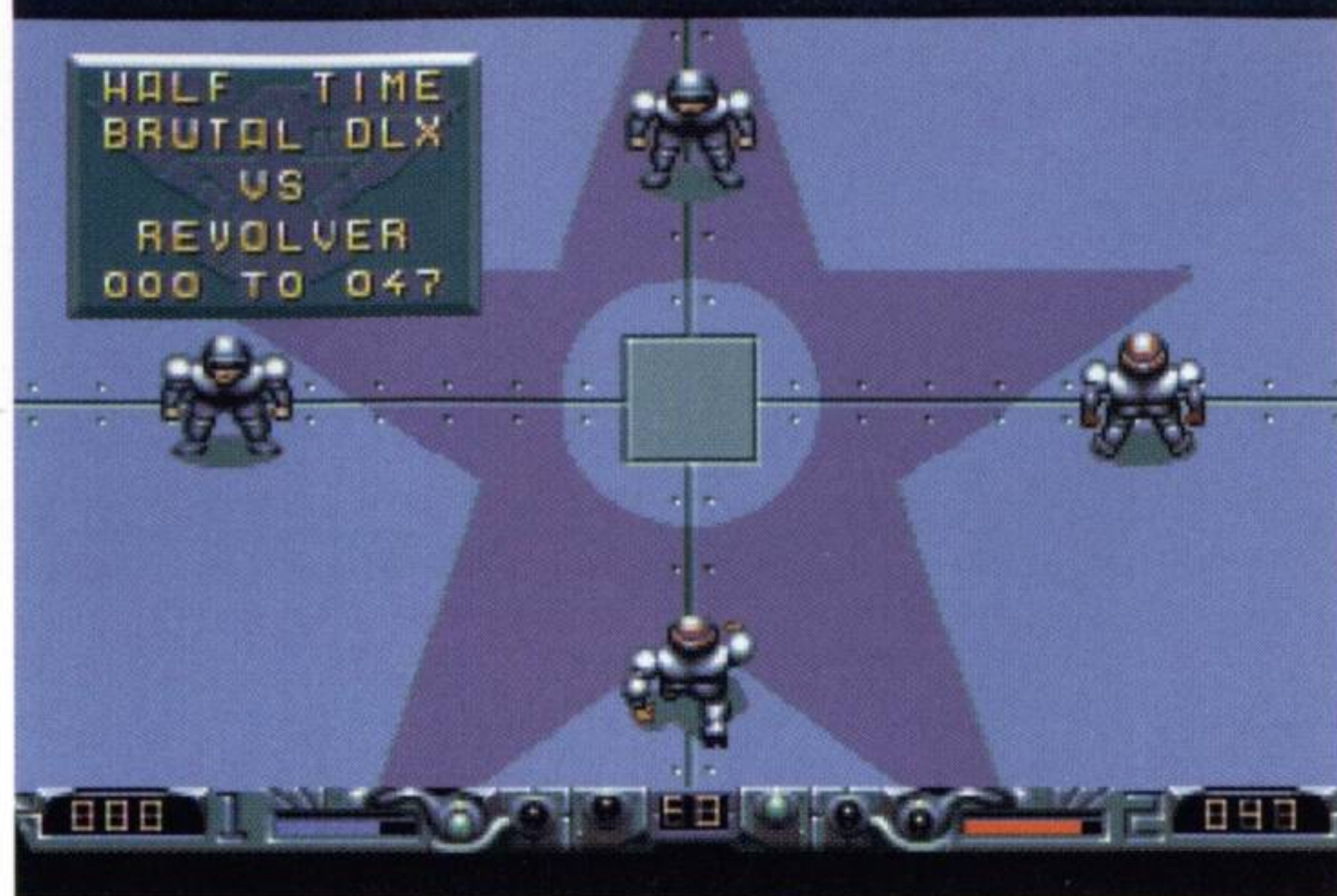


Kerry
Stepping in as designer, Kerry's the newest addition to the *Arcade* team. A tender 13 by the time the '80s were over, she still has a soft spot for Duran Duran.



Rich
Easily confused, Rich's initial response to the suggestion that we do an "Old Skool" Games Night this time was "What, like Eton?". Poor fool.

Speedball 2



■ *Speedball* is a bit like American football with psychotic players and violence at every turn. Oh, hang on, that is American football.

Rich: "Er, hello? You two? This isn't going to make a very interesting read..."

But they don't care. Kerry's a little out of practice and Mark is playing abysmally. Conversation has been replaced with grim determination. Eventually, Mark crashes into one of his own green Koopa shells and loses his last life. And then is strangely silent.

Kerry: "Hmmm. Yes, it's all very well, Mark, but I reckon you're just being nice and were sandbagging for me."

Mark: "Eh? What does 'sandbagging' mean?"

Kerry: "It means I think you were deliberately going slow to let me win."

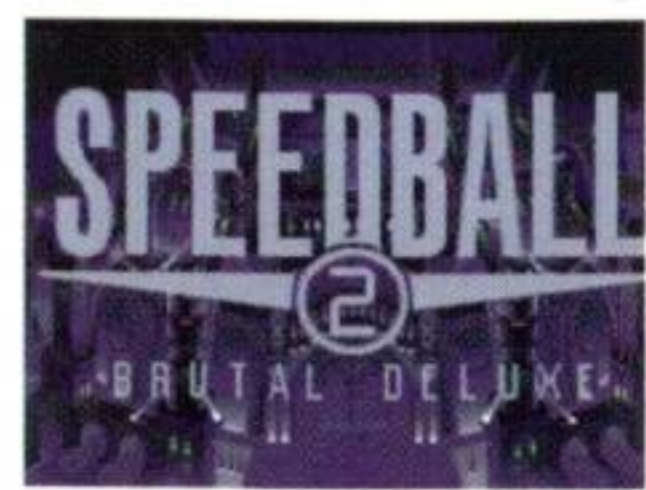
Mark: "I don't let people win. I'd rather see my gerbil dead."

To back this up, Mark clinches the next game and suggests a Best Of Three pact. This comes to a swift end as Kerry lets rip with three perfectly placed red Koopa shells before Mark knows what's hit him.

Mark: "I don't like losing, but I'll admit I'm a bit crap at *Mario Kart*. Or are you just going to accuse me of carpet-stroking or whatever it was again? I've had enough of this. The N64 version is a lot better. What's next?"

7.20pm

Speedball 2, Amiga (Renegade)



Next up we plump for *Speedball 2* on the Amiga. It's a futuristic mix of football and basketball, with no rules other than "the team with the most points wins". This freedom extends to killing members of the

opposition outright if you run into them hard enough. Mark loads up the game.

Mark: "I'd forgotten how long games used to take to load from floppy disks. It's so slow". He starts pacing up and down. "Come on. For God's sake. Just load, you bloody thing. I hate old computers."

Rich: "We need to pick joysticks. The choice is between this flimsy unbranded black one, and the Konix Speed King. Can I use the black one?" I pass over the Konix joystick, which looks like a bizarre torture device.

Mark: "Can't I use keys? Why hasn't it loaded yet? Is it broken?" As Mark grows more desperate, he starts wagging his joystick, which makes clicking sounds with every movement. "Listen to those micro-switches go!"

Rich: "It's obviously mimicking the rheumatism that all this videogame playing is going to give you in later life."

The game finally loads.

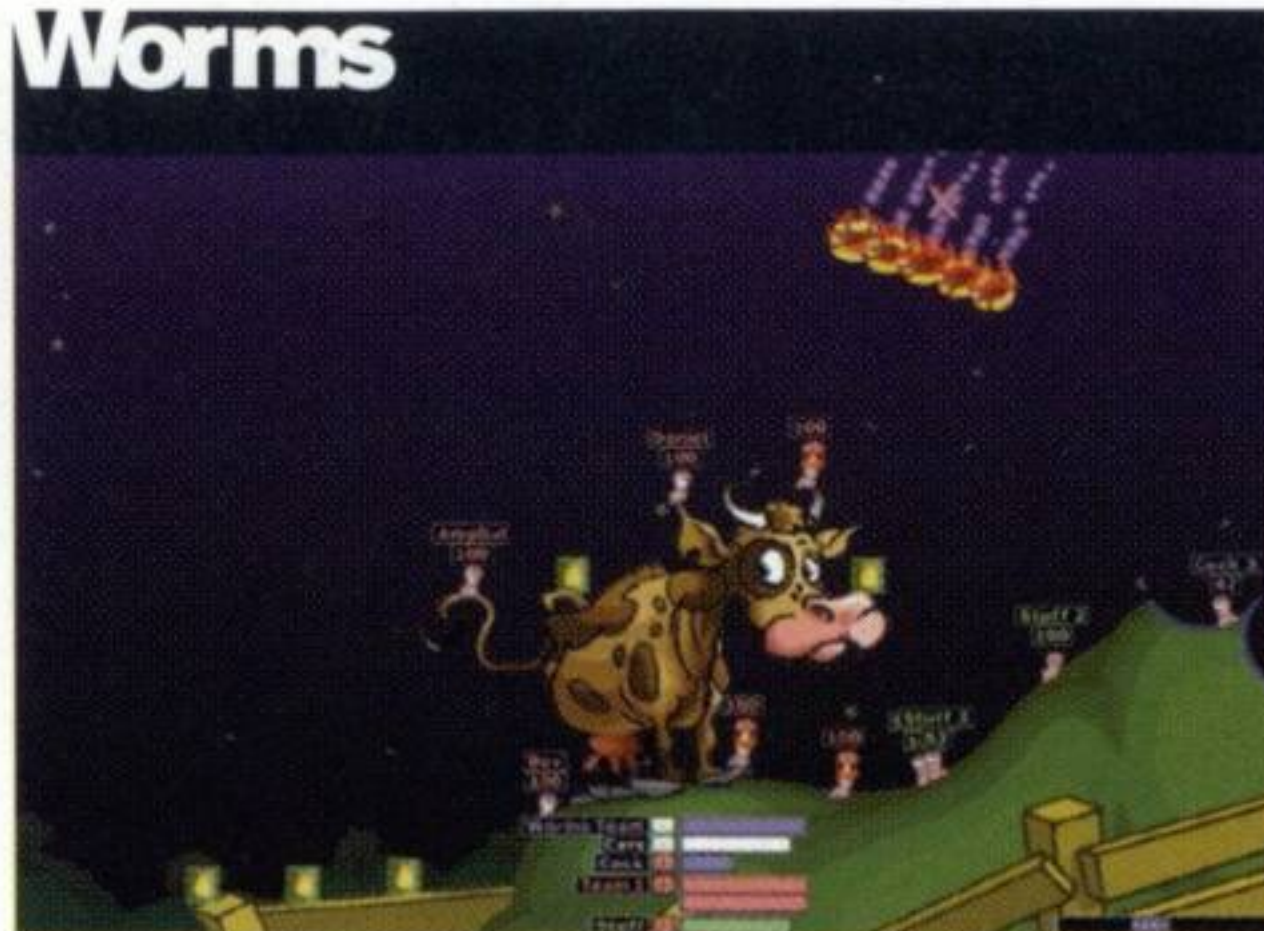
Mark: "I seem to remember that there is some way that you can always guarantee a win on *Speedball 2*."

Rich: "Yes, by scoring more goals than the other person, you chump."

A 38-to-14 win to myself, and I hand my Konix over to Sam who scores an own goal within seconds of the start of his first game of *Speedball* for over six years.

Sam: "What is going on with my goalie? Is he on some sort of suicide mission? I've always thought *Speedball* was more like netball on ice. Don't you agree? Oh. Nice turn. Come on, come on. Hang on. Why did I just clear it? It must be this joystick. It can't be working properly. Oi, Mark, let's

Worms



■ It might look simplistic, but *Worms* was a popular form of entertainment in the days before any good games had actually been invented.

Too many wasted youthful nights when we should probably have been out talking to girls seem to pay off

swap joysticks."

Mark: "Well, I wanted that one in the first place..."

Sam knocks in a belter.

Sam: "Get in!"

Mark: "Yes, yes. Very good. Has anyone noticed that when you fall over, it sounds like someone's dropping a cardboard box on the floor?"

Finally, Mark gets possession and his enthusiasm for the game returns. "Got the ball! Gorgeous! Flawless! Textbook! Tackle! Score! In your face, Richards!"

Sam: "No, up your arse, Mark."

Mark: "I'm not sure about this control method, you know."

Sam: "They've done a sort of unofficial update of *Speedball* on the PlayStation, haven't they? It was called *Dead Ball Zone*, but it's not very good. I reckon this oversimplistic gameplay has had its day."

And so *Speedball 2* is laid fondly to rest with a mood of mild disappointment. It's true that no other sports game has ever quite managed to match it for sheer simplicity and violence, but we've all grown up a bit since then. Hopefully *Worms*, the next game on our list, will help to stimulate our retro juices a little more.

Games Night

8.14pm

Worms, Amiga (Team 17)



Sam: "Speedball 2 really hurt my hands. Is this game going to be as well? I blame that crap joystick. Oh no, it's alright, Worms is

controlled with the mouse."

Mark: "Christ on a stick. This game comes on three disks."

Sam: "I've played the PlayStation version. Is this one the same?"

Mark: "Bum flaps! How many disk-swaps am I going to have to go through?"

Sam: "Can't you answer my question without swearing?"

Mark: "Thank jiggery for that. It's loaded. We can have four-player on this. Thank buggery for the invention of cartridges and CDs too. And you can quote me on that."

Rich: "Right, come on you three."

Mark: "Okay. What do you want to call your team then, Sam."

Sam: "Sam's Team."

Mark: "And your team members?"

Sam: "Sam 1, Sam 2, Sam 3 and Sam 4."

Kerry: "Mr Imagination, eh?"

Sam: "Last time I played Worms, we called them things like 'Knobend' and 'Cheeseflaps'. And, you know what? After four hours it still wasn't funny."

Kerry, Mark and I chose our team mates with slightly more ingenuity than Sam, and the game begins.

Rich: "Okay, whose worm is that? Yours, Mark. Well eat this." Kerry fires off a homing missile which circles around and blows up completely missing Mark.

"Bollocks. Right, your go, Mark. What are you doing? Running away! Every game we ever play, you always try to run away. You wouldn't be much of an ally in a fight. Or in any situation, come to think of it."

Sam: "How do you jump? Oh there we go." He accidentally fires off a missile. "Well, that missile didn't hit anyone at all."

Mark: "There's a new version of Worms coming out on the PlayStation. Whoopee dee-doo, eh? Hope it's a bit more exciting than this. I wrote a game on the Amiga once, you know. I sent it into a Public Domain library and the library made it their game of the month. It was fantastic, if I don't say so myself. I meant to bring it round for us to all play."

Rich: "Why didn't you? It's because you buried it in a time capsule, isn't it? Along with all your other '80s memorabilia. I've never met anyone who lives more in the past than you, Mark."

Worms continues, painstaking and slow. Interest waxes when Mark chooses to fire a sheep at Kerry (which bounces around the screen and explodes with a sorrowful "Baa"), but wanes by the end of the first game. A game that's won, by happy coincidence more than anything else, by Kerry, but by this point everyone has admitted that they never actually liked Worms in the first place, and no one wants another go. Besides, by now all eyes are beginning to focus in on the

Chaos

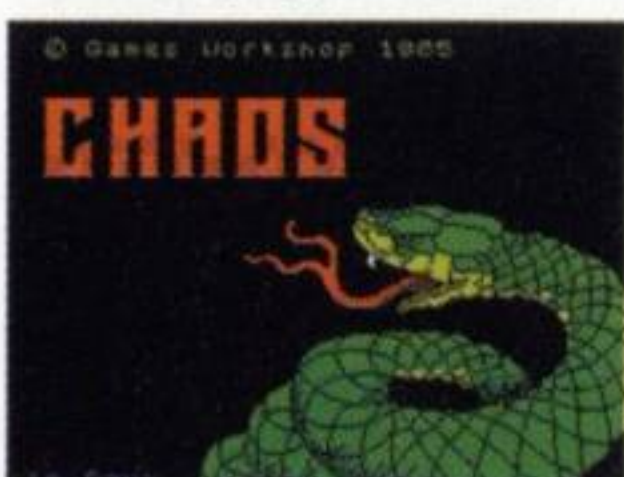


■ Interesting fact: When Your Sinclair magazine put Chaos on a cover-mounted cassette in the '80s, Rich wrote the instructions.

Spectrum. Surely, it won't work? Have we actually got all the wires? And a tape recorder? It'll never load. Not without an "R Tape loading error, 0:1" message. The Spectrum was brought out, dusted off and placed ceremoniously on the table. Eyes began to mist over. Mark bowed his head. If you listened carefully, you could have probably heard the Hallelujah Chorus playing softly in the background.

9.12pm

Chaos, Spectrum (Games Workshop)



Getting the Spectrum to actually work proves highly entertaining in itself.

Mark: "Is this on?"

The keys should make a clicky noise, but I can't tune in the telly. Are you sure the power supply is working?"

Rich: "The only way to tell is with your tongue. Give me the end."

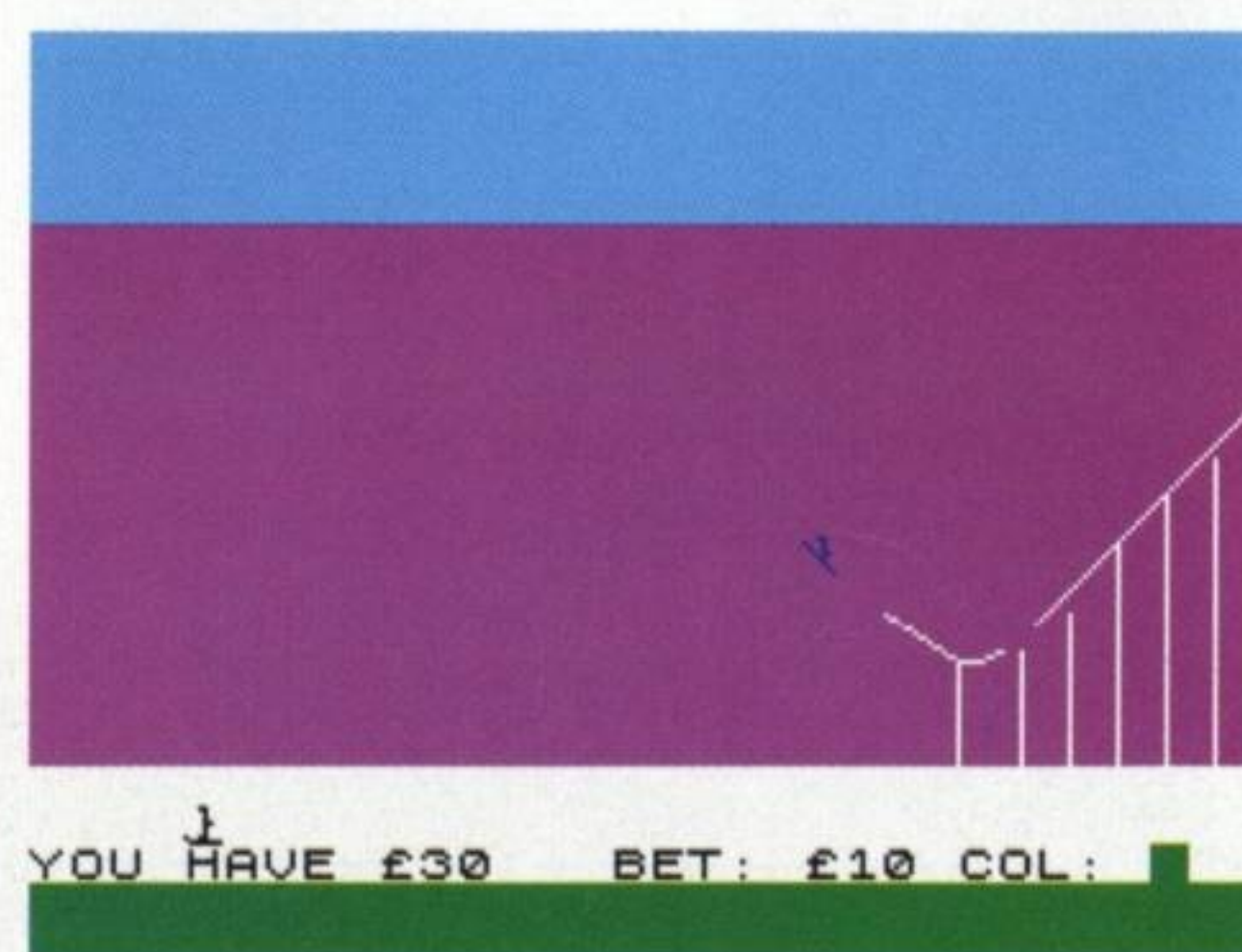
I perform the time-honoured trick of touching the power jack lead on tongue and then jumping back with a 9V shock. DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME, ANYONE.

"Oooh! Yup, the power supply's working. That always makes me feel a bit funny. In a strange way. You know, that thin line between pleasure and pain."

Mark: "Right... Let's get this bad-boy loaded." And amazingly, it loads first time.

There's a chance you might remember Chaos. It's an ancient strategy game, written by a man called Julian Gollop who later went on to write Laser Squad, the X.COM games

Ski Jumping



■ If only real-life ski-jumping was as interesting as this.

Finally the Spectrum is brought out. You could have probably heard the Hallelujah Chorus in the background

and, most recently, Magic and Mayhem on the PC. It's a straightforward turn-based affair, where each player takes the form of a wizard whose goal is to create monsters and hunt down and kill the other wizards. First off, we had to choose our colours.

Kerry: "Red."

Sam: "Cyan."

Rich: "Magenta, obviously."

Mark: "White, please. Pure as a virgin."

When you create a monster in Chaos, you need to choose to create it as real, with a percentage chance that the creating spell won't work, or as an illusion with a 100% success rate, but the chance that you will be sussed by the other players. Because you don't want the other players to know whether you have pressed Y or N, special Chaos House Rules have to be implemented.

Rich: "Right, I've chosen to cast Dire Wolf. 'Illusion: Y or N?'. Okay, everyone, look away please. Oi, Mark, you can still see."

Mark: "No I can't."

Sam: "Right, my go." He picks a Gorilla. "Right, I don't trust you lot."

Sam disappears into the kitchen and comes back with a tea-towel which he places over his hands and picks either Y or N

(we will never know) under the guard of the newly-appointed Chaos Security Tea Towel Of Mystery.

Sam: "Oi, you were watching my hands."

Rich: "Yes, and your right arm moved slightly, hence I predict you pressed 'N'."

Kerry: "My go. Hmm. I think I'll choose a King Cobra. Okay everyone, look away. Pass the tea towel. Oi, Rich, what are you doing?"

Rich: "Trying to judge which of your hands is moving."

Mark: "Of course, to be really fair, we all ought to stand outside the room to ensure there's no chance that anyone can see."

Rich: "And we'd have to brick up the windows. There's a roof-top out there. Anyone with a pair of binoculars could scale up the drainpipe. It's just not safe."

Sam: "Oh for God's sake." He grabs a warm can of Stella and begins to down it. "Right. What does a Pegasus do again?"

Mark: "You can ride that, mate."

The game continues, among much complaining and agonising, with Sam looking like he might come out as a potential winner.

Rich: "Look at me. I know all the rules and have played Chaos for years and all I've got is a crappy Dire Wolf, while Sam is flying around on a fucking Pegasus with a Skeleton and a Gorilla in tow and he hasn't a clue what's going on."

Rich: "Look, it's my go again. I'm going to cast a spell to create a Vampire. There's only a 20% chance of this working... Success!"

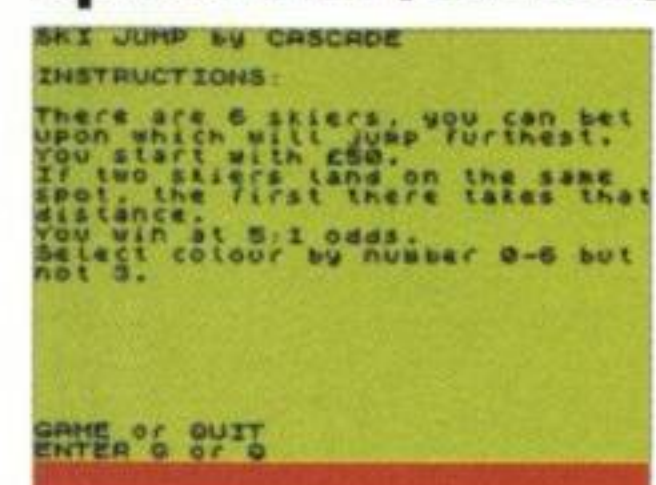
Sam: "Pelley's making out that he's, like, this top James Bond-style 'you only have a 3% chance of pulling this off' Chaos player, but I reckon it's all luck. Let the record show, everyone, that I'm scratching my chin."

And he is indeed scratching his chin.

Meanwhile the game continues. Kerry is the first to buy it from a dastardly placed lightning bolt. Mark spends the entire game hiding inside a Dark Citadel castle with no monsters. We're all easy pickings for Sam and it's only a matter of time before he flies in on his Pegasus and nails me. The fact that his face, although victorious, looks like it's just come home from a particularly messy funeral hints that perhaps one game of Chaos is enough. Time, therefore, to bring out the evening's secret gaming weapon.

9.58pm

Ski Jumping (part of Cassette 50), Spectrum (Cassell)



Kerry: "And that's it? You bet on which of the seven ski jumpers is going to jump the furthest? That's the game?"

Mark: "Well, yes. Go on then. Pick a colour."

Kerry: "Do I have to? Oh, anything. Green. I don't care. You're making me miss Changing Rooms for this."

The skiers jump in ascending colours. Red goes first and jumps halfway across the screen. Others follow. Green makes it one square away from the end, but white overtakes. Kerry loses. Mark is delighted.

Mark: "Bad luck, Kerry. Anyone else want a go? Everyone?"

Everyone else has, rather predictably, lost all interest.

10.03pm

Sardines



The collective mental age of the Arcade team isn't that high at the best of times, but the overall effect of all these retro games managed to regress Sam and co past the Super Nintendo and Amiga and way back beyond the Spectrum, right back to days gone by, when entertainment was a much more simplistic affair, and computers were still in the realms of science fiction.

Mark: "...18, 19, 20. Coming ready or not. Right, where are they?"

He wanders out of living room and spies a strange-looking bulge sticking out of the under-the-stairs cupboard.

"Ah ha!"

Kerry: "Oh, bother it. Let's find the others."

Mark: "I reckon I heard them run upstairs. Follow me."

Kerry: "Okay. Let's look under the beds."

Mark: "No, they're not there."

Suddenly Sam catapults out from behind a curtain and starts prancing around the bedroom.

Sam: "Fuck! Arrgh, bloody hell! I've got cramp. Ooooh, ooooh, ooooh!"

Mark: "Jesus on a bike!"

And then, in an overtly loud voice. "Right, where's that Pelley hiding?" And then there's some muffled whispering and the pad of stealthy footsteps. And then I hear the front door slamming.



And so it was, at the end of Games Night, that I was left hiding ingeniously behind the shower curtain, feverishly scribbling down every word uttered by Sam, Mark and Kerry. Until they all did a runner. The bastards.

They won't come back, I thought as I cleared up the debris from my living room carpet. No one ever does.



Games Night picks

Are our happiest gaming days all gone? Or is the best still to come? Here's what we learned:

1) There's still fun to be had out of old gaming systems. You can pick up a second-hand SNES for around thirty quid with games at a tenner a go. Many still play surprisingly well too. *Super Mario Kart* is a prime example, along with *Super Mario World* and *StarFox*. There are plenty of great games around on the Amiga, too: some people still think *Sensible Soccer* is the best footy game ever.

2) Mark's mother would have been less than amused if, while passing by, she had heard her son's language and

discovered he would rather see his cherished pet dead than let anyone else win.

3) It might have been fundamental in shaping the entire videogames scene as we know it, but in 1999, playing on a Spectrum is about as enjoyable as having a vice tightened around your sexual organs.

4) Stroking the chin is still the Internationally Recognised Gesture for "I don't believe you", optionally reinforced with the phrase "Jimmy Hill," or "Chinny Reckon".

5) People never help you tidy your house after a party.



Our fave

Super Mario Kart
Largely chosen because it's the only Nintendo game where anyone stands the remotest chance of beating Mark, but also because it provided the hardest-fought, most aggressive battles.

Closely followed by...

Sardines
Mark says, "It's sexy!"

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A Review

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INSIDE...

- Rollcage
- Championship Manager 3
- Civilization
- FIFA 99
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- Worms Armageddon
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- Smash Brothers
- Close Combat III
- Castlevania 64
- Sega Rally 2
- Poy Poy 2
- Super Bikes
- All Star Tennis



55
GAMES
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SMASH BROTHERS

ALWAYS WANTED TO KICK MARIO SQUARELY IN THE FAMILY JEWELS? FED UP WITH LINK IN ZELDA 64 AND WANT TO EXACT SOME REVENGE? NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO SHOW 'EM WHO'S BOSS. PAGE 126.

PLUS! VIDEOS/BOOKS/MUSIC/COMICS/INTERNET/TOYS/BOARD GAMES/GAME ACCESSORIES/FILMS/CD-ROMS/GADGETS

Star ratings

- ★★★★★ Simply the best. A game you really must play.
- ★★★★ Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
- ★★★ Good stuff. Not a world-beater, but fine within its genre.
- ★★ Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
- ★ Awful. Avoid at all costs.

New PlayStation Games

Arcade
PlayStation
Game of
the Month



ROLL WITH IT

IT'S WIPEOUT ON WHEELS



■ Thanks to the cars regularly being flung through the air like toys, playing from the in-car view is next to impossible. And, as if the passing visuals weren't freaky enough, a motion-blur option lurks within the game to smudge the graphics with a trippy afterglow. Freaky.



Rollcage

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Attention to Detail**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **March** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Extras: **memory card, analogue controller, Dual Shock-compatible**

Rollcage takes the future-racing vibe of Wipeout then adds its own inverted madness.

Anyone wanting to make a PlayStation racing game must be mental. Why waste time, money and talent creating yet another mix of tracks, cars and replay options, when at the end of the day folks are just going to say "it's not as good as *Gran Turismo*"?

Unless the developer actively goes about making its driving game remarkably original, of course. And this is what Attention to Detail has done. *Rollcage* includes cars and tracks, but lobs the rest of the racing formula through the madness-blender to whip up a space age, radically alternative spaghetti junction of road rage.

Wipeout took a similarly alternative slant on racing and *Rollcage* brutally rips it off in almost every way. What we have here is *Wipeout* on wheels. The sleds this time around being huge-tired indestructible buggies, whose remarkable resilience is matched by their cheek-flapping speed.

Once again the action takes a futuristic bent with fearless roadwarrior types ripe for combat on the open

highways of an unnamed (and unexplained) utopian futureworld. Each buggy has different handling capabilities, but all are blessed with the remarkable ability to drive inverted; you just can't put the car in a situation where it's impossible to drive. Flip it over and it'll just keep on going.

Contributing further to the madness is the fact that the scenery, while capturing and containing the action, is eminently mountable. Clip the wall at the edge of the track and rather than be biffed back on course, your buggy will happily begin to drive up it, paying no heed to the laws of gravity. Indeed, in tunnels you can drive all the way around the inside surface, swinging left and right around the circumference

Tempest-style, as you weave through the pack ahead.

As in *Wipeout*, pick-ups are placed around the track, enticing you to divert and grab them, and each rewards you with a different weapon. Similarly, certain patches of track will increase the speed of any vehicle smart enough to drive over them. *Rollcage* adds to this tried and tested formula by placing these power-ups and speed-ups in ludicrous places along the raceway. You can scale walls, drive upside-down, and generally stray from the beaten track below in order to garner race-winning treats. A cautious driver will stay on the level, while his daring opponent will pelt along the side of a skyscraper to nab the weapons lurking there, then increase his speed to preposterous levels by riding around the roofs of tunnel sections, hitting the speed-ups.

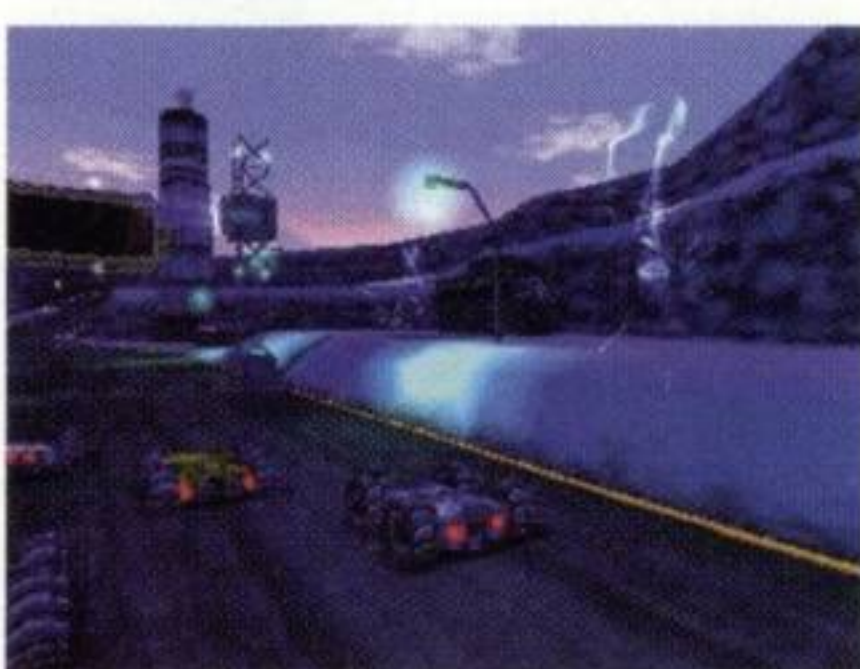
Further originality is added when you discover that you can carry two pick-ups at once, each fireable from your left or right shoulder buttons. This not only gives you a choice as to which weapon to unleash at a specific moment (it's possible to save your shield for when you need it, while still enjoying the short-term thrill of missiles), but new avenues of power are available, created when you fire a matching pair of pick-ups simultaneously. Trigger a pair of speed-ups together, for example, and power your buggy to screen-melting speeds. Do this on the tip of a ramp or hillock and your vehicle will take to the air and clear hundreds of metres of track unimpeded. The multiplier effects of other power-ups are similarly super-charged, either making them last longer or firing off a pair of attacks together.

The power-ups come in various shapes and forms, the most obvious being the speed-up, the most obscure a kind of time-tunnel that opens a hyperspace portal in front of

WIPEOUT TOOK THIS ALTERNATIVE SLANT ON RACING AND ROLLCAGE BRUTALLY RIPS IT OFF



■ You can mount the scenery, but the horrific crashes that so often result mean that you'll usually opt to remain on ground level.



■ Scenery is nicely varied throughout the 12 tracks, and it all shares a pleasing futuristic sheen. But would *Rollcage* have existed if *WipEout* hadn't? That is the million-dollar question.

your buggy and swaps your position with that of the car in front. Neat. Another potential race-winner is the leader missile, a rocket which streaks off into the distance and nukes the current leader of the race. You also get assorted missiles, lightning bolts and a time-warp device that sends all the cars but yours into a soupy drug-like time haze.

And, while it's possible to leather the cars in front in order to slip past, it's also possible to destroy scenery to your advantage. Most of the futuristic buildings lining the track can be brought down with a missile or, more entertainingly, a direct impact from a vehicle. The resulting explosions are totally over the top, blinding you for a couple of seconds. Still, if you're the bloke in front, it's great to let fly with a missile on an auto targeted building and have it crush (and therefore render speechless) the bloke behind – particularly in the excellent full-speed two-player mode.

So it's got gorgeous looks, top sounds (courtesy of Fat Boy Slim and other less expensive dance artists), and some radically different gameplay. So what's wrong? Why is it that a *Rollcage* race isn't so much a joy as a nail-biting, stomach churning battle of man versus machine? Why can you go from first place to sixth (last), and back to first again within half a lap, making the final results of a race as unpredictable as the toss of a dice?

Clip scenery and your buggy is sent wheeling through the air, frequently winding up facing in the wrong direction. Nudge scenery as you try and turn around and, thanks to the wall-scaling nature of the game, you

drive up it rather than nudging back on course. Get knocked, nuked or caught in a blast of *bloody scenery* and you lose all track of space and time as the screen whites out, your car spirals and bounces, and you wind up flat against a wall. Which you pathetically drive up as you try to

RACES ARE STOP/START AFFAIRS OF BRAIN-CURDLING SPEED AND SUDDEN ARRESTS

turn around. Bigger. There's an "auto-correct" button that can set your car back on track, but the time it takes to auto-correct makes it a painful last resort. Races are stop/start affairs of brain-curdling speed and sudden arrests.

And the other five cars have as much trouble as you do. It's possible to be sixth and suddenly catch and pass a shambles of crashed cars, all trying to emerge from wreckage or stop climbing the walls. But then victory is short lived as you're once more flung into oblivion, suddenly back in last place through no fault of your own. The best

example of this is during a race where you must make an enormous jump. Your car will either make a successful landing at the end of a jump or wind up facing the wrong direction as you flip in mid-air – *entirely at random*. Gah!

Which leaves *Rollcage* in uncharted territory. If you're a racing purist, addicted to accurate sims like *Gran Turismo* and used to having your racing skills tested to the limit, you may balk at this non-reliance on skill and *Rollcage's* all-round unfairness.

On the other hand, should you want to

play a radically different and exciting racing game, where originality is the key and reaction speed of the essence, then you *should* get involved. While a victim of its own admirable intentions, *Rollcage's* gamble does pay off and you'll find yourself screaming across the ceiling "just one more time" to find that last missile and get your chance on the winner's podium. ★★ ★★

Daniel Griffiths

Or you could try...

WipEout 2097
Psygnosis ★★★★★
The original futuristic, power-up blasting racer. Fast, difficult, and painfully chic.

Gran Turismo
SCEE ★★★★★
King of PlayStation racers. An infinitely more sensible, but no less gripping car racing "sim".



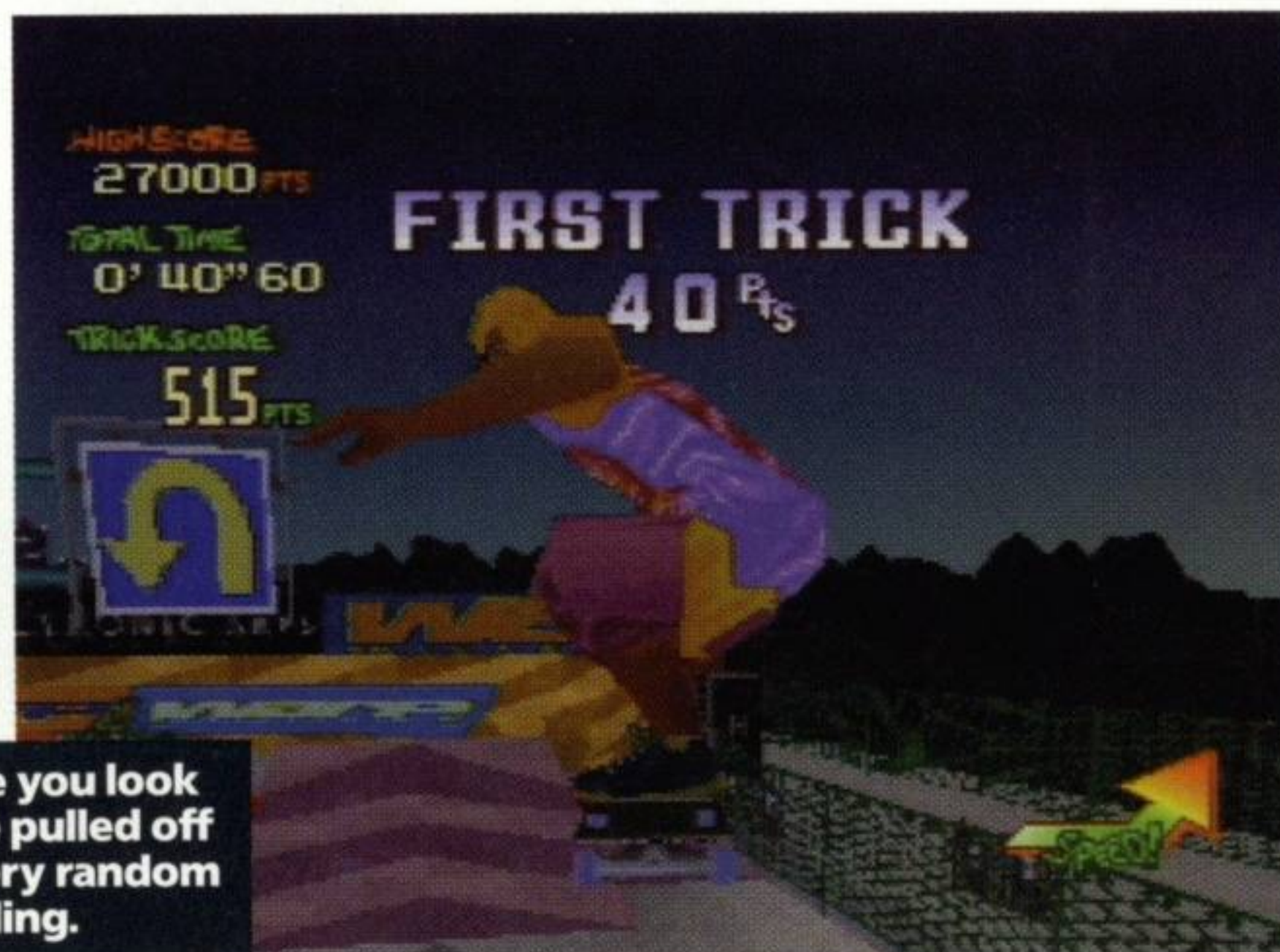
■ The split-screen game (top) shows no sign of slow-down. Only a slight loss of some background detail marks it apart.



■ Wheels bigger than the body, see? That's how they can flip over and keep going. Ah.

RAD ALERT!

IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU SKATE, YEAH



Tricks make you look good, but are pulled off with some very random button prodding.

Street Skater

- Publisher: **EA** ■ Developer: **Micro Cabin**
- Price: **£39.99** ■ Players **1-2**
- Release date: **TBC** ■ Extras: **memory card**

Skateboarding's cool, PlayStation's cool. So the crossover potential for a decent boarding game must be huge, daddio.

"Sick move!", "Crazy launch!" and – most galling – when you fall off your skateboard, a sarcastic "Medic!". Meet *Street Skater's* commentator, officially this month's most annoying man in the world and someone who's obviously never had to pick bits of gravel out of his knees. This, the PlayStation's first proper skate boarding game, is all very gnarly but not in the way baggy trousered youths in your local Kwik Save car park would mean it. Refer instead to the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "rough, twisted and knobbly". Like an old stick.

Dues acknowledged, *Street Skater* is at least more ambitious than previous attempts like *2Xtreme* where the boarding level saw you hurtle down a large hill avoiding dogs. You get to skate fast on straight bits, jump over ramps and make detours to take in half and quarter pipes where you pull off tricks before the timer expires. You can also rail-slide and "grind" on kerbs, accompanied by an eye rollingly bad soundtrack of punk-ska with (gulp) vocals.

But with no one to race against, (even the two player game makes you take it in turns), excitement isn't at a premium. Skaters might argue it's all about just you and the board as you try to reach the required points total by pulling off tricks on your way to the finish line

but the stunt section of the game is totally tension free because the only way you can come off your board is by skating into a wall. You trigger tricks by using button combos, but you can easily unlock all three courses and bonus ramps by skating up a half pipe and randomly pressing buttons. With no chance of embarrassing yourself, the sort of risky stunts that enlivened *1080°* or *Cool Boarders* are noticeable by their absence.

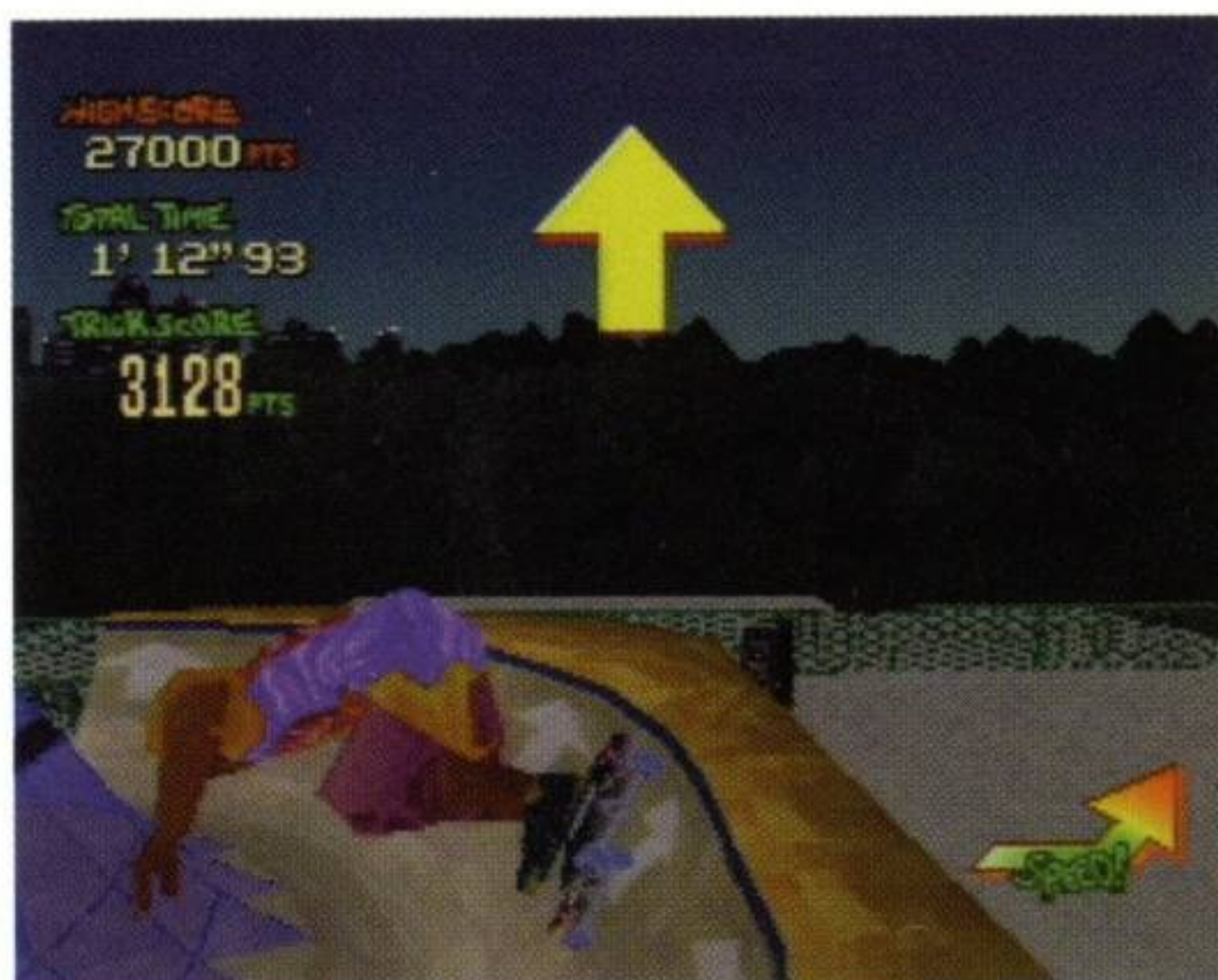
It doesn't really feel like you're on a skateboard. There's an articulated lorry-like turning circle, only basic speed up and slow down controls, and no options like *1080°*'s board angle adjustment or knee bending to make you feel like you're surfing the streets. Combine this with shoddy graphics and a meagre number of courses, and *Street Skater* never manages to do more than irritate. The street lingo favoured by the kids is ripe with bad-meaning-good confusion, so we'll spell it out. This isn't so much *the shit* as, well, not very good. ★

Robin Alway

Or you could try...

Cool Boarders 3
SCEE ★★ ★★
The best (snow) board action to be had on PlayStation.

2xtreme
SCEE ★
Dire extreme sports with awful skateboarding section. Ban it.



↑ Uppers & Downers

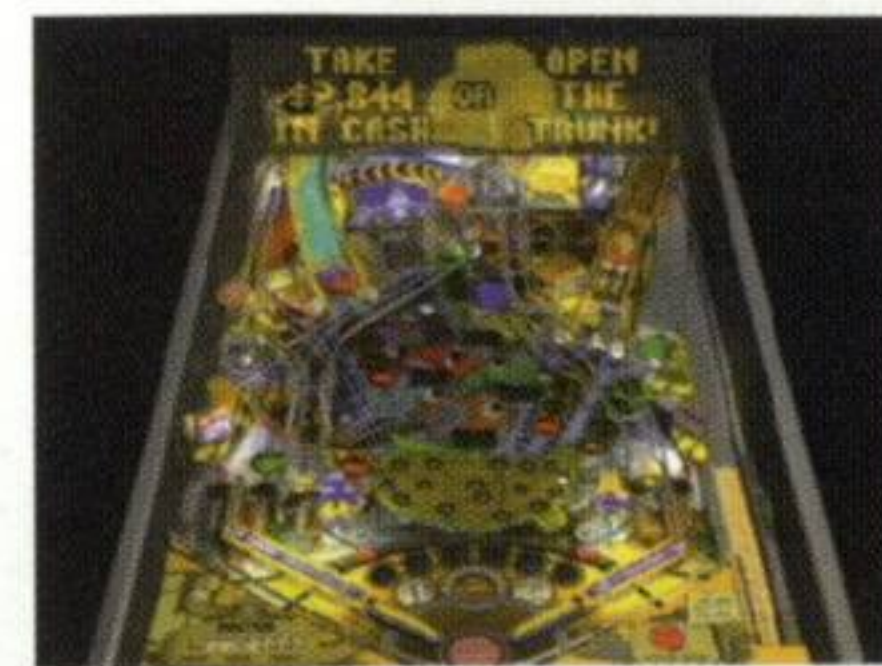
Rad

- The first proper skateboarding game
- All the vital elements of boarding included
- Some nice courses

Sad

- Risk-free tricks
- Shoddy looking
- Poor control

Street Skater's courses mix bowls, half pipes and railings to slide along, but it's all resolutely skill free.



Pro Pinball – Big Race USA

- Publisher: **Empire Interactive**
- Developer: **Cunning**
- Price: **£29.99**
- Release date: **on sale now**
- Players: **1-2**

Time, inevitably, for the pub references and Elton John gags, as Empire launches its third pinball title for PlayStation.

The sad thing is, it feels right. The intricacies of the table, the razor-edge melodrama of the tilt, the mischievous twists and turns of that shiny silver sphere – it's all, all there. For its graphics, its soundtrack, its slavish devotion to converting every molecule of the modern pinball table on to the PlayStation, *Pro Pinball: Big Race USA* deserves applause.

Now for the bad part. *Pro Pinball* isn't that good a PSX game. As a simulation, it's on the money – the plethora of car-themed multiballs, nitro boosts and speed bumps on offer perfectly captures the hi-tech carnage of the modern table. Unfortunately, compared to the majority of other PSX games or – whisper it – pinball itself, *Pro Pinball* is doomed to abject failure.

A few facts for the devoted. This latest *Pro Pinball* is based on a hi-octane race through 16 US cities. Each city gets a table with its own features and each feature eats credits as you learn each table. Left-ramp combos, bonus awards, ball locks and super jackpots – they're all there.

Unfortunately, however, by not fully exploiting the PlayStation's capabilities, eschewing screen-scrolling (thus rendering the top of the table unviewable) and cramming the disc with technical specifications rather than say, ooh, extra tables, all that remains is a soulless facsimile of *The Real Thing* that even the most liberal sprinkling of nicotine, hops and *Tommy* quotes could not salvage. Granted, the Head-To-Head option enables two people to play using a Link Up cable but it isn't enough.

Pinball purists will be utterly overjoyed; *Pro Pinball* looks good, sounds good and with physics improved up on previous efforts, plays just dandy. For the other 99% of PlayStation gamers, hands up who thinks that laying out 30 quid on a limited pinball game could ever beat a pastime that in the real world costs a handful of loose change and a helping of well-oiled bonhomie? We didn't think so. ★★ **Mike Goldsmith**



GOOD VIBRATIONS

IT'S TIME TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD



■ Spell casting's easy with well designed joypad control.



■ It's not as smooth and lovely looking as the PC version, but this PlayStation port still offers strategy by the spade.



Populous: The Beginning

- Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Bullfrog**
- Price: **£44.99** ■ Release date: **March** ■ Players: **1**
- Extras: **memory card**

Cast spells of incredible destruction. Create armies to do thy bidding. Then smite thy enemies as Bullfrog shoehorns its epic quest for deification into the humble PlayStation.

↑ Uppers & ↓ Downers

Heaven

- Lasting challenge
- Non-linear missions
- Easy to pick up
- Tidy, but comprehensive control system

Hell

- Muddy use of colour
- Occasionally over sensitive camera use

Cramming the PC version of *Populous: The Beginning* into the modestly equipped PlayStation makes this conversion something of a quart and pint pot affair. While the graphics have survived the port pretty much intact, as have the 25 game worlds, surely something had to give? Well, apart from four missing spells, apparently not. The only concession to *The Beginning's* new console home is that, with PlayStation mouse owners in a minority, Bullfrog has been forced to adapt the PC game's menu system to the PlayStation joypad – something the company has managed admirably.

The original *Populous* cast you as a god-like entity. This sequel, *The Beginning*, charts your path to deification and beefs up the gameplay in many ways. The Lego-esque

isometric worlds of the first game have been replaced with true 3D landscapes. This move to the third dimension is more than aesthetic, however, as now you can alter and rework every aspect of the landscape. Similarly, in addition to providing swooping camera effects as you traverse the globe, the levels appear to be incredibly non-linear, a feeling boosted by the power to combine spells with terraforming.

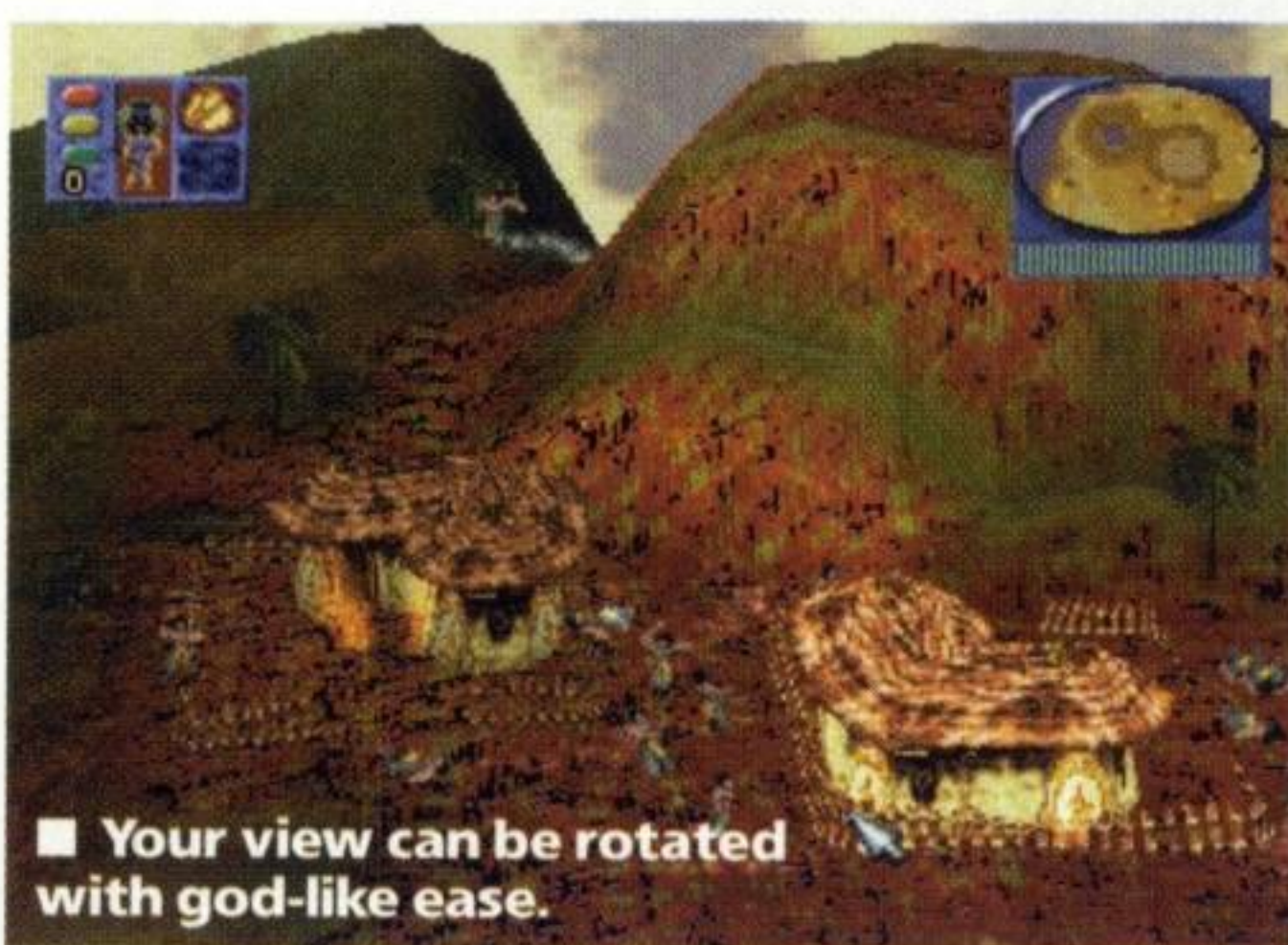
To complete each level, you'll need to eliminate a CPU-controlled Shaman. Doing so depends on the creation and use of Manna – the game's currency – which you collect

ALL CREDIT TO BULLFROG FOR CRAMMING SUCH AN EXPANSIVE GAME INTO THE PLAYSTATION

from the Shaman's worshipping hordes, using it to create the spells and tricks. This might sound daunting but it's accessible, courtesy of an excellent tutorial mode and level design that's perfectly attuned to the learning curve.

Spells are introduced a couple at a time and become evermore impressive. Favourites from the first game include volcanoes and earthquakes (albeit more eye-catching for their 3D lick of paint), and there are some new ideas such as swamps and tornadoes. Every order is effected from a pop-up menu accessed via the R2 button, with the more mundane spell rosters and tasks (building huts and so on) selected by pressing the button once or twice. This frees the face buttons for the more basic tasks of highlighting men or objects and the actual casting of spells or sending orders. All in all, it's a very satisfactory system.

All credit to Bullfrog for cramming such an expansive game into the PlayStation. The biggest stumbling point could have been the control system but, within minutes, even novice deities will be casting spells with aplomb. *Populous: The Beginning* is one of the deepest, most involving PlayStation titles to date. ★★★★★ **Steve Merrett**



■ Your view can be rotated with god-like ease.



■ Omnipotence rocks with *Populous*.

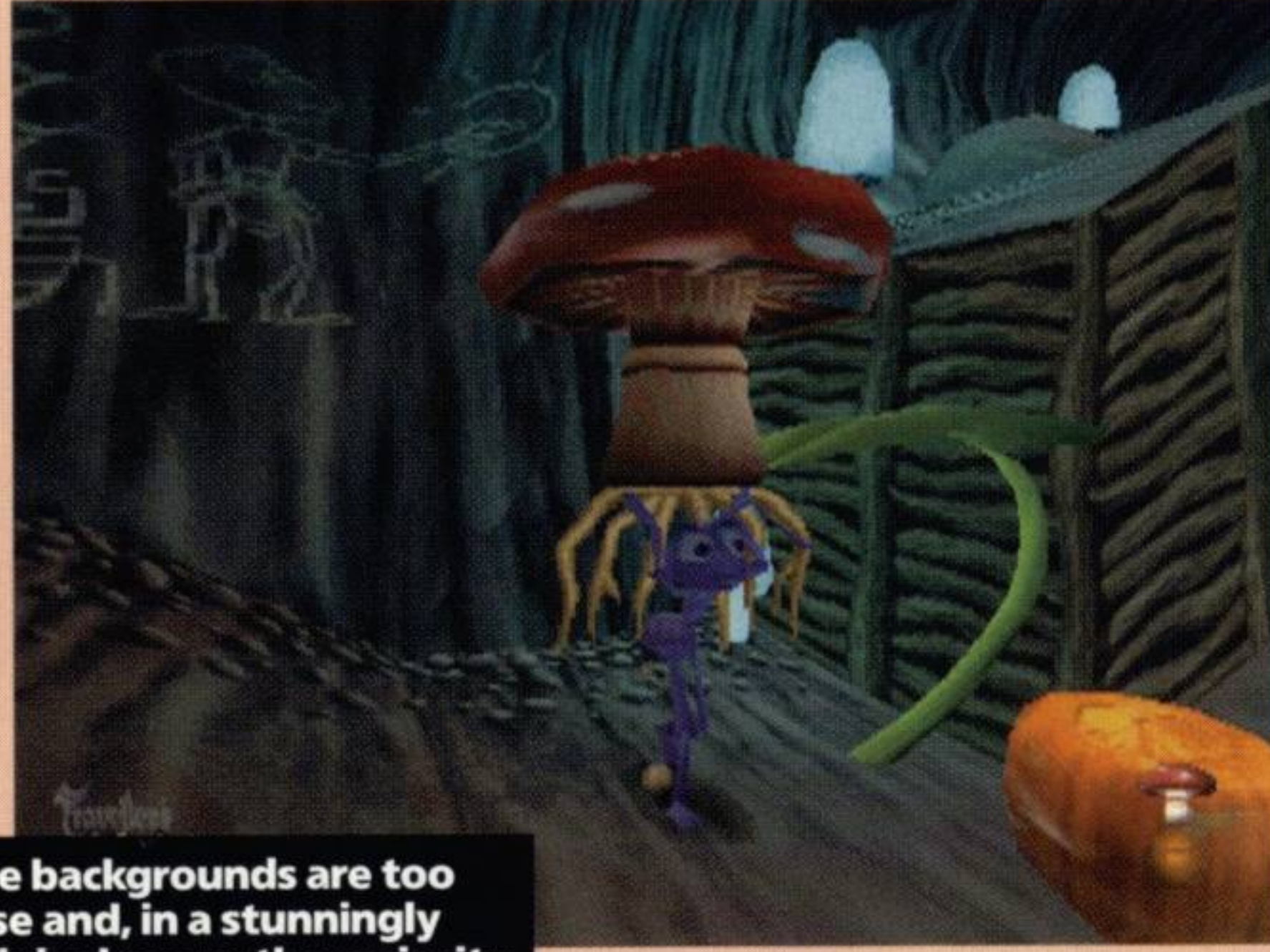
Or you could try...

Command & Conquer: Red Alert
Virgin ★★★★★
Fearsomely compulsive, militaristic real-time strategy with suffering on an almighty scale.

Constructor
Acclaim ★★★
Comedic god game set within the cutthroat world of property maintenance.

BUG STANDARD

DISNEY GETS BACK TO GROUND LEVEL



■ The backgrounds are too sparse and, in a stunningly unoriginal move, the majority of Flik's foes can be offed by bum-bouncing on them.

A Bug's Life

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **Traveller's Tales**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **March** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Requires: **memory card**

Mirroring the plot of Disney's new computer-generated flick, one ant's battle to save his nest from its grasshopper foes is now recreated as a 3D arcade adventure.

As Pixar's CGI epic places Disney at the forefront of animated entertainment once more, the familiar pattern of disappointing game spin-offs continues. This time round we have been spared the formulaic 2D platform clones regurgitated since *Aladdin* for the Mega Drive – a style that persisted through to last year's *Hercules*. Instead, Travellers Tales – the team behind Psygnosis' less-than-impressive *Rascal* – has attempted to recreate the film's tunnels and foliage-laden locations within a 3D world.

Despite making the brave step into 3D, *A Bug's Life* is substandard fare. You control Flik – its ant-y hero – and the game is broken down into a series of levels based on key points in the film, all linked by extracts from the movie. Sadly, these 20-30-second clips prove to be the game's only high-points and serve to remind you of the gulf in charm between the movie's Flik and the gangly, crudely animated creature under your guidance.

The basic aim of each level is to guide Flik to the exit, while avoiding or offing anything in the way. Worms jut out of tunnels, assorted bug foes scuttle in your path, and the aforementioned grasshoppers appear with irritating regularity. *A Bug's Life's* nearest comparison is the *Crash*



Bandicoot series, but Naughty Dog's platformer shows the Disney effort up in every department.

Flik and his many bug adversaries are all sketchily drawn and routinely animated, while the assorted backdrops are also on the sparse side and fail to convey the bustling activity of the film. It is the gameplay that is the worst offender, however, with Travellers Tales treading overly familiar territory as Flik performs the same running, jumping and bum-bounce moves that have graced 3D platform games since time immemorial. Sadly, even this well-established tradition is poorly implemented, and any chance of a decent – if uninspired – romp is killed off as perspective problems and unavoidable collisions continually blight the action.

You could argue that *A Bug's Life* is targeted towards younger players. Even so, with the PlayStation already offering the polished delights of the aforementioned *Bandicoot* and his stable-mate *Spyro*, it seems unlikely that *A Bug's Life* will please even the youngest player. Flawed and clumsy gameplay is flawed and clumsy gameplay, no matter how old you are. ★★ **Steve Merrett**

↑ Uppers & Downers

Ants

- Well-used film clips
- Plentiful speech and sampled effects

Pants

- Poorly-defined graphics
- Uninteresting level design
- Dodgy collision detection
- Perspective causes positional problems

Or you could try...

Crash Bandicoot 3
 SCEE ★★★★★
 Best of the PlayStation platformers. Offers a varied task and a refined control system.

Spyro the Dragon
 SCEE ★★★★★
 Platforming with a purple dragon. Beautiful, well-designed, but a tad too simplistic.



Live Wire

■ Publisher: **SCI** ■ Developer: **The Code Monkeys** ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Extras: **memory card**

Two of the all-time great pastimes – joining the dots and colouring in – are set to house music in this primary-colour puzzler.

There's a simple game – you've probably played it on train journeys when every other option has been exhausted – that requires the players to draw lines between dots on a grid in order to complete squares. The winner is the person who completes the most squares. *Live Wire* is, in spirit anyway, the PlayStation reincarnation of that very game.

Controlling what looks like a bug-eyed chilli pepper impaled on a pencil, the object of this puzzler is to dart back and forth across a themed grid – fun fair, wild west, space; you get the idea – claiming tiles by colouring in all four sides of a tile and thus changing it into your particular colour. Also in pursuit of said squares are three other similar hovering creatures.

Hidden away under some plain looking tiles are items such as shotguns, trap doors and speed-ups, all of which can be used to either your advantage or your fellow "artists" detriment. And to make it tricky for everyone, extra danger lurks in the form of obstacles and baddies, designed to irritate and hinder in equal measure.

But these impediments are not the only things that will have you swearing loudly. The characters don't respond well to your promptings and the camera, swinging about all over the shop, is just wrong. What with this and the horribly bright patchwork of colours each level creates the only way you're going to have fun with *Live Wire* is if you enjoy headaches and blinking a lot.

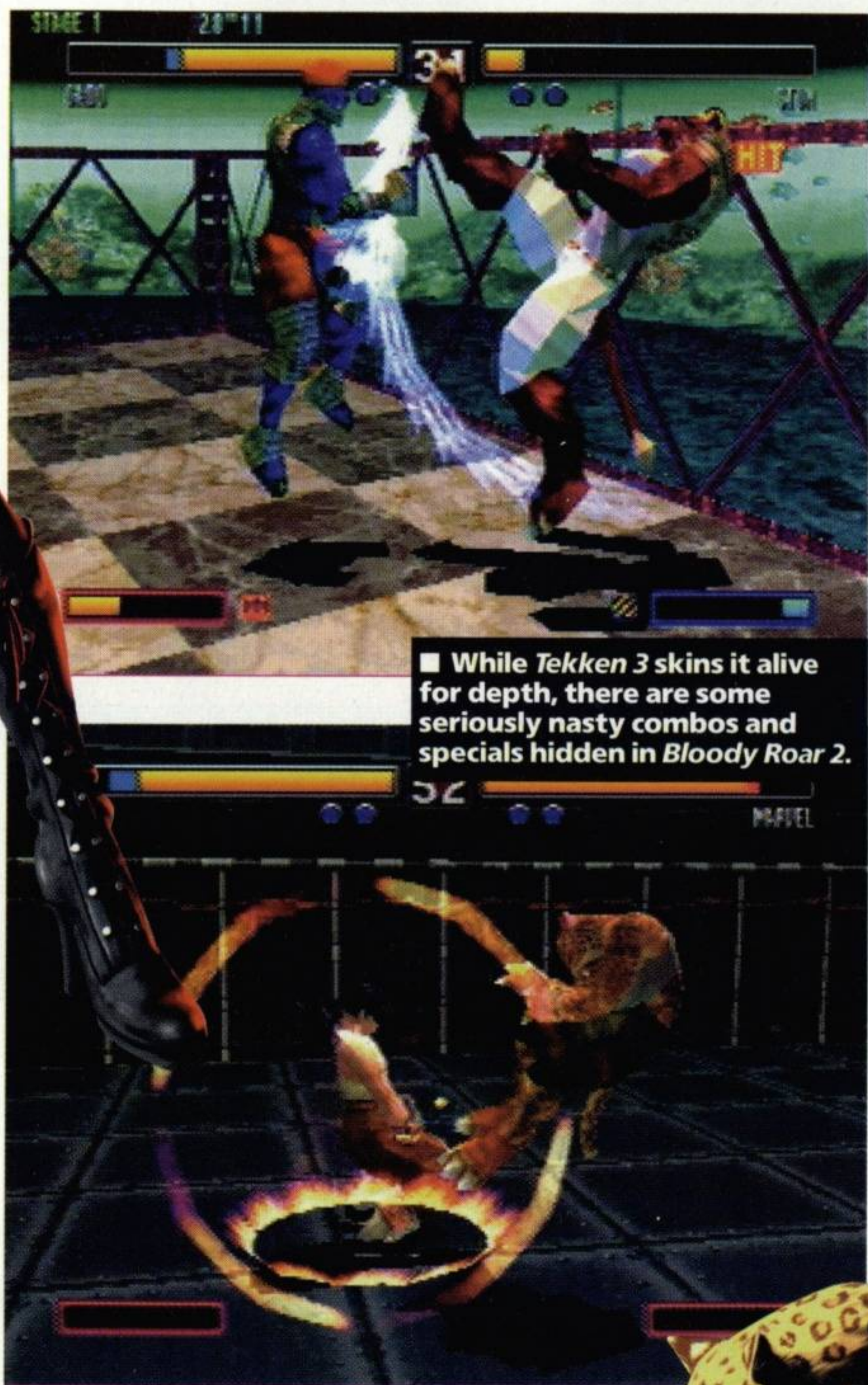
Live Wire's worst crime, however, is the random nature of the gameplay. Stealing tiles from the other three players is an important part of your strategy if you're going to win, but doing it logically is nigh-on impossible. This seems to be a problem with the basic nature of the game and however well you play, you'll find yourself with odd little patches of tiles scattered everywhere.

Even an Allister Whitehead soundtrack can't save this from being anything more than frustrating. ★ **Simon Garner**



ANIMAL INSTINCT

UNLEASH THE BEAST WITHIN



■ While *Tekken 3* skins it alive for depth, there are some seriously nasty combos and specials hidden in *Bloody Roar 2*.

↑ Uppers & Downers

Bloody great

- Big, brassy, beastly characters
- Energy-spewing specials
- Tough on one-player

Bloody sore

- Difficult to evade attacks
- Limited array of moves
- Altogether too predictable

particular animal (tiger, leopard, rabbit and so on), each with different attacks and spectacularly gory finishing moves.

Fighting as an animal wouldn't be any fun if the alter-egos were big, slow brutes with only a few frames of animation between them. Fortunately, they're actually lithe, beautifully constructed, and often frighteningly speedy lumps of pure polygon beastliness (think *Tekken's* King, only all leopard). They claw, they bite, they gouge and, in between, they pull off amazing super-powered punches, throws and kicks that are, quite simply, vicious. It's not just

THEY CLAW, THEY BITE, THEY GOUGE AND, IN BETWEEN, THEY PULL OFF AMAZING SUPER-POWERED PUNCHES

button-thumping assault and battery either, there's animal cunning involved too – you have to choose carefully when to turn into your furry friend; and remembering which attacks belong to whom will take practice.

The big criticism of this sequel is that, like the original, there aren't enough moves. Next to the stance-swapping, multiple combo perfection of *Tekken 3* and *Kensei*, *Bloody Roar 2* isn't much more than a well-preened exhibition fighter. Yes, it looks nice, and yes, there are some flash moves, but it lacks the variety and depth of a true champ. Often fights will consist of trading basic kicks and punches until you gain enough power to release the beast within, so your thumps are upgraded to almighty claw-tipped wallops. Fair comment but, in a way, it's missing the point. *Bloody*

Roar 2 is like a cheesy Hong Kong action flick that knows it's stupid and predictable, but that just wants to throw so much ridiculous action at the screen you can't help but be entertained.

One thing that's definitely been fixed from the first game is the difficulty level. It boasts nothing like as many modes as *Tekken 3*, but now fighting through the Story or Arcade modes on one-player is considerably tougher. Its OTT visual style really makes *Bloody Roar 2* ideal for a post-pub kick-in: it'll make you laugh, sweat and swear – usually all at once. There's nothing quite like your opponent shouting

"Look at me, I am an enormous ladybat!" to make you long for victory, the prospect of

defeat more painful than committing hara-kiri with your own bread knife. If you're looking for finesse in your fighting game, look elsewhere, but if you're looking for fun, *Bloody Roar 2* delivers. ★★★

Pete Wilton

Bloody Roar 2

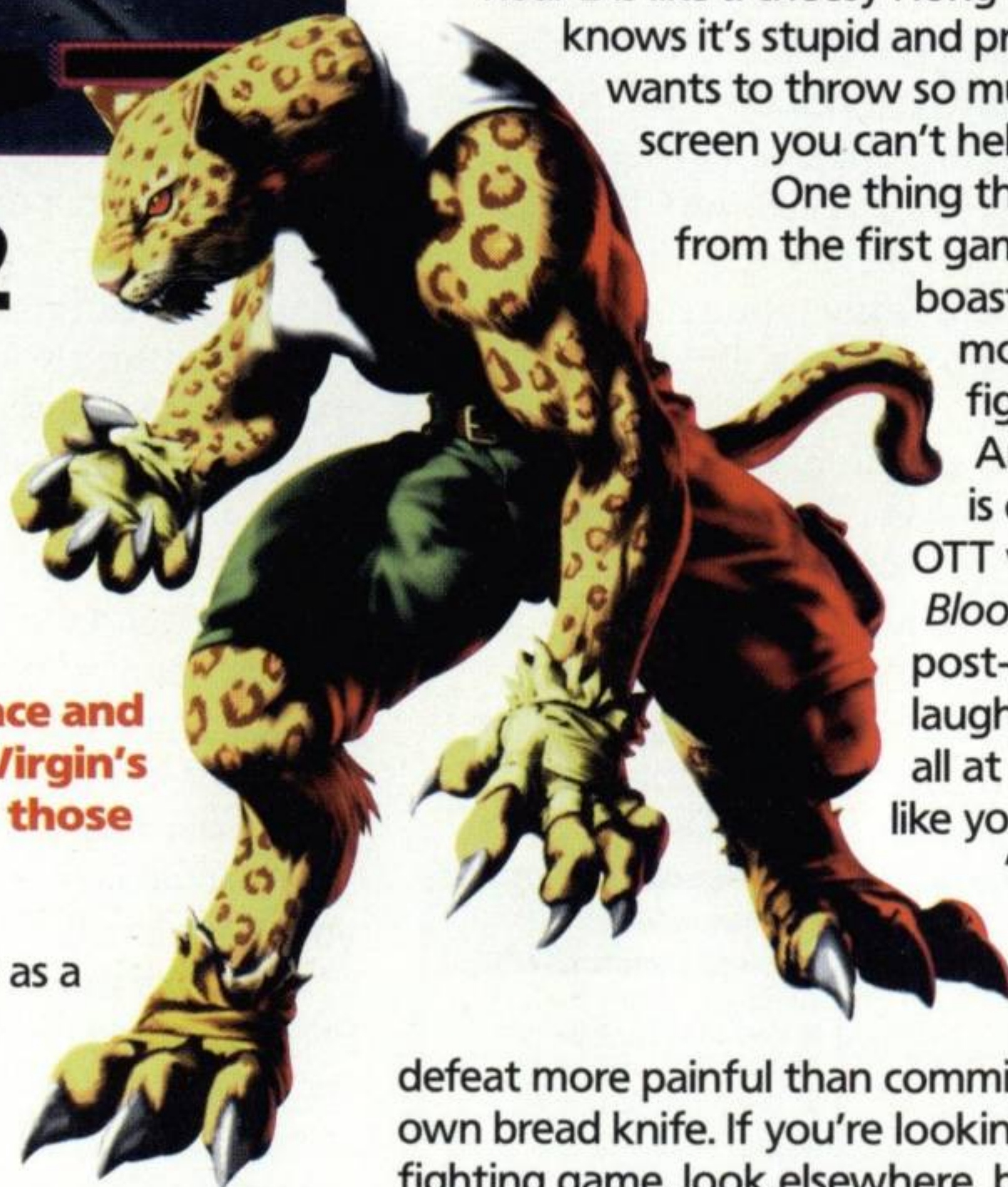
■ Publisher: **Virgin** ■ Developer: **Hudsonsoft** ■ Price: **£39.99**

■ Release date: **30 April** ■ Players: **1-2**

■ Extras: **Dual Shock-compatible, memory card**

So, beat-'em-ups are about style, grace and subtlety are they? Not according to Virgin's latest offering. Here's something for those who like their games raw...

No other fighting game lets you play as a mole. In itself this isn't necessarily a recommendation, but it's a good example of the overall oddness of *Bloody Roar 2*. A fighting game with just seven basic characters might sound dull, until you realise that these seven are actually 14. How's that? Well, each character can, at the appropriate "by the power of GreySkull!" moment, transform themselves into a



■ The choice of animals used for alter-egos is intriguing.

Or you could try...

Tekken 3
Namco ★★★★★
The best all-round scrapper since gaming began. Meaty, mammoth and a surefire crowd-pleaser.

Kensei
Konami ★★★★★
For those of a more serious persuasion. Precision plumage and classy true 3D moves.

CHUCK ROCK

MULTI-PLAYER ACTION, WITHOUT THE BOMBS



■ As laid down in videogame law, *Poy Poy* features levels with sand, ice, grass and, er, giant glass skyscrapers. The stuff you throw is the only constant.

Poy Poy 2

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Price: **£39.99**
 ■ Release date: **April** ■ Players: **1-4**

Konami recovers from *Metal Gear* with a cutesy, rock lobbing multi-player game.

Chucking things at each other has long been a favourite pastime, be the projectiles snowballs, pillows or paper aeroplanes. The general rule is that the items shouldn't be hard and shouldn't actually hurt on contact. But try telling that to the big bloke in the Puffa jacket who squishes his snow up in his hands so hard that he may as well be lobbing cricket balls.

Poy Poy is a multi-player lobbing frenzy. Four players compete at a time with the computer making up the number if friends or, let's hope more often, a Multi-Tap are missing. The idea is to race around, pick up things like rocks, logs, rockets, treasure chests and penguins, and hurl them at your rivals before they do the same to you. You have four different throws and, when you're not holding something, you can duck, jump and dive out of the way. Energy is replenished as you collect hearts scattered from a thrown chest.

There're five different arenas to choose from – grass, ice, sand, park and an odd sort of rocky one – all of which comprise of one screen. Should anything particularly exciting happen, the camera will home in on the action, backing out when it's all died down. You can also chose a special move before the game starts and activate it, once you pick up an object, with the R1 button. For example, you can whip out a big hammer which clonks your opponents over the head, supercharge your throw, send objects spinning up into a whirlwind or envelop everyone in flames.

All of which sounds fun – and it is. The snags, however, are twofold. The first lies with the multi-player aspect. Because the game is always four-player, it's not as much fun picking off the computer guys as it is the human ones. And team-up mode (you and a friend against the computer) isn't enjoyable at all. The second snag lies with the gameplay. With the likes of *Bomberman*, you knew that every victory or loss was your fault. But *Poy Poy* is too muddled. Whether you manage to avoid the objects lobbed at you, or get in first to throw something yourself, is more down to luck than judgement.

So what have we learnt? The difference in fun between playing *Poy Poy 2* in one- and two- or four- player modes is immense, but it still doesn't prove as much of a challenge as *Bomberman*, which is far more skillful. ★★★ **Rich Pelley**

↑ Uppers & Downers

Chuckling great
 ■ Lots of new powerups
 ■ Multi-player fun
 ■ Funny graphics

Chuckling up
 ■ You really need a Multi-Tap to play with four players
 ■ But even then it's a bit muddled

THE BIG BLOKE IN THE PUFFA JACKET MAY AS WELL BE LOBBING CRICKET BALLS



■ *Poy Poy 2*'s characters suggest there's a cute, colourful side to the *Metal Gear*-producing Konami.

Or you could try...

Bomberman World
 SCEE ★★★
 The original and best multi-player frenzy, but again you'll need a Multi-Tap.

Smash Court Tennis
 Namco ★★★★★
 Funny, four-player, cartoony tennis game that's nothing like real tennis.



Running Wild

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **989 Studios** ■ Price: **£34.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Extras: **memory card**

Sony looks to animal magic to help in its battle against Ridge Racer Type 4. But is it really very wild at heart?

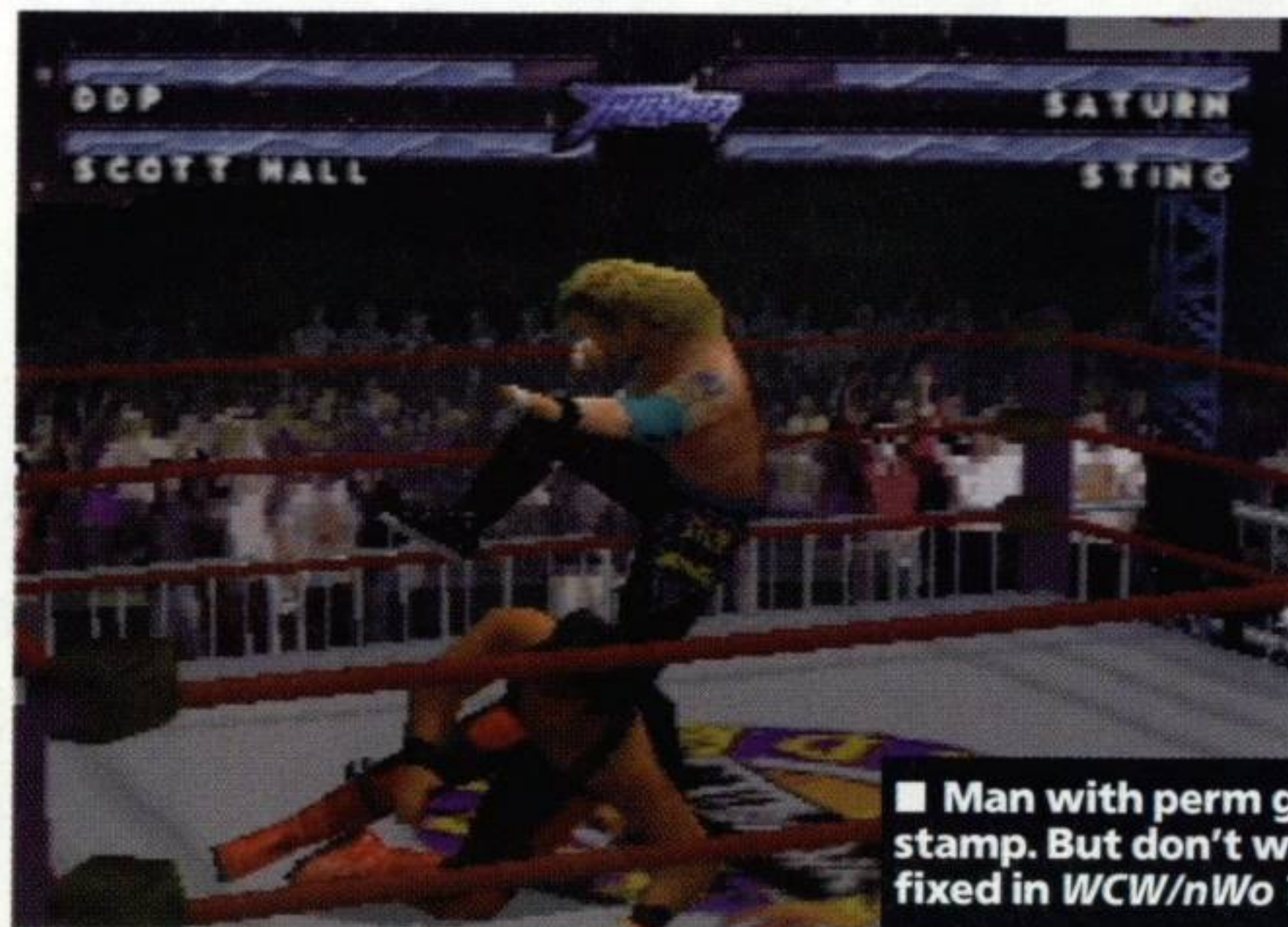
■ It's good to know there's still some originality around. There we were, bombarded by *Tomb Raider* clones and racing games, waiting for something new. And now, at last, we've got it. Forget *Metal Gear Solid* and bow down before the truly innovative – a game based on a running panda. You couldn't make it up, could you?

Running Wild is the first in the run-'em-up genre. And let's hope it's the last. You take control of an animal of your choice – most of them seem to be endangered species for no particular reason – and pit him/her/it against other animals in a three-lap race. Come first and you'll progress to the next level, experiencing a rush as you go. A rush, that is, of relief, when you realise that you might never have to play that level again.

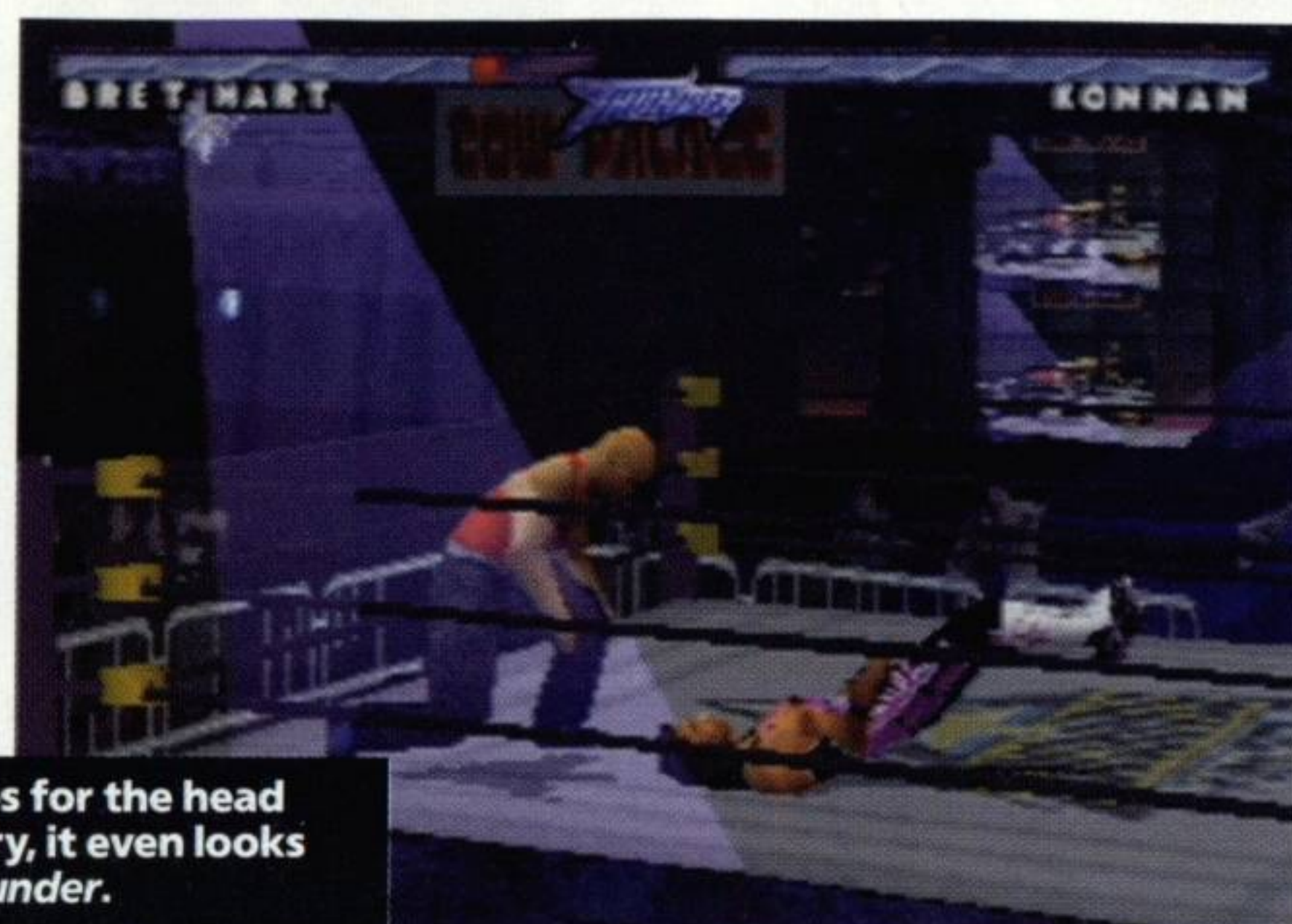
Run-'em-up, then? Yep, we made the term up, but it's not even a particularly accurate description of *Running Wild*, since you're not involved in any *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*-style finger antics. The animals run for you, which means your job is simply turning left and right, and jumping every now and again.

Worse still is the speed. Okay, so perhaps a game where one of the characters is an elephant was never going to challenge the pace of *Rollcage* or *WipEout*, but *Running Wild* is achingly slow. And you've got to wonder why. It's hardly as if sumptuous graphics are the cause of the hold up. The whirlwinds and tumbleweed that blow across the screen just look like tiny squares, they don't look anything like whirlwinds or tumbleweed. But then *Running Wild* doesn't look anything like a racing game.

This kind of cute racer is done so much better on Nintendo that it's almost embarrassing to make the comparison. If you really must have your racing fun colourful and full of giggles this spring then go out and buy yourself *Ridge Racer Type 4*. All you need to do from there on is find the most colourful car, drive around a bit and laugh a lot. And then, when you're bored of that, you'll still have a damn fine game underneath to fall back on. ★ **Duncan Forbes**



■ Man with perm goes for the head stamp. But don't worry, it even looks fixed in *WCW/nWo Thunder*.



GREASED LIGHTNING

THE GIANT-SIZED LORDS OF THE RING

WCW/nWo Thunder

■ Publisher: **EIDOS** ■ Developer: **Inland Productions** ■ Price: **£44.99** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Release Date: **on sale now**

Follow up to feeble WCW Nitro, this heavy handed grappler is looking to bring some much-needed decent wrestling action to the PlayStation.

↑ Uppers & Downers

Giant Haystacks
 ■ Lots of wrestlers
 ■ Plenty of modes
 ■ Amusing FMV

Bale of straw
 ■ So slooow
 ■ Unresponsive controls
 ■ Poor animation

Fat sweaty men squeezed into Spandex. Rainy TV footage of someone calling himself Macho Man Randy Savage. All accompanied by a three second loop of metal guitar and a baying crowd. There's something about wrestling games that hollers "Cultural Armageddon" and presents the same possibility of suffering long-term psychological damage as watching a Channel 4 documentary about men who dress up as

babies. On the other hand, wrestlers are a laugh and you don't get too many chances to use a folding chair as a deadly weapon.

With *WCW/nWo Thunder* though, you've got wrestling so weak that it would find itself right at the bottom of any pile of hairy men, gasping. So although the developer has managed (quite frighteningly) to paste a decent representation of the wrestlers' real faces on to their heads (so you'll be able to recognise the likes of Rowdy Roddy Pipe) their sausage-like limbs move so slowly that they permanently look like they're getting ready to rumble rather than actually doing it.

There's a fan-pleasingly large amount of ways to fight – including tag team, four-in-the-ring rumbles and cage-based bouts – and up to 64 glistening wrestlers crammed on the Character Selection screen, but *Thunder's* comprehensive approach is completely undermined by its unresponsive controls. Even a simple slap takes an age to trigger and anything more complicated (like a Power Bomb) just doesn't seem worth the effort.

The result is a wrestling game that looks as fake as the real sport, with grapples lasting long enough for the virtual adversaries to whisper what move they're going to pull off next into each other's ears. Even the old picking-up-a-weapon-from-the-crowd bit fails to raise a smile when everything moves so slowly, which means your sole source of entertainment is watching FMV sequences of pony-tailed scrappers growling at the screen.

Despite *Thunder's* depressingly inevitable foray into the top ten, grapple fans would be far better off trying out the rib-tickling *WCW Warzone*, which provides more comedy moments in its create-a-character mode than last year's entire output of the BBC's Light Entertainment division. ★ **Simon Garner**



■ Even a simple drop kick can take an age to trigger thanks to *Thunder's* treacle powered controls.

Or you could try...

WWF Warzone
 THQ ★★★★★
 Relatively fluid fights plus much hilarity in the four-player mode.

WCW Vs The World
 THQ ★★★
 The World wins, but not before some entertaining wrestling.



Mega Man X4

■ Publisher: **Virgin** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Price: **£34.99**
■ Release date: **on sale now**
■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **memory card**

A few years ago blue and popular would've meant Sonic and the Thatcher government, but still – inexplicably – like Dr Pepper, Vauxhall and Virgin Trains, Mega Man and the franchise that would never die, continue unabated.

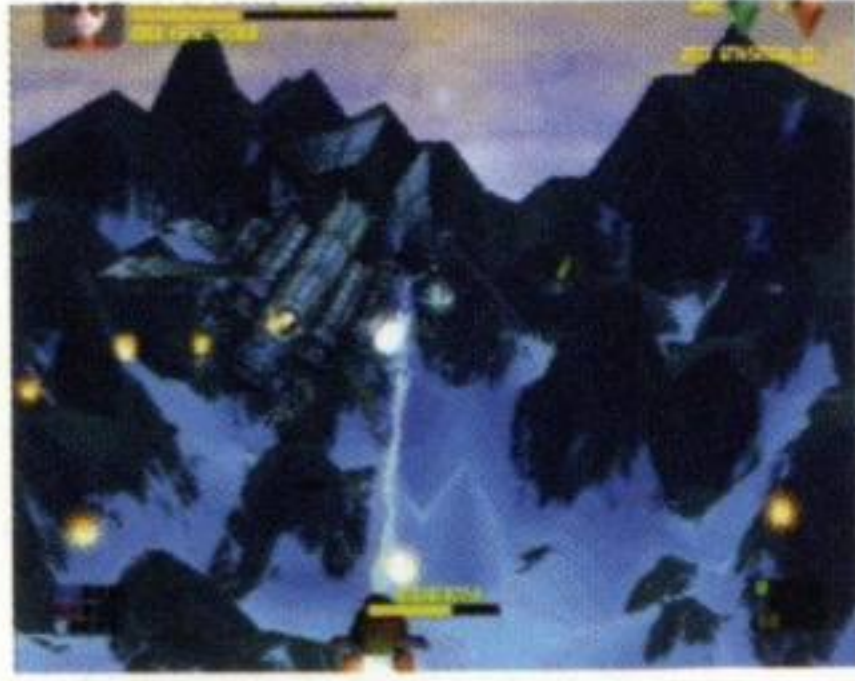
■ Does anyone remember *Mega Man 8*? Well it just grew up. *Mega Man X4*'s 2D side-scrolling nature means that you won't be able to avoid making a comparison to the ghost of *Sonic 2*, a comparison that becomes more relevant the deeper into the wonderland of collapsing platforms and linear progression you stumble. Capcom's flashy 2D sprite-based characters run and jump, and their "all new" climbing abilities (yawn) could make you believe it's a Mega Drive emulator that you've just shelled out 30-odd quid on, rather than an all-new game.

Still, if you have even a mild retrogaming fetish, you'll find everything to satisfy your urges: miniature manga-style heroes, damsels with broken ankles, and whopping great 2D baddies that hop around the screen in a sub-Hanna Barbara-animation sort of a way, growling, or just towering menacingly as they go.

Unhappily, you also have miles of surplus dialogue to contend with, which, rather than adding to the thrills on offer, just blunts them. There are only eight levels and each of these contains a predictable range of oversized sub-bosses and huge end bosses (and the added challenge of having to pick up new weapons for each level), but at the end of the day we've been here before with *Gunstar Heroes* and everything was that bit more convincing on Sega's old console.

As an added twist you can play through the game as optional character Zero, donning a fetching pink costume and handling a pleasing swish-swish lightsabre.

Even this doesn't make up for our *Mega Man* disappointment, though, so – choked by tears – we'll have to leave the final words to the characters themselves, spoken as Zero finds the cute and injured Iris among the wreckage. "What are you doing here?" he asks her. Buy this and you'll be asking yourself the same question. ★★ **Simon Garner**



Retro Force

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Psygnosis**
■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4**

Archaic scrolling shooter gets a shot of adrenaline and creaks from its bath chair. Wouldn't it be kinder to let it just drift away?

■ How to inspire enthusiasm in a formula as prosaic as this? Hmm, tricky. For while this game is indeed inherently "retro", its forcefulness is decidedly absent. So *Retro Force* appears wizened, frail, and a mite fatigued. We're talking vertical scroller. We're talking constant depression of the fire dimple. We're talking déjà vu.

There's a nominal nod toward a 3D world as your craft mopes up the screen o'er hillocks and other undulations – and yes, you can move up and down taking out land installations, before ascending to swat still more aerial annoyances. But your futuristic assault is on rails. The camera guides you. Nay, forces, your route.

With a choice of four different craft and the default three

weapons, we're not in the business of over subscription to options here. You have a bolt-throwing device, a tool that emits triangular spreads of laser mess, and a long strand of galaxy-class pain at your disposal. Which is perhaps too much. For, thanks to the moth-like nature of your brain-mashed opponents, sitting in the centre of the screen is often enough to coax enemy ships into frying their own behinds.

In fairness, you do get the occasional add-on weapon to strap on, yet these have such a limited lifespan as to almost negate their inclusion. This is a pity, but hardly a disaster, when you finally come up against what should be the nadir of the experience – the bosses. Major

fire-power is almost unwarranted against these boluses of pixels, each inspired to slovenly movement only when necessary.

As eye emollient *Retro Force* isn't that soothing either, as you encounter vitality-free depictions of little airborne craft, little airborne villains and little airborne pellets of light. Your environment is equally dull; just bitty, grating and violently uninspired.

Retro Force does include a rotation game where you can play with up to three more players, but even this nod to contemporary gaming habits can't redeem it. The kindest thing anyone could do would be to pop a few too many paracetamol in its Horlicks and let this grandpa drift away. ★★ **Stephen Pierce**

PlayStation budget round-up

by Robin Alway

Immoral earnings are difficult to dispose of as money laundering's a time-consuming process. If you can't get rid of your filthy lucre by traditional means, why not spend it on some precious metal? Platinum, to be precise.



Crash Bandicoot 2

■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **Naughty Dog** ■ Price: **£19.99**
■ Release date: **on sale now**
■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **memory card, analogue control**

■ You can always tell the quality of a platformer by how well the star dies. Who didn't feel distress when Mario's lungs filled with water? It's a good sign then, that you'll almost want to lose a life in this so you can see Crash float up to Bandicoot heaven playing a didgeridoo, or get blown sky high with only his boxer shorts and eyeballs falling back down to Earth.

More polished than the original, but lacking the super gloss of *Crash 3*, this falls between the two in a flurry of limbs and orange fur. The main criticisms levelled at the first game and, come to think of it, the last one, also apply here. There's none of the giddy freedom of *Mario 64* or even *Spyro*, with play confined to a narrow tube of fun which Crash either pelts down (into the screen, smashing crates and bounding over obstacles) or runs out of (chased by a ruddy great polar bear).

But despite the linear path through the levels and reliance on jumping, spin attacking and, of course, collecting apple elements, you can't help but enjoy the entertaining way *Crash 2*'s been put together. The fact that the graphics and animation have been imbued with the spirit of Warner Bros only helps matters, as you pound hectically through the levels; and *Crash*'s lack of 3D girth actually makes for a more action packed experience with enemies, obstacles and inventively animated death never far away. One word of warning, however: unless you can be bothered to collect all the bonus gems, it won't take that long to reach the credits.

You have our permission to call *Crash 2* a "romp" then, always a more enticing prospect at £20 than at full price. If you want the definitive Bandicoot game and best PlayStation platformer go for *Crash 3*, but if you're looking for an example of what Sony's mascot is all about, this'll do nicely. ★★★★★



G-Police

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis** ■ Developer: **Psygnosis** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **memory card, analogue control**

■ Yet more proof of the cruelty of this world we call videogames. With *G-Police* Psygnosis crafted a fantastic looking, far future 3D chopper game with involving missions, TV-shaking explosions and intriguing *The Bill*-in-space sub-plot. But no one bought it, making this Platinum release a definite lost classic.

The thing that possibly put most punters off first time round is the difficulty in controlling your heavily armed, 2097 flying panda car. You'll need every button on the pad to thrust around, target enemy ships and unleash your weapons, and to begin with you'll gad about smacking into buildings like a daddy-longlegs. But the rewards of mastering the controls are definitely worth it as you hover over the urban sprawl killing innocent bystanders, or weave through the streets with the afterburner kicked in.

The city environments are so detailed (advertising screens flog Diesel jeans, hover cars stop at traffic lights) and immersive that you can easily ignore the way everything looms out of the darkness, as your PlayStation strains to keep up with the sheer amount of architecture being flung in its direction.

The 38 missions are smartly designed, and range from escorting the president's limo to bombing a train-load of terrorists. You are always required to do more than just shoot something, with your objectives changing as new orders are radioed to you from base, and joypad-dampening tension is provided by knife-edge dog fights.

Coming on two CDs and wrapped up in a visual sheen of pure quality, *G-Police* is a real close-the-curtains-and-cultivate-a-pallid-complexion game. Full of strategy, thick with explosion, and completely engrossing, it's a definite discovery at £20. ★★★★★



Tomb Raider II

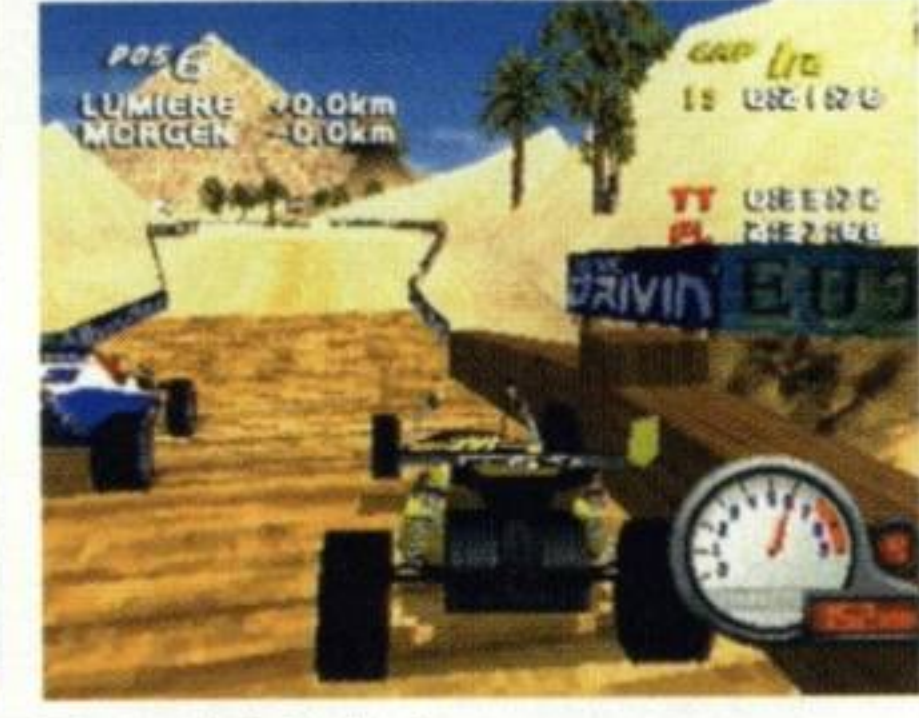
■ Publisher: **EIDOS** ■ Developer: **Core Design** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1** ■ Extras: **memory card**

■ Such was the enormity of completing *TRIII*, you could be wearing Lara's actual pants and still be sick of the sight of her, particularly if you spent most of your Christmas holiday prattling about in Maduba Gorge.

That said, *Tomb Raider II*'s a bargain at the price, offering huge amounts of game for your 20 quid. The differences from the other two games – new costumes, weapons and locations – don't make this anything other than more of the same, but it's really the adventure as a whole, spanning 16 masterfully designed levels, that makes it worth grappling with the notoriously tricky controls yet again. By the time you put the game back in its case and clear your memory card, you'll have been speed boating around Venice, speared Great White sharks, and killed a Yeti in what must be Lara's most action-assisted adventure to date.

In retrospect, the action's probably a little too stacked. Hitching a ride on a minisub adds a nice dash of 007-style cavorting to the proceedings, but too often the well-conceived puzzles of the first game have been replaced with dull shoot outs. Worse still, the auto-aiming weapons make for some uninvolved stand offs with enemies and endangered species. Luckily, the running leaps and ledge-clinging landings haven't lost their vertigo-inducing edge, even if the ability to save your game at any point does sap some of the tension.

In retrospect, this is probably the weakest instalment of the *Tomb Raider* series, but it only loses out to the original's head stoving puzzles and the latest one's well-paced mix of action and intelligence by a small margin. If you want more Lara and have got the other two games, this should keep you happy until Christmas and the inevitable appearance of *TRIV: Lara Does Community Service* – those ancient artifacts belong to someone else, you know. ★★★★★



Total Drivin'

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Eutechnyx** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Extras: **memory card**

■ You could almost feel sorry for pre-*Gran Turismo* racers. They were quite happy to drop the letter "g" from their titles in a bid to appear more exciting, blissfully unaware of the classy Italian chat-up-line of a driving game, waiting just around the corner.

Total Drivin''s worth remembering, though. From Eutechnyx – the developer behind the slightly disappointing *Max Power Racing* – it certainly doesn't do things by halves, packing in 40 cars, 36 tracks and five different types of racing. That means you're racing beach buggies on Easter Island one moment and rally cars round the Scottish highlands the next.

Any accusations that *Total Drivin'* is spreading itself too thin are deflected by the fact that the handling of each vehicle is pleasingly tight and different enough to make you modify your driving, depending on which vehicle you're sitting in and what surface you're racing on.

There's a host of neat touches, too. You can have four-player games with the link-up cable (two players on each TV). You can drive off a terrifying cliff into the water and it's Game Over rather than the loss of a few seconds. More evidence of the way the developers have tried to do things differently is the way you can plough off the tarmac for a few screens. There's none of lesser games' invisible trackside walls stopping you from hurtling into a field.

Naturally, given racing games' relentless pursuit of graphical excellence, *Total Drivin'* looks a bit shoddy more than a year on from its original release. Don't expect the cars to look as shiny as *Turismo*'s or the game to offer the same sophistication as the specialist driving successes that have come out since the likes of *TOCA* or *Colin McRae*. But for a more-than-competent, hugely comprehensive racer, with large amounts of variety and plenty of excitement, *Total Drivin'* wears its Platinum colours with style. ★★★★★



■ Paths are now shown with a handy number bar that shows you how long it will take you to cross the map.

AGE OF EMPIRE

SHAPE THE WORLD IN YOUR IMAGE

Arcade
PC
Game of the Month



■ Some squares have specific resources such as pearls and oil which can be traded for extra dosh. It's important to invest in public works to farm the land and fish the seas.

Civilization: Call to Power

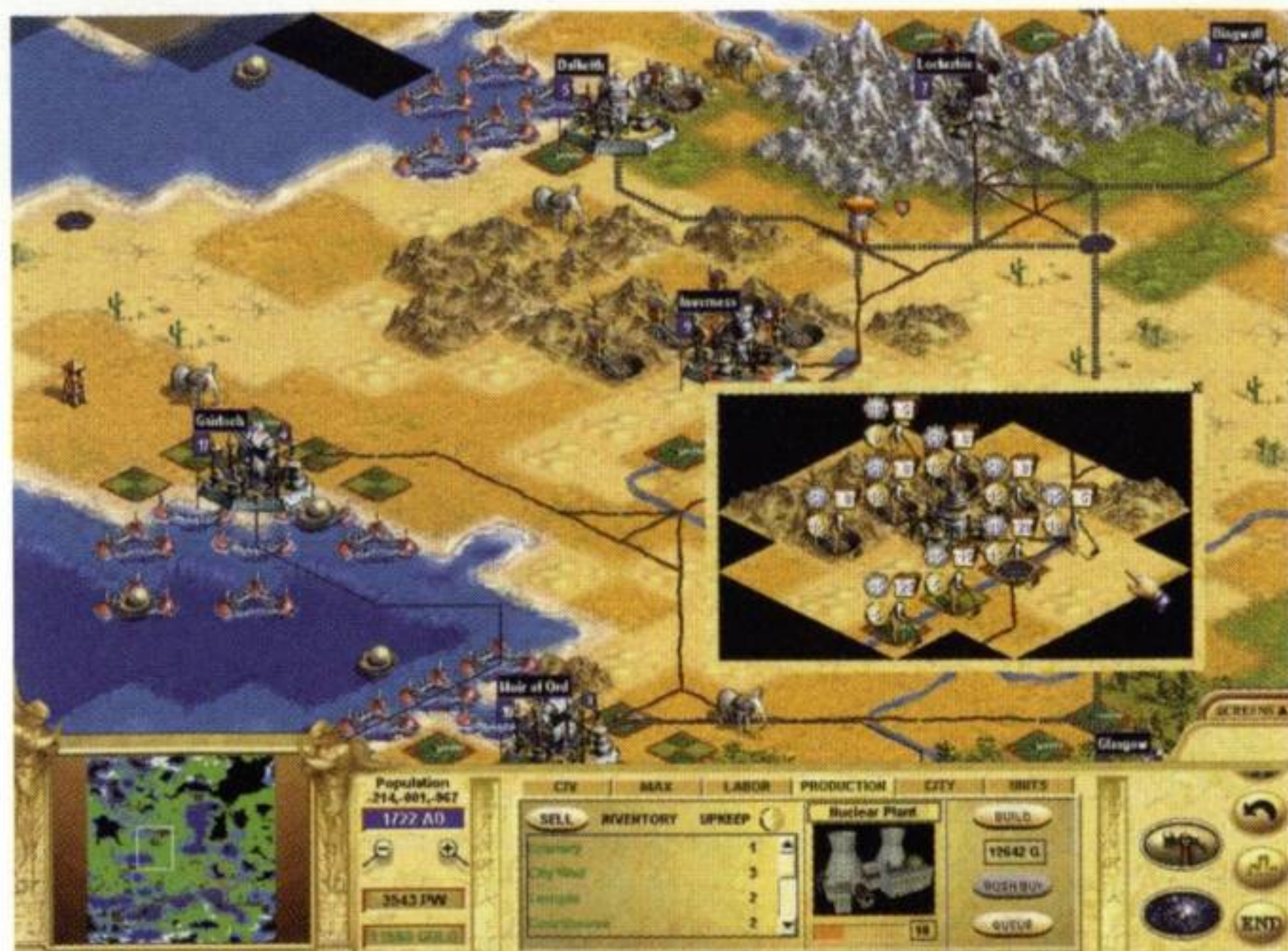
■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Activision**
 ■ Price: **£40** ■ Release date: **March** ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ Requires: **P133, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, Win 95**

Since the dawn of time man has been playing Sid Meier's *Civilization*. Alongside *Civ II* it ruled as the greatest strategy game ever made. Now Activision has dared to try and better it. Bring on the sequel.

No history of computer gaming would be complete without a major entry for the god of all strategy games, *Civilization*. Many regard it as the most important, timeless, and exquisite piece of game programming ever to have entered this country. It is a well balanced work of art, a strip of coastline of infinite complexity and beauty. Oh yes, we like it very much.

But it was made in 1993. Even the sequel, delivered some three years later (and essentially fixing some serious flaws in the AI that made the catapult the weapon of choice in the 20th Century), is looking a little ragged and old fashioned alongside the swirling MTV-inspired 3D visuals of today.

Which is why Activision, sans original *Civ* designer Sid Meier, has endeavoured to update it. And yet they've foregone flashy graphics – for which we are grateful – and



■ The dimmed bits show areas you've explored but can't see.

have instead refined and expanded the original to further increase its complexity and make it an even longer game. While *Civ II* absorbs a whole weekend (or about 20 hours) to play through, *Call to Power* took seven days to complete the first game. Seven days. Eight hours a day. Blimey!

Your task is mammoth. Start with two bands of settlers in 4000BC, explore an unknown land, form cities, meet other civilisations, and create a race that spans the globe. Along the way you need to research scientific goals, keep your increasingly demanding populace happy, and engage in diplomatic or military relations with the other civilisations.

Sure enough, niggles and disagreements over territory soon result in full blown war, and it's here that the first of *Call to Power's* innovations becomes apparent. Battles are massively more complex, with stacked units, front and rear lines, hand-to-hand and long-range combat, with defenders enjoying terrain benefits. It means that the battles are considerably more difficult – and thus more expensive – than they used to be, and as such require significant planning in advance. This has been countered with the

introduction of special non-military units that can enter foreign cities without being noticed and without fear of retaliation. Slavers, for instance, strip a city of its population, while abolitionists can be used to get your people back or instill revolution. Televangelists siphon tithes from enemy cities, while Franchises suck production. You can even use eco-terrorists to destroy city improvements, bringing about unhappiness, unrest and strikes.

These extra, non-military units are designed to reflect the increasing use of economic warfare in the 20th Century, and lead the way to *Call to Power's* other main change. The game no longer finishes in 2100AD with the successful colonisation of Alpha Centauri, but continues on to 3000, whereupon you have to collect DNA through a wormhole in space and construct your own alien. Alternatively, of course, you can just destroy everyone else on the planet.

To tide over the traditionally quiet bit that comes between controlling a vast civilisation in the time of the Renaissance and reaching your final goal, Activision has offered even greater expansion possibilities. With the appropriate scientific discoveries you can now build cities on the ocean bed to capitalise on the vast quantities of minerals, or construct floating palaces in the planet's orbit, which not only encourages rapid growth, but also gives you the opportunity to bombard your enemies from space.

Ironically, *Civilisation* fans will find *Call to Power* more unfamiliar than Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri* – the new control system will certainly take some getting used to. But, essentially, *Call to Power* provides all that it promised: an enhanced and refreshed take on what was already a stonkingly good game. ★★★★★ **Steve Owen**

↑ Uppers & Downers

- Romans**
- Wonderfully complex battles
 - Enjoyable future sciences
 - Thoroughly captivating game style
- Barbarians**
- One game takes too long
 - Battles – the fun bit – are expensive
 - Graphically it's still a little old fashioned

IT'S AN ENHANCED AND REFRESHED TAKE ON WHAT WAS ALREADY A STONKINGLY GOOD GAME

Or you could try...

Caesar III
Publisher ★★★★★
Empire building in real-time from the golden age of Roman civilisation.

Alpha Centauri
Publisher ★★★★★
Sid Meier's unofficial sequel to *Civilization II*, set on an alien planet and still turn-based.



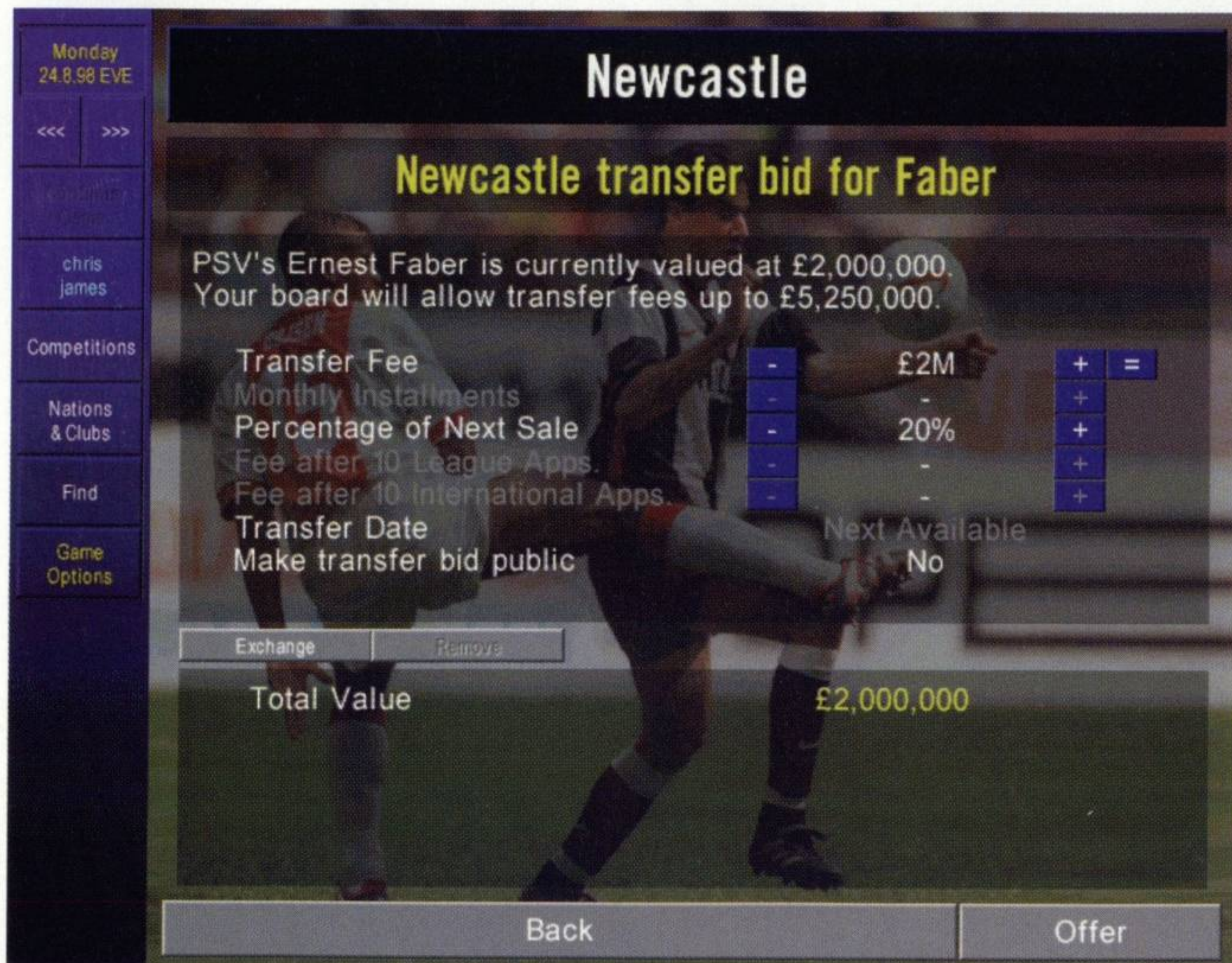
■ Deep down, *Civilisation: Call to Power* is an ugly game. Do these screenshots make you want to play it? Fight the urge to turn it off, and instead prepare to invest the rest of your life in it.



■ Learn all about the cheating scum who lifted the '82 trophy, and all the world's other great teams, in a brand new textual database service. Then it's over to Andy Gray in the studio for a check on those action zones.

TREBLE CHAMPIONS

TIME TO DIG OUT YOUR SHEEPSKIN COAT



■ Transfer dealings in the third instalment of CM are more detailed than ever.

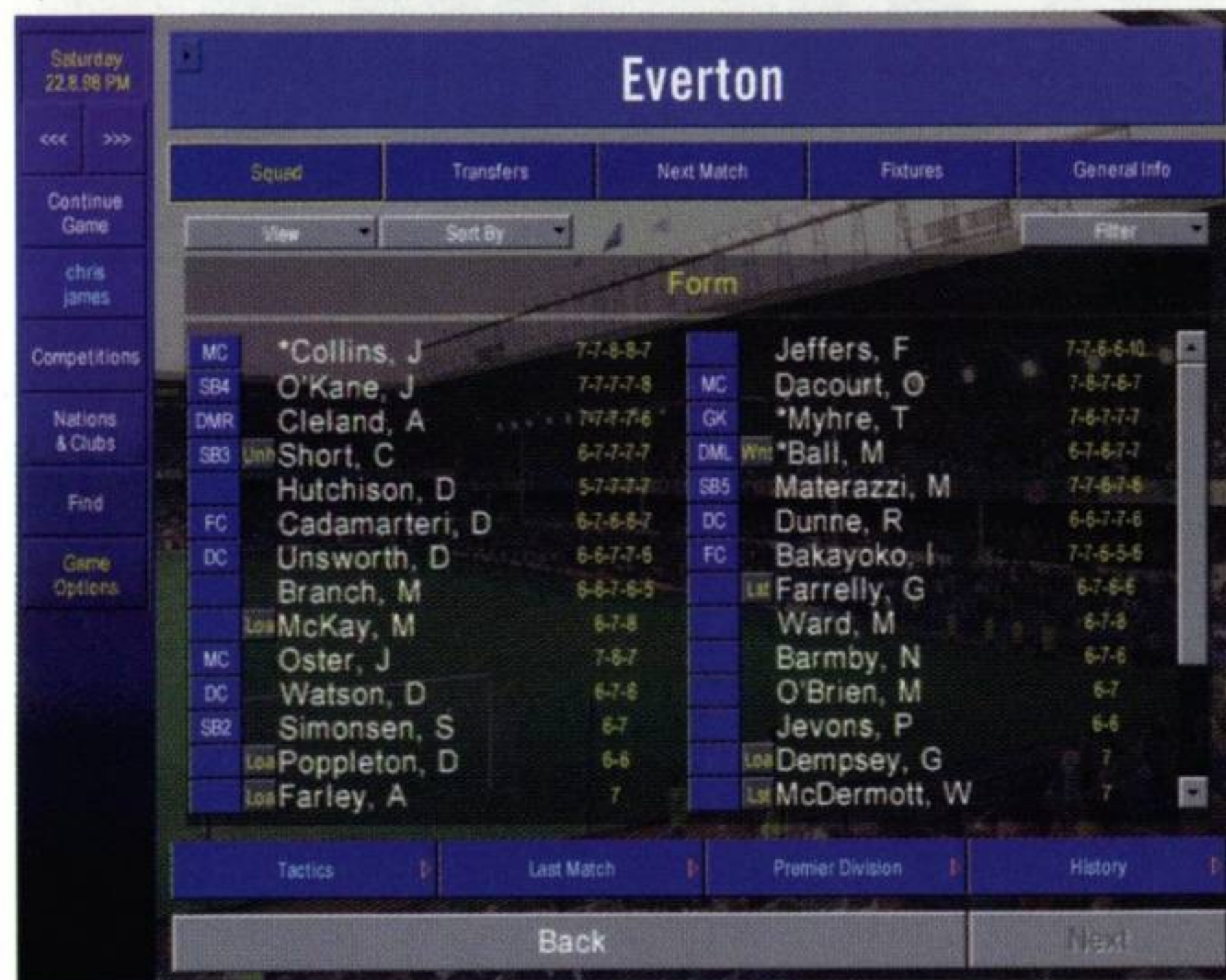
Championship Manager 3

■ Publisher: **EIDOS** ■ Developer: **Sports Interactive**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **12 March** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, soundcard, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **64Mb RAM**

If football management truly is a funny old game, then Championship Manager's creators must be laughing all the way to the bank.

You don't need a degree in rocket science to grasp the principle behind the appeal of footie management sims. Deep down, all football fans know that they could do a better job than Hoddle, Wilkinson, Keegan and co, and most would sell their souls for the chance to prove it. The key to making a successful football management game, then, is realism: you have to be able to suspend your disbelief in the game world to such a degree that you'll cheer out loud when a virtual Beckham breaks his leg, or hold your head in despair as Columbian import Manuel "barn door" Enchilada balloons one over the bar.

However, only one developer has ever come close to capturing the atmosphere of the beautiful game: Sports



■ Relying on scores elsewhere? Just flick straight through from the main match screen to take a look at the latest results.

Interactive with *Championship Manager 2*, officially hailed as the football fans' favourite management sim. And it's still regarded as the best soccer sim of all time, or at least it was until now. For *Championship Manager 3* is bigger, bolder, and better than its predecessor in every department.

CM2's engine was beginning to chug in the '97-'98 season upgrade, so it's been entirely stripped out, and in its place beats a brand new number-crunching heart. Over 35,000 footballers have been squeezed into *CM3*, with players taken from 16 global leagues (encompassing the USA's MSL, the Japanese J-League, and top Scandinavian and South American leagues, alongside all the usual European superpowers). And every last one of those players now boasts 31 visible statistics (from Acceleration to Work rate), a handful of invisible ones (Potential, Selfishness and so on), and a further smattering of eclectic personal details including morale, preferred foot, and even fluent and basic language abilities, all of which really will affect their performance. Hurl in several thousand more non-playing staff, including coaches, physios, scouts, other stunningly talented AI managers, and even referees with their own unique abilities and ratings, and you're almost in danger of having (dare we say it) too much detail.

Fortunately, the second major upgrade is the interface itself, which enables you to instantly access all the major screens via drop-down menus. In addition, almost every name or number on the screen has been hyperlinked, so one click on a player, team or competition name in any context will bring up more in-depth information. Even the already impressive transfer system hasn't evaded the streamlining approach. The familiar Quick Search

Uppers & Downers

Scorchers

- Huge, in-depth football world
- Faster game engine
- Enhanced tactics options
- Full reserve team squad

Howlers

- Initially bewildering interface
- No visual match representation
- Mountains of stats

function has been simplified via a powerful filter system to deliver a smaller, but eminently more suitable, collection of players every time you search, while up to seven scouts fulfil more generic player rooting duties.

So far so good then. But it gets better yet as *CM3* makes its most evolutionary departure from its forbears, by providing alternative methods of team improvement: your team improvement options are now by no means limited to transfers. You can even employ a training regime to subtly enhance players – particularly those youth/reserve team prospects with potential (you can sack your coach and take direct control if you're particularly hard-up).

In the short term there's also a whole new world of tactical opportunities you can use to get the best out of your boys. Although you can still deal with tactics as in *CM2* – changing basic formation and suggested runs only – only the earliest beginner might overlook the opportunity to get down and dirty with the tactics editor, dictating where each player should attempt to be when the ball is in various positions on the pitch. On top of this there's even room for individual roles and passing directions to be handed out.

Then all you need to do is sit back as your best-laid plans fall apart in real-time, via a much improved real-time match engine (featuring more flowing commentary and some neatly atmospheric crowd sounds). And you can be sure that most of your schemes will fall apart, for the first few games at least, because on top of all your considerations there's still the players' own skills, morale and selfishness to come to terms with, which is what makes the whole game so damn compelling. But you can't actually see your golden boys perform; instead you have to rely on the services of a commentary, some text screens, and changes to your statistics and tables. This lack of visual representation of the match is the only area where *CM3* is let down.

However, whether it's screaming at your charges on the pitch, or grimacing at the chairmen's vote of confidence off it, *CM3* never gives you a moment to consider that the world you're playing in isn't real. ★★★★★ **Chris James**

OVER 35,000 PLAYERS, 16 WORLD LEAGUES AND EVERY MAJOR TEAM HAVE BEEN SQUEEZED IN

Or you could try...

Ultimate Soccer Manager 98-99
Cendant Software ★★★★★
Friendly interface marks an overall more light-hearted approach to the beautiful game.

Premier Manager 98
Gremlin ★★★
Bastard child of Spanish management sim and Actua Soccer game engine. Pretty but flawed.



■ Of all the leagues in all the world, you had to walk into the Vauxhall Conference.



Pro Pilot '99

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Dynamix** ■ Price: **£34.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1** ■ Requires: **P133, 32Mb RAM, 100Mb free HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 4Mb graphics card, DirectSound 6.0-compatible soundcard, Win 95**

At last a game that simulates the romance of private aviation: the worn leatherette, the ill-fitting aircraft doors, the airfields with no loos...

■ Actually, *Pro Pilot* is a bit of a misnomer. "Amateur Pilot" would be a better description of this flight sim. There are no guns, no enemies bent on your destruction, and no desperate attempts to single-handedly save the Free World. Instead, you have a choice of six civil aircraft, ranging from a little Cessna hedgehopper, through light twin-engined planes, to a Citation executive jet.

Flight-plans, not missions, are the order of the day, and with *Pro Pilot* you can fly between over 4,300 airfields in North America and Western Europe. Once you've chosen your departure and arrival points, the program will generate a flight-plan, with the relevant weather conditions along your flightpath. It does much of the tedious navigation planning for you, and simply gives you the headings and times by which you'll need to reach your destination or waypoints. You can also pull up a GPS display which shows your position and intended course, so you can point the plane in the right direction.

The game also features air traffic control messages, an instrument landing system, VOR/LOC beacons, visual and instrument flight rules, various autopilot types... the list goes on. Unfortunately, while *Pro Pilot* makes desultory use of 3Dfx cards, the graphics are functional rather than outstanding. A few famous buildings are included in the larger cities, but otherwise the towns and cities are merely flat, blurry pictures pasted on the ground. I was a bit taken aback at being able to land on Birmingham, something that's somewhat frowned upon in real life.

Pro Pilot '99 is the ideal flight sim for weekend private pilots, or perhaps for student pilots who don't want to buy *Microsoft Flight Sim* and all the add-ons that go with it. ★★★ **Jim Chandler**



■ We've all had worms, but it was never as much fun as this.

HOOKED ON CLASSICS

TREAT YOURSELF TO A FIT OF THE WIGGLES

Worms Armageddon

■ Publisher: **Hasbro** ■ Developer: **Team 17**
 ■ Price: **£35** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-16** ■ Requires: **P200, 32Mb RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **WormNet on-line service**

It's two-dimensional, turn-based and almost offensively cute. So why has the third Worms game got us hooked?

There's something reassuringly familiar about the *Worms* series. Like the entire menu at any branch of McDonald's, you know exactly what to expect. While *Worms Armageddon* might not constitute an experience as life-altering as devouring a halfpounder, large fries and a strawberry shake, it will almost certainly leave you feeling agreeably sated.

Like its two predecessors, *Armageddon* sticks defiantly to its turn-based roots – shunning the fashionable trends of both real-time and 3D action. And again, like Team 17's previous efforts, it relies heavily on tightly

drawn cartoon visuals and squeaky voices to provide the game's trademark humour.

In fact, at first glance *Armageddon* looks far too similar to *Worms 2* to be anything more than a cynical rehash. It's only when you plumb its new single-player depths and discover the new weapons and modes of play that it reveals itself to be a strategy game gem.

The basics of the series involve taking it in turns to use your team of beautifully animated worms to launch attacks on your rival annelids. The almost-flawless control system enables you to view the landscape while walking or jumping your worm around, as well as opening up access to your enormous arsenal of specialist offensive (and defensive) weaponry. Choosing the trajectory of your projectile weapons, such as the bazooka, is done by adjusting the angle of fire and using a power bar – although you must take the strength and direction of the wind into account, too.

Armageddon is deceptively simple and only reveals its subtleties after prolonged play. Random crates reveal new weapons that are as humorous to watch as they are difficult to use, such as the erratic, exploding Old Lady and the devastating French Sheep Strike. Team 17 has also improved the previously weak single-player element. Although *Armageddon* still works best as a simultaneous multi-player game, the single gamer will find some enjoyable (if extremely tough) missions forming the basis for a series of maps in which your objectives are consistently varied.

As for *Armageddon's* downers, they're few. The pixels of scenery can be tough to spot, and there's no denying that the formula remains largely unchanged, but that said, *Worms Armageddon* remains one of the most challenging, attractive and downright fun multi-player games ever. ★★★★★ **Matt Pierce**

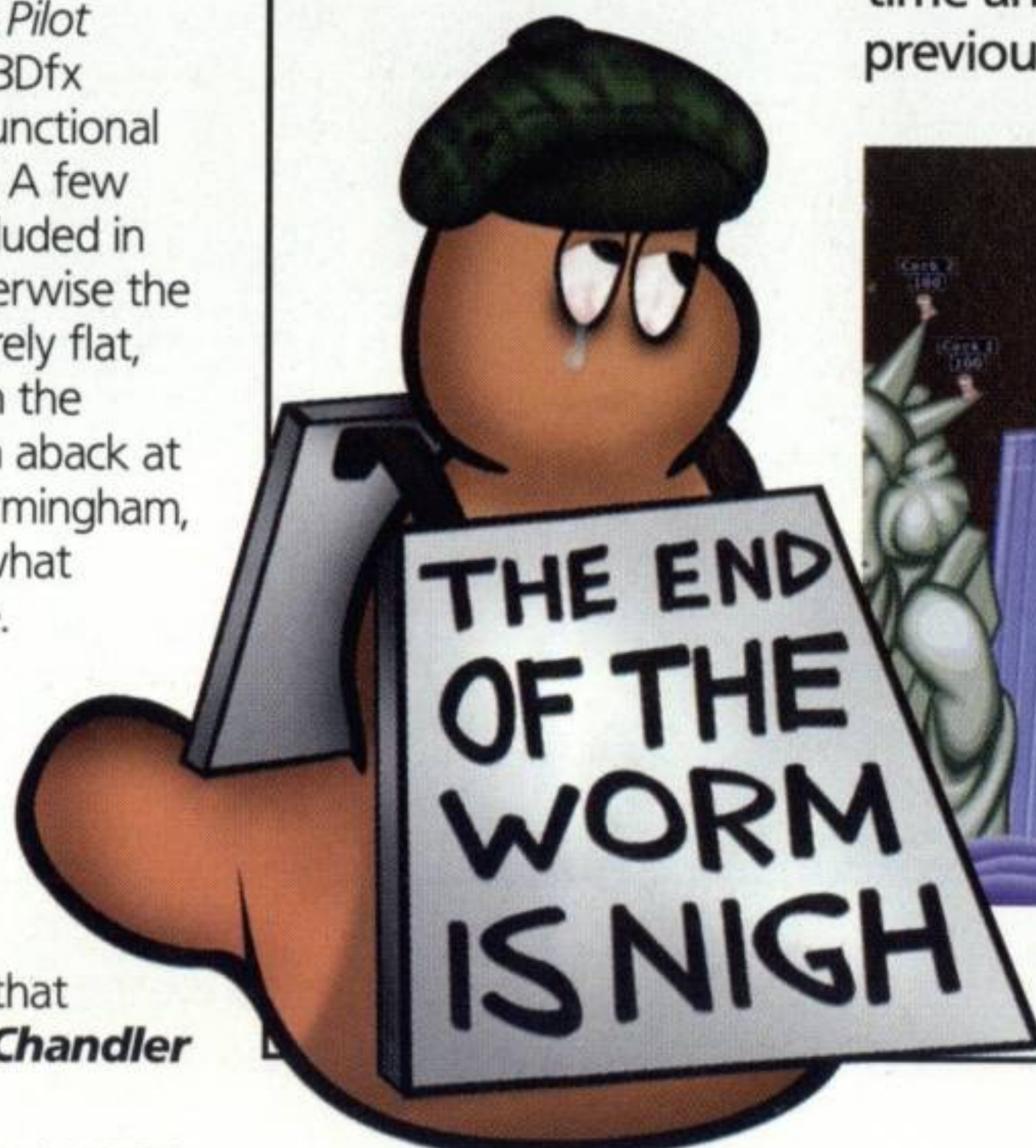
Uppers & Downers

Wiggly

- Gorgeous detailed graphics
- Missions for the single player
- More weapons than ever before

Slimy

- Bits of scenery sometimes hard to spot
- The dialogue begins to grate
- The formula's still essentially the same



■ Wiggly worms. Huge sausages. No game has more potential for rudeness.

Or you could try...

Worms 2
 MicroProse ★★★★★
 Lacking the single-player element, but available on budget.

Lemmings
 Psygnosis ★★★★★
 Similar to look at, but more of a puzzler, and incredibly addictive.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

HOLD ON TO YOUR LUNCH, IT'S HORROR TIME



■ "Hello? Hey! Wake up! Yooo-hooo! Is anybody iiiin theeerre? Come on, shake your ass! Oh, he's dead."

Resident Evil 2

■ Publisher: **Virgin** ■ Developer: **Capcom**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1** ■ Requires: **P133, 32Mb RAM, 75Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 3D accelerator card, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **PII 233MHz, 314Mb HD space, Win 98** ■ Extras: **joystick, gamepad, soundcard**

The two Resident Evil games are so heavily influenced by George Romero's splatter-films that Capcom paid the gory fella to direct its Japanese TV advert.

Raccoon City must be a dreadful place to work. A corrupt police chief with a taste for Gothic esoterica has made the civic headquarters an intimidating nightmare of stained-glass windows and outdated technology; rookie cops are permitted to carry sub-machine guns in their vehicles; herbal pot plants are freely available for medicinal purposes; and it's always night.

Raccoon City is the fictional setting for both *Resident Evil* titles; action adventures shamelessly based on the *Night of the Living Dead* slasher movies. Strictly for adults only, *RE2* assaulted the PlayStation last Autumn and has finally hunted down the PC.

You must choose to start the episode as either police officer Leon or girl-power Claire. Either way you also get to play as the

young Ada Wong – and you enter Raccoon City just as the dreaded G-virus turns all its inhabitants into flesh-eating zombies.

Stranded near the crumbling police station, you must shoot your way to safety.

The gameplay is an amalgam of simple object-based conundrums and mindless run-shoot manoeuvring. A variety of weapons result in countless gory "self-defence" kills, which you witness from fixed camera angles. As you trot from room to room, watching tedious door-opening animations, the perspective flicks to show a suitably cinematic view. It's a viewing technique popular since the first *Alone in the Dark* game five years ago, and it still suffers from the same drawback: the fixed camera isn't always ideal for the events you're supposed to watch. Sometimes you're shooting at beasts just beyond the side of the screen, and you'll ache for a "look" key like the one in *Tomb Raider*.

You're expected to overlook minor conceits in the design. For instance, why should objects you put in a crate on the ground floor also be available to you in a crate on the top floor? Fortunately, there's sufficient atmosphere to keep you engrossed. At times *Resident Evil 2*'s shock-horror gameplay proves unsubtle, but with a Voodoo 2, it looks magnificent – crystal clear and far smoother than its PlayStation cousin. When the eerie music chimes, a door slams in the distance, and bloody footprints glisten in colourful high res, you'll squirm on the edge of your seat. ★★★

Simon Garner

Uppers & Downers

- Angels**
- Atmosphere to choke on
 - Commendable visuals
 - A worthy sequel
- Devils**
- Dodgy camera angles
 - Lacks real depth
 - Can grow tiresome

Or you could try...

Tomb Raider III
 EDOS ★★★★★
 The bitch is back, this time leaping around the Indian jungle and the London Tube.

Sanitarium
 Mindscape ★★★
 Like *Resident Evil 2*, you wander around a spooky world in multiple character guises.



Pro 18 World Tour Golf

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Developer: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Price: **TBC** ■ Release date: **19 March** ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Requires: **P166 (MMX), 32Mb RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster-compatible soundcard, Win 95**
 ■ Recommended: **P200, 64Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive**

Could Psygnosis' change of control approach be all that's needed to make golf games really swing?

■ In the computer golf clubhouse, titles that cater for the anal realism and atomic precision demanded by true fans tend to soar up the charts, quickly taking up their seat in the Men's Lounge. Those that fall short are relegated to the budget labels and confined to Ladies' Days. Thus it is that the low-handicapped pros such as *PGA Tour* and *Links LS* have traditionally ruled the fairways, but *Pro 18 World Tour Golf* threatens to knock away the competition with a satisfying thwack.

The game does everything right. The use of aerial photography and photo-realistic backdrops gives the three courses in Northern Ireland, Idaho and South Africa an astonishing sense of realism, and – according to Psygnosis – add-on packs are imminent. *Pro 18*'s commentators include the BBC's Peter Alliss, and the inclusion of digital versions of pro-golfers such as Colin Montgomerie is also pleasing.

Pro 18's game engine has been designed to look and feel like you're watching TV and the playing experience is almost as passive as being in front of the tube because, to be honest, you don't actually do much.

On the face of it this is a bad idea, but virtually all control is vested in your left-hand mouse button. This is thanks to a unique four-click system, where the strength and direction of your shot are determined by your ability to stop a series of meters in the right place. This innovative interface abolishes the need to move a cursor to aim the shot and reduces the game to simple finger flexing, but this is what most people want from a golf game.

With eye candy pretty enough to distract you from your stroke, lots of multi-player options, and a control method that could quickly become de facto, *Pro 18* could easily be the only golf game you need. ★★★★★

Ian Harris



Biosys

■ Publisher: **Take 2** ■ Developer: **Jumpstart Solutions**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Requires: **P100, 16Mb RAM, 123Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **P200, 32Mb RAM**

You're trapped in a biosphere with no food and a bunch of mutants who want to kill you. A bit like manning the "complaints" booth at the Post Office.

■ *Biosys* is one of those first-person perspective games that eschews sexy 3D graphics in favour of pre-rendered backdrops and movies. There's nothing wrong with that in itself, but it's a bit like deciding to make a sit-com and saying "I know! Let's have that hilariously camp bloke off *The Thin Blue Line* in it!" You're in trouble before you've started, really. Despite the huge and mystifying success of *Myst* and its sequel *Riven*, it should be obvious to everyone by now that these outdated point-and-click affairs are always complete crap. It's a massive shame, really, as the idea behind the story is quite good.

Biosys starts with your character awakening in the middle of a sealed rainforest environment – suffering from an acute case of amnesia, naturally – with no way out. You have to make sure that the biosphere's environment doesn't get messed up, and you must keep your character alive. He gets too hot, too cold, hungry, thirsty, ill and – if you're really unlucky – eaten by mutant monster-things. There's also the machinations of the sinister Subtech Corporation to deal with, and other biospheres and locations to explore.

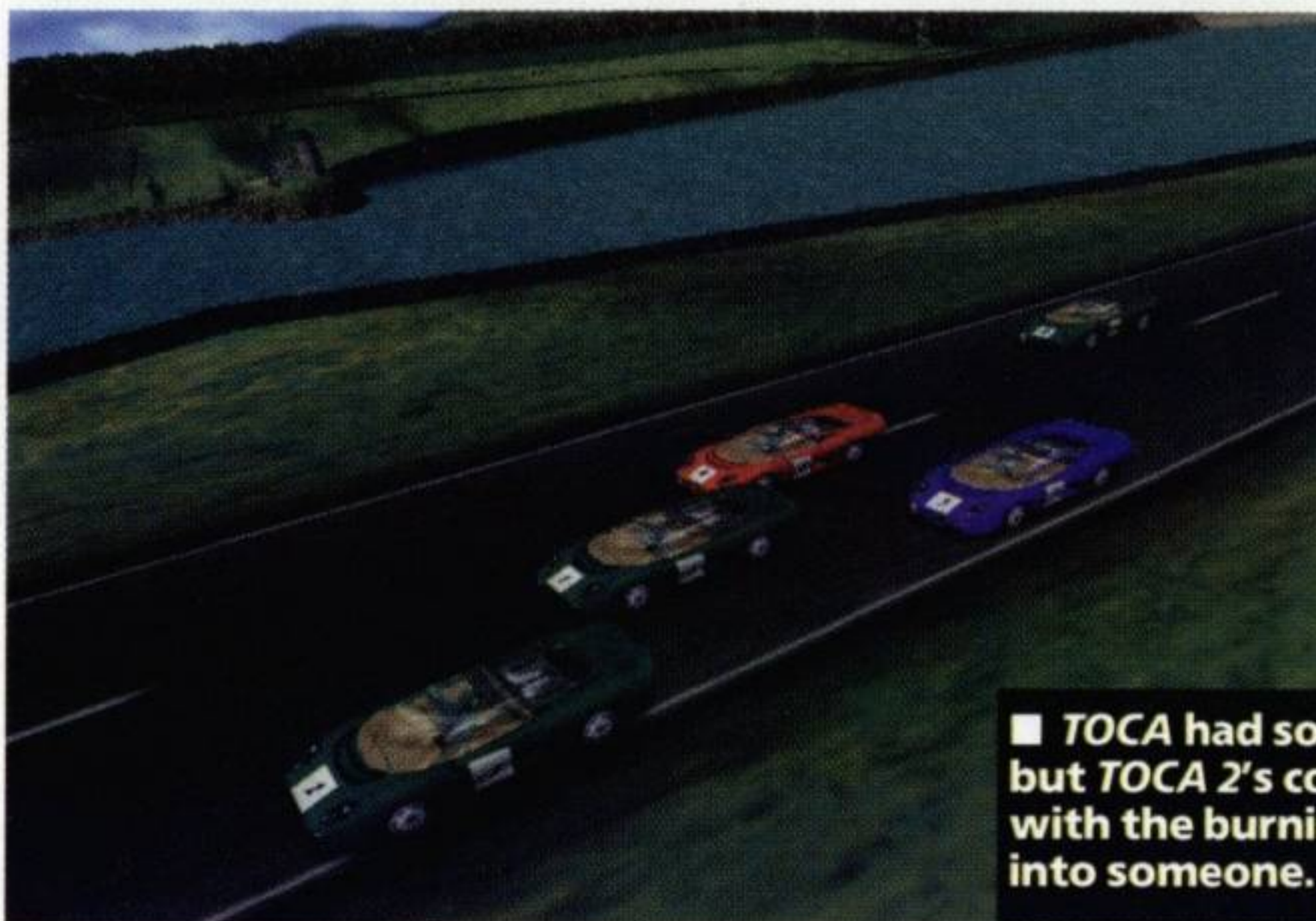
It sounds enticing but, sadly, *Biosys'* execution leaves a lot to be desired. It's not the presentation that's at fault – the graphics, despite not being "proper" 3D, are pretty, with some gorgeous rendered locations and weather effects. Likewise, the sound is brilliant, and the various animal noises and ambient effects complete the fantastic atmosphere. However, *Biosys* lacks gameplay. When it starts, you've got naff all idea of what you're supposed to be doing, and the confusing navigation system doesn't help. There's a great game buried somewhere here but, frankly, we can't find it. Tragedy. ★★ **Simon Garner**



■ The cars' handling is as realistic as it gets.

EASY RIDER

TEAM TOCA IS ON THE ROAD AGAIN



■ TOCA had some great crashes, but TOCA 2's collisions leave you with the burning desire to drive into someone.



Uppers & Downers

- Eddie Irvine**
- Stunning realism
 - Great little arcade-style bonuses
 - Loads of tracks and cars
- Mark Thatcher**
- A little frustrating at first
 - Needs a powerful PC
 - Force Feedback wheels are expensive

TOCA 2 Touring Car

■ Publisher: **Codemasters** ■ Developer: **Codemasters** ■ Price: **£35** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Requires: **P200, 32Mb RAM, TBCMb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive** ■ Recommended: **3D accelerator card**

The PC version of TOCA 2 looks and plays so well that it's quickly eclipsing its PlayStation counterpart.

Codemasters is fast establishing itself as the leading racing game designer outside of Japan and *TOCA 2* is its crowning glory. If you've played the original, then you'll appreciate that the combination of simulation realism and arcade pick-up-and-play style is a winner; but, not satisfied, Codemasters has loaded this new release with improvements.

The most obvious change is in the graphics, reflecting how far 3D accelerator technology has come over the last 18 months. You get high frame rates, lovely textures and no slow-down, even when you're up against 15 other cars, scurrying and scraping their way to the front spot. The tracks recede into the distance with no perceivable cut-off, and it takes only the slightest shift in imagination to put yourself in the seat of a real touring car.

The most welcome development, however, is in the handling of the cars, particularly if you're dedicated enough to blow £100 on a Force Feedback steering wheel. The effects are superb: the car constantly fights your turns at high speed, and you can feel the back-end slipping out as the Feedback relaxes

■ While your car can now sustain damage, this barely affects your performance.



a little, giving you the chance to slow down or correct before losing it big time. There's never even been anything in the arcade like it.

Codemasters has added new Touring Car rules, too. One of the best implementations of these is that every venue now has a forced pit-stop in the second of the two races – a vital addition that gives you the opportunity to undertake maintenance such as changing wheels and repairing any damage you sustain as you jostle for the top spot.

As well as the eight existing tournament tracks, Codemasters has included four of its own courses (all of which are enjoyably varied, especially the one based around a Scottish lake), a test track with eight different routes, and three variations on existing courses.

Even if you own a copy of the original *TOCA*, you'd be foolish not to invest in this too. All of the 1998 tracks and drivers nestle snugly on the CD, plus you get a massive collection of support races, featuring the likes of a Ford Fiesta, Jaguar XJ220 and TVR. *TOCA 2* is the most impressive and most satisfyingly racer you can play. Another Codemasters masterpiece. ★★★★★ **Steve Owen**

Or you could try...

Grand Prix Legends
 Sierra ★★★★★
 Simulation of the dangerous 1968 Grand Prix season.

Colin McRae Rally
 Codemasters ★★★★★
 Another of the PC's finest racing moments.



■ Superbikes offer a variety of viewpoints, each one very fast.

SUPER SPEED

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

Superbikes World Championship

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Milestone**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-8** ■ Requires: **P133, 16Mb RAM, 144Mb HD space, graphics card, 4x CD-ROM** ■ Recommended: **P166, 3D accelerator card** ■ Extras: **joystick, steering wheel, modem/LAN for network play**

The team behind the Screamer series loses a pair of wheels, but gains a whole lot of realism in the most demanding motorbike speedfest yet.

As road racing games go, Milestone's *Screamer* was a blast. Nothing like real racing, mind you, but great all the same. *Screamer Rally* proved to be even less rooted in reality, with the only real rally element being the use of down 'n' dirty track layouts. And yet, it was even more enjoyable than its predecessor. *Superbikes World Championship* is a very different kind of motor racing simulation, and not just because the emphasis has switched to Hondas, Ducatis and Kawasakis.

Heavy licensing is at work here, with official approval from all the motor companies and associations represented. And that doesn't just mean all the logos and track layouts. This serious approach is far more than cosmetic, leading to the creation of a game that's at odds with pretty much every other motorbike game on the PC. It's about as close to a real bike simulation as you can get, even in the supposed "arcade" mode. Switch to the full simulation mode, whack all the realism settings to the max and you've got a challenge to last until your pension book pops through the letterbox.

This more authentic approach impacts on the game in two important ways. First, if you're a novice, you're likely to gnash your teeth in frustration. It's soon clear just how challenging every corner is when there are only two wheels between your rider and gravity. A need for serious planning and judicious use of the brakes makes it even

↑ Uppers & Downers

- Throttle**
- Looks good enough to eat. Yum yum.
 - Customisable bikes and difficulty
 - A true bike simulation
- Helmet**
- Not so impressive without a 3D card
 - Just too damn hard

more challenging than *TOCA* and *Colin McCrae Rally*. Happily, the second effect of the warts, tyre-wear and all approach is that once you've reached a certain level of competence the real fun begins. You can learn the nuances of bike modification, while the races

become tense struggles, where lavish visuals bring the sport spectacularly to life. The tracks feature a wonderful level of detail, but the bikes and their riders are the real stars. Lean into a corner and the all-too-solid-looking rider will push his body just that little bit further. Take a tumble and he'll even run back and pick his bike up to start again. Even the shadows feature rotating spokes.

It's this dedication to detail, with the opportunity to race against up to 30 other riders in either single or multi-player modes, that ensures *Superbikes World Championship* is big on thrills. You may never want the bother of four wheels again. ★★★★★ **Mark Ramshaw**

Or you could try...

Motocross Madness
 Microsoft ★★★
 A less believable, though altogether wilder, kind of bike ride.

Moto Racer 2
 Electronic Arts ★★★
 Used to be the ultimate in arcade-style two-wheel road racing fun. Not any more.



■ The simulation mode adds more control and more chance to screw the race up.



Tellurian Defence

■ Publisher: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Developer: **Psygnosis**
 ■ Price: **£35** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 78Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **joystick, 3D accelerator card, modem for network play**

Sub-standard futuristic flight sim fare for the less discerning PC gamer. X-wing it ain't.

■ *Tellurian Defence* is the kind of game that should, if there's any justice, bomb terribly. Harsh for an opening sentence, granted. But taking the "cruel to be kind" tack, I write these words in the hope that Psygnosis never again sends a game such as this for review.

Tellurian Defence, y'see, is an unwanted addition to an already overworked genre. LucasArts, Origin and Volition have set the standard for sci-fi flight sims with the *X-wing* and *Wing Commander* series, as well as the superb *Conflict Freespace*. So here comes bully-boy *Tellurian Defence*, trying to muscle in on the action, but only showing you exactly how it *shouldn't* be done.

TD busies itself with the task of simulating conflict over the planet's surface, rather than in deep space. Hills, mountains and urban areas are therefore required – a task that, for all its faults, *Rogue Squadron* still managed to achieve more effectively than this. Thanks to the *TD* game engine's love of fog, the biggest threat to your missions is crashing into the Everest-size lumps that appear, without warning, before you. Add the fact that your ship's handling is curiously sluggish and you'll start to see the frustration. Perhaps this is why Psygnosis has made the targeting system one of the most generous ever – you simply press the fire button as soon as you see a UFO. The lasers and missiles take care of the rest themselves.

In all, *Tellurian Defence* is at best instantly forgettable. Mission objectives vary between assault, rescue and reconnaissance, and the storyline opens up well, but there's no originality here. In fact, it's most comparable to Gremlin's ancient *Sandwarriors*, which although slightly better than this Psygnosis offering, disappeared as quickly as it arrived, nearly two years ago. No doubt *Tellurian Defence's* fate will be identical. ★ **Matthew Pierce**



Baldur's Gate

■ Publisher: **Interplay**
 ■ Developer: **Bioware** ■ Price: **£44.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-6** ■ Requires: **P166, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2Mb SVGA graphics card, Win 95**
 ■ Recommended: **P200, 32Mb RAM, 8x CD-ROM drive, 4Mb SVGA graphics card**

With Baldur's Gate quickly following Fallout 2, it seems Interplay is almost single-handedly attempting to revive the RPG genre.

■ Reams of paper covered in maps, list upon list of hit points, experience points and armour class tables, and a group of spotty youths living out their Tolkien fantasies. That was *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, as most of us remember it. There've been many conversions to the PC, but recently there's been a void, which *Baldur's Gate* looks set to fill. Based on the *Second Edition* rules, it may seem that it only has appeal for the experienced campaigner, but thanks to a well-conceived game engine and a suitably detailed manual, most of the rulesets are either internalised, or adequately explained, making it accessible to all RPG fans.

The story is set in the Forgotten Realms, focusing around the city of Baldur's Gate. You take the central role of the ward of Gorian, who's mysteriously killed while attempting to secure your escape from an unknown peril. You recruit up to five other party members to assist you in your cause, from thieves, to elves, to magic users, each with their own traits, characteristics and beliefs. The game takes place in real time, across a set of beautifully drawn isometric views. Interaction with other characters is a choice of textual responses, determining your route. *Baldur's Gate* is huge, and you'll find a stack of side quests, monsters and characters to interact with along a non linear path across thousands of screens.

The interface takes some getting used to, but there's a huge amount of customisation that makes things easier. Combat is carried out in real time, which won't appeal to all, but thankfully you can pause the game and issue orders to your characters, before jumping back into the fray.

Die-hard AD&Ders might find inconsistencies that niggle, but *Baldur's Gate* is superb. There's already talk of expansion sets, so you can continue your adventures.

★★★★ **Jason Weston**



■ Just wait until people start dying. It's horrible.

DOGS OF WAR

ATOMIC GETS UP-CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Close Combat III: The Russian Front

■ Publisher: **Microsoft** ■ Developer: **Atomic**
 ■ Price: **£40** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Requires: **P133, 32Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive** ■ Recommended: **modem for Internet play**

A point-and-click title with real-time action and not a hexagon in sight. Atomic has taken all the honours in the great and gory wargame skirmish.

This improved instalment of Microsoft's successful wargame sees you reliving the horrors of the Russian Front. It's not an easy task, though, and you'll need a deal of technical nous if you are to succeed as either Germany or Russia. Luckily, the

option to develop technical nous is included – well, it's less of an option and more a command. If you want to perform well, you will soon have to get bogged down in a great deal of fact.

The game isn't all minute calculation, however – you will also find yourself investing a great deal of emotion into it, too. You concentrate on small groups of between ten and 15 units and, in operational play, you see them advance from ill-equipped Partisans to well-disciplined, er, murderers (as they fight through a number of linked battles). But you also get to see them die. Horribly. At which stage you'll unconsciously fiddle with the volume control as you try to block out their piercing screams. The only comparable emotional wrench is the limb-strewn opening to *Saving Private Ryan*. In fact, after starting the game in an arcadey all-out-battle style, I soon muted my attitude and started to play a much more cautious game, purely because my guilt gland was overflowing.

The closest titles to compete with *Close Combat III* are the regulation hex-based wargames such as *Western Front*, but this is far more immediate. Also, while you can customise scenes to give you a great advantage, you'll find yourself developing a desperate urge to see entire campaigns through to the bitter end. The blend of plotting, action and learning curve is, frankly, a challenge in itself, and that's even before you get into the Map detail, soldier AI, or the fact that once you've played the game through, you can compete with warmongering strangers over the Internet. There's no better choice on the PC. ★★★★★

Simon Kirrane

Uppers & Downers

Reds

- Pick-up-and-play control system
- Complex and immersive
- Close individual control

Deads

- You can't have a quick five-minute battle
- Lots of information to soak up
- Look, you'll love it

FORCE POOL

Unit	Count
Machine Gun Infantry *	14
Machine Gun Infantry *	12
Light Machine Gun *	9
Machine Gun Infantry *	9
Rifle Infantry *	27
Rifle Infantry *	22
Rifle Infantry *	22
Rifle Infantry *	10
Rifle Infantry *	10
2nd Line Infantry *	4

ACTIVE ROSTER

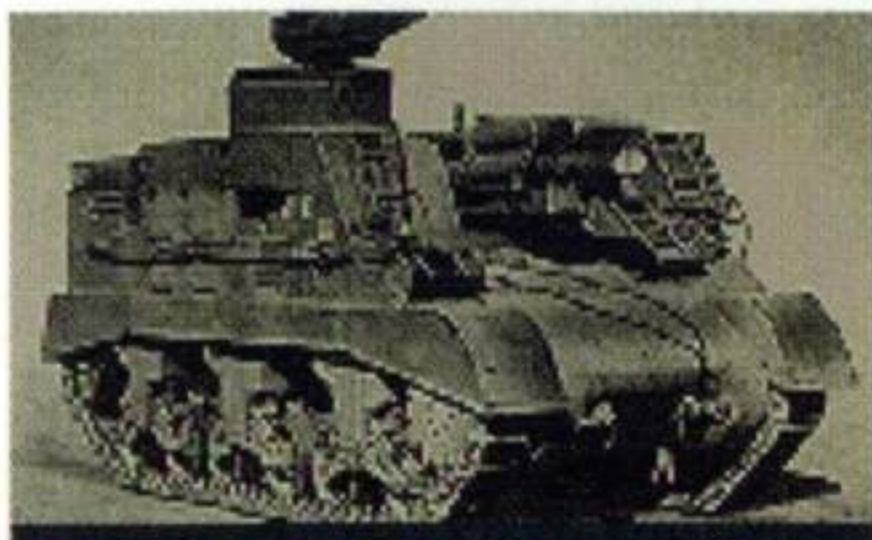
Unit	Count
Group Leader	1
Heavy Infantry	1
Heavy Infantry	1
Heavy Infantry	1
Light Infantry	1
Rifle Infantry *	1
Recon Inf.	1
Sharpshooter	1
Flamethrower	1
Flamethrower	1
Mortar (81mm)	1
FMG Infantry	1

■ As you'd expect, even the options have options.

Or you could try...

Western Front
 Empire ★★
 Fun, but only if hex-based wargames are your niche.

Gangsters
 EDOs ★★★
 Run the streets, but with a gun rather than sweat pants.



■ Fight any battle you like from World War II.

Western Front

■ Publisher: **Empire**
 ■ Developer: **Talonsoft**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-16**
 ■ Requires: **P133, 16Mb RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, Win 95**
 ■ Recommended: **32Mb RAM, modem for network/e-mail play**

All's quiet on the Western Front. Or it was. Until you came along in your tank.

■ There are two types of wargame. One is based around real-time control of your forces: you're able to adapt to sudden changes in the tactical situation,

throwing your troops around with abandon. Such games are visually spectacular, with the sight of your horde descending to claim bloody vengeance warming the heart. This isn't one of those.

No, *Western Front* is the other type of wargame. The type where you move all your forces around a hex-based grid, then let your opponent have a go. Then you. Then him again. And eventually one of you manages to slaughter all of the other's forces, putting you in the enviable position of being able to have *another* game: and it's all based on painstakingly gathered historical evidence. *That* type.

Western Front bulges with all the information you need to

recreate every battle, skirmish and scrap between soldiers ever fought in the Western theatre during World War II. You can play whatever country you choose, and either wrestle against the sneaky computer, or pit your heaving intellect against up to 16 other humans.

Intriguingly, when you grow tired of playing one-off scenarios, you can start a campaign game and follow the same group of soldiers through several battles. Watching your commander rising up the ranks injects a surprisingly human element to the frigid austerity of this wargame-world. Add this to its non-mystifying presentation and you have a fine introduction to the genre. But for

one asteroid-colliding-with-the-Earth-sized error.

When playing a campaign you can't save during a battle.

Not, on the face of it, an error on a par with "Hey! Let's reform The Beatles without John", but let me elaborate. Wargames aren't exactly quick things to play, with a single battle taking several hours. *Hours*. Really *big* rucks can last most of an afternoon. PCs crash more often than that. Humans have other things to do besides playing games: things like sleeping. So, despite the fun of the short-scenario missions, this feature (or rather, the lack of it) damns *Western Front* to a special hell marked "For true obsessives only". ★★ **Kieron Gillen**

PC budget re-releases

by Robin Alway and Sam Richards

Surely such a huge stack of cheap, quality PC games can only be the result of a top-level government conspiracy. Imagine it – what secret agenda might require every home to own one of these fine packages? Beats us.



The Biggest Names, The Best Games

■ Publisher: **EA Classics**
 ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ It's a lairy, self-confident title for a compilation, but mostly legitimate. This pack contains *Theme Hospital*, *SimCity 2000*, *The Need For Speed 2: Special Edition*, *Dungeon Keeper*, *Warhammer: Dark Omen*, and *Nuclear Strike*. That's six four- or five-star games from the last 18 months, in one box, for less than 25 quid. With three god sims and one turn-based combat game, the collection is heavily weighted towards strategy and, as a result, arcade chopper title *Nuclear Strike*, and racer *The Need For Speed 2: Special Edition* seem out of place. But they provide light relief from the immersive worlds created in those tactical classics. ★★★★★



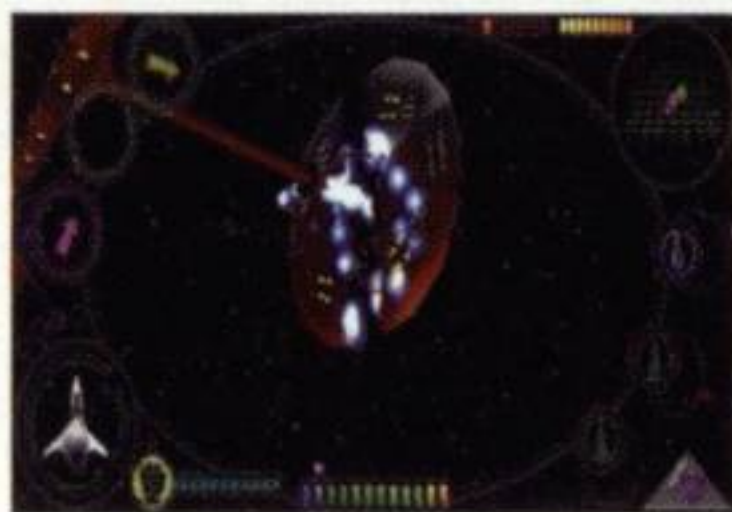
Command & Conquer Classic

■ Publisher: **EA Classics**
 ■ Price: **£14.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Unless you count *Dune 2*, *Command & Conquer* is the game that started it all, bringing real-time strategy wargaming to the masses. By Easter you'll be able to play its sequel, *Tiberian Sun*, but until then this will have to do. You know how it works: pick an army and then point-and-click your little men to victory across a top-down terrain. It's been surpassed in the last three years, of course. Strategy fans have moved on to either *Total Annihilation* (also available on budget) or *StarCraft*. But if you haven't sampled it before and you want to be up to speed when *Tiberian Sun* storms the charts, this budget offering is timely. ★★★



Dark Earth

■ Publisher: **MicroProse Powerplus** ■ Price: **£11.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Long before *Grim Fandango* or *Sanitarium*, French developer Kalisto created a smashing 3D adventure set in a fantastical future. The Earth has been struck by a meteorite. Everything's shrouded in dust and only a few beams of sunlight filter through to the land beyond the holy citadels. Our hero tramps around pre-rendered backdrops picking up objects and chatting with other characters in an attempt to find a cure for the Darkness, a disease which is transforming him both physically and mentally. *Dark Earth* takes itself too seriously, and some of the puzzles are obscure, but gorgeous presentation makes it an atmospheric treat. ★★★★★



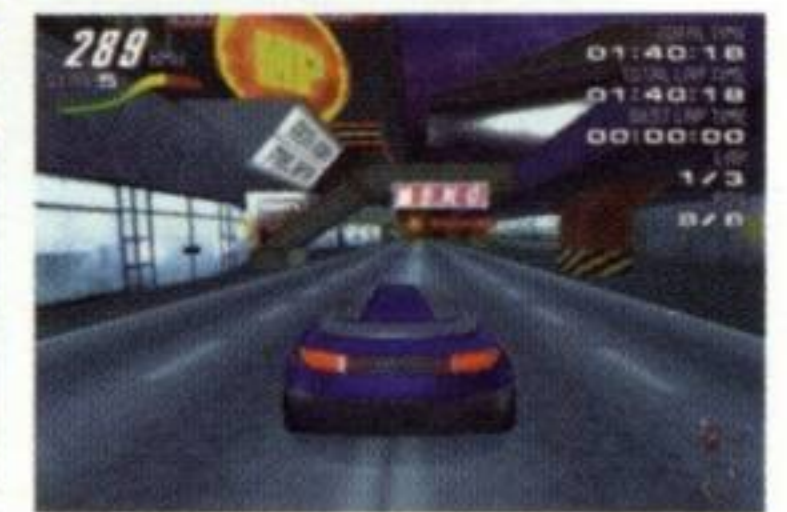
Darklight Conflict

■ Publisher: **EA Classics**
 ■ Price: **£14.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Before *Rage*, the posse behind *Incoming*, went independent it produced this incredibly frenetic sci-fi shooter, which never achieved the acclaim it deserved. The theme is straight from *The Last Starfighter*: a war between the Ovon and Repton worlds is reaching stalemate, as vessels on both sides are controlled by computers. Knowledge gleaned from a living being would give the Reptons an edge, so they abduct you from Earth and strap you into a fighter cockpit. An intuitive control system and some well-orchestrated pyrotechnic effects make the distant warzone entertaining, but it feels insubstantial. The *X-wing* games provide a meatier challenge and have far better plots. ★★



Joint Strike Fighter

■ Publisher: **EIDOS Premier Collection** ■ Price: **£9.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Some magnificent graphics are let down by a boring approach to campaign structuring. You're a pilot and tactical officer in a unit flying Europe's Joint Strike Fighter, a stealth assault plane the government expects Boeing or Lockheed Martin to build. Instead of linked missions, there are three territories, with a clear objective in each. How you achieve that objective is up to you, and you compose your freeform waypoints and manoeuvres from an overhead map before launch. The combat bits are outstanding, but the game's too open-ended and you spend a lot of your time scooting over empty territory looking for something to do. ★★★



Overload

■ Publisher: **Gremlin**
 ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Next to *The Biggest Names*, *The Best Games*, Gremlin's spring compilation pack seems puny. Its major advantage is that all three games are recent – they were still selling at full price last autumn. *Men In Black* is a disappointing movie tie-in, a 3D action-adventure full of simple flaws, awkward camera angles and clumsy animation. By contrast, *Premier Manager '98* is a smoothly executed footy management sim, which ought to provide some entertainment before *Championship Manager 3* touches down. The real gem of the pack is *Motorhead*, arguably one of the PC's finest arcade driving games – guaranteed to show off your new 3D card. ★★★★★



Privateer 2: The Darkening

■ Publisher: **EA Classics**
 ■ Price: **£14.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Possibly the closest the PC has ever come to *Elite*, *Privateer* and its sequel are spin-offs from the FMV-heavy *Wing Commander* series and are designed to be open-ended. A virtual galaxy exists for you to explore, although there are only 18 worlds of any substance. A central plot does exist – but it's a tired quest for identity, following a crash which wipes your memory. The in-flight visuals are satisfactory, and the various non-player characters are all believable and supported by decent AI. Many of the events and technologies are derivative and emerge like a rejected *Babylon 5* script, but in essence *Privateer 2* is a captivating space blaster. ★★★



Shadow Warrior

■ Publisher: **EIDOS Premier Collection** ■ Price: **£12.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ We hate *Shadow Warrior*, it's a ghastly first-person shoot-'em-up with a phoney Oriental mythology plot and so much superfluous gore it's simply annoying. The only things going for it, as with all games designed using *Duke Nukem 3D*'s Build engine, is that its opponents are constructed from sprites, so that dozens of characters can appear on the screen in one go, and it will still run very fast on a low-end PC.
 ■ Also like all Build-engine games, however, it's unfeasibly difficult and full of sick "humour". There are so many more polished, intelligent action titles available and, as *Quake* is on budget, you have no reason to buy this at all. ★



Street Racer

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft Classique**
 ■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ Nearly every weekend one of the *Arcade* team loses a day to *Mario Kart 64*. It's a shame, then, that the PC doesn't have anything to rival the colourful tomfoolery of console cartoon racing games. *Street Racer* is a dably executed attempt to compensate for this. The chunky sprite-based graphics have a certain inane charm, and the chase-camera viewpoint is functional, but the tracks and characters feel dated and uninspired. There's an emphasis on multi-player driving, including a split-screen mode, which is a bonus since the single-player competition is cheerless and repetitive. You're much better off picking up your Nintendo if you're in need of wackiness. ★★



TOCA Touring Car Championship

■ Publisher: **Codemasters**
 ■ Price: **£12.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-8**
 ■ With *Colin McRae Rally* still turning heads, Codemasters is fast gaining a reputation for great motor sport simulations. It's a standing which began with the release of *TOCA Touring Car Championship*, licensed from the 1997 British *TOCA* event. With official backing, Codemasters was able to include famous tracks and genuine cars. Swift, clean visuals and an excellent driving model make for a snazzy racing experience, but if you're just beginning in racing, you may be alienated by the skill required. *TOCA* is a furious simulation, and can overwhelm the unwary. If you're an enthusiast, however, you'll adore the challenge. ★★★★★



Uprising

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft Classique**
 ■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Early in 1998 folk were predicting a whole new genre of PC game, the "first-person strategy" product, a cross-over of *Quake*-style action and *C&C*-style battle planning. *Uprising* is a hardcore attempt at this genre from developer 3D0. Donning the helmet of a futuristic military commander, you give orders to a ground-based strike force, while yourself controlling a tank in the rocky killing fields. As well as scrapping, you also have to establish bases over fixed power-sources, manage resources and construct reinforcements. An intense, intelligent experience. ★★★★★



X-wing Collector Series

■ Publisher: **LucasArts**
 ■ Price: **£29.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ As the world gears up for the cinema launch of *Star Wars: Episode 1*, LucasArts prepares to release its next combat simulation, *X-wing: Alliance*. Meanwhile, you can check out three of the previous best Skywalker games, courtesy of this *Collector Series* compilation. Original *X-wing* and both associated mission packs, *TIE Fighter* and its mission pack, and *X-wing Vs TIE Fighter* (and its add-on pack) are all bundled together. Moreover, both the two earliest titles have had an engine overhaul using the smoother technology of the third game. If you don't have them already, this collection is better value than most full-priced releases. ★★★★★



BALLS UP

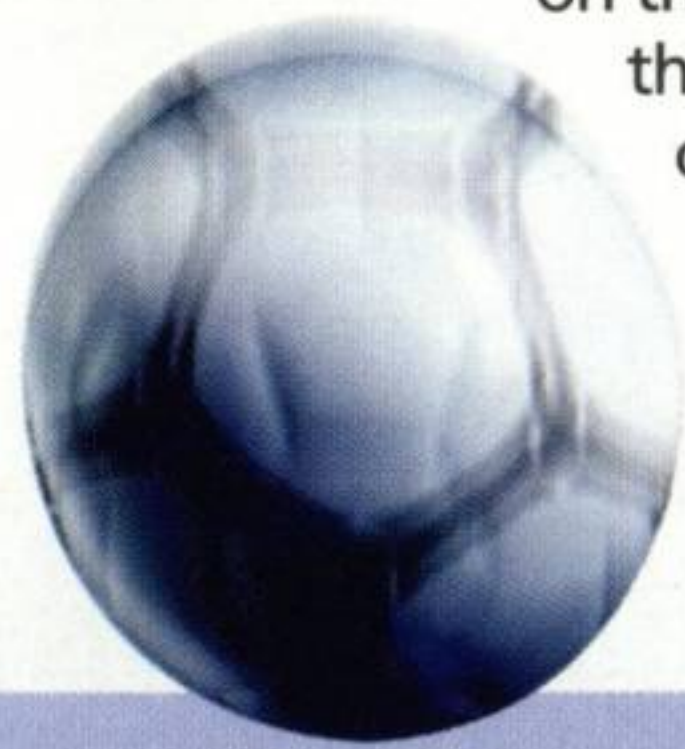
FOOTY GIANT TAKES A TUMBLE

FIFA '99

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Electronic Arts** ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **out now** ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Extras: **Memory Pak, three joypads**

The FIFAs have always been the Manchester United of football games: rich, inexplicably popular and never quite able to handle the best foreign opposition. No change in '99.

So when was the last time a FIFA game stood head and shoulders above anything else the same console had to offer? Ooh that would be about 1994 on the Mega Drive – you know, the console that never got the pleasure of Konami's *International Superstar Soccer*. Sure, FIFA games on the PlayStation and PC outsold their rivals, but they've never outplayed the best of them. On the N64, where this is the fourth FIFA in just under two years, the situation is even more extreme. But EA knows how to sell a football game, and with *FIFA '99*



it has honed that art to perfection. The game has a licence that most football fans will find difficult to resist. Imagine a game that contains the entire Premier league, complete with accurate player rosters. Imagine a game with the Cup Winners' Cup, the UEFA Cup and the Champions' League. Imagine a game with the Scottish Premiership, the German Bundesliga and the Italian Serie A, along with French, Dutch, Brazilian, Belgian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish and American leagues. Imagine a game with a transfer option that enables you to augment your favourite team with the greatest players from around the world, or create your own Premiership wannabe and install Zidane, Owen and Ronaldo at Ipswich Town's Portman Road fortress (er, for instance). Throw in some international teams and a custom cup feature, and it'd be the perfect football game, wouldn't it?

Yep, if nothing else, EA knows how to spend money on licences, and there can't have been many games in history to have offered players quite so much name simulation. The most frustrating aspect about real football is that frequently the wrong team win for all the wrong reasons. *FIFA '99* is the ultimate chance to turn the clock back and grind out the *proper* result in the comfort of your own living room. England 4, France 0, anyone?

Unfortunately – and this is a *big* unfortunately, so stand by – while EA is the master of licence, its programming leaves a lot to be desired. Original N64 gamers won't have forgotten the spectacularly shoddy *FIFA 64*. Things

■ The travelling Ipswich fans salute their team. FIFA's edit team roster facility is one of its most appealing bits.



■ The 'keeper looks vaguely surprised as, yet again, his inability to move like a human proves too great a handicap to actually doing anything useful. Still, nice shorts.



■ Surprisingly up-to-date team rosters and playing positions. The crowd even boos accurately when Kanu or Beckham are on the ball.



■ Nottingham Forest look confused as they concede their first of the afternoon. Why, we're not sure.

improved with *Road to the World Cup* and *World Cup '98*, but there was always the feeling that while the PlayStation had the best programmers working on its version of the game, the poor guys left to do the N64 version had to rush PSX or PC code into a Nintendo cart as fast as possible.

Horrendous delays between button commands and player actions, jerky camera work, commentary recorded in a cave, annoying player selection, semi-automatic tackling by CPU players on your own side, ugly motion capture, and disappointing replays were just surface blemishes. The big problem was that the *FIFAs* simply didn't play a convincing game of football. Put them beside Konami's *International Superstar Soccer 64* and *ISS '98* and EA's games looked amateur and dull. Konami had no official licences and its cup and league system could only be described as "shareware" in comparison with that of the *FIFAs*, but no one in the world could dispute that the Japanese game played an infinitely superior game of football.

So has the pecking order changed with the arrival of *FIFA '99*? Of course not. Despite a full orchestra of bells and whistles, the best game of football to be had on the N64 is still *International Superstar Soccer*. The old *FIFA* problems have been alleviated in the '99 version, but only incrementally – there's less time delay between button press and player action, but it's still there and you still have to account for it. The motion capture is improved, but *FIFA*'s players still look unnatural. Passing is easier, but the horror of non-automatic player selection and a pitch covered in the computer equivalent of Copydex make it frustrating. The impossible goals have been eliminated (*Road to the World Cup*, for instance, would allow you to head them in from the half-way line), but use the speed-up button with a reasonably nippy player and

you can run rings around a defence and slot one in diagonally across the box, more-or-less every time.

Everything's better than last time, but still not as good as in *ISS*. Familiar story?

Football games should never be about perfect simulation, the trick is to build an entertaining game using football as its base. And EA has missed the point again. Football games do not automatically come with excitement built in – they have to be playtested to perfection. Slavish simulation doesn't work. And slavish simulation when you haven't got the technical know-how to pull it off – that leaves you with football pie all over your face. ★★★ **James Ashton**

EA KNOWS HOW TO SELL A FOOTY GAME, AND WITH FIFA 99 IT HAS HONED THAT ART TO PERFECTION

Or you could try...

International Superstar Soccer '98
Konami ★★★
The finest N64 football game in existence. Even a shabby league and cup system can't spoil it. This is sublime and the fine first instalment (*ISS 64*) is often available at a discount price.

↑ Uppers & Downers ↓

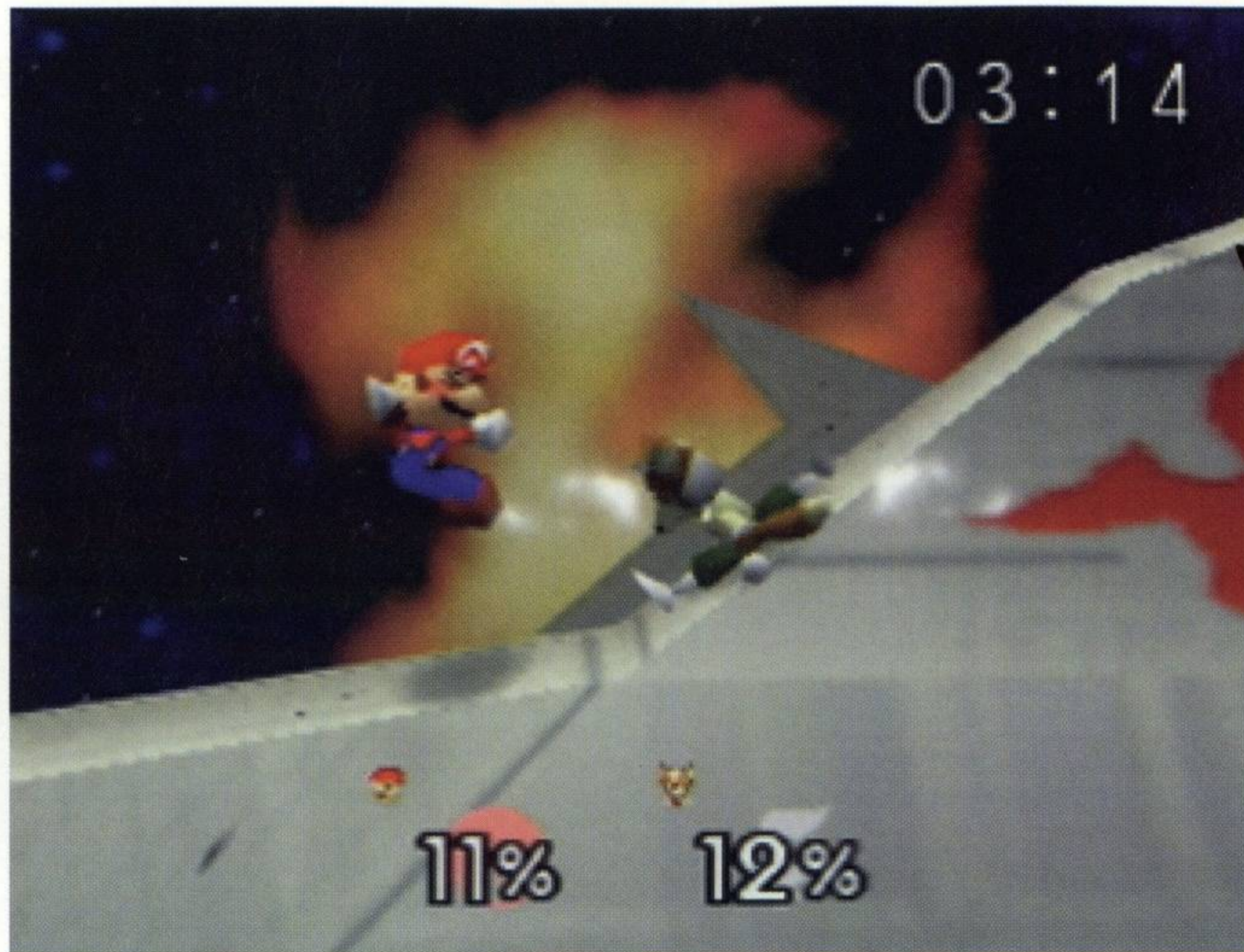
Model
■ Great licence
■ Best in-game options yet
■ Did we say it had a great licence?

Huddle
■ Dreary presentation – players look like shamblers
■ Only rewards simplistic football
■ Patently second-best to Konami

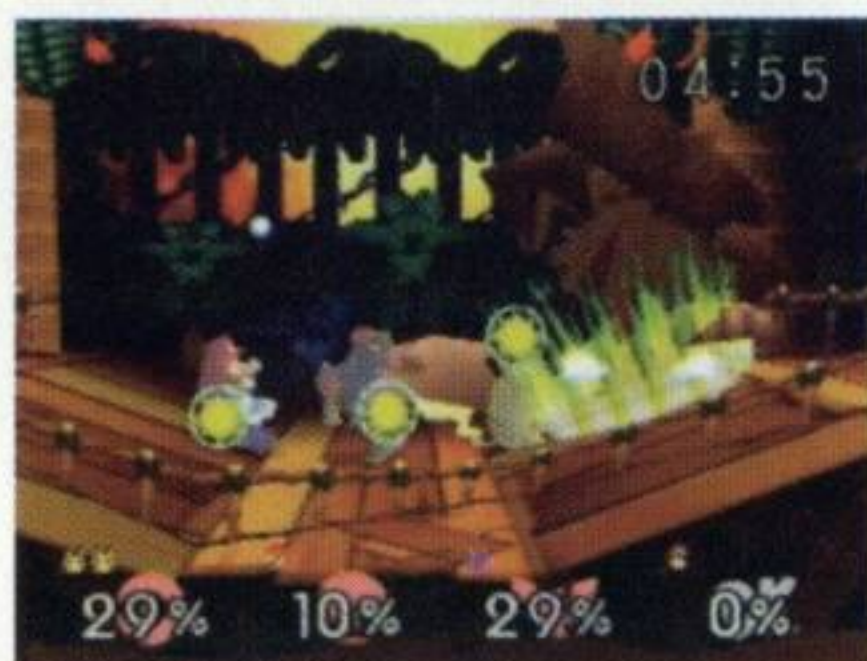


■ The game now boasts short cut-scenes between the action. Unfortunately, they only tend to highlight the game artists' obvious lack of basic anatomical knowledge.





■ Don't think for a moment that Mario and friends are girly slappers – they can kick, punch, chop and roundhouse with the best of them. Even “gentleman” Fox McCloud isn't afraid to kick someone's teeth out.



IMPORT

BROTHERS IN ARMS

MARIO AND LUIGI SMACK EACH OTHER UP REAL NICE



Nintendo All-Star Dai-Rantou Smash Brothers

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **HAL Laboratories**
 ■ Price: **£64** ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan)**
 ■ Players: **1-4** ■ Extras: **Rumble Pak** ■ Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

Kick! Punch! It's all in the mind! Or at least it was, until Nintendo gave the go-ahead for a Mario fighting game to become reality.

It's 1992. Radio 1 is playing "I Will Always Love You" non stop, *Reservoir Dogs* is causing an outrage, and the "flares comeback" has finally materialised. And Nintendo announces that Mario and friends will be appearing in a driving game. "Sacrilege!" cry fans of the plumber's 2D platforming exploits. "It'll never happen!" urge the doubters. But it does, and *Super Mario Kart* emerges as one of the Big N's finest gaming gambits (see "Games Night" on page 96 if you need proof.)

Fast forward to 1998. Whitney Houston has mercifully evaporated, Quentin Tarantino has lost it, and flares have vanished in preparation for the 2012 revival. Nintendo, meanwhile, has yet another

surprise up its sleeve. Mario and friends will be featuring in their very own *fighting* game. "Blasphemy!" scream the legions of dyed-in-the-wool plumbing fans. "Is this really such a good idea?" ponder the vast majority of gamers. Well, it's here, and – sighs of relief all round – it turned out to be a *great* idea.

Unfortunately, it doesn't mean we get to kick Toad's teeth in. HAL has abandoned the 'Magnificent Eight' of Nintendo stars used in *Mario Kart* and *Mario Party*, cobbling together instead a "collector's edition" set of modern and retro characters ready for scrapping. Old familiars

Mario and Yoshi are present and correct, but so are *Pocket Monsters* star Pikachu, *Zelda's* Link, and near-forgotten Nintendo stars Kirby and Samus. And because

Nintendo knows better than to waste its greatest inventions, each character's moves come from their own games. Link uses spin attacks, boomerangs and bombs, while Yoshi is able to slurp up his opponents and plop them back out as eggs. It's all oddly comforting.

When it comes to the actual scrapping, those hoping for *Tekken: The Mario Edition* will be disappointed. Expecting Nintendo to create a Mario game which sticks rigidly to the rules of its genre is like asking Jim Carrey to follow a script without careering off on a prolonged "I'm mad, me!" tangent. It's not going to happen. So, among many fighting game laws broken, *Smash Brothers* ignores the 1986 Health Meter Act and offers no



THIS QUIRKY STYLE OF FIGHTING IS THE NATURAL EXTENSION OF NINTENDO'S WAY OF DOING THINGS



limit to how much damage a participant can take. Instead, their condition determines their vulnerability to an attacking move. As such, the game neatly side-steps the prospect of fabled Nintendo characters lying on the floor in a pool of blood and bone fragments, as a victory comes with one fighter punching his opponent off the suspended arena and into the stratosphere.

It takes a while to get into, but it becomes obvious that this quirky style of fighting is the natural extension of Nintendo's way of doing things. It's quick, simple, and reliant on reactions and hand-eye co-ordination. With very few moves per character, and the appearance of power-ups such as land-mines and light sabres (Nintendo is obviously anxious for a meeting with Mr Lucas' lawyers), *Smash Brothers* is a lesson in frantic button-pressing. Crucially, it remains a satisfying fighter in its own right throughout. And there are

few things more pleasing than the delicious "slap" of Fox McCloud's fist first making contact with Mario's cheek.

Despite the speed, *Smash Brothers'* battles are also surprisingly tactical. As all the characters' moves are easily learnt, there'll be few players caught off-guard by a surprise new kick. Instead, fights are a process of exploiting chinks in your enemy's armour; sneaking in a shot at the moment they let their defences drop, timing your jumps and falls to avoid a sneaky punch up the jacksie, and knowing when to retreat in the hope of a power-up dropping from the sky, or your opponent making the first mistake and toppling from the arena. You can play your own style of game.

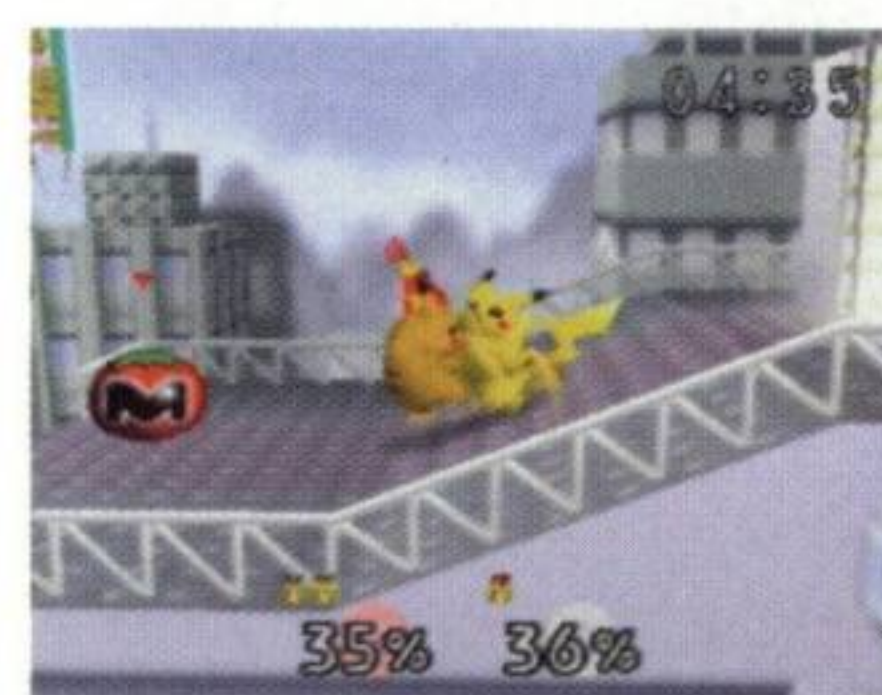
There are problems, however, and more of them than you'd expect from a Nintendo-badged title. Your on-screen character is slow to respond to movements of the control stick, especially when it comes to jumping. In fact, why HAL has chosen to use the analogue stick rather than the D-pad is a complete mystery, since it makes even running and jumping joy-pad-bitingly difficult. To add to the displeasure, a needless and infuriating "bonus round" appears after every few fights in one-player mode, signifying a tedious break from the real action.

But then, why buy a fighting game to play on your own? Especially when Nintendo is plainly begging you to go out and find some friends by offering a traditional two-player mode and a screaming mad four-player battle. And it's this 'everybody in and no-holds-barred punch-uppery until one person's left standing' mode is the game's strongest aspect. Although the four-player can end up a bit of a mess, with the camera seemingly on elastic as it attempts to keep everybody on the same screen, it's simple and unpredictable enough for any skill level.

So it's mission accomplished once again for Nintendo, this time successfully bringing fighting games to a platform that's traditionally been starved of them, and in a way that makes them accessible to everyone. So now all the N64 needs is *Metal Gear Mario*. Don't hold your breath though, eh? ★★★★★

Mark Green

THERE ARE PROBLEMS, AND MORE OF THEM THAN YOU'D EXPECT FROM A NINTENDO-BADGED TITLE



■ **Pikachu vs Pikachu.** When these two met, it was mmmmmoider.



Or you could try...

Fighter's Destiny
Infogrames ★★★★★
As close to "proper" fighting as the N64 gets, and really rather good.

Mario Party
Nintendo ★★★★★
A board game for the Nintendo generation. Almost too much fun.

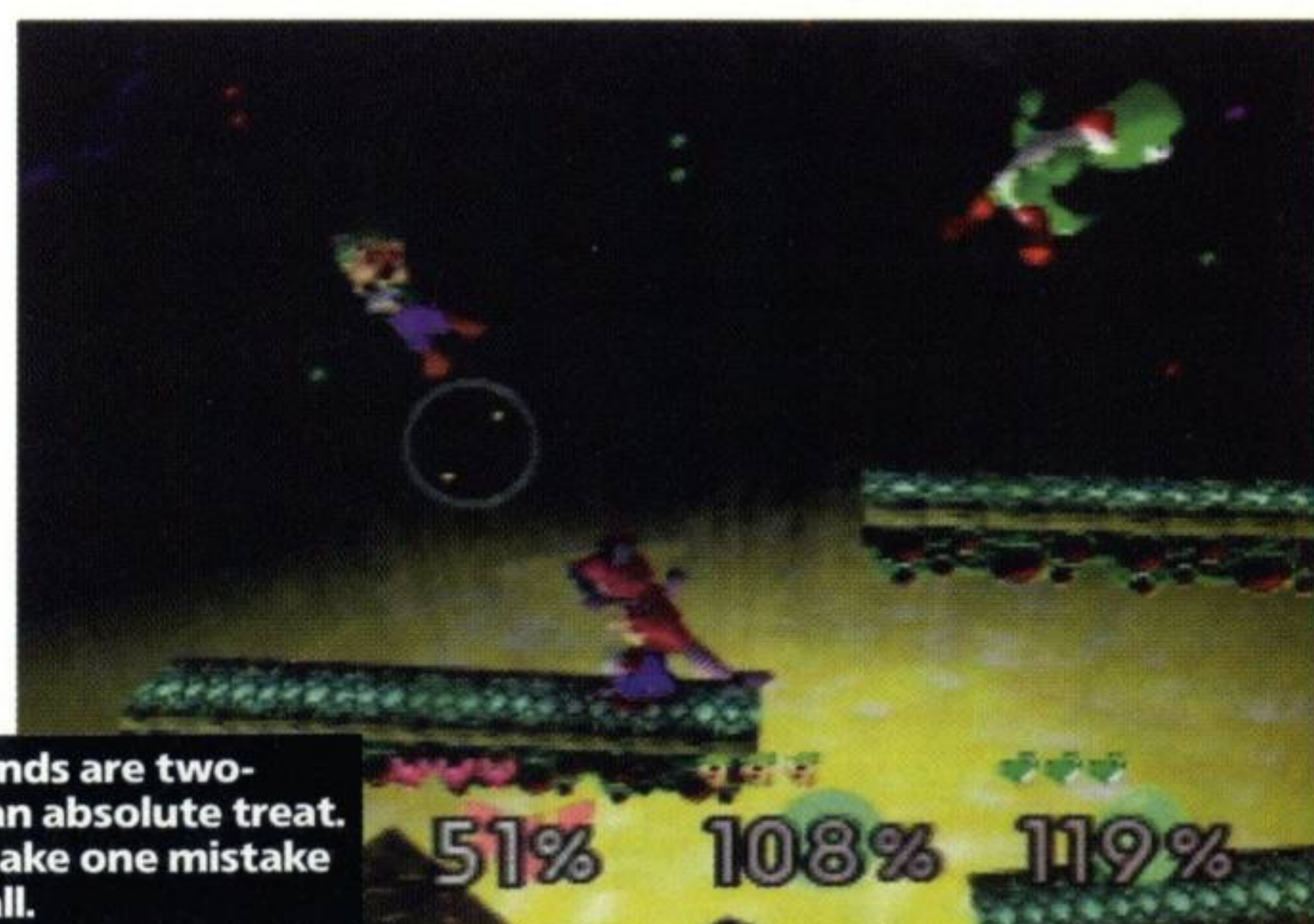
↑ Uppers & Downers

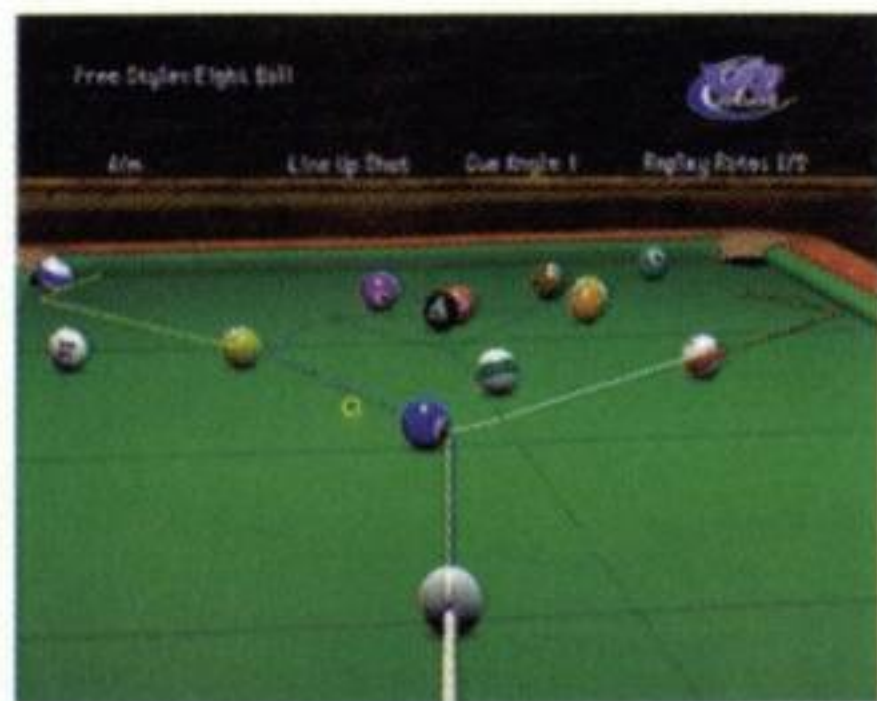
Smash
■ An original fighting game idea that works
■ Satisfyingly quick
■ 12 Nintendo faves limber up

Trash
■ Iffy controls
■ One-player lacks longevity
■ Four-player games are chaos



■ **Smash Brothers' backgrounds** are two-dimensional, but they look an absolute treat. They're unforgiving too – make one mistake and your reward is a 200ft fall.





Virtual Pool 64

■ Publisher: **Interplay**
 ■ Developer: **Crave** ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Extras: **memory card**

Too lazy to queue for the pub table? Here's the latest stay-at-home solution.

■ If you've ever rued the inability of videogames to place even the smallest spherical object within a proper 3D world, Crave's ball-and-stick sim is the answer to your prayers, as perfectly round balls clatter across the table in a way that probably resembles John Virgo's most feverish dreams.

The blurry, muddy background to each table (ranging from "back room" to "pub corner") are in sharp contrast, but *Virtual Pool* never truly tries to replicate that smoky, there-could-be-a-fight-any-minute atmosphere. With the 64-bit power of the N64 at its disposal, the game's main concern is making sure those pretty balls move like the real thing.

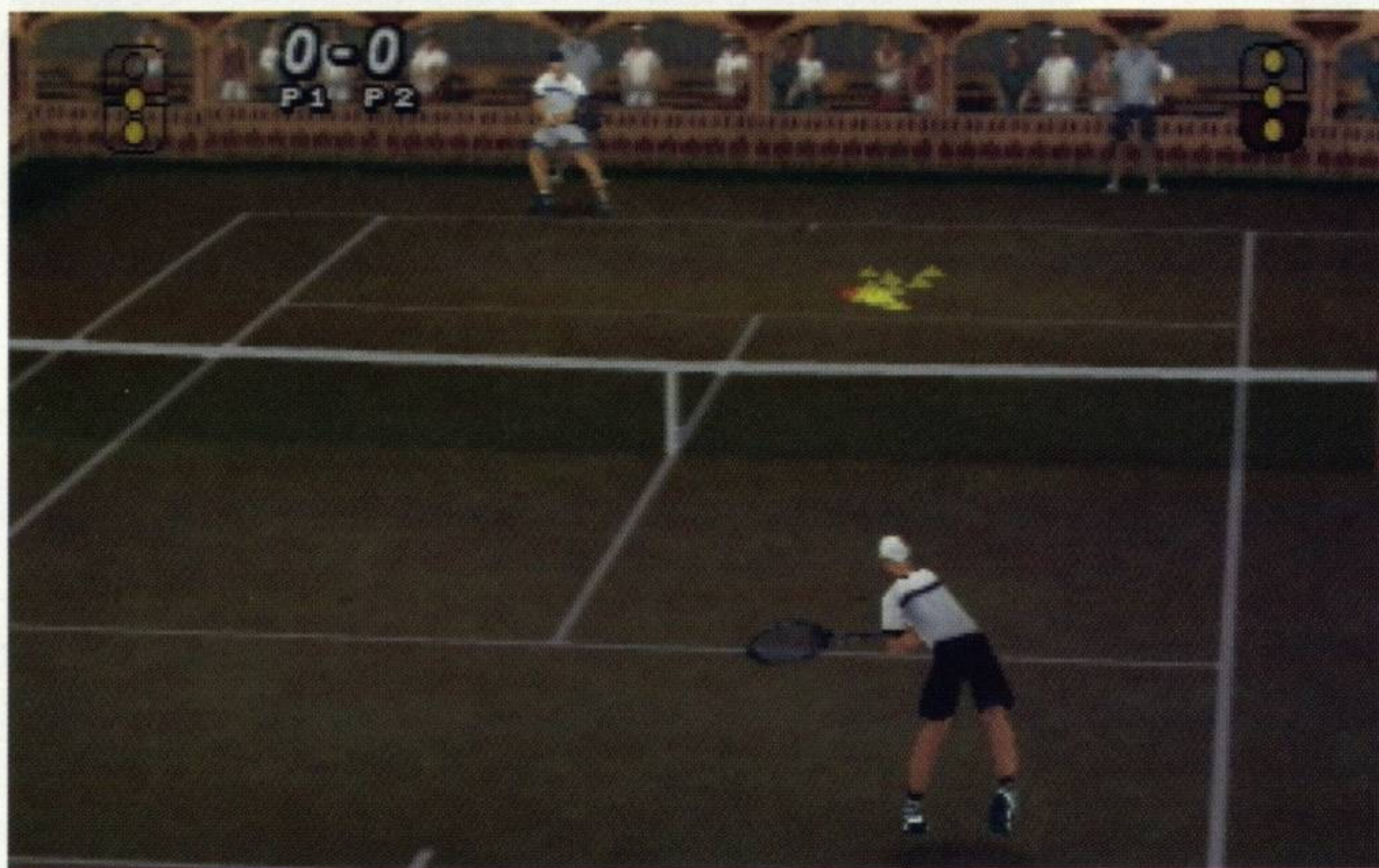
Thankfully, the time that the Crave team has spent with its collective noses buried inside physics textbooks has paid off. The bit of your brain that knows how balls should move on a rectangle of green baize will quickly flash a warning when something's wrong, but it stays remarkably quiet for the duration of *Virtual Pool*. Each collision between cue and ball is translated into realistic, believable moves, helping to avoid those "What? That was definitely in, you stupid bloody game!" moments.

The only thing preventing a successful pot on every turn is your ability to get used to the innovative control method, where the speed with which you push the control stick translates into the strength of the cue strike. This initially leads to balls trickling forward a few millimetres at a time or flying from the table, but it becomes easier with patience – the exact same stuff that you need to master *real pool*.

Virtual Pool's only faults are those you'd associate with any 3D game – a slight jerkiness when things really start moving, a camera that tries so very hard to keep up with the action, and so on. You'll never be truly enthralled in one-player – what satisfaction can there ever be in thrashing a computer? – but that's a problem with most sports titles. As a pool simulation and a bit of fun if you've got a few mates hanging around, *Virtual Pool* does its job brilliantly. ★★★★★ **Robin Alway**

AT YOUR SERVICE

THEY CANNOT BE SERIOUS



■ *All Star's* courts veer between sensible strips of well-manicured grass in England and America and stylised courts in Greece and Japan, complete with ancient temples behind the umpire.

Uppers & Downers

- Centre Court**
- Graceful animation
 - Good range of strokes
 - Four-player game
- Swingball**
- Can't decide if it's a simulation or arcade game
 - No great camera work

All Star Tennis 99

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft** ■ Developer: **Smart Dog**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-4**

Frilly pants, strawberries and Henman.

You might groan every time Wimbledon comes round, but tennis has often given gaming some of its finest multi-player moments. So let's give a warm welcome to the gratuitous knicker shots of the N64's first UK ball-and-racquet sim.

It seems the developers of *All Star Tennis* have come to the same shocking conclusion as the rest of the right-thinking world – tennis is boring and has been since John McEnroe hung up his racquet. Their answer is a game where real-life, realistically animated players are made to apologise for their very existence by pulling off over-the-top arcadey special moves.

The likes of Mark Philippoussis and Michael Chang are kicking around the eight-strong character selection screen and once on court show off a range of realistic, well animated strokes. But then someone does a special move where the ball's swallowed by a vortex just over the net and fired out like a rocket. Or each bounce of the ball sees a mine laid on court, making long rallies a perilous affair.

It's very much *NBA Jam* for tennis and although not approaching the heady multi-

player delights of Namco's *Smash Court Tennis* on PlayStation, it's very entertaining.

All Star's technique also shines. The stroke play is well implemented, rallies are long and the players fast enough to reach most balls. You are always left feeling like there's the opportunity to win the point if you can just pull off the right, court bisecting shot.

The animation of the players is nice, too. They tap the racket on their shoes between points and dive for out-of-reach shots, giving you a tingle with their motion-captured movements. This is always a good sign, even if the camera never lets you get in for a close-up.

Of course, as with all tennis games since *Pong*, the multi-player modes are where most of the replay value lies. You can partner a CPU character in doubles matches but it's no substitute for four-player games complete with shouts for individual players from the crowd and heated arguments over whose "side" that last set winning point was on.

All Star would have been better deciding whether it was a serious, striped-grass sim or arcadey knockabout. The cartoony special moves and stylised locations don't always sit well with five-match marathons against level-headed Pole Richard Krajicek. But what the game lacks in realistic tennis atmosphere or *Smash Court*-style hatstandness, it makes up for with pleasing racquet play and smooth strokes that make this enjoyable – if not exactly classic – stuff. ★★★ **Robin Alway**



■ **Zoe Rogers is British, brilliant and quite clearly fictitious.**

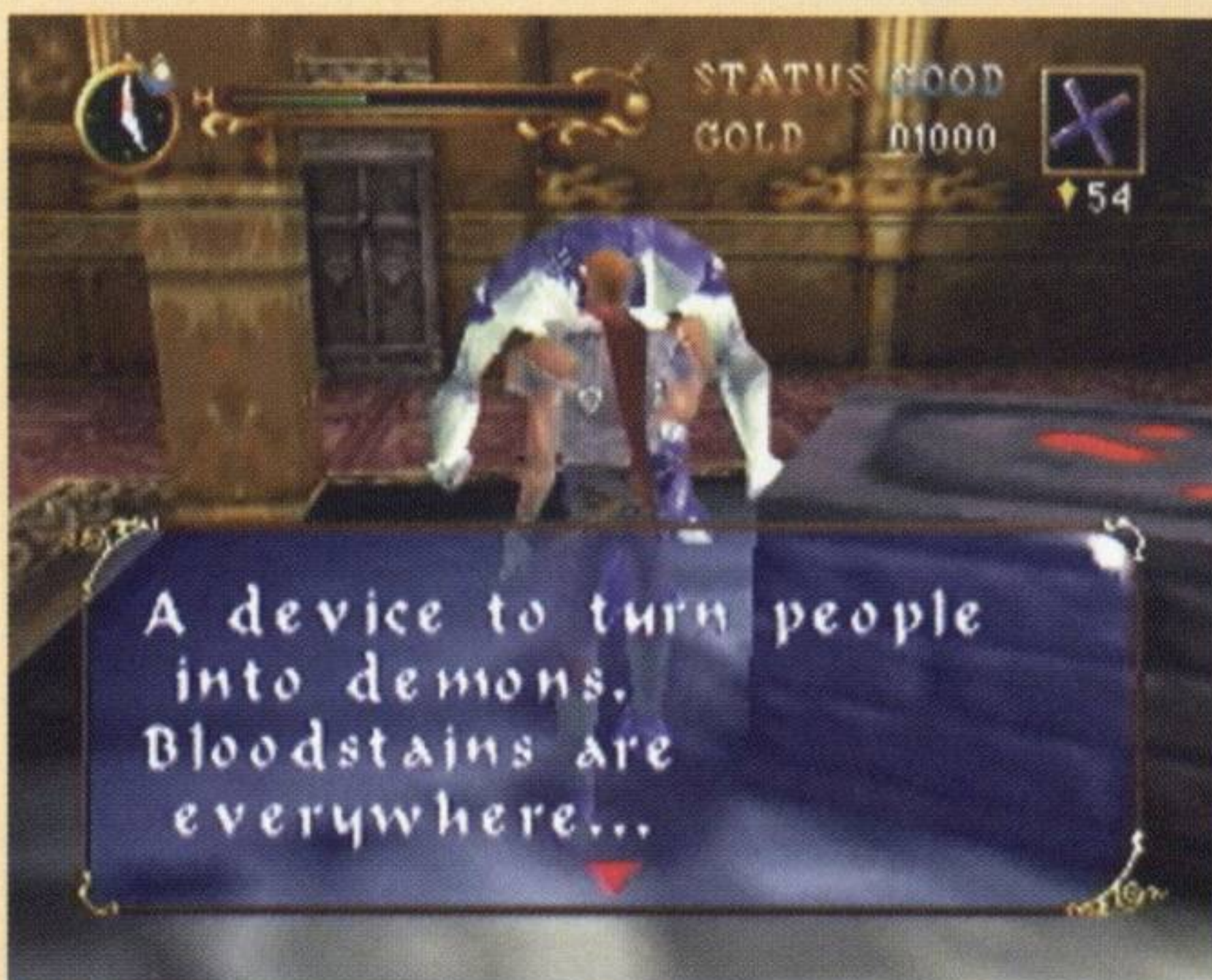
Or you could try...

Centre Court Tennis
 Nintendo ★★★
 Arcadey tennis action with create-a-character option.

Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside
 Nintendo ★★★★★
 Basketball with sharp animation.



Normal view



A device to turn people into demons. Bloodstains are everywhere...



Boss view



Boss view

■ And that's for what you said about our Tracey, you hulking great skeletal brute. Take that!



Twisted Edge: Extreme Snowboarding

■ Publisher: **Nintendo**
 ■ Developer: **Kemco**
 ■ Price: **£40** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1-2**
 ■ Extras: **Rumble Pak**

Slide down featureless slopes at speeds reaching several miles per hour.

■ Picture Nintendo's own glorious *1080° Snowboarding*: snappily designed courses, photo-realistic graphics, its subtle-yet-challenging control system and stacks of secrets. Now imagine it stripped of everything that made so desirable that hardcore players were enticed to get up at 4am to order it from Australia when the UK launch was delayed. What you're left with is *Twisted Edge*.

It's just another of Kemco's average attempts to cash in on a popular format. Snowboarding sells, but in this case we'd be inclined to think it will only sell to confused parents who might mistake it for *1080°* when picking a birthday present on a busy Saturday afternoon at HMV.

Twisted Edge tries desperately not to beat *1080°* but to actually be it, and, unsurprisingly, it fails. Not because it's inept – it isn't that bad – but because it's bland. The courses resemble featureless white pistes, down which your chosen boarder slides with about as much urgency as a small child on the nursery slopes. The lack of speed isn't a fatal flaw, because it does allow you a bit space to pull off some *Snowboard Kids*-style stunts, but you never feel like you're really racing.

The computer opponents are tough to beat, with collisions resulting in your irrecoverable loss of momentum. Hazardous a guess, we'd say that the frustration level has been set so high to disguise the game's lack of depth, because once you've completed it there's little left to keep you coming back. The two-player game is equally uninspiring, leaving just the simple Stunt mode and the odd hidden character to add replay value.

It's rather easier to control than *1080°* (its control system doesn't enable you to make anything like the same level of fine tuning to your descent) so maybe it would be a reasonable alternative for younger players. However, as a blatant clone competing for the same market, it loses out to *1080°* in every respect. ★★ **Martin Kitts**

TIME TO DEMAND A RE-COUNT

DRACULA'S BACK AND HE'S STILL THIRSTY FOR BLOOD

Castlevania

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Konami**
 ■ Price: **£39.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Extras: **Rumble Pak, Controller Pak**

Konami updates its vampire-strewn series for the 3D crowd. Has it worked? Or not? And is it scary?

Until now the N64 has been swamped in "cute", so it's a relief to witness an apparent horror explosion on Nintendo's big grey box. Iguana's dark and disturbing *Shadowman* is due for a summer release, and an all-new, 64-bit version of *Resident Evil* was recently confirmed. And then, of course, there's *Castlevania*, which has suddenly crept into the shops.

Yup, the venerable vamp-hunting series is back – and in full 3D. Fantastic, right? Well, to be honest, Konami hasn't quite pulled it off. Which is immensely frustrating, because, as you play *Castlevania*, you realise that it could easily have been brilliant. As always, it seems that only Nintendo itself has truly got to grips with enabling the player to successfully navigate 3D space – Konami has a brave stab at it, but the game's camera is a stubborn and wilful beast, continually having to be forced behind you and settling in the most awkward, unhelpful angles for the purposes of jumping and combat. It's really irritating

↑↓ Uppers & Downers

- Bloody**
- Marvellous atmosphere
 - Two different characters
 - Loads o' monsters
- Cruddy**
- Often awful camera
 - Too short
 - And, at times, too hard

and the cause of unnecessary death far more often than any fanged thing of the night.

What *Castlevania* does have going for is its atmosphere. The graphics, while occasionally shoddy, fuzzy and foggy, are for the most part admirably detailed, and you get a real feeling of

gloom and foreboding. This is helped by the numerous cut-scenes that pepper the game; like *Zelda* or *Lylat Wars*, they seamlessly take over from the action to further the well-written plot. At times, *Castlevania* is like the best horror movie you ever saw. When you meet the hysterical villager, babbling about vampires, and notice in the mirror behind you that *he has no reflection*, you'll jump a mile.

Other things annoy and please in equal measure. The game's too short, though you get to play through it with two characters, each privy to secret levels and special abilities; the platform-style sections are horrendous; the day-to-night feature is ace, as vampires are weaker in the day, certain characters appear at certain times, and so on.

So, the verdict? Soak up the atmosphere, savour the finer touches, forgive the coarser ones, and you'll find *Castlevania* worth a fourth star. ★★ ★★ **Jes Bickham**

Or you could try...

Super Mario 64
 Nintendo ★★★★★
 No vampires, but still a 3D-platforming masterpiece. Only bettered by one game...

Zelda: Ocarina of Time
 Nintendo ★★★★★
 Officially the Best Game Ever. Miyamoto's crowning glory. And it's got chickens in it.

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[IMPORT]

RACE LEADER

THE BEST RALLY GAME IN THE WORLD... EVER



■ Dreamcast's graphics technology gets to show off on the night levels.

DREAMCAST

Sega Rally 2

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega** ■ Price: **£69.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now (Japan)** ■ Players: **1-2** ■ Extras:
VMS ■ Contact: **Department 1 on 0171 916 8440**

After much delay and rumour the game seen as the make-or-break title for the Dreamcast scotches the sceptics big style.

The claim that *Sega Rally 2* is the greatest home console driving game ever made ought to carry more weight than it does. Saying that it's even more gorgeous than the previous console king, PlayStation's *Gran Turismo*, should be an incredible surprise. So why does the revelation smack of inevitability?

Simple. While *Gran Turismo* milked previously unseen graphics and speed from a four-year-old PlayStation, *Sega Rally 2* is the first driving game on the barely three-month-old Dreamcast. It's bound to look gorgeous. It relies not on genius programmers, but instead rests lazily on the awesome power already nestling under the Dreamcast's hood. And occasionally, and shamefully, this programming laziness peeks through.

But first there's the brutal reality that Dreamcast is the only console capable of whipping an eye-slicing hi-res image (in millions of colours) past the eye at 60 frames per second. The promise of *Pen Pen Trilcelon*, with its too-brief moments of extreme speed and sumptuous detail, has been fulfilled in *Sega Rally 2*. Dreamcast always looked like it was going to offer a new age of home entertainment. And, after a shaky start, it looks like this new age has arrived.

Despite being so obviously based on the arcade game, *Sega Rally 2* even avoids the famous arcade-to-console-conversion criticism by adding a stupid amount of extras on top of the pound-a-time treats. You get a whopping 17 tracks, and the main menu screen bristles with options and sub-options: each one rejigs the expanded content of the game in 20-or-so different ways, and each milks the fun out of that 3D engine and virtual car handling. There are ace ghost modes, a cracking two-player split-



■ And which car will Sir be demolishing today?



■ No-one sets up power slides better than Sega. Although this chap on the left has committed himself a little early...

screen game (with minimal pop-up), and the option to twiddle with each of the nine initial cars in the game via almost unlimited tuning options.

The straight arcade mode – featuring the four tracks of the coin-op – is intact. However, once you get it home, it's surprising how short a time this mode will hang on to your attention. And the Dreamcast has a hard time matching the graphical perfection of the arcade machine. The quality is more akin to that of original *Sega Rally* arcade, rather than its super-charged big-bro. Still, that'll do nicely when you compare it to the quality offered by other console formats.

Pepping up this package is the ten-year Championship mode consisting of ten, four-race, four-track, arcade events. The 17 basic tracks are expanded by mixing them up with different weather and day and night settings. Get through each one without missing a checkpoint and you're allowed to compete in the next year's event.

Sega Rally 2 takes its inspiration from the snowy, muddy and mountainous tracks of the original arcade tournament and concocts entire islands from each theme. Each island is rather like the world of *Ridge Racer*, where tracks branch off, steering you around new straights and bends, and giving you three tracks per terrain theme. This means that while each track isn't 100% unique – sharing a straight and set of bends here and there – they are sufficiently different.

And all this quantity is married to pure quality. *Sega Rally 2's* handling and feel will not disappoint. The chubby analogue stick puts in an admirable performance as a steering wheel, and the two underside triggers turn out to be analogue sliders, enabling you to apply an infinite range

of gas and brake. Play from the in-car view and the sensation of *just* beginning to lose it, immediately followed by scenery sliding past sideways is spot on. Play from out-of-car and some annoyances do begin to present themselves, however.

First of all your car appears to be hovering an half an inch above the track and the more you look at it the more it floats *ever so slightly*. And any impacts with the banks produce an unrealistic mounting and oscillating effect, further giving rise to the feeling that the car (whisper it) *isn't really there*. More serious, however, is the realisation that the game drops frames at practically every corner. We're not talking about slow-down, but instead the sacrificing of screen updates as the Dreamcast's brain gets clogged. We're talking about a problem that's no worse than you'd expect in practically any PlayStation or N64 driver, but the sudden switch from "Driving game of the future" to plain old "Driving game" prompted howls of derision here. People even began to drag up memories of the famously shabby Saturn *Daytona* conversion. Harsh.

We say, ditch such spoilsport melodrama. *Sega Rally 2* is excellent, it's just a great shame that the slight chinks in its armour have given sceptics an opportunity to attack. The game does Dreamcast proud. ★★★★★ **Cam Anderson**

ALL THIS QUANTITY IS MARRIED TO QUALITY. SEGA RALLY 2'S HANDLING AND FEEL WILL NOT DISAPPOINT

↑ Uppers & Downers

Rally

- Superb handling
- Loads of options
- It'll last you ages

Ropey

- Not as gorgeous as the arcade game
- Visible drop in frame rate on corners
- Not enough other good Dreamcast games yet

Or you could try...

Pen Pen Tricelton
Sega ★★
Force fat pastel-coloured animals to swim, slide and "run" in this cute-packed ice race-fest.

Sonic Adventure
Sega ★★★★★
Alright, it's not driving at all, but it's the next best Dreamcast game. And it's a bit like driving.



■ *Sega Rally 2* offers a different racing buzz to the authenticity of *Gran Turismo*. This baby's all about bumper-to-bumper tension and foot-to-the-floor arcade racing action. The two-player mode is especially fine, enabling you and a buddy to race head-to-head with only minimal loss of graphical loveliness.





MACINTOSH

Dark Vengeance

■ Publisher: **MacSoft**
 ■ Developer: **Reality Bytes**
 ■ Price: **£34** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
 ■ Requires: **PowerMac 604e (132MHz), 32Mb RAM, 50Mb HD space, System 7.5**
 ■ Recommended: **PowerMac G3, 64Mb RAM, 250Mb HD space, 3Dfx card**

Mix a heaped tablespoonful of *Quake* and a sprinkling of *Tomb Raider*. Add in detailed graphics, leave to fester for six months, and release at an extortionate price.

Original ideas are hard to come by and it's only occasionally that a game redefines a genre, far less creates a new one. *Dark Vengeance* does neither. It's a 3D shoot-'em and slash-'em game; basically *Dungeons & Dragons*-style *Quake* with *Tomb Raider*'s third-person camera perspective.

You have three characters to choose from, and each has their own strengths and weaknesses. Your first level depends on the character you pick (there's some back story for each, along the lines of lost brothers, murdered parents and fire swamps). After that, you're into 17 identical levels – all the same whoever you play.

It's the old story. Kill monsters while you search for the key to open that door out of the dungeons. The levels are maze-like, guaranteeing that you'll get lost and double-back on yourself. Power-ups are sprinkled around, and these enable you to regain lost health and kill enemies in ever-more interesting ways. If you get bored of single-player (and you will), you can take on friends in more exciting network games.

And the flaws? The control system is diabolical, and depends on pressing a modifier key along with direction controls to perform different moves. This is unintuitive, and battle descends into hand-to-hand combat where you wade in and hope you have enough health to survive. Tricky, given that the camera's behind you and you can't see the enemy half the time.

Also, the collision detection ought to be taken out and shot. Frequently you get stuck between a barrel and a wall, when visually there's enough space to drive a bus through. True, the models are detailed and the animation fluid, but this serves only to amaze you that this is all the game actually offers. If you want action, go and buy *Unreal*. ★★ **Lindsay Bruce**

RAT-A-TAT-TAT!

IT JUST GETS BETTER AND BETTER

COIN-OP

LA Machineguns

■ Maker: **Sega** ■ Developer: **AM3**
 ■ Release date: **out now** ■ Players: **1-2**

What could be more therapeutic than spending half an hour blasting away with a huge, recoiling machine gun, in the hopes of maiming some polygonised perpetrators?

Should you find yourself in need of a little 9mm therapy, Sega has created something just for you. *LA Machineguns* is set in 2025, when a group of terrorist androids called the ROM (which stands for Rage of Machines, apparently) launch an attack on America's West Coast. And your role in all this? You guessed it – blow the suckers back to Kwik-Fit.

It's a direct descendent of *Gunblade*, which in turn was the fully-automatic, lead-spraying offspring of Sega's *Virtua Cop* series. The game will be one of the last to utilise Sega's old Model 3 2.1 hardware, as the new Dreamcast-compatible Naomi board gathers momentum.

And it shows. The graphics, although still impressive, are nowhere near as polished as *House of the Dead 2* (reviewed in *Arcade 4*). As for gameplay, however, *LA Machineguns* is right up there with the best shooters.

There are five stages and you can access the game from any, bar the final one. The missions sweep across the western seaboard of America from Los Angeles to Alcatraz and Las Vegas to Yosemite National Park. The level of detail in each of these locations is impressive.

The game makes use of some much-improved AI to ensure that the bad guys can always spring a couple of surprises on you, no matter how many times you play. And the targets are difficult to hit, although you do get a limitless supply of ammo, which evens things out. More importantly, your missed shots rebound, causing chunks of masonry to be blown out of walls and vehicles to explode.

One gripe though. Why does Sega insist on using its ridiculous target acquisition system, where a red crosshair symbol appears on each target? If you can't see the guy with the big gun shooting at you, then you deserve to die.

It's not exactly original but, unlike *House of the Dead 2*, *LA Machineguns* moves on just enough from its predecessor to make it an enjoyable experience. And for the well-heeled, there's always the one-player, two-gun option which will jerk your body through all sorts of spasms, earning you many admiring glances. Probably. ★★★ **Cam Anderson**

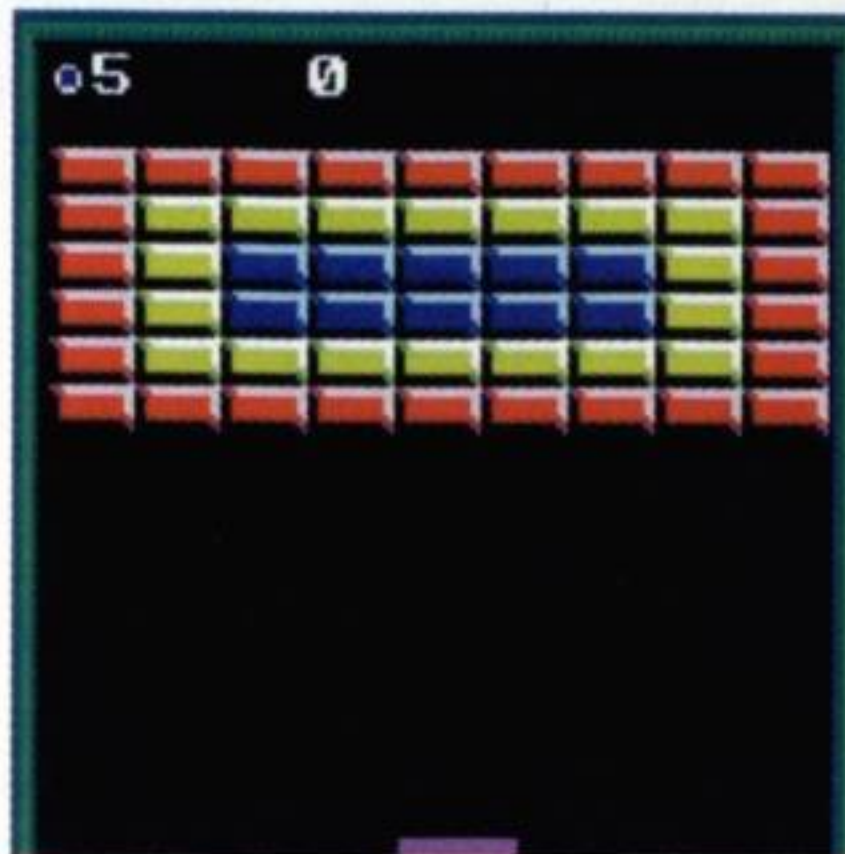


Imagine *Virtua Cop* with a John Woo film level of firepower and you're close to describing Sega's new screen shooter. Coming to a Motorway Service Station near you soon.

HAND-HELD HUES

IT'S SMALL, SMART, CUTE AND WON'T SING "THE LOCOMOTION"

This month Reviews Editor Robin Alway found three new reasons why he loves his job and two reasons why he should pack it all in and move to the North Sea. Don't laugh. It's confusing for the poor man.



Breakout

- Publisher: **Take 2**
- Developer: **Morning Star**
- Release date: **on sale now**
- Price: **£19.99** ■ Players: **1-2**

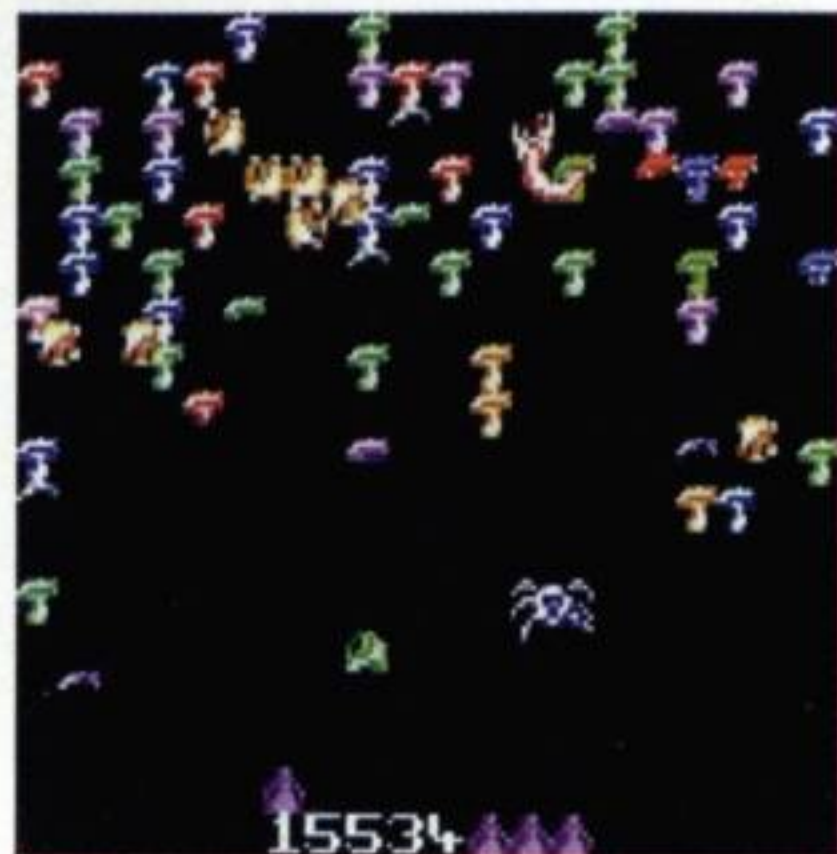
The last time we saw this, Fred Harris was playing it on a state-of-the-art BBC B on *Micro Live*.

Well, the bit where the ball bounces along the top row of bricks is still good and there's an option to make the blocks beep or stay silent when the ball hits them, but really? *Breakout*? It's from a videogaming age when type-in listings ruled.

This is a remarkably straight version, too. You can have two balls on screen or a row of bricks that moves down the screen, *Space Invaders*-style, but that's pretty much it. You move your bat left and right, and the B button, excitingly, speeds it up. You hit the ball into the blocks. They disappear. And that's it.

It's still got some addictive properties, but only of the sort that appeal to people who move their lips when reading. It must have taken at least a day to program and the intro tries so hard to be exciting it's pitiful.

Maybe as a part of a retro compilation of five-or-so games, it'd be acceptable, but at the price of a PlayStation Platinum release, and with the superb likes of *Zelda DX*, *Harvest Moon* and *Tetris DX* around, you're going to have to have unnaturally fond memories of *Thro' the Wall* on the Spectrum's *Horizon* cassette to consider buying this. Of course, a decent version of Tatio's souped-up *Breakout* *Arkanoid* would be a different matter altogether. ★



Centipede

- Publisher: **Take 2**
- Developer: **The Code Monkeys**
- Release date: **on sale now**
- Price: **£19.99** ■ Players: **1-2**
- Extras: **link-up cable**

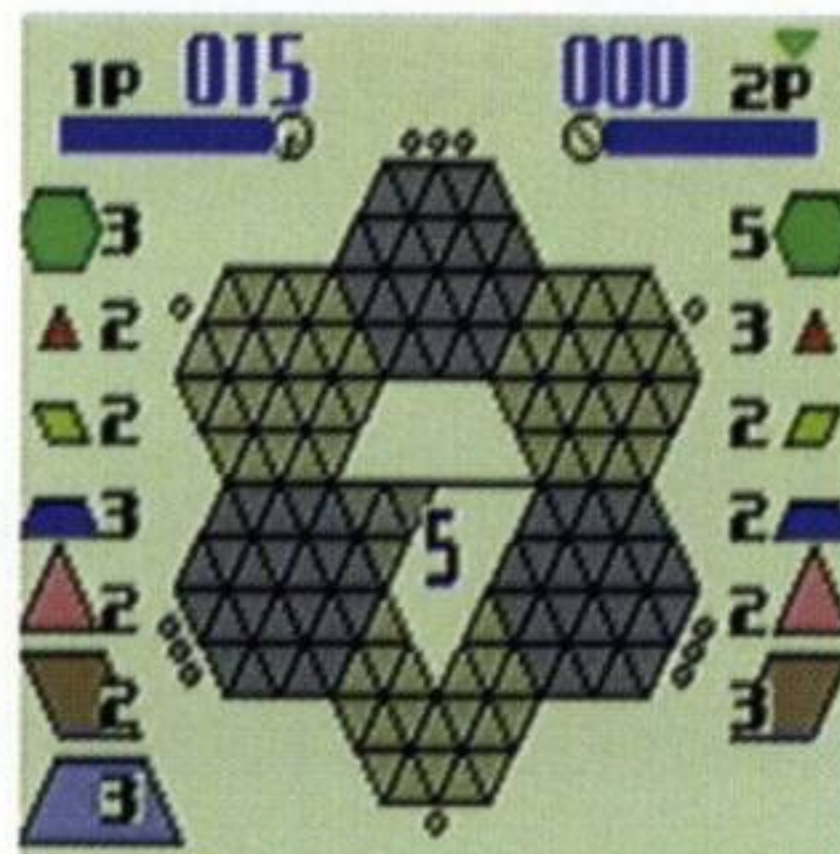
Retro arcade action straight out of Alan Titchmarsh's twisted nightmares.

We could have sworn blind that Atari's early-'80s, trackball-controlled coin-op *Centipede* was a bit of a classic last time we saw it (in a chippy somewhere in Weston-super-Mare), but this shrunk-down replica isn't going to last you ten minutes.

It's just too simple: *Space Invaders* with a horticultural setting. A centipede wends its way down the screen and you shoot it. Other mini-beasts show up. Fleas drop down laying more mushrooms. Spiders bounce about at the bottom and there's a moment of high tension when a slug crosses the screen.

You can't fault old games' refreshingly tenuous grip on reality, but unless you have a fetish for high scores, you'll have to force yourself to keep playing. The nostalgia factor's not even particularly strong because, unlike console/PC retro compilations, this isn't the original coin-op code emulated, but a rewrite that makes the heinous mistake of giving you ten spaces rather than three for your name when you reach the high score screen.

The two-player modes (including a co-operative mode with the link-up cable) are a step in the right direction, but this isn't either a pixel-perfect reproduction or an enhanced version of the old arcade stager. ★



Hexcite

- Publisher: **Ubisoft**
- Developer: **Gu Inc**
- Release date: **on sale now**
- Price: **£24.99** ■ Players: **1-2**
- Extras: **Link cable**

Shape-slotting, board-based puzzler that enables your Game Boy Color to humiliate you.

Hexcite is a fine piece of puzzling which conforms to the old maxim of "Easy to learn, hard to master." The idea, spelled out by an on-screen tutorial, is to fit different sized polygons on the game board, scoring points for making the sides of your piece adjoin as many others as possible. As with all puzzle greats, from *Tetris* to *Bust-A-Move*, it doesn't sound like much, but a few games are enough to have you calling your GBC a cheating git and hammering the Start button for a rematch.

Things get fraught because winning means stitching up your opponent by producing cunning shape placings to limit their scoring opportunities and leave them with point-deducting pieces when the game finishes.

It's well presented and full of options. You can play against a friend (either taking it in turns or with the link cable) or against the clock, and there's a practice mode that teaches you the tactics you'll need to chalk up victories against the tricky-to-beat computer opponent.

While not quite pick-up-and-play enough to permanently replace *Tetris*, *Hexcite* is excellent, compulsive puzzling that will make your head throb and your tongue stick out with concentration, as you fret over your next move. ★★★★★



Loony Tunes

- Publisher: **Infogrames**
- Developer: **Sunsoft**
- Release date: **March**
- Players: **1** ■ Price: **£24.99**

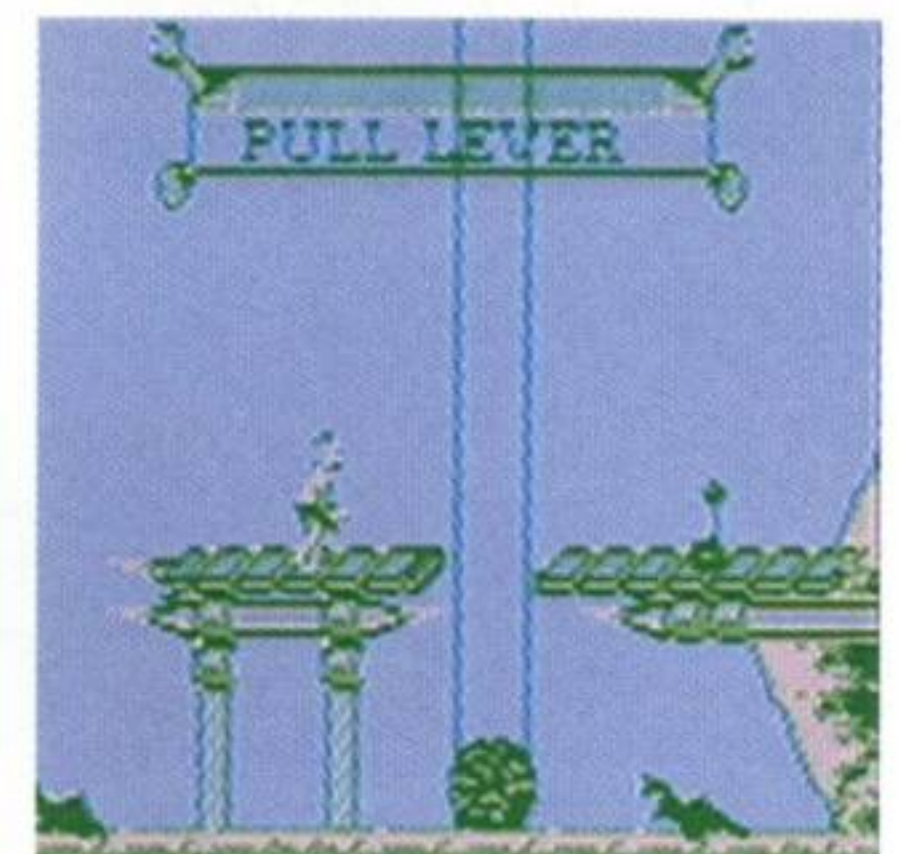
Infogrames bring Warner Bros's biggest names and Speedy Gonzales to GB.

It's Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Sylvester and Tweety, Road Runner, Taz, Bugs Bunny, and the criminally underused Speedy Gonzales, with a full supporting cast from the Dark Side, including Elmer Fudd and Yosemite Sam.

The characters look like their cartoon counterparts and there's plenty of variety in what you're expected to do. The platform-based levels borrow heavily from *Mario*, a good thing given the often uninspired state of Game Boy jumpathons, and feature swimming, races, falling spiked ceilings and whistling Egyptian mummies. Crucially, the controls are accurate and responsive so you've only got your cack-handed self to blame when Daffy Duck fails to land on the back of a giant baby chick.

Developer Sunsoft hasn't been afraid to deviate from classic platforming, either. Porky Pig's section is a plane-based scrolling shoot-'em-up; playing as Tweety Pie you've got to flap out of Sylvester's grasp while making him fall down manholes.

It's not bursting with colour, but there's enough different hues to show off Warner Bros' finest in all their glory, particularly with the underwired support provided by the interesting, well polished levels. Until Nintendo makes its Color platform debut with a revamped *Warioland II*, then, this is the best ledge-leaping to be had. ★★★★★



Oddworld Adventures

- Publisher: **GT interactive**
- Developer: **Saffire**
- Release date: **on sale now**
- Players: **1** ■ Price: **£19.99**

He sings! He farts! He frustrates! Abe brings his worst habits to Nintendo's purple slab of fun.

When you originally start out with a 2D platformer, albeit one tarted up like *Abe's Oddysee*, the prospects for a good conversion to Game Boy are pretty high. Some of the things that made scrawny alien freedom fighter Abe a hero on PlayStation – superb animation, sumptuous backgrounds and Oscar-nominated cut scenes – have obviously taken a battering, but there's still enough of the original to make this an enjoyable, if frustrating, platformy puzzler.

You even get a cut-down version of the gamespeak feature where Abe whistles tunes and – testing the GB's speaker to the max – farts to complete puzzles.

The style of play is similar to the original throughout. As Abe, you can possess enemy Sligs, sneak past Paramites on tiptoe and pull levers to unlock doors in well-designed puzzles. Sadly, the frustration factor familiar to all *Oddworld* veterans rears its head as well. With unlimited lives, death lies round every flip screen and you're made to constantly replay the same bits.

As Game Boy platformers go this greeny-grey offering is pretty ambitious and generally succeeds in squeezing Abe's odd little world into a piece of plastic the size of a Shrinkydink. ★★★

On-line gaming



Want to play *Half-Life* and *Quake* forever? Find shiny new levels on-line.

NEW GAMES FOR OLD!

Don't throw those long-completed favourites in the bin! Take a look on-line and you could find that there's life in the old dog yet. As long as the dog in question is a PC game.

Old games never die, it's said. But that's clearly a load of nonsense, because we can think of scores of games that are not only dead, they're also well and truly buried, most of the way to putrefaction and filled with enough maggots to sustain a month-long fishing trip to Lake Fullofish. But there are some games that seem to live on way beyond their expected life-span, and they're usually the ones that enable you to add your own new levels and modifications. They're the ones that actually are "a million games in one" without being a rubbish LED-based toy with a million variants on bad noughts and crosses.

Which is a good thing, as long as you observe the universal law that states that 95% of everything is crap. For every series of *Beadle's Hotshots*, you might get one home-made video that's actually any good, and for every ton of new *Quake* levels, you'll probably find a pound of decent ones. For *Quake* wheat without the chaff you'd be best off visiting the oddly-named 24 at <http://www.planetquake.com/24/>.

There's more to life than *Quake*, though. There's *Unreal* and *Half-Life*, too, and you can nab all the add-ons that you want at <http://www.unrealnation.com/> and <http://www.half-life.org/> respectively. Or you could even do it yourself; both *WorldCraft* (<http://www.worldcraft.com/>) and *Qoole* (<http://www.qoole.com/>) enable you to build new levels for just about every *Quake*-based game in the world ever, and there are a lot of them about.

Ah, but none of these games would be where they were today without the mighty *Doom*, still alive after all these years, and now in new and improved flavours. You can even get a version to run on your 3D card; it's called *GLDoom* and you can find it at <http://frag.com/doom/>. But please read the instructions before you try and make it work; it's a bit complicated.

So, you want something a bit more thoughtful, do you? Some new *Command & Conquer*? Go to <http://www.ww-underground.com/>. New *Total Annihilation*? That'll be <http://www.annihilated.com/>. More *Warcraft*? Head for <http://www.fifagaming.com/warcraft/>. All of them offer whole new missions for your favourite strategy games, for both single and multi-player battles.

All of which assumes that your game works in the first place. Alas, in these days of rushed schedules, it's all too likely that your game doesn't work as well as it should. So you need to find the latest patch for it. It's a dirty job, but <http://www.3dfiles.com/patches/> is happy to do it.



Even crusty old *Doom* gets new levels and glittery rebuilds. It's enough to make you feel years younger.

Web Ring | Moving in circles

Round and round and round we go. Until we become dizzy and feel sick.

A Clockwork Orange
<http://jake.chem.unsw.edu.au/michaels/Orange/orange.html>

Feast on the banquet of Nadsat and ultra-violence in Stanley Kubrick's classic film of Anthony Burgess' disturbing novel, then itty toff to...



Stanley Kubrick
<http://pages.prodigy.com/kubrick/>

How could I mention two of his films without featuring a page all about the great bearded curmudgeon of Borehamwood? Especially because the site takes us nicely back to...

2001
<http://www.palantir.net/2001/>

Pedants insist that 2001 is the first year of the third millennium.

But it's not. It's a film by Stanley Kubrick that no-one understands. Except me. Ah, Stanley...

Supermarionation Special Effects

<http://www.gis.net/fm/>

Why did all the puppets in *Thunderbirds* have enormous heads? So that they could fit the enormous solenoids in to make their mouths work. Go here, now...

The Fantasy, Horror and Sci-Fi Internet Yellow Pages

<http://users.aol.com/svandensen/main.htm>

Sort of like the Internet Movie Database, but based entirely around sci-fi. The perfect place to find a handy link to the string-powered world of...

Internet Movie Database

<http://www.imdb.com/>

Pick a film. Any film. Yes, even that bizarre '70s blaxploitation flick only you've heard of. You'll find it in IMDB, plus a link to...

Star Riders

<http://starriders.simplenet.com/b7/>

Plenty of sci-fi here; as long as it's *Babylon 5* or *Blakes 7*. Did you know *B5* was inspired by *B7*? Think on that as you head for...

Avon: Paul Darrow Society

<http://members.aol.com/avonpds/>

One of sci-fi's greatest anti-heroes ever. Either sign up for membership or set course for...

Blakes 7

<http://www.hermit.org/Blakes7/>

Stuffed with more *Blakes 7*-related stuff. Find out what "filks" are, then run off to...

Horizon

<http://www.horizon.org.uk/>

How many *Blakes 7* sites can I fit into a single article? Loads. This is the *B7* fan club, or appreciation society. Enjoy it, then go to...

CD-ROM of the Month



DIY Home Improvements

Publisher: **Europress**
Developer: **Europress**
Price: **£19.99**
Release date: **on sale now**
Requires: **P133, 16Mb RAM, Win 95**

There are many milestones in a man's life – the first car, loss of virginity, the first Vindaloo, marriage – yet few have the same potential repercussions as your first attempt at DIY. A true test of your standing with partner, family and friends, that first simple shelf or paint job is an opportunity to impress. Sadly, for most men the experience is rather less positive: flooding,

electrocution, expensive damage and failures that will be recalled in after-dinner stories for the rest of your life, and condemn you to years of Christmas presents courtesy of Black and Decker.

A whole world of pain, in fact, that could have been avoided if only you'd got hold of Europress' latest CD-ROM. Providing professional step-by-step guidance through over 100 home-fixing tasks, *DIY: Home Improvements* promises to transform the most cack-handed spanner into a tool-wielding God.

Introducing each task with a summary detailing tools and materials, *DIY's* simple interface leads you through the basics with support from 3D images, videos, diagrams, photos and professional tips. This simplicity, combined with a refreshing concern for your safety, means it's hard to put a foot, spirit level or socket-set wrong. *DIY* makes an ideal gift for Father's Day. ★★ ★★ **Chris James**

▶▶ PLAY TO WIN ◀◀
NEVER TO LOSE

NEW

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ACTION REPLAY CODELINE: 0891 516355*

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DATEL WEBSITE: www.datel.co.uk updated daily

Or see the Code Pages of all the leading games magazines

AVAILABLE FROM:

GAME



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www.datel.co.uk

ALSO AVAILABLE THROUGH GAME MAIL ORDER, TEL: 01604 700701 FOR FURTHER DETAILS (QUOTE CODE 06618 - PLAYSTATION OR 06619 - NINTENDO 64)

*PlayStation™ version only

**Nintendo® version requires Nintendo® or Datel Ram Expansion Pak to utilise this feature

PlayStation™ is a trademark of Sony Inc.
Nintendo® 64 is a trademark of Nintendo® Inc.

Accessories



Pump Action Gun

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Available from: **Guillemot on 0181 944 1940**

■ Originality is all very well, but when it comes to games accessories you just want the job done and done well. It's the same with lightguns – it's a good laugh packing a piece shaped like a carinet, but you'd soon be dead if it kept shooting wide and took an

hour to reload. Guillemot's pump action gun looks the same as most other lightguns on the market and includes the same features (autofire, sliding reload, auto reload and a host of assignable buttons) but it's also deadly accurate and costs just £25.

The trigger is rather tight and unrealistic and the buttons are in quite awkward positions, but this Guncon-compatible product is a good buy nevertheless. ★★★★★

Ultraracer/Ultraracer 64

■ For: **PlayStation/N64** ■ Price: **£19.99**
 ■ Available from: **Performance on 0161 702 5000**

■ They certainly look intriguing. One-handed controllers in the style of a Geiger counter with a little wheel on top. Could this be the revolutionary new design for the console joypads of the future? Sadly, no.

The idea of a two-way trigger (for Accelerate and Brake) underneath the controller is certainly a good one, but everything else on the Ultraracer controllers is doomed to failure. The miniature wheel, designed to be controlled with your free hand, is pointless, since you don't end up using it like an actual steering wheel; you tap it in the required direction and let it spring back, just like the N64's analogue stick.

The one-handed nature of the controller means that lots of buttons are crammed into a small space, and not always in the most convenient positions. The PlayStation version works okay, although it provides you with far less driving control than a normal joypad. With the N64 controller, there's no

guarantee that functions will assign themselves to the expected buttons, and with some games (*Mario Kart* included) we had difficulty finding the accelerate function at all – even after resetting the controls – rendering the games unplayable. ★★



Race Leader Force Feedback Wheel

■ For: **PC** ■ Price: **£99.99**
 ■ Available from: **Guillemot on 0181 944 1940**

■ Firstly, a word about the pedals. Sitting in front of a PC with a steering wheel is a pretty odd idea in the first place. If you're going to do it, you may as well have a good pedal board so you can pretend you're driving a proper car. Usually, the pedal board is an extra piece of plastic, reluctantly included in the same box as the wheel – almost as if the manufacturer expects everyone to throw it away with the polystyrene packing anyway. That's not the case here. The board doesn't move! The pedals are solid! They're responsive to pressure!

That excitement over with, the wheel itself is a little disappointing. The control is sticky, the angle of the wheel is odd and, bizarrely, none of the buttons are labelled, making configuration more confusing than it need be. The force feedback is effective, but better high-end wheels exist. ★★★



Double Impact Primal Pad

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£24.99**
 ■ Available from: **Wild Things on 01222 755774**

■ While you might expect a Primal Pad to boast some kind of exciting jungle-based design, Wild Things has opted for what it calls a "black ice" finish. Essentially, it's black with grey flecks (in the manner of the trousers your Dad used to wear to work in the 1980s). Dubious.

It's difficult to predict any success for this resolutely ugly joypad, although the chunky handlebar design does give you more to hold on to than the average PlayStation pad. Also on the plus side, there's nothing wrong with the feel or positioning of the buttons, even if the moulded D-pad could easily become a cause of "PlayStation thumb". Slow and turbo buttons are predictably included, but to superfluous effect. ★★



WingMan Interceptor Joystick

■ For: **PC** ■ Price: **£49.99**
 ■ Available from: **Logitech on 01306 734300**

■ Another day, another very decent joystick, with a few minor imperfections. The WingMan is solid and comfortable, although with no adjustability and a grip that may seem too small if your hands are on the larger end of the scale. Logitech has gone overboard on the hat switches, too, providing three, each with a different finish. We suggest that you opt for whichever leaves the least painful imprint on your thumb after a heavy gaming session. As a bonus, the rubber throttle is more sensitive than usual, adding a good level of extra precision. It's just odd that having provided so many additional buttons in order to minimise keyboard use with your left hand, these buttons are so awkwardly positioned. If you're sculpting for the right hand, why not sculpt for the left? There's a thought for the day. ★★ ★



Competition

SERIOUS DRIVING



Which Formula One drivers use a tiny joypad to control their mean speed machines? None of them, that's who. Which is why you'll be wanting to win a Thrustmaster steering wheel in our real racing competition.

■ If you're a driving game enthusiast searching for a way to enhance racing realism *Arcade* has a competition you won't be able to resist. Courtesy of Thrustmaster, we have two PC Formula Sprint Wheels (★★★ *Arcade 1*) and two PlayStation/N64 Formula Race Pro Wheels (★★★ *Arcade 3*) to give away. Both are high-quality performance steering wheels which come complete with their own set of foot pedals, and both will bring you a step closer to the real thing as you scream around the track in *Gran Turismo*, *TOCA 2*, *Monaco Grand Prix* or *F1 World Grand Prix*.

To stand a chance of winning one of these wheels (each worth around £60), you need to answer our simple question, lifted straight from the pages of the driving test theory paper:

Which side of the road should you drive on in the UK? (Clue: it's either left or right, and we'll not accept any of this one-way system nonsense.)

■ Just send us your answer on a postcard or sealed envelope, making sure you include your name, address and a daytime telephone number. Screech down to your local postbox and get your entry to us by midnight on 30 April 1999, at this address:

Thrustmaster competition
Arcade, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street
Bath BA12BW

Don't forget to wear your seatbelt.



■ **Win one of four Thrustmaster wheels.**

Rules of the road:
1) No purchase is necessary.
2) No employees of Future Publishing, Thrustmaster, or associated companies may enter this competition.
3) The closing date is midnight on 30 April 1999.
4) The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding any aspect of this competition.
5) There is no cash alternative to the prizes.
6) Individuals may enter only once.
7) All entries must be sent to: Thrustmaster competition, Arcade, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA12BW

V3 Racing Wheel

■ For: **PlayStation** ■ Price: **£49.99**
 ■ Available from: **Interact on 0161 702 5000**

■ The quest to produce the perfect PlayStation racing wheel continues, but the V3 Racing Wheel is no holy grail. At first it appears to handle sensitively and realistically, but it soon demonstrates the same traits as other wheels before it; if you can drive a perfect lap, the V3 wheel is fine, but the moment you misjudge a corner or accidentally clip another car's bumper you begin to spin and, however hard you tussle, it's impossible to put the car back on course without twisting out of control and effectively surrendering the race. Frustrating.

The height and angle of the wheel is adjustable, but unless your body is a very strange shape, you're unlikely to need the wheel extended at all. The function buttons are also in a very awkward position, a fault rectified somewhat by the excellent pedal board, but if you're playing a racing game which also requires a fire button, you'll need to reconfigure. ★★ ★



Film of the Month

RUTHLESS PEOPLE

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO FOR \$140,000?



■ "Alright, alright, no more *Lethal Weapon* films, I promise."

Payback

■ Director: **Nora Ephron**
 ■ Starring: **Mel Gibson, Gregg Henry, Maria Bello, James Coburn**
 ■ UK release: **26 March**

A modern revamp of John Boorman's 1967 thriller *Point Blank*, Mel Gibson returns to winning form in a clever, entertaining thriller where plot matters more than improbable action and cheesy one-liners.

In *Payback*, Gibbo plays immoral street-thief Porter. After pinching \$140,000 from a Chinese gang with his partner Val Resnick (Henry), Porter and Resnick prepare to split the loot 50/50. But what Porter doesn't realise is that Resnick needs \$130,000 to buy himself into the local crime syndicate. With the help of Porter's wife, Resnick suddenly double-crosses Porter, guns

him down and leaves him for dead in a pool of his own blood. Against the odds, Porter survives and – after being sewn back together by an unsanctioned street-doctor – he vows to track down Resnick, kill him and get his share of the money.

Funny, absorbing and thoroughly entertaining, *Payback* mixes violence (smashing toes with a metal hammer) and humour (torturing a dope dealer by pulling out his nose-ring) with satisfying success.

Aping the worn feel of a '70s detective drama, Helgeland's thriller shuns no-brainer action and adventure, and goes for plot, characterisation and dialogue that actually means something. It's a breath of fresh air; the perfect antidote to last year's crop of blockbusters that were big, bold and brash, but ultimately bollocks. Gibson is excellent, giving his character a ruthless mean streak, while ex-*ER* beauty Maria Bello makes a solid debut as the hooker with the heart of gold. Guns, bombs, sex, drink, drugs, cars... *Payback's* got everything. ★★★★★



■ More World War II action.

The Thin Red Line

■ Director: **Terence Malick**
 ■ Starring: **Sean Penn, Adrien Brody, Ben Chaplin, George Clooney, John Cusack**
 ■ UK release: **out now**

■ What you mustn't hope for with *The Thin Red Line* is another heady dose of *Saving Private Ryan*. Directed by reclusive lenser Terence Malick (whose last film was the 1979 flick *Days Of Heaven*), it's a difficult film to like.

Set in World War II, *The Thin Red Line* tells the story of Charlie Company, a rag-tag group of marines fighting to take an airfield from the Japanese in the strategically important dash at Guadalcanal. The 170-minute narrative then attempts to address how the young soldiers cope with the horrors of war with the Japanese, not to mention the tensions and friendships between each other.

But where *Saving Private Ryan* brought home the nightmarish elements of large-scale conflict, *The Thin Red Line* is less concerned with realism and more with the reasons why men fight. As a result, none of the large cast (which also includes Nick Nolte, Elias Koteas, Woody Harrelson and John Travolta) have characters that they can get their teeth into, they are content instead to shoehorn what realism they can into soldier shells defined by very few traits.

In contrast, Malick unfurls the action with a grand, poetic sweep, filming the combat with breathless attention to detail. You'll either love *The Thin Red Line* or hate it. But is it searching, luscious film-making with an anti-war message, or high-profile, poned-up arthouse? It's somewhere in between. ★★★

Pleasantville

■ Director: **Gary Ross**
 ■ Starring: **Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon, William H Macy, Joan Allen, Jeff Daniels**
 ■ UK release: **12 March**

Penned and directed by *Big* scripter Gary Ross, *Pleasantville* is a curious mix of *The Truman Show* and *Back To The Future*, and it tries to be much smarter than you'll think it is.

The backplot is pure *Twilight Zone* hokum; the very tall tale of two '90s brats who are zapped into their TV (via a magical remote control, no less) and find themselves in a two-tone '50s TV

soap called *Pleasantville*. The opposite of their uncaring, smoggy, crime-stained reality, the show's squeaky-clean, white picket fence utopia is innocent, clean, trouble-free and very dull.

Nineties-hating *Pleasantville* fan David (Maguire) loves the escape, but his sister Jennifer (Witherspoon) can't stand the excitement-free pace of a town where there's no sex and no trouble, and everything is TV-show perfect. Absorbed into this monochrome world as TV show teens Bud and Mary Sue, David tries to fit in (mindful that he mustn't upset the balance of life by deviating from the scripts he remembers) while Jennifer is more rebellious. And as her '90s influence on the greyscale inhabitants increases, both the people and the town begin to develop colour.

An intelligent, post-modern fairytale, the joyously odd *Pleasantville* boasts over 1,700 special effects and an eye-opening fusion of mono and colour that gives the film an impressive, gimmicky edge. It's only problem? It's way too slow. Although the story unrolls over two hours, it feels like four, while director Ross distracts you from the simple "David and Jennifer become better people" and



■ Isn't colour just great?

"Change is for the better" devices with a spatter of mini-themes (racism, tolerance, honesty, and so on). It's hardly a rip-roaring night out, but if you're prepared to give it some time, *Pleasantville* is a clever and rewarding movie. ★★★

Waking Ned

■ Director: **Kirk Jones**
 ■ Starring: **Ian Bannen, David Kelly, Fionnula Flanagan, Susan Lynch**
 ■ UK release: **12 March**

■ Set in Ireland, but shot entirely on location on the Isle Of Man, *Waking Ned* is a slapstick tale of greed, deceit and bony nudity that comes across like *The Last Of The Summer Wine* meets *Ballykissangel*. Inspired by a true story, it spins a delightful fable of when the Irish lottery (the "Lotto") announces that a resident of the small village of Tully More has won the jackpot and OAP troublemakers Jackie O'Shea (Bannen) and Michael O'Sullivan (Kelly) decide to find the winner and befriend him.

After complementing and bribing most of the townsfolk to track down the lucky soul, the trail eventually leads the less-than-dynamic duo to the house of fisherman, Ned Devine. Unfortunately, the shock of seeing his numbers finally come up has killed poor Ned and Jackie finds him dead in a chair, clutching the winning ticket. There's now a decision to be made: should they report Ned's death (whereupon the jackpot gets reclaimed by the Lotto), or do they impersonate dead Ned, hoodwink the Lotto representative, and keep the cash for themselves? One makes a better movie than the other...

It doesn't sound like much, but *Waking Ned* is a delightfully funny and witty comedy. Notable for its terrific acting (especially by wrinkly duo Bannen and Kelly) and its brilliantly-constructed script, the cosy charm of this Irish



■ Like a drink, do the Irish.

odyssey easily wins you over. Intelligent, rather than clichéd, *Waking Ned* twists and turns with admirable inventiveness right up to its surprising and shamefully enjoyable finale. Another cracking British film. ★★★

Mighty Joe Young

■ Director: **Ron Underwood**
 ■ Starring: **Bill Paxton, Charlize Theron, David Paymer, Regina King**
 ■ UK release: **26 March**

■ It could be a boxing movie. It could be a baseball movie. But *Mighty Joe Young* is, in fact, a happy-go-lucky version of RKO's 1949 black-and-white ape adventure, *King Kong*. It's also smaller, less terrifying, and aimed squarely at the kiddy end of the multiplex audience.

The plot unfolds thus: a giant gorilla (known as Joe) is discovered living on the misty mountain slopes of an African wilderness by an intrepid Bill Paxton. The mammoth monkey has been raised by anthropologist's daughter Jill Young (Theron), who has nursed Joe from a knee-high furbundle into the house-sized furbundle he is today. The adventures begin when, to avoid marauding gangs

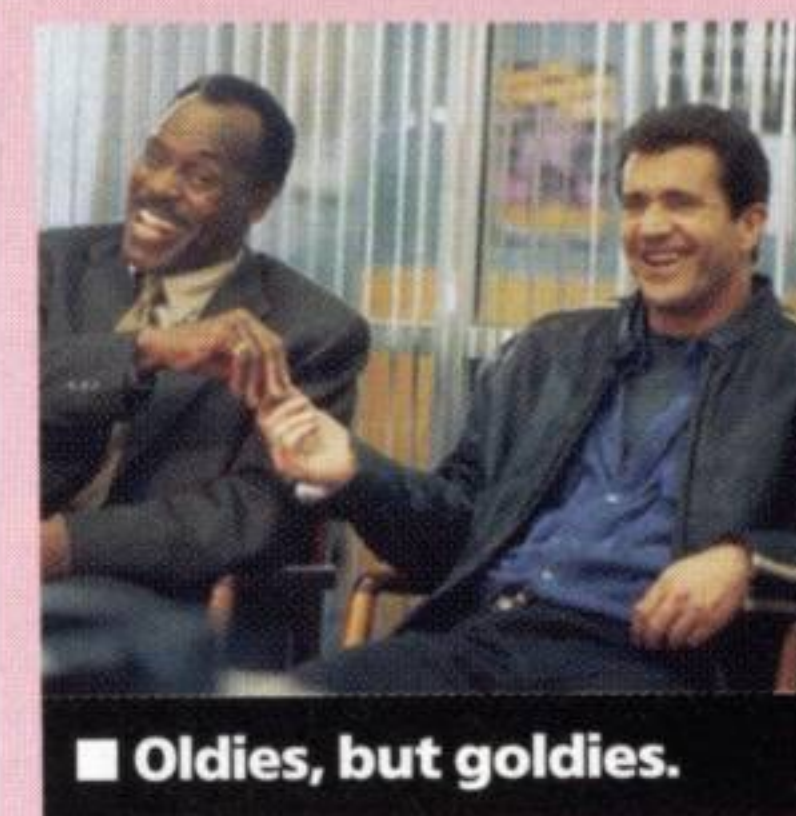
of poachers, Jill and Joe are relocated to a Californian wildlife preserve. Unsurprisingly, like King Kong before him, the combination of a feisty Fay Wray and several tonnes of ape cause an unprecedented stir in society.

Having swallowed \$80 million of Disney's loose change, *Mighty Joe Young* is neither groundbreakingly awesome or distressingly bad. It is, however, stuck in that forgettable limbo somewhere in between; a slightly disappointing combo of hairy special effects and often unbearable *House Of Mouse* cuteness. Don't expect the gorilla to scale tall buildings and swat helicopters out of the sky like flies. Do expect it to capture the hearts and minds of the US people and to rescue small boys from broken fairground rides. ★★



■ My mate, primate.

Videos to Rent



■ Oldies, but goldies.

Lethal Weapon 4

■ Warners
 ■ Gibson and Glover dodge the retirement home in order to make their fourth (and surely final) appearance as "everyone's" favourite cops. Even age has not diminished their ability to crack painful gags while miraculously cheating death seven times a day. This time they're caught up in some nonsense about a Triad gang smuggling Chinese slave labour into LA, but this is only an excuse for martial arts-style fisticuffs. The best bit is where Mel's dragged along the freeway on an upturned coffee table and then regains his place behind the wheel to drive straight through an office block, emerging with only a wisecrack and a tiny scratch on his cheek. ★★★

The Truman Show

■ CIC
 ■ It's a daring concept for Hollywood – a combination of quirky comedy, docusoap critique and Kafkaesque dystopia. Truman Burbank lives in an artificial world, the unwitting star of TV's biggest real-life drama, except he's about to discover that his whole existence is a sham.

Jim Carey tones down his usual mania to convincing levels and Ed Harris gives a chilling performance as the show's director/dictator without lapsing into comic villainy. The cleverest touch is to instill the "real world" with the same sense of claustrophobia as Truman's fake environment; as Mark and Lard would say, "Is it really real or not really real?" "Is it, then? Is it? Eh?" ★★★★★

Videos to Buy



■ Gattaca: Uma shows off her perfect genes.

Gattaca

■ Columbia Tristar
 ■ One of the most beautifully shot films of recent times, *Gattaca* is set in a near future obsessed by genetic modification. Vincent (Ethan Hawke) is naturally conceived – a disadvantage which condemns him to life as an in-valid with a projected life-expectancy of 30. To fulfil his dream of entering the space academy, he buys a new identity from Jerome (Jude Law) – a paralysed former swimming champion – and cops off with Uma Thurman in the process.

Strip away the gorgeous sets and endless poignant gazes, and the story of a heroic impostor, soon to be exposed, is simplistic. The ending is also rather trite, but the effect of the whole film is strangely hypnotic. ★★★

Desperate Measures

■ Entertainment In Video
 ■ Frank Conner (Andy Garcia) is a cop with a critically ill son. A bone marrow donor is required, but the only DNA match is homicidal lifer Peter McCabe (played by Michael Keaton for the sole reason that he has pointy eyebrows that make him look a bit psychotic). When brought to the hospital, McCabe naturally tries to escape, facilitating a massive gun battle and a great deal of shouting.

The plot is so obvious (and so obviously tacky) that it's amazing no-one's tried it before. However, all the dialogue and all the set scenes have been done before, making for wearisome viewing. *Casualty* is regularly more stylish and exciting. ★★

The Crow Road

■ BBC Films
 ■ Based on a novel by Iain Banks, *The Crow Road* is the story of Prentice, a scatty, romantic, loveable student, and his fascinating Scottish family. Inspired by his Grandmother, Prentice begins to explore the legacy of his Uncle Rory, a writer who disappeared seven years previously and who appears as an enigmatic ghost at Prentice's shoulder.

Discovering an unfinished family history on some ancient computer disks, Prentice's quest becomes a refreshing murder mystery, which manages to be utterly compelling without resorting to the usual clichéd props. Originally broadcast over four hour-long episodes on the BBC, this may seem a lot for one sitting, but believe me, you won't want to go anywhere. ★★★★★

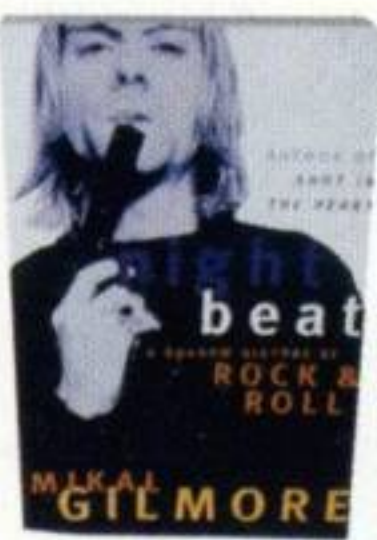
Book of the Month

■ Quite what Michael's ever rebelled against (other than his own ethnicity) is anyone's guess.



REBEL YELL

A HISTORY OF POP INSURRECTION



Night Beat

■ Author: **Mikal Gilmore**
 ■ Publisher: **Picador**
 ■ Price: **£12.99**
 ■ ISBN: **0-330-36891-5**

"Rock 'n' roll ain't noise pollution", screeched AC/DC. No, it's far more powerful than that. Although this may seem like an alien concept to today's kids, weaned on the musical anaemia of Steps, Embrace and Dru Hill, Mikal Gilmore likes to refer to rock 'n' roll as a "disruptive art form". At its basic level, it annoys your parents; at its incendiary best, it empowers the outcast, overturns restrictive social orders and changes lives forever. Like, *serious*, man.

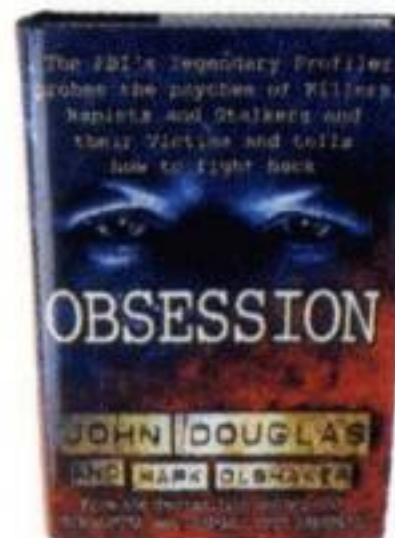
Actually, the pop rebellion theme of *Night Beat* is a tiny bit of a contrivance – the book is basically a collection of Gilmore's musical writings from 25 years at *Rolling Stone* and the *LA Weekly*. Without this expanded vista however, we'd miss the fascinating insight into the unhappy world of Michael Jackson. We'd also be without the tedious ode to Randy Newman.

While Gilmore struggles to give a contemporary angle to the work of '60s icons such as Bob Dylan and Lou Reed, which – though revolutionary at the time – may seem tame to modern readers, he's at his best when writing about heavy metal and rap. These are consistently two of the most maligned musical subcultures and are also the genres which have ignited the wrath of America's conservative moral majority. Anyone who's ever raised a satanic salute to the power of nihilist rock, or felt adrenalised by the violent poses of Public Enemy or NWA will appreciate Gilmore's excited ramblings (and his hatred for Tipper Gore's censor-happy Parents Musical Resource Centre).

From Elvis via the hilarious rock excess of Van Halen, to the self-destructive urges of the late Tupac Shakur, *Night Beat* revels in its rebels. ★★★★★ **Sam Richards**

Obsession

■ Author: **John Douglas and Mark Olshaker**
 ■ Publisher: **T Simon & Schuster**
 ■ Price: **£16.99**
 ■ ISBN: **0-684-85147-4**



■ Another in the unstoppable stream of books about serial killers, mass murderers and violent sexual criminals,

Obsession at least has the weight of experience behind it. John Douglas was the head of the FBI's Investigative Support Unit and helped pioneer the now-familiar "profiling" technique so beloved of films like *Silence of the Lambs*.

But this is no Brian Masters shock-horror gofest. The case studies are deeply disturbing, of course, but aside from the occasional jarringly over-dramatic line, the tone is neither salacious nor tabloid. Douglas manages to weave seemingly contradictory threads – cold scientific analysis, genuine interest in the workings of these people's minds, and compassion for their victims – without sounding trite.

The book's title refers to both the killers and Douglas' compulsion to hunt them down, and he manages to convey this fascination with eminent skill and delicacy. ★★★★★ **Ed Ricketts**

I Am Jackie Chan: My Life in Action

■ Author: **Jackie Chan & Jeff Yang** ■ Publisher: **Pan**
 ■ Price: **£12.99**
 ■ ISBN: **0-330-37590-3 170**



■ Jackie Chan loves his food. The hugely successful star of countless (well, 81) martial arts movies, who can rightly claim to be "bigger than

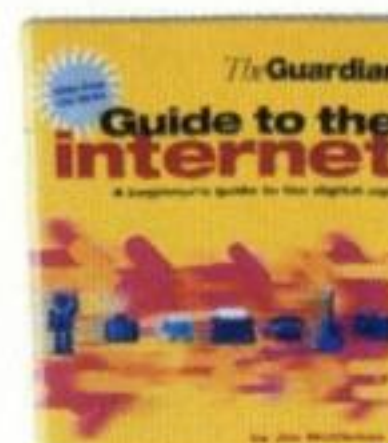
Bruce Lee", barely lets a chapter pass in his autobiography without mentioning how much he adores a big, hearty meal.

Although Jackie's early years being beaten into shape by a Chinese Opera Academy are interesting, the real meat of the star's life – his period spent in the flicks – is confined to the last quarter of the book. A period working with Bruce Lee is dealt with in a couple of pages, and there's more information on each of his movies in the book's appendix than in the main text.

Generally, this history doesn't do Jackie any favours. He's always come across as a cheeky, loveable rogue on screen, but the real Jackie Chan seems conceited, stubbornly career-driven, and not very keen on chatting about the stuff that we're *really* interested in. ★★ **Mark Green**

The Guardian Guide to the Internet

■ Author: **Jim McClellan**
 ■ Publisher: **Fourth Estate**
 ■ Price: **£6.99**
 ■ ISBN: **1-857-02665-9**



■ Everyone is on-line, we are ceaselessly being told. Your kids' experience of the world is so much greater

than your own, thanks to the joy of the World Wide Web. But your kids never had to struggle with a Hayes AT command set while configuring their own modem.

Yup, the on-line world is full of jargon. It's also full of children who *can* sort out their own Hayes set. However, what it's been remarkably short of, up until now, is an entertaining, adult-oriented guide to getting on-line. From the basic principles of on-line history, through to picking a service provider and getting on-line; the *Guardian Guide* can get you there.

Once you're in touch with the world, you then get help with the basics of Web browsing, e-mail, newsgroups and "netiquette". It's written with a wry, adult audience in mind, and provides all the information you need without becoming condescending.

Read it, enjoy it, and use the jargon to scare your kids.

★★★★★ **Emma Parkinson**

An Underachiever's Diary

■ Author: **John Douglas and Mark Olshaker** ■ Publisher: **Simon & Schuster** ■ Price: **£16.99** ■ ISBN: **0-684-85147-4**

■ From the hilariously accurate "principles of an underachiever" listed on its jacket, you might imagine *An Underachiever's Diary* to be an

incisive, chortlesome account of a Generation X slacker, an American, twentysomething Bridget Jones without the fat references.

Don't be fooled, though, because Benjamin Anastas' debut novel is a rather plodding affair that says much less than it thinks. William, our hero, is the firstborn (by seven minutes) of two twins, and spends his life watching his sibling out-perform him.

Sadly, William's failures and subsequent resignation to a life more ordinary aren't amusing, spectacular, or indeed interesting, couched in earnestly prolix prose with maybe one smile-inducing line every ten pages.

The irony, of course, is that Anastas has managed to write an uninspiring book that could have been so much better. Intentional? Probably not. Disappointing? Very much so. ★★ **Ed Ricketts**

Underworld

Beaucoup Fish
 ■ Label: **Junior Boys Own**



Underworld have changed direction more times than a granny wheeling a trolley around a supermarket. But *Beaucoup Fish* is easier to deconstruct than the laid-back vibes and multi-layered epic of previous albums *Dubnobasswithmyheadman* and *Second Toughest in the Infants*.

The opening three songs build over one-bar basslines, with Karl Hyde spouting lyrics as cut-up as ever. Things get weirder by the time you get to "King of Snake" with its Bronski Beat groove, while "Kittens" sounds more like a marching band.

Beaucoup Fish is a hard album to fully appreciate, sauntering between the minimalist ("Something like a Mama") and the full-on ("Moaner"), the genius ("Push Upstairs") and the perhaps too-clever-for-its-own-good ("Bruce Lee"). However, this is still dance music at its most intelligent. ★★ ★★ **Sam Richards**

Gene

Revelations
 ■ Label: **Polydor**



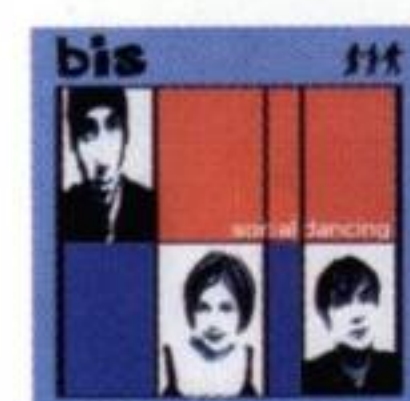
As the Britpop second-division bands are gradually being picked off, Gene are desperately dodging bullets. Their first album, *Olympian* was

fantastic; full of the cocky elegance which transcended lazy Smiths comparisons. The second was occasionally exquisite, but mostly inconsequential.

Revelations is unlikely to spare them the chop. Rousing opener "As Good As It Gets" is soon forgotten as an ocean of indistinguishable tracks follow. Rossitter – previously able to work up a righteous anger about anything – appears angry about nothing, and the lyrics are pale. "The Police Will Never Find You" is a great title wasted on a poor song and the most affecting melody ("Stop") is almost ruined when the band do actually stop, Motown-style, in the middle of the verse as a tame tribute to pop artistry greater than theirs. Bye, Gene. ★★ **Sam Richards**

Bis
Social Dancing

■ Label: **Wiiija**



For a fleeting second, everyone loved Bis. They played *Top Of The Pops* when still unsigned and their smiley, naive charm saw them tangle with the charts, while a lovestruck Mike D (of the Beastie Boys) clasped Bis to his trendy bosom and made them officially hip Stateside. Then we all decided that sucking lollipops and shouting petulantly in thick Scottish accents wasn't really cool and forgot about them.

Social Dancing is supposedly the sound of an older and wiser group, but Bis have learnt little in their time away.

The songwriting, the singing and the sound have all improved (although the Casio drum machine still holds sway). But the spark of originality has extinguished itself, leaving nothing but a pile of self-conscious Republica cast-offs in its place. ★★ **Sam Richards**

Kula Shaker

Peasants, Pigs & Astronauts
 ■ Label: **Columbia**



If you're still worried about Kula Shaker's fascistic leanings, there's nothing in *Peasants, Pigs & Astronauts* to suggest Crispian Mills & Co are closet Nazis. However, there is everything to suggest they are posh, misguided hippies on bad drugs, who believe themselves to be the Grateful Dead reincarnated as Nepalese shamen. In terrible trousers.

The pomposity of this album is difficult to convey. Every track drips with hollow bombast, and while Crispian intones his lyrics with the gravitas of a new messiah, the most meaningful line he can come up with is "I'm a wizard in a blizzard". There are empty rock poses and there are the rubbish Indian mantra bits. Occasionally a tune breaks loose, such as the startlingly impressive "Shower Your Love", but even this sounds too much like Crosby, Stills & Nash (ask your Dad). Why the kids ever fell for Kula Shaker in the first place is a mystery. ★ **Sam Richards**

Album of the Month



■ Even with hair, he still looks bald.

TO BALDLY GO
TECHNO SLAPHEADS STILL ROCKIN'

Orbital
The Middle Of Nowhere
 ■ Label: **FFrr**

Ten years ago, Orbital released "Chime". Distinctive, hypnotic and alluring it may have been, but few would have predicted long-term success for a "rave" outfit when most hit records of its kind were made by baggy-trousered idiots shouting about E. Since then, Orbital's non-identity (two bald heads wearing LED-framed specs) has become one of the strongest identities in pop, and the group operate on the same terms as Oasis and U2. *The Middle Of Nowhere* has as much in common with Radiohead as it does with the sound of Ibiza. You'd look like a drunk builder if you tried to dance to it, but the driving rhythms still lend Orbital's music immense power.

The Middle Of Nowhere is far more uplifting and celebratory than previous effort *In Sides*, "Way Out" introducing the album with a symphonic tumble into the warm synthetic tones that characterise the group. Orbital's sound remains so distinctive, you wonder if they have access to a unique supply of musical equipment – at the very least they must stroke their library of synths and samplers where lesser musicians simply prod.

"I Don't Know You People", "Satan"'s fiery-eyed cousin, is the only abrasive moment, but it's mischievous rather than menacing. Sly humour underlies the weighty pomp of the album, bagpipe breaks mingling with samples from *John Craven's Newsround*. When Orbital attempt a "proper" song ("Autumn") it turns out like Tori Amos' arse. When they chop up a similar vocal and it splatter it over the walls, as on "Nothing Left", it's somehow more poignant.

There's so much depth to "The Middle Of Nowhere" that you'll make it a constant companion for weeks and not get bored of its conversation. ★★ ★★ **Sam Richards**

Comic of the Month

A BUG'S LIFE



Spider-Man: Chapter One

■ Writer/artist: **John Byrne**
 ■ Publisher: **Marvel Comics**

■ Ever since he kick-started the X-Men revival, Canadian

artist-writer John Byrne has become the man to get if you want to rejuvenate a failing big name. Over the years he's done it for Superman, Wonder Woman, The Fantastic Four – and now Spiderman, Marvel's signature character, but a hero who's floundered since the stupidly convoluted

"clone" storyline of a few years back drove readers away in their thousands. Byrne's solution is go right back to the beginning, and retell the original Stan Lee/Steve Ditko stories so they look like they actually took place last year, and not in 1962. Byrne's art is as clear and appealing as ever, the

updates do their job (instead of happening across vital information in a newspaper, for instance, Spidey's alter-ego Peter Parker pulls it from the Internet), and the sheer energy of the original stories, in particular the pell-mell inventiveness of their villains, shines through.

But there's a major problem: Byrne's retellings don't really add anything, and their main effect is to leave you wanting to search out the originals. That's not as hard as it might sound, either – comic shops are currently selling a no-frills Marvel Books trade paperback, *Essential Spider-Man*, that reprints our hero's first 22 stories on bog paper for not much more than a tenner (ISBN 0-785-10286-8). It renders Byrne's efforts, fine though they are, almost completely redundant.

Spiderman: Chapter One ★★ ★★ **Essential Spiderman** ★★ ★★ ★★ **Matt Bielby**

Millennium Jukebox

The sounds giving the Arcade stereo an aural hernia this month...

Mogwai
Kappa
 ■ Sportswear-sponsored proto-prog wonderment.

Blur
Tender
 ■ The sentimental post-pub gospel.

Grant Green
The Latin Bit
 ■ Blame Neil for all this jazz nonsense. Again.

Gil Scott Heron
Spirits
 ■ Featuring "Message to the Messengers". It's, like, lessons from the true teacher, man.

Radio 1's Mark & Lard
Dedication to Mark Green (1 Feb '99)
 ■ "Mark, stop whinging about the '80s and wear some pants!"

Blondie
New Stuff
 ■ Almost as good as the old stuff, strangely. Although Debbie's looking a bit ropy.

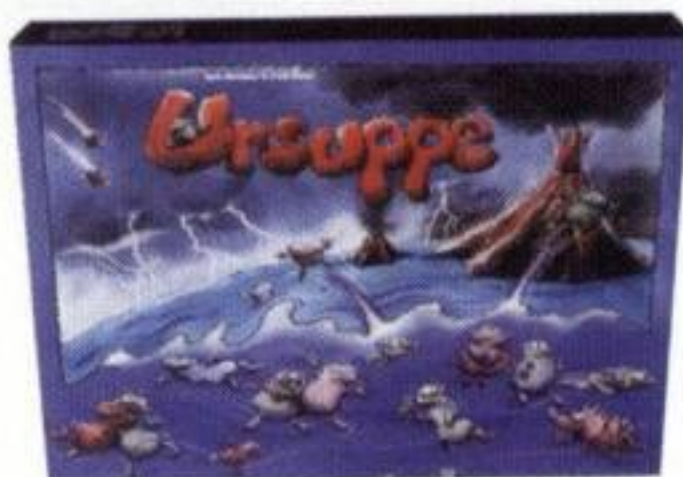
Orbital
Style
 ■ Rolf Harris plays "Chime". For real.

Pavement
Slanted And Enchanted
 ■ Like fried eggs on a hangover.

Dose Feat. Mark E Smith
Inch
 ■ Help me, I'm scared.



CELL MATES



EAGER AMOEBA RACE TO EVOLVE

Ursuppe

■ Publisher: **Doris and Frank**
 ■ Available from: **Leisure Games on 0181 346 2327** ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **3-4 players (6 with expansion set)**

M eet the latest cult board game from the small publisher that brought you *Aunty Tarantula* and *Hedgehogs in a Hurry*. *Ursuppe* is German for "primordial soup", and it's at the dawn of time where this game is set.

The ursuppe, as you know, is full of the detritus of life, represented here by tiny blocks of wood. You control of amoebas drifting aimlessly around the soup,

making lunch of the detritus. When they eat, they shit to feed others. If they don't, they'll die to feed others. Mmm, tasty.

Your amoebas develop attributes, represented by gene cards, which you bestow upon them, but which they may also later lose. You get points by holding cards and by having amoebas on the board and as these factors are inter-dependent, you need to keep a balance. When you have 42 points, you leave the soup.

It's a strange concept, executed with humour, but the tiny blocks make *Ursuppe* fiddly. You need to memorise the order of the phases of play to develop a winning strategy, too, so your group needs to be able to keep up a good rhythm. It takes time to get into, but *Ursuppe* is an excellent board game, playable on many levels. ★★★★★ **Jon Palmer**



TOP POCKET GAMEBOY'S NEW RIVAL

NeoGeo Pocket

■ Available from: **Fire International on 01302 325225**
 ■ Price: **£49.99**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ Look at the Game Boy, smirking in its corner of the playground. When it comes to handhelds, GB's the cock of the yard so has every right to look smug. But will anyone challenge its rule?

Enter the NeoGeo Pocket,

a sleek rival, attempting to win new favour. It certainly looks better than the Game Boy – the finish resembles a Walkman, meaning it'll probably win more cred among older gamers than the Game Boy's primary hues. The eight-shade, 160 x 152 resolution screen is sharp and copes with most lighting situations. The machine is smart, compact and ergonomic.

However, as with any game system, the NeoGeo

Pocket will stand or fall by its software and at the moment, only SNK titles are available, retailing for between £25 and £30. When *Pocket Tennis* is the best of them, this isn't a pretty situation. For now, then, the Game Boy can sneer at the NeoGeo Pocket, leading a chant of "You and whose army?" ★★★★★

Sam Richards



■ It's small, it's sleek, but its games aren't as good as the Game Boy's.

DON'T WATCH GET PERSONAL



■ It's the perfect combination of '80s style with '90s technology.

PC Unite watch

■ Available from Casio on **0181 450 9131** ■ Price: **£180**
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**

You must have spotted by now that the digital watch is this year's hot fashion accessory. But to be a really hep cat, you'll no doubt want to combine the "best" in '80s styling with the highest technology – which is where the PC Unite comes in. At first glance, it's yet another '80s-styled, LCD-based, wrist-housed time-telling accessory. But wait! Look closer: it's actually a personal organiser as well, capable of storing up to 340 phone numbers, appointments or reminder notes, as well as all kinds of other trivia in its 10K memory. You can't actually enter data into the PC Unite itself, however – you'll need a desktop PC. Install the software, connect the supplied infrared adaptor, enter the data on your PC and then upload it to the PC Unite via the IR link. You can then access the information on the go via the watch's simple menu system. It's not perfect, but it does mean you can keep plenty of useful information to "hand" (sorry). ★★★★★ **Russell Deeks**

DECK IN THE BOX

MINI SYSTEMS MAKE IT BIG

The pain of buying a hi-fi has finally been ended. Today's one-box lifestyle set ups offer the convenience of a mini system with the sound quality of separates. *T3 Magazine's* Russell Deeks investigates.



XR-MD90 micro hi-fi

Available from: **Aiwa on 0990 902902** ■ Price: **£480**
Release date: **on sale now**

■ We're talking flashiness on a budget here. Comprising CD player, MiniDisc recorder and speakers, the Aiwa excels on extras, rather than sound quality, at a price that's not dissimilar to your average mini system. But how much flash do you get for your cash? Well, there's the speakers, which are in two parts so you can rotate the tweeters (the treble) separately to the woofers (the bass bins). Then there's the controls which, rather than cluttering up the front panel, hide on a little sliding tray at the bottom.

The sound quality's decent, too, and there are three play modes (Rock, Jazz and Pop). Two extra digital sound processing modes help you tweak the MD90 to your own tastes. A reasonable package for the price. ★★★

OUR CHOICE

NS-5 mini system

Available from: **Pioneer on 01753 789789** ■ Price: **£550**
Release date: **on sale now**

■ Now, how cool is that? Tiny boxes and smoked glass tops are all very well, but there's nothing that's guaranteed to tickle our fancy more than LCD panels that flip up at the touch of a button (except possibly Helen Baxendale in a maid's outfit). What's more, the NS-5 sounds great.

Comprising an integrated amp/CD/tuner and MiniDisc recorder, it's tiny, yet shouldn't distress even the fussiest of ears. There's no fancy DSP trickery, but you do get full programmability for the MD and CD decks, plus a clock, lots of station presets for the tuner and an incredibly sexy blue credit card-sized remote. Quite frankly, if you've got the dosh, it's hard to see how you can go wrong with this. ★★★★★



MR2020 Layla music centre

Available from: **Marantz on 01753 680868** ■ Price: **£500**
Release date: **on sale now**

■ If you grew up in the '70s and early '80s you should remember the phrase "music centre" with a mix of fond nostalgia and sheer horror. Just like you remember Culture Club and white towelling socks. And, like these ghosts from our past, the music centre is also making a comeback, as evidenced by this all-in-one solution from Marantz. The Layla comprises a CD player, tuner, amp and speakers, all (bar the speakers, obviously) in one striking box.

It seems, for the price, perfectly reasonable, although it does look like nothing on this Earth. And how long those flimsy little joysticks on top will last is another matter. ★★★★★



SC-HD55 mini system

Available from: **Technics on 0990 357357**
Price: **£500** ■ Release date: **on sale now**

■ Technics' set of silver boxes is distinguished from all the other sets of silver boxes out there by dint of the eerily-glowing blue lights that adorn its edges. Other than that, design-wise it's a fairly traditional, er, set of silver boxes. Five hundred smackers buys you a CD player, amp, tuner, cassette deck and speakers but, surprisingly, there's no MiniDisc option. The speakers are covered with (almost) matching blue grilles, but you can remove these if you're worried that your living room's starting to look like William Hague's boudoir.

CD programming, DSP modes and other trickery has been kept to a minimum, but the sound emerging from the SC-HD55 makes it well worth a look. ★★★★★



UD-M3 mini system

Available from: **Denon on 01753 888447**
Price: **£299** ■ Release date: **now**

■ What do you want from a hi-fi? Great looks with a cute diminutive style, fantastic sound, or a compromise between the two? If it's top quality audio you're after, then £300 isn't going to buy you a high-end CD player, amp, tuner and speakers (you'll struggle to manage with £3,000). However, if you're shopping on a budget, this Denon system's well worth a look. It's ridiculously low-priced, yet the sound quality's decent (although we avoided the DSP modes, which just tended to make matters worse). More to the point, the fact that Denon's managed to incorporate all that wizardry into a box this small (about eight by six inches, and five inches high) surely deserves some Brownie points. ★★★



HURRICANES. MUDSLIDES. WHAT KIND OF

If you've had a really bad week or month, you can always console yourself with the thought that you don't live in Central America. As if people there haven't suffered enough with Hurricane Mitch, there maybe worse to come.

Central America's escalating problems.

The hurricane has washed away three-quarters of the crops and left behind a landscape covered in mud. Most of the infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, has been swept away, so that the region faces a litany of mounting problems. The people are fighting back but they need help.

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With so many problems against them, the disaster could turn into something far worse.

Famine and disease, if left unchecked will combine to turn this crisis into a catastrophe. Food, clean water, medical supplies and basic equipment to make shelters are desperately needed.

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Everyone must realise that Central America stands on the edge of a precipice - the situation is so grave that the British magazine industry has joined forces to donate space like this one. Please make this effort work and donate what you can.

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CENTRAL AMERICA HURRICANE APPEAL

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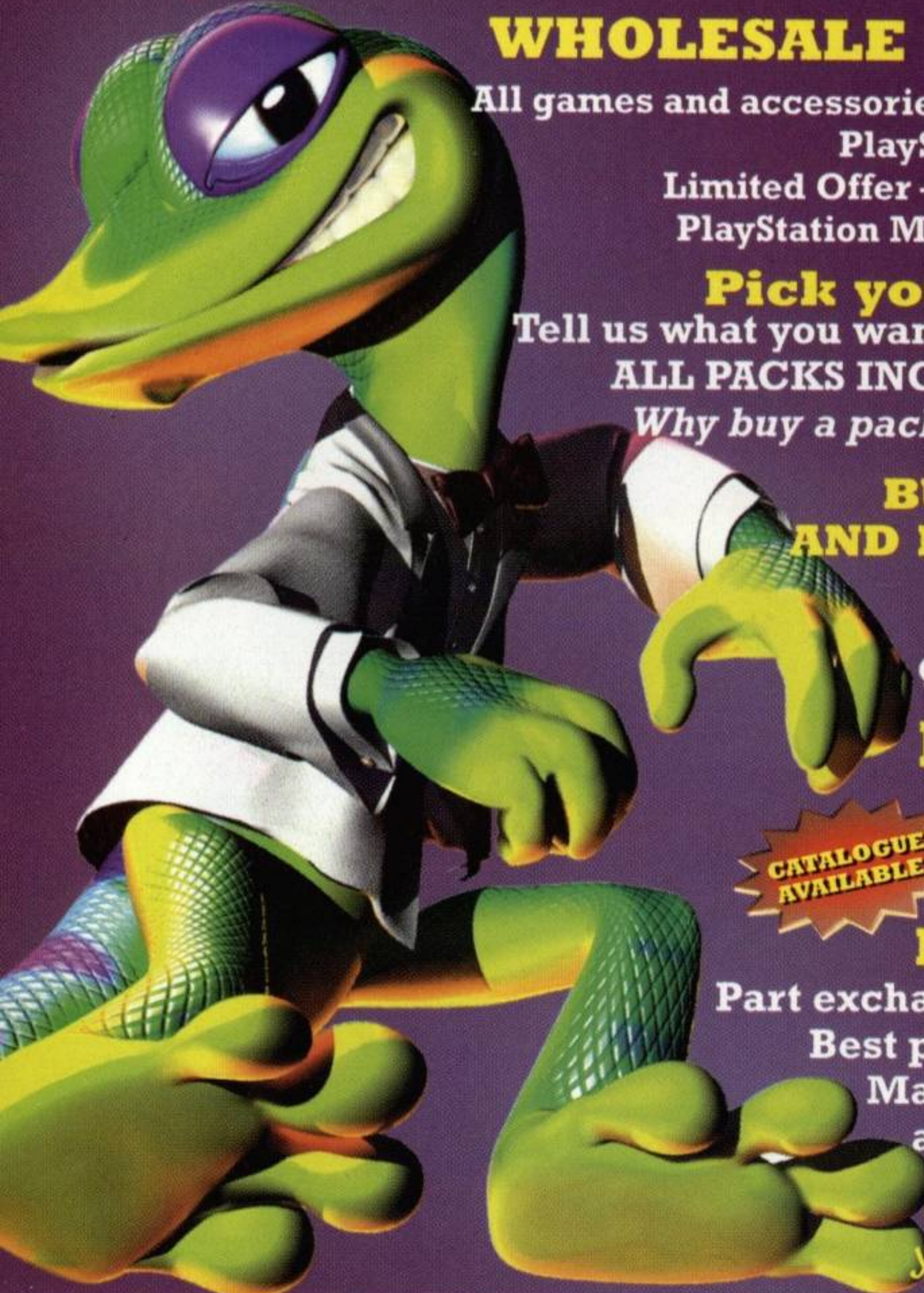
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guess who?



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competition

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YOUR
GUIDE TO OVER
380
GAMES

Edited by
Mark Green

A-list

Updated every month, the A-list is your essential videogame buyer's guide. Over the next ten pages you'll discover reviews of every videogame currently on sale in the UK. Some we heartily recommend you buy. Some are distinctly average. Some smell of wee.

Featured this month:

151 If in doubt, shoot it
We pick out the best five space shooters.



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153 Emergency!
How *GoldenEye* almost ruined Mark Green's TV-watching habits forever.



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155 Long term test
Is EA's *Fade to Black* still any good? We have a look.

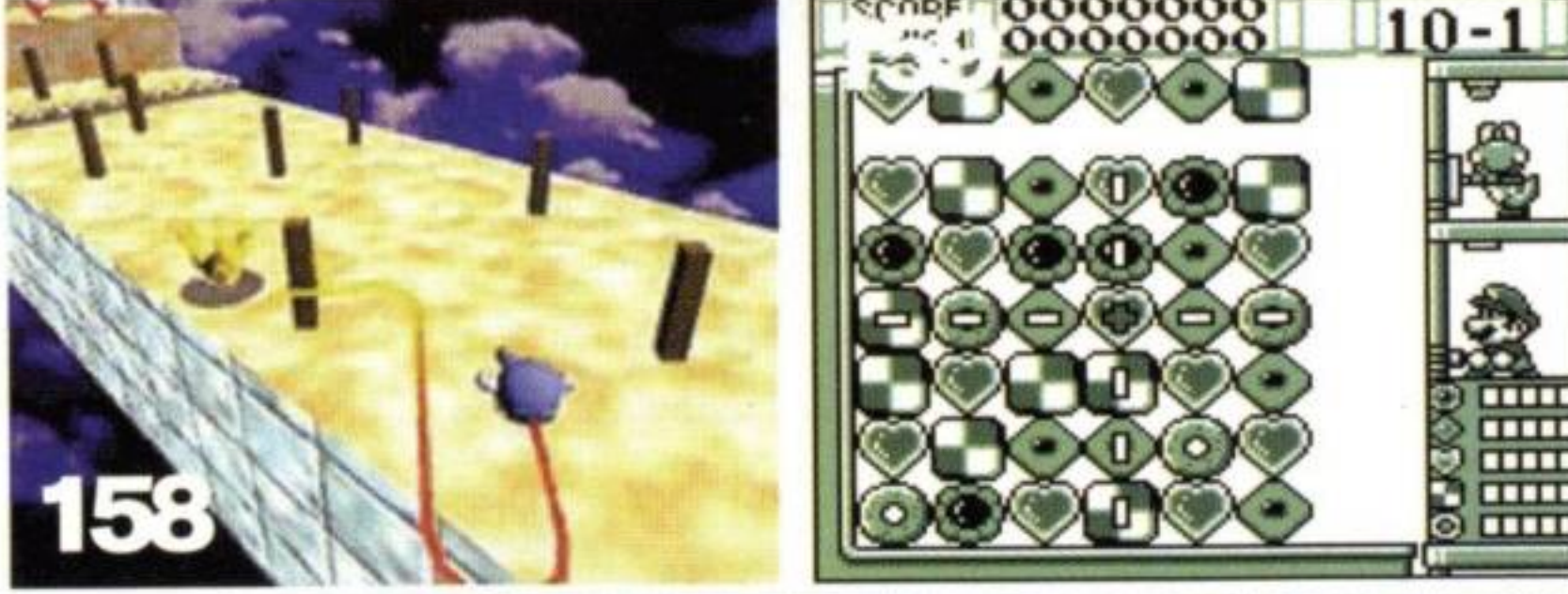


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158 Stab in the back
A well deserved kick in the nuts for *Chameleon Twist*.



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150 PlayStation
Over 160 PlayStation games reviewed and rated.

154 PC
Which PC games should you buy? We review 120 of them.

157 N64
The Top 20, plus over 55 of the best games on sale.

159 Game Boy
More than 30 games tested.

Date	Pre-Season Friendly	From
SAT 1 AUG 1998		ATALANTA
	Atalanta	Ravenna
	Friendly # 1	Attendance 24,838
	From Comunale	
Alberto Fontana	Gianluca Berti	
Massimo Carrera	Stefano Medina	
Walter Bonacina	Franco Gabrieli	
Damiano Zenoni	Nicolo Sciacca	
Andrea Soffit	Aless. Lamonic	
Fabio Gallo	Massimo Melucci	
Cristiano Doni	Paolo Agostini	
Angelo Carbone	Mariano Sotgia	
Nicola Caccia	Girolamo Bizzari	
Giacomo Banchelli	Mauro Bertarelli	
Giovanni Piacentini	Felice Centofanti	



Star ratings

- ★★★★★ Simply the best. A game you really should try.
- ★★★★ Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
- ★★★ Good stuff. Not exactly a world beater, but fine within its genre.
- ★★ Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
- ★ Really bad news. Avoid at all costs.

PlayStation Top 20

Currently flying off the shelves in games shops across the UK...

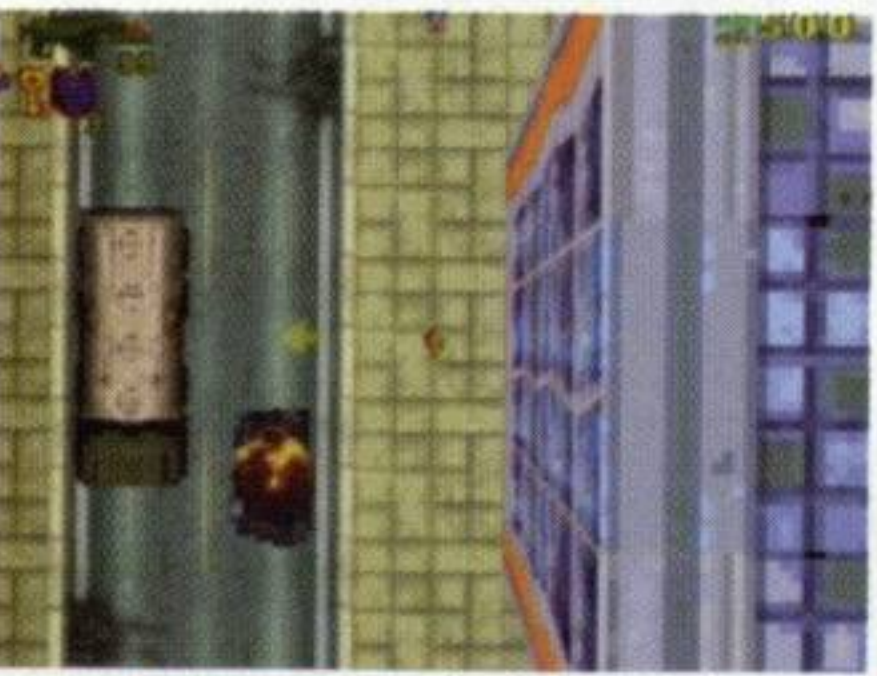


1 (1) Premier Manager '99 Gremlin
Sports management ■ 1 player **Footy management for everyone** Endorsed by Kevin Keegan, this sim features more squads than you'll be able to fit into your brain. Loads of options – including a future-proof European Super League – and good controls, but you'll need patience to be the best. ★★★★★



2 (2) FIFA '99 EA Sports
Sports ■ 1-2 players **Long-running official footy update** It has the license and the visual frills, but scoring multiple goals is too easy, and the programmers just don't seem to care about football. ★★★

3 (3) Tomb Raider Platinum
Platformer ■ 1 player **Indiana Jones joins Melinda Messenger** It was the superb level design and atmosphere that helped sell this game, with its combo of exploring, shooting and puzzling. ★★★★★

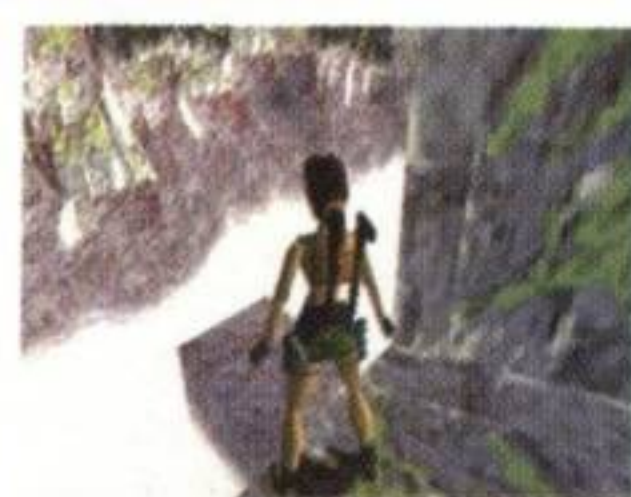


4 (4) Grand Theft Auto Platinum
Joy rider ■ 1 player **Contention ahoy!** Motor around, turn criminal and drive whatever vehicle you can pinch. Poor graphics and lack of speed ruin the enjoyment. ★★★

5 (5) Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped SCE
Platformer ■ 1 player **More marsupials** Thanks to atmospheric worlds, and a host of challenges, this round of object-collecting and speedy running pays off. ★★★★★



6 (6) TOCA Touring Car Championship Platinum
Racer ■ 1 player **Touring car mayhem** Good handling and difficulty levels single this out as one of the top rally-fests. ★★★★★



7 (7) Tomb Raider 3 EIDOS
Platformer ■ 1 player **The bitch is back** A new hi-res mode and some more well-designed, good-looking levels for gamers to peruse. ★★★★★



8 (8) Rayman Platinum
Platformer ■ 1 player **Ancient running and jumping** Cheap and very retro – it's just vertical platforming that's far too difficult. ★★



9 (14) Cool Boarders 3 SCE
Racer ■ 1-2 players **Snowy fun all over again** A hefty pile of tracks, characters and boards, looking and feeling good. ★★★★★



10 (16) Mickey's Wild Adventure Platinum
Platformer ■ 1 player **Disney action** The graphics are as good as you'd expect, but this is too basic to be fun. ★★



11 (13) V-Rally Platinum
Racer ■ 1-2 players **No-holds-barred driving** The realistic cars and physics and the number of tracks help make this addictive, infuriating, fun. ★★★★★



12 (12) Brian Lara Codemasters
Sports ■ 1-4 players **Bat-on-ball sim** Realistic, painfully hard, but surprisingly playable and well-crafted. ★★★★★



13 (11) Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus SCE
Platformer ■ 1-2 players **Agile alien fun** Wander about, save friends and solve puzzles. Infuriating, but enjoyable. ★★★★★



14 (9) Croc Platinum
Platformer ■ 1 player **Lacklustre 3D crocodile adventure** Odd camera angles and some poorly-designed levels ruin this. ★★



15 (10) Resident Evil Platinum
Action adventure ■ 1 player **Boo!** Great atmospheric zombie plot and third-person shooting and puzzles. ★★★★★



16 (18) Die Hard Trilogy Platinum
Shooter/racer ■ 1 player **Three in one** A shoot-'em-up, a shooting gallery and a driving game. Will last ages. ★★★★★



17 (15) Jurassic Park: The Lost World Platinum
Platformer ■ 1 player **Dino Spiel** Control your dino trudging across a dull 2D landscape. ★★



18 (17) Spyro The Dragon SCE
Platformer ■ 1 player **Camp dino romp** Gorgeous – and massive – 3D fun aimed at the kids, but still well-crafted. ★★★★★



19 (-) Time Crisis Platinum
Shooter ■ 1 player **Go for your G-Con** Travel along a fixed path and kill lots of men. Exciting, bloody and very smooth. ★★★★★



20 (19) Tekken 2 Platinum
Fighter ■ 1-2 players **Round two... fight!** Engrossing one player and plenty of action to get your teeth into. ★★★★★

AND THE REST...

2Xtreme
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ SCE **Extreme sports sim** Horrible snow-based sports. ★
Or try: Nagano Winter Olympics ■ 1 player ■ Konami ■ Boring icy events ★

Ace Combat 2
■ Flight sim ■ 1 player ■ Namco **Aeroplane antics** Your chance to fly a mechanical sky-bird on a series of combat missions. Fun for a while, but liable to bore you quickly. ★★
Or try: Air Combat ■ 1 player ■ Namco ■ Equally uninteresting aero antics. ★★

Actua Golf 3
■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin **Time for tee** Eight courses, a variety of one-player and multi-player tournaments, and some lovingly crafted scenery. It doesn't offer anything new, but its slickness and Peter Allis' wonderful commentary brings it in well under par. ★★★★★

Actua Ice Hockey
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin **Minority sport for psychos** Surprisingly slow and unresponsive, but its saving grace is its easy-to-pick-up control system. ★★

Actua Soccer 3
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin **Pigs bladder kick-a-thon** Pleasingly difficult and wonderfully fluid, producing play that flows like a well-oiled Brazilian back-four. Let down by occasionally ropey animation, but otherwise a solid – if largely unimproved – sequel. ★★★★★

Adidas Power Soccer '98
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis **Simple, speedy, silly** Ludicrously fast-paced, ropery graphics, and some very unpredictable keepers. ★★

Akuji The Heartless
■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS **Voodoo-inspired puzzler** A creepier Tomb Raider-style romp with switch-pushing and ledge-jumping. Plenty of graphical wizardry, but tediously simple. ★★

Alien Trilogy
■ First-person shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim ■ Platinum **Lost in space with Ripley and "friends"** Monotonous, with aliens who look like they might fall apart at any minute. ★★

All Star Tennis '99
■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Ubisoft **Serious recreation of Henman's hobby** Fast and comprehensive, but the rather inadequate camera makes things difficult. Stick to the multi-player and "bomb tennis" sub-game. ★★

Alundra
■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Psygnosis **Utterly puzzly adventuring** An absorbing plot married with an enticing arcade feel. The emphasis is as much on moving and jumping about as solving difficult, but logical, puzzles. It's so addictive you'll miss your hairdressing appointment. ★★★★★

Apocalypse
■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ Activision **Bruce Willis and some guns** A big, bold, futuristic shoot-'em-up experience, with a decent learning curve and not too many puzzles to interrupt the action. Solid, violent fun. ★★★★★

WATCH OUT FOR

Expect these games to break into the charts any day now.



Metal Gear Solid
■ Sneaker ■ 1 player ■ SCE **The best PlayStation game ever?** Sneak around and avoid detection rather than blasting everything in sight. It looks great, it's a brilliant new idea and, despite the end screen coming around too quickly, you'll adore every single minute. A must-buy. ★★★★★



4 PlayStation Multipack
■ Compilation ■ 1 player **Acclaim Charity quartet** Independence Day, Thunderstrike 2, Actua Soccer CE and Overboard! in one package. Worth the money, especially as that money's for charity, but don't expect too much for your dosh. ★★



Viva Football
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin **Pinball soccer** Utilises an interesting powerbar system, giving you complete control with just a little practice. But almost too damn fast, and the 'keepers and control system are awful. ★★



X Games Pro Boarders
■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ SCE **Snowboard multi-eventer** Nine different events, but too slow and too tricky. ★★



Eliminator
■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis **Hover-ship shooting.** Annoying and badly designed, with nightmarish controls. ★

Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection 2

■ Retro ■ 1-4 players
■ Midway **Retro compilation** *Millipede, Road Blasters, Paperboy, Crystal Castles, Marble Madness and Gauntlet*, but none of them holds up well in an age when you need massive breasts to become a gaming legend. ★★★

Asteroids

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ Syrox **Shoot rocks, fly, shoot...** The original concept hasn't changed, but power-ups and eye-torturing effects make it enjoyable – if repetitive and dated – for '90s kids. ★★★

Ayrton Senna Kart Duel 2

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Sunsoft **Dead bloke driving** Short-lived tedium. ★

B-Movie

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ GT **Interactive '50s-style shoot-the-aliens game** An amusing 3D shoot-'em-up with a mission-based slant and cartoony alien ships flying about. Odd controls and a high difficulty level ensure frustration. ★★★

Batman & Robin

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
■ Acclaim **As good as the film** A hotch-potch of puzzly nonsense. ★

Battle Arena Toshinden

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ SCEE **The PSX's first beat-'em-up** Looking dated, but an enjoyable (if rather limited) fighter nonetheless, especially at its Platinum price. ★★★

Battle Arena Toshinden 3

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ SCEE **Crazy old men still fighting** A high for this beat-'em-up series, but despite improvements on episode 2, it's still eclipsed by *Tekken*. ★★★

Blasto

■ Third-person platformer ■ 1 player ■ SCEE **Broad-shouldered babe-rescuing** Limited – both graphically and gameplay-wise – and difficult for all the wrong reasons. ★★★

Bloody Roar

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Hudson **Animal magic** A lack of moves, but those that you do get are quick and smooth, with fighters that can change into beastly forms. ★★★

Bomberman World

■ Puzzler ■ 1-5 players
■ Sony/Hudsonsoft **Bomb-chucking maze game** The isometric 3D version of this classic is tedious and unoriginal in one-player mode, but – thankfully – as addictive as ever in multi-player battle mode. ★★★

Breath of Fire III

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Virgin **Turn-based isometric role-player** Mill about a pseudo-3D landscape, chatting to people and solving puzzles. A genuinely interesting story (you must combine genes to give dragons special powers) makes this involving, if a little slow. ★★★★★

Broken Sword 2

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
■ SCEE **Crime-solving antics** Point-and-click to solve the mystery. This often descends into over-long conversations, but it's still unexpectedly interesting and amusing. ★★★★★

Bubble Bobble/Rainbow Islands

■ Retro collection ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE **Old-skool platforming** These jumpy multi-screen action games starring Bub and Bob don't stand up well today against blue hedgehogs and Italian plumbers. ★★★
Or try: **Bubble Bobble 2** ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin ■ Bubbly sequel. ★★★

Burning Road

■ Racer ■ 1 player
■ Sunsoft **Attempt at racing** With the camera sitting almost directly above the car, this one's stalled on the grid. ★★

Bushido Blade

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ SCEE **Pugilism for purists** Using trad weapons, and with characters who drop to the floor after just one hit, this is the beat-'em-up for purists. Once you've played other, more cartoony, scrappers it takes time to adjust to fighting this way, but there are rewards a-plenty if you persevere. ★★★★★

Bust-A-Move 4

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ Taito **Bubble-bursting brilliance** A fantastically addictive puzzle game, where the simple – yet infuriating – aim is to match coloured bubbles. It's as easy to pick up and painfully compulsive as previous versions. The bubble-link feature makes for faster and more frenetic play, and the story mode levels add some novel bits, too. Don't bother if you already own an earlier version, though. ★★★★★
Or try: **Bust-A-Move 2** ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim ■ You'll forget sleep exists! ★★★★★

Casper

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ SCEE **Movie tie-in** Transparently bad. ★

Castlevania

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Konami **Old platform game strand returns** Retro-style platformer that sacrifices graphics (which are often terrible) for size. Takes a bit of time to get going, but it's involving, exciting and addictive. And no cute Italian plumbers. ★★★★★

Chessmaster 3D

■ Puzzler ■ 1 player
■ Mindscape **The only choice for chess fans** A tad more expensive than a real chess board and not brilliantly presented, but it's laden with a plentiful supply of features and types of game. ★★★

Circuit Breakers

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Mindscape **Fine comedy racer** Race as fast as your little wheels can carry you, firing off missiles at your opponents. The varied courses and speed help no end, and the multi-player game will have you waking the neighbours with your boisterous swearing. ★★★★★

Colin McRae Rally

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ Codemasters **Only his Mum's ever heard of him** A departure from the usual racing game, as your rally car rattles around countryside tracks with time and damage your only opponents. The variety of terrain and responsive controls give real driving feedback. ★★★★★

Colony Wars: Vengeance

■ Space shooter ■ 1 player
■ Psygnosis **Epic space battles** Looking gorgeous, this sequel takes you and your spaceship through a variety of first-person missions and all-out explosive battles. It's off-puttingly methodical, but there's enough realism to make *Star Wars* fans wet their pants. ★★★★★

Command & Conquer

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
■ Virgin ■ Platinum **The original real-time strategy** A complicated but accessible point-and-click war sim, where it's up to the player to manage all their resources and decide where and when to send men to their deaths. It's extremely popular, solid and involving but, sadly, it's also starting to date. The design of the levels and speed of the action make it a bit of a barg, though, so we advise you to get it in. ★★★★★

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players
■ Virgin **And again...** The sequel to the above has a number of improvements, including better graphics and a brilliant, often neglected link-up game. If you don't come to the massacre with a mouse, then knock a star off the score for the difficulty you'll have controlling your tiny warriors, but otherwise this is a fine strategy title with loads of missions. ★★★★★

Constructor

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
■ Acclaim **Build an urban empire** Pointing and clicking to build up houses while keeping your tenants happy is comfortingly challenging, and you have a host of interesting enemies, rivals and mad hippie-types to contend with. Complex, comprehensive and cool. ★★★★★

Crash Bandicoot 2

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ SCEE **Pseudo-3D antics, again** Control a mad marsupial as he runs into the screen, collecting apples and avoiding the bad guys. The linear level format and ease of the levels don't help. ★★★

Crime Killer

■ Racer/shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ Interplay **Fuzz of the future** Hunt "Burning Epoch" terrorists using armed bikes, cars and wings. It's fast, with good graphics, but its difficulty veers drunkenly. ★★★

Dead Ball Zone

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ GT **Interactive Rugby for space-age sadists** Metallic-suited individuals tackle each other and occasionally throw a ball into the goal. Violent, difficult and the speed comes at the expense of smooth play. ★★★

Dead or Alive

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ SCEE **Slick beat-'em-up** Barren-looking, but with quick-as-you-like visuals, this is a slick deviation from *Tekken*-style fighting, with its clever use of counter-attacks and emphasis on grabbing your adversary and throwing him up into the heavens. Avoid the "bouncing breasts" option. ★★★★★

Destruction Derby

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Psygnosis ■ Platinum **Early PSX racing** Poorly designed tracks and little fun. ★★

Destruction Derby 2

■ Racer ■ 1 player
■ Psygnosis ■ Platinum **Smashing racing sequel** Your opponents are happiest when slamming into your backside and reaching the finish without your car falling apart is an achievement. Making good on almost all of the faults of the original, this sequel is incredibly fast, includes varied well-designed tracks, and offers more crashes than your average PC. And it's only 20 quid, too. ★★★★★

Devil Dice

■ Puzzler ■ 1-5 players
■ SCEE **Cuboidal conundrum** This beautifully presented 3D dice-based version of dominoes isn't for the casual gamer, but it's tough to put down once you get your head around the astonishing speed of the thing and the utterly soul-numbing creepiness of the evil pixie characters. ★★★★★

Diablo

■ RPG ■ 1-2 players ■ EA **Medieval role-playing** Unimaginative wandering around, fighting and chatting. Dull. ★★

Dodgem Arena

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Project Two **Pucking average** A battle to collect pucks and fire them off at hovering goal-mouths. Fast, but tedious. ★★

Doom

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ GT **Interactive in the beginning...** Superb conversion of id's breakthrough first-person shooter. Just in case you've been wearing a blindfold for the last few years, *Doom* features your squaddie traipsing through futuristic dungeons, making bloody holes in whoever he meets. The fact that the graphics are years out of date merely enables the excellent level design and gameplay to shine. ★★★★★

Duke Nukem

■ Shooter ■ 1 player
■ GT **Interactive "You want some?"** An outrageously bad-taste first-person shooter, starring a crazed psychopath and numerous topless lovelies. Strong gameplay and with levels that are ingeniously designed around real-life locales, but looking dated already. ★★★★★

Everybody's Golf

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ SCEE **Cartoon-style stick-and-ball antics** Simplistic looks but complex gameplay, with an arcade slant that injects a welcome burst of speed. Great if you don't take your golf too seriously. And who does, apart from that Faldo chappy? For more details turn to page 152. ★★★★★

Fantastic Four

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Acclaim **Scrolling beat-'em-up** Badly put-together. ★

Final Doom

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ GT **Interactive The original returns** Loads of new levels, but what's the point? ★★

Final Fantasy VII

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ SCEE **150 hours of epic adventure** Takes the usual RPG staples (moving around a landscape, chatting to locals, solving puzzles) and tarts them up with cut-scenes that mix seamlessly with the moving characters, exciting conflicts and a story that will have you emotionally involved. Even the linear plot and apparently random battles can't mar this near-perfect adventure experience. ★★★★★

FIVE OF THE BEST

Blow it up!

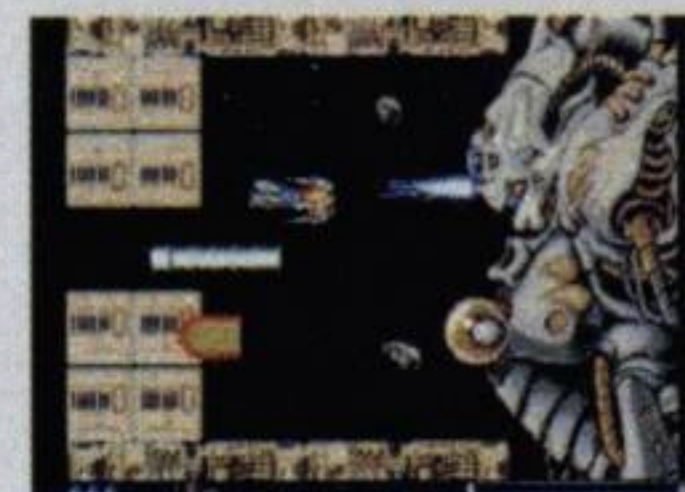
"Wanted: Plucky heroes to battle evil aliens". Are you ready for the best space shoot-'em-ups ever?



1. Lylat Wars

■ N64 ■ Nintendo

If you're sick of *Virtual Foxes* (page 40), then try a real one on for size. Fox McCloud and his motley band of hairy heroes zoom off into space to take on the evil Andross in this 3D gun-battling extravaganza. Boasting fluid, colourful visuals and some of that indescribable Nintendo Special Formula, it's a blast.



2. R-Types

■ PlayStation ■ Irem

Irem's pure 2D shoot-'em-up series has been sprinting its way past competitors for about 15 years now, and you only need to sit with this retro compilation of episodes one and two for a few minutes to see why. The games are all polished, neatly crafted and – most importantly – packed full of things to test your lasers on.



3. X-wing Vs Tie Fighter

■ PC ■ LucasArts

If you're a *Star Wars* fan, you would no doubt relish the opportunity to climb into any the trilogy's spacecraft and kick the Death Star's butt. Well this is exactly what's on offer here, with every *Star Wars* battle splendidly realised. But do you really feel the urge to stuff more of your coins into George Lucas's bulging pockets?



4. Conflict: Freespace

■ PC ■ Interplay

Nicks bits from every similar space combat game that's appeared since 1982, but it is breath-takingly comprehensive and packed jam-full of brilliantly-designed craft. Interestingly, your success (or failure) in missions influences the difficulty of your future tasks and objectives, each of which is split into easy-to-digest chunks. Tasty.



5. Colony Wars: Vengeance

■ PlayStation ■ Psygnosis

Very irritating at first, as multiple flying space crates pump bullets into your ship and end your life with depressing frequency. However, the visuals will keep tempting you, and you'll come to realise that this is a particularly enjoyable intergalactic blast.

Hidden Gem | An unsung PlayStation hero.

Everybody's Golf

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ SCEE



For golfers who want to come in from the cold

The beauty of Sony's interpretation of golf is that it doesn't take itself seriously. While real-life golf fans wear stupid hats and turn their noses up at commoners, *Everybody's Golf* drops a group of animé-style kids in the starring role and screams "Nice Shot!" in screen-high letters when you pull off the perfect putt.

Despite this, the accuracy of the simulation itself isn't sacrificed, with your characters able to slice, hook, spin and curl to their heart's content, over a range of brilliant courses. It's a shame that the over-used powerbar system is included in such an original game, but it's still considerably more fun than freezing your bits off on a barren hill. ★★★★★

Formula 1 '97

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ **Psygnosis Vrooom...** A much-needed follow up to the original simulation of Damon Hill's least favourite pastime. All the stats are there, along with increased responsiveness and more realistic opposition. The two-player mode lets it down. ★★★★★

Formula 1 '98

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ **Psygnosis Purportedly accurate driving sim** Inadequate views and horrendous handling. Into the bin with it. ★★

Forsaken

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ **Acclaim Blast bikers** Battle to the death in a scramble to gain the last resources of a condemned planet in this tough tunnel-and-hovercraft based shoot-'em-up. The controls are tricky, but the look of the thing will keep you persevering through its moodily lit corridors. ★★★★★

Frogger

■ Retro ■ 1 player ■ **JMI Update of early game** You're a frog. Cross the road. Dull. ★★

G-Police

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ **Psygnosis You are the law** A mission-based shoot-'em-up, set in a series of domed cities. As you guide your future cop around in his fancy spacecraft, sending crims packing, it's initially as easy to control as a three-year-old in a supermarket. But, stick with it, and a compulsive experience emerges, especially as it manages to slip some strategy elements in while you're not looking. ★★★★★

Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Take 2 Lizard-lover's platformer** It's after *Mario's* crown, but Gex's running, jumping and collecting exploits don't feel as free-roaming as the Big M. Still, the level design almost matches Nintendo's, and there are 125 moves at your disposal. ★★★★★

Global Domination

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
■ **Psygnosis Brain-drain wargame** Protect the world from global threats. Difficult to get to grips with, but it's ultimately satisfying and looks great. ★★★★★

Gran Turismo

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE
■ **Probably the best racing game in the world** Take one measure of outrageously good graphics, another of near-perfect handling, throw in a pinch of immediacy of play and limitless levels of depth, add a dash of replay mode, and you've the recipe for an unmissable pleasure pie. Sony has packed its little black disc with a hefty number of vehicles and courses and made sure it all plays perfectly. A masterpiece, and likely only to be bettered by the sequel. ★★★★★

The Granstream Saga

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ SCEE
■ **Pedestrian role-player** A promising plot that reveals a set of obvious and simplistic puzzles. ★★

Heart of Darkness

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Ocean Long-awaited 2D adventure** A Gallic 2D platforming epic about a boy and his dog. Frustratingly difficult and descends into trial-and-error far too often. ★★★★★

Hercules

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **SCEE Cute-as-a-button mythology** Disney's difficult, tedious and clichéd 2D running and jumping. ★★

Invasion

■ Shooter ■ 1 player
■ **Microids Back-to-basics** Shooting aliens over a series of missions has never been so totally forgettable. ★★

ISS Pro '98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ **Konami The best football game in the world** Konami sticks one up its desperate licence-toting rivals by beautifully honing its original killer title. Playability is smoother, tactics more subtle, graphics more well realised, goal-scoring more rewarding and that through-pass will send shivers of ecstasy along your spine. And Tony Gubba's commentary is oddly soothing. ★★★★★

Jeremy McGrath Super Cross '98

■ Racer ■ 1 player ■ **Acclaim On your bike** Very fast, but too easy and with little sense of realism. Track editor included. ★★

Kensei

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ **Konami Block-rocking beat-'em-up** Less flash than *Tekken*, but the range of characters and depth of play makes this admirably comprehensive. The visuals and humour are lacking, but with challenges a-plenty and opponents who actually learn, who's complaining? ★★★★★

Klonoa

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Namco Cutesy dog jumpery** An incredibly well-designed and intuitive platformer that would be up there with *Mario* if you didn't complete it far too quickly. More involving than your average platform game. ★★★★★

Knockout Kings

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ EA
■ **Sports Boxing very clever** A simulation of punch-uppery, with a powerbar system to make sure you don't just stab the "Hit" button until your opponent falls. Plenty of modes, a create-a-player section and the chance to meet a virtual Muhammed Ali. Cripes! ★★★★★

Kula World

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ **SCEE Indecently addictive puzzler** Ball-rolling-impossibly-on-a-floating-maze game. As head-bending as it sounds, but once you're sucked in you'll be hooked, thanks to the well-designed controls and ingeniously tricky levels. ★★★★★

Lemmings Compilation

■ Puzzler ■ 1 player
■ **Psygnosis Multiple midget mayhem** Click on little men to help them avoid traps and get safely home and scream at the screen in frustration. All a bit dated these days. ★★

Libero Grande

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ **Namco Original footy sim** Control just one player for the duration of an entire match. Glitchy and tedious. ★★

Loaded

■ Shooter ■ 1 player
■ **Gremlin Platinum Mass murder quest** This bloke-bloodbath is nothing more than a boringly mindless shooter. ★★

Lucky Luke

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Ocean Cowboy adventure** A platformer that treads into other genres with its bonus games. This is one for the kids. ★★

Max Power Racing

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ **Infogrames Fun boy free-wheeling** Fancy graphics can't save this driver from its over-long tracks and finger-denching difficulty. ★★

Megaman 8

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Ocean Platforming - Japanese style** Boring. ★

Megaman Legends RPG

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ **Virgin Flavour of Japan** The long-awaited 3D update of Megaman's '80s platform/shooting adventures. The RPG element provides depth, but the repetitive big robot shooting could put you off. ★★

Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ **EIDOS Not taking the Michael** Ooh, this looks bad, with players skating around the pitch like Torville and Dean. However, you'd be hard pushed to fault *WLS '99* in any other direction, because it plays like a dream. The finest details of footy have been recreated with the Liverpoolian Boy Wonder in a starring role, and the intuitive controls, sexy combos and realistic difficulty level make this a fine interpretation. ★★★★★

Micro Machines v3

■ Racer ■ 1-8 players
■ **Codemasters Platinum Tiny cars race around your living room** The old top-down 2D game souped up into pseudo-3D for a modern audience, and it's a beauty. There are 30 innovative courses, based on kitchen tables and school desks, coupled with a perfect overhead camera and a multi-player game that's as beautifully designed as Philipa Forrester. And all for just 20 quid? We must be dreaming. ★★★★★

Monkey Hero

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ **Take 2 Adventuring monkey magic** Role-playing, fighting and puzzling huddled together, but with far too much switch-flipping and object-moving. ★★

Mortal Kombat 4

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive "Come and 'ave a go if you think..."** Although in 3D, this bloody fighter fails to take advantage of the extra dimension. After ten years, the controls and characters are getting staid. ★★
Or try: **Mortal Kombat Trilogy** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive** ■ Everything from the previous three. ★★

Music: Music Creation for the PlayStation

■ Music creation ■ 1 player
■ **Codemasters Custom-build your own techno** Create your own toons by manipulating little chunks of music and pictures. Too difficult for novices and too insulting for pros. ★★
Or try: **Fluid** ■ 1 player ■ SCEE
■ **Interactive aquatic music**. ★★

Nascar '98

■ Racer ■ 1 player ■ EA
■ **American racing** Pitifully dull tracks, as befits the sport itself, but the speed and computer opponents are passable. There are better racers. ★★

NBA Live 99

■ Sports ■ 1-8 players ■ EA
■ **Sports That's a slam-dunk!** Silky motion capture, proper gurning faces, and Simulation and Arcade modes that should satisfy proper basketball fans and normal people alike. Rodman fans should be happy with the cornucopia of stats and the create-a-player mode. ★★★★★

Need for Speed 3

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ EA
■ **Sports I feel the need...** Plenty of modes to make the game last longer, great graphics and a good sense of speed. The chance to leg it from the police and the two-player mode make this the best *NFS* so far, but like so many others it's been overtaken on the inside by *Gran Turismo*. ★★★★★

Newman Haas Racing

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ **Psygnosis F1 jostling** Well-designed tracks and a nice looker, but very jerky and too easy. ★★

NFL Blitz

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ **GT Interactive US footy simplified and made fun** Abandoning the usual American football style (overloading on rules and stopping for a rest every other minute) and moving to something more worthwhile (emphasis on speed, simple controls, usage of fists), this is top fun. ★★★★★

NHL 99

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ **EA Ice hockey for mother puckers** Too many goals, too little action. Disappointing. ★★
Or try: **NHL Powerplay '98** ■ 1-2 players ■ **Virgin** ■ **Sturdy but slow**. ★★

Ninja: Shadow of Darkness

■ Action adventure ■ 1 player
■ **EIDOS Here comes the man in black** Another third-person wanderer, with a great range of punches, kicks and magic. Enjoyable, but too difficult and with an odd camera system. ★★

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus

■ Platformer ■ 1-2 players
■ **GT Interactive Puzzly platform game with agile alien** Wander through 2D screens and rescue your friends, solving puzzles along the way. Often infuriating rather than tricky, but its neat touches and marvellous graphics make it a long-lasting and enjoyable challenge. ★★★★★

ODT

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Psygnosis Disappointing third-person adventure** A *Tomb Raider* clone, ruined by dreadful controls and perverse difficulty. ★★

Pandemonium 2

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **BMG Interactive It's chaos in there** Pseudo-3D platforming with a fixed path, and nothing to challenge you. ★★
Or try: **The Lost World** ■ 1 player ■ EA ■ **Dino death-dealing**. ★★

PaRappa the Rapper

■ Rapper ■ 1 player ■ SCEE
■ **Puppy love songs** It's time for you to join the rapping dog with "attitude". A selection of fantastic tunes make this brilliantly funny and completely original. You'll finish it in an afternoon, but it's still something you should have tons of fun with. ★★★★★

Phat Air Racer

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ **Funsoft Downhill all the way** The controls are all over the place and the graphics are awful. Give it a miss. ★★

Point Blank

■ Light-gun shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ **Namco Grab your gun** Only the Japanese could create a shooting gallery featuring ninjas and piranhas, stick in a four-player mode and still ensure that it has the most weirdly addictive gameplay ever. Get your mates and some beer round, and laugh your socks off. ★★★★★

Pool Hustler

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ **Sunsoft Simming pool** Challenging and comprehensive, with faithful physics and a plethora of game styles to try your hand at, but it lacks atmosphere, and there's something about pool that means it never makes for videogame fun. ★★
Or try: **Pool Shark** ■ 1-2 player
■ **Gremlin** ■ A game "baized" on the popular sport. ★★

Psybadek

■ Platformer/racer
■ 1 player ■ **Psygnosis Cute snowboardy stuff** Platforming and snowboarding mixed together. Difficult and pointless. ★★

Rapid Racer

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE
■ **Powerboat racing** The random track generator is a nice inclusion, and the hi-res visuals are great, but the handling and lack of realism scupper it. ★★

Rage Racer

■ Racer ■ 1 player ■ **Namco Arcade racing in your house** The third in the *Ridge Racer* series is speedy, moodily good looking and option-laden. This is the definitive racer if you like your cars a bit more "Woa, woah, woaaaaahhh!" than *Gran Turismo*, with powersliding and rocketing down straights at 100mph par for the course. Let down only by the lack of a split-screen option, but the link-up mode more than makes up for that. Soon to be surpassed by *R4*, due out for PlayStation in April. ★★★★★
Or try: **Ridge Racer Revolution** ■ 1-2 players
■ **Namco** ■ **Platinum** ■ **Fast car action**. ★★★★★

Rally Cross 2

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE
■ **Off-road racing** Three cars and three types of terrain. Too many crashes and awful handling. ★★

Rascal

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Psygnosis Cute kid antics** A big heap of ill-advised running and jumping. ★★

Rampage World Tour

■ Smasher ■ 1 player ■ **GT Interactive Old-skool bizarre building-smasher** "Be" Godzilla and have no fun. ★

Resident Evil 2

■ Action adventure
■ 1 player ■ **Capcom Scary sequel to the original gore-fest** The ability to control two characters is gimmicky, and the puzzles are similar to the first incarnation, but *RE2* is better than the original in all other respects. The improved script and acting (and the wildly increased zombie count) will scare your skin off, and the cut-scenes, once again, are the highlight of a polished and creepy package that will have you scared to be alone at night. ★★★★★

Rival Schools

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Virgin Teachers and students take to the ring**
 Absolutely mad *Grange Hill*-style fighter, with over-the-top moves and a huge selection of modes and sub-games. Not technically great, but it's a whole heap of fun, thanks to its pleasingly easy-to-pull-off moves. ★★★★★

Road Rash 3D

■ **Racer** ■ 1-6 players ■ **EA Manx TT meets WWF**
 A racer for people who like the look of bruises on a man, but this bizarre combination of racing and smacking other riders doesn't balance too well. ★★★

R-Types

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Virgin Classic scrolling**
R-Type parts one and two; emulated rather than converted, and therefore closer than dose to the originals. Lovely level designs, perfect power-ups and unbridled addictiveness, squeezed into your little portable TV. ★★★★★

Rushdown

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 player
 ■ **Infogrames Rubbish racing**
 Three types of downhill vehicle races. Forgettable. ★

S.C.A.R.S

■ **Racer** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Ubisoft Cute racer**
 A faithful attempt at a less serious *Mario Kart* clone, but lacking immediacy. The difficult control system rewards patience, but the multi-player game disappoints. ★★★

Small Soldiers

■ **Platformer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **EA Movie-based tin-men exploits**
 Decent-looking and well-crafted, but this third-person shooter just isn't fun. ★★

Sentinel Returns

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Psygnosis Classic '80s tactics**
 Absorb the Sentinel, who sits on the highest point on the 3D chequerboard landscape. A successful retro update at long last, with the graphics kept deliberately low key to maintain the feel of the original. ★★★★★

Sensible Soccer: European Club Edition

■ **Sports** ■ 1-2 players ■ **GT Interactive Old-skool soccer updated**
 Tedious footy, where shooting and passing are toe-curlingly difficult. ★★

Shanghai: True Valor

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Activision Snap drag-on**
 Awful Chinese matching pairs-style game. ★

Skull Monkeys

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **EA Nostalgic platformer**
 Beautiful graphics that move around quickly, but this is really just a re-creation of retro 2D platformer *Earthworm Jim*. Possibly one for the kids, especially considering its incredibly bad jokes. ★★★★★
 Or try: *Earthworm Jim 2* ■ 1 player ■ Virgin ■ Wormy wonder. ★★

Soul Blade

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Platinum Big sword fest**
 Replacing the fist-bleeding fights of *Tekken* with weapon-clattering scraps steeped in folklore, this caters for the all-round gamer. The moves are more easily pulled-off than in *Tekken*, but it still offers some of the fastest, most beautiful beat-'em-up action on the PlayStation. Top fun for very little money. ★★★★★

Spawn: The Eternal

■ **Action** ■ 1 player ■ **SCEE Movie-based nonsense**
 Similar to the adventures of a certain Ms Lara Croft. Rubbish. ★

Spice World

■ **Music/dancing** ■ 1 player
 ■ **SCEE Platinum The fab five... er, four**
 Choreograph cartoon Spices to grating music. ★

Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Capcom Another in the beat-'em-up series**
 Conversion of the first 3D SF coin-op, with loads of extra bits chucked in. Excellent speed and good backgrounds, as well the pleasingly familiar moves and style, make it every bit as intuitive as its great predecessors. ★★★★★
 Or try: *Street Fighter Collection* ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin ■ Missed opportunity for a history lesson. ★★

Super Motor Cross

■ **Racer** ■ 1 player ■ **Acclaim Motorbike madness**
 Horrible courses and far too easy. ★

Super Pang

■ **Retro** ■ 1 player ■ **Ocean Age-old bubble buster returns**
 A classic idea – break bubbles into smaller and smaller ones until they disappear – and its simplicity hides addictive, “one-more-go” gameplay. ★★

Super Puzzle Fighter II

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Virgin Superb Tetris-style puzzling**
 Mix *Tetris* and *Bust-A-Move*, add some *Street Fighter* kiddie characters and you have one of the best puzzlers of all time, with successful moves affecting an on-screen battle. It's insanely addictive in two-player mode, but try one-player and you'll have the family banging on your bedroom door, wondering where on Earth you've been for the past month. ★★★★★

Syndicate Wars

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ **EA Moody violence**
 A darkly atmospheric strategic shoot-'em-up, which is showing its age. It's still enjoyable and engrossing, but you have little excuse not to go and buy *Command & Conquer* instead. ★★

Tekken

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Namco Round one... fight**
 This may have been usurped by its progeny, but the first *Tekken* combines slick visuals with a series of moves that would have your mother fainting on the floor. Plenty to do in one-player, and only surpassed in two-player by its sequels. ★★★★★

Tekken 3

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Namco Round Thr... oh, never mind**
 Here they are again. A major improvement to the prequels in almost every way – graphically flawless and the new moves add something for both newcomers and veterans. A wide variety of sub-games, bonuses and hidden characters, as well as a frightening difficulty level, means there's so much to do that it's almost the *Mario* of fighting games. But without the cute stuff, obviously. ★★★★★

Tenchu

■ **Fighter** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Activision Lara Croft and the oriental arts combine**
 Starring a bloke who gets about with the aid of a grappling hook, this hugely atmospheric kung-fu fighting/exploring game could have been a five-star affair were it not for the glitchy graphics and annoying camera. ★★★★★

Tiger Woods '99 PGA Tour Golf

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **EA Sports Decent fore-play**
 Easy to pick up and with lots of eye-pleasing real-life courses, *PGA Tour Golf* delivers a realistic, option-heavy simulation of the game with the grass. The mechanics of play leave a little to be desired, but it's still worth your rearies. ★★★★★

TOCA 2

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 player
 ■ **Codemasters Yet more touring car mayhem**
 A garage-full of cars that all handle differently and embrace accurate driving physics. If it wasn't for its intense difficulty, this would be the perfect racer, with accurate courses and speed, and a smoothness that's scary. ★★★★★

Tombi

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **SCEE Porcine platform power**
 Some welcome RPG elements, and innovative tasks to carry out add to the enjoyment in this old-school 2D platformer, which relies on secrets and level design to carry it through. ★★

Tommi Makinen Rally

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Europress Colin McRae rival**
 Plenty of tracks (130) and the option to create even more of your own, but still beaten to the flag by the competition. ★★

Total NBA '98

■ **Sports** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **SCEE Get in the hoop**
 A sim that requires determination to both learn and succeed, thanks to intelligent computer-controlled opponents. A create-a-player mode, a whole range of options and total control over your players makes it addictive and surprisingly beautiful to watch. ★★★★★

Treasures of the Deep

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player
 ■ **SCEE Underwater exploration**
 The lack of levels is compensated for by the sharply rising difficulty curve and a wide variety of both weapons and exploratory missions – from crashed jumbo jets to Aztec cities. The underwater aspect is a bit of a gimmick, though. ★★★★★

True Pinball

■ **Pinball** ■ 1 player ■ **Ocean Platinum Flipping mad**
 One of the best pinball sims, but not an essential purchase unless you're too scared to go down the arcade. The visuals are poor, but the ball physics work well. ★★

Vigilante 8

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Activision '70s-influenced destruction driving**
 Blowing up buildings and cars using a selection of '70s vehicles sounds great, but when your reward is just more explosions per level, monotony soon follows. ★★
 Or try: *Twisted Metal 2* ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Futuristic first-person shooter. ★★

Viper

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player ■ **Ocean Mission-based gun-play**
 Incredibly repetitive and ridiculously easy. ★

VMX Racing

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Funsoft Motorbike racer**
 Awful controls and an offputting lack of realism. ★

V-Rally

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 player
 ■ **Infogrames Platinum Rally rather good**
 Even staying on the track in this rally sim is difficult, but the addition of Dual Shock rumblings and another car make this Platinum re-release a sensible purchase. ★★★★★

Wargames

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **EA Action-orientated strategy game**
 The missions are simple and limited in number, but this is a worthy action-based strategy alternative to *Command & Conquer*. The wide range of vehicles available and the capture-the-flag two-player game will keep you laughing as you watch men die. ★★★★★

Warhammer: Dark Omen

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ **EA Fantasy role-playing**
 This suffers at the hands of its controls and its overall confusing nature. Having to repeat missions will get on your nerves. ★★★

Wild Arms

■ **RPG** ■ 1 player ■ **SCEE Huge role-play adventure**
 A strong RPG, eclipsed by the shadow of Square's seminal classic *Final Fantasy VII*. It suffers from *Final Fantasy's* random battle syndrome and the slick-but-retro-looking visuals strip away much of the feeling of involvement, but it's still absorbing. ★★★★★

Wing Commander IV

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player ■ **EA Interactive movie/space shoot-'em-up hybrid**
 It has too many video sequences, and the bits in space are boring, but it's enough of an improvement on its predecessors to be reasonably enjoyable. ★★

Wipeout

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Psygnosis Platinum Futuristic hovercraft action**
 The game that made PSX the console of choice. It boasts the soundtrack that helped make gaming cool, but the nasty opposing craft mean you'll need to persevere to succeed. Your reward is the opportunity to career down some classic neon tracks at incredible speeds, massaging the sensible controls and throwing up your lunch. ★★★★★

Wipeout 2097

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Psygnosis A sequel 100 years in the making**
 A better bet than the original for the casual racer, as the learning curve is gentler, but the new, more difficult racing class should make veterans weep. It has excellent CPU opposition, more weapons and the twistiest tracks this side of Alton Towers, although – dare we say it – in comparison with some of today's gorgeous offerings, it's starting to look a little rough around the edges. ★★★★★

Worms

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Ocean Platinum Multi-player battle game with warring invertebrates**
 Tries too hard to be cute and different, and it offers very little to enjoy in one-player mode. ★★

THE GAME THAT RUINED MY LIFE

Emergency 888

Who would've thought that *GoldenEye 007* could cause young Mark Green such abject misery?



■ One of my favourite hobbies, before the “accident”, was gorging on the wonders of Teletext, especially during *Top Of The Pops* on BBC1, where tapping 888 for a speedy peek at subtitles would put a quick end to any confusion concerning indecipherable lyrics.

But then came the day when the frustration of being killed yet again in *GoldenEye* on the N64 got the better of me. As James Bond fell to the floor for the 15th time in three minutes, adrenaline coursed uncontrollably through my veins. It needed draining – and quickly – so I picked up the nearest object to be my TV remote control, and threw it with all my strength against the wall.

I soon regretted it. For as I picked up the dented, but still intact, control device, horror struck me. The “Text” button had disappeared! No more Teletext! Gone were the days of up-to-

the-minute sports results and constantly scrolling traffic information. An end to reading the news in bite-size, 50-word chunks. No more daily *Digitiser* fix. And, most drastically of all, I could wave goodbye to reading the lyrics to *Underworld's* next single on *TOTP*.

I peered at the floor, and suddenly spotted it – a misshapen black blob, the dismembered button that had been so painfully ripped from its moorings. Picking up the small piece of rubber and cradling it in my hands, its slight waxy texture feeling almost moist, I cursed the damn developers at Rare under my breath, and said a silent prayer for that little button. Never again would I let my rage get the better of me.

■ *Next month: An unfortunate chain of events involving an antique porcelain vase and The Legend of Zelda leads to the death of Mark's pet hamster.*

Wreckin' Crew

■ **Racer** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Telstar Mario Kart clone**
 Comedy racer with comedy characters, where your aim is to break the other cars up real nice. Could have done with a multi-tap mode to bring the best out of the multi-player game, but there's loads of fun, with plenty of hidden extras buried here. ★★★★★

WWF Warzone

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Acclaim Lardy leotard lovelies fight it out**
 Moves and characters that make play interesting and a great create-a-player section that enables you to custom-build your own fighter. It lacks variety, and it's bit slow and sluggish, but there's plenty to do. ★★★★★
 Or try: *WCW Nitro* ■ 1-2 players ■ THQ ■ Plenty of wrestlers. ★★

X-Com: Terror From The Deep

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microprose Turn-based wander**
 Head into the lair of some sea-dwelling aliens and kick their asses. A good buy, and makes a success of its takey-turney style, but often frustrating. A little dated, too. ★★

Xenocracy

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Grolier Interactive Alien-blasting in space**
 Ruined by difficult controls and no variety in the weapons. ★

X-Men Vs Street Fighter

■ **Fighter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Virgin Fight!**
 The great controls and 2D fighters that you expect from the long-running *Street Fighter* series, but repetitive, jerky and a bit shallow. ★★

PC Top 20

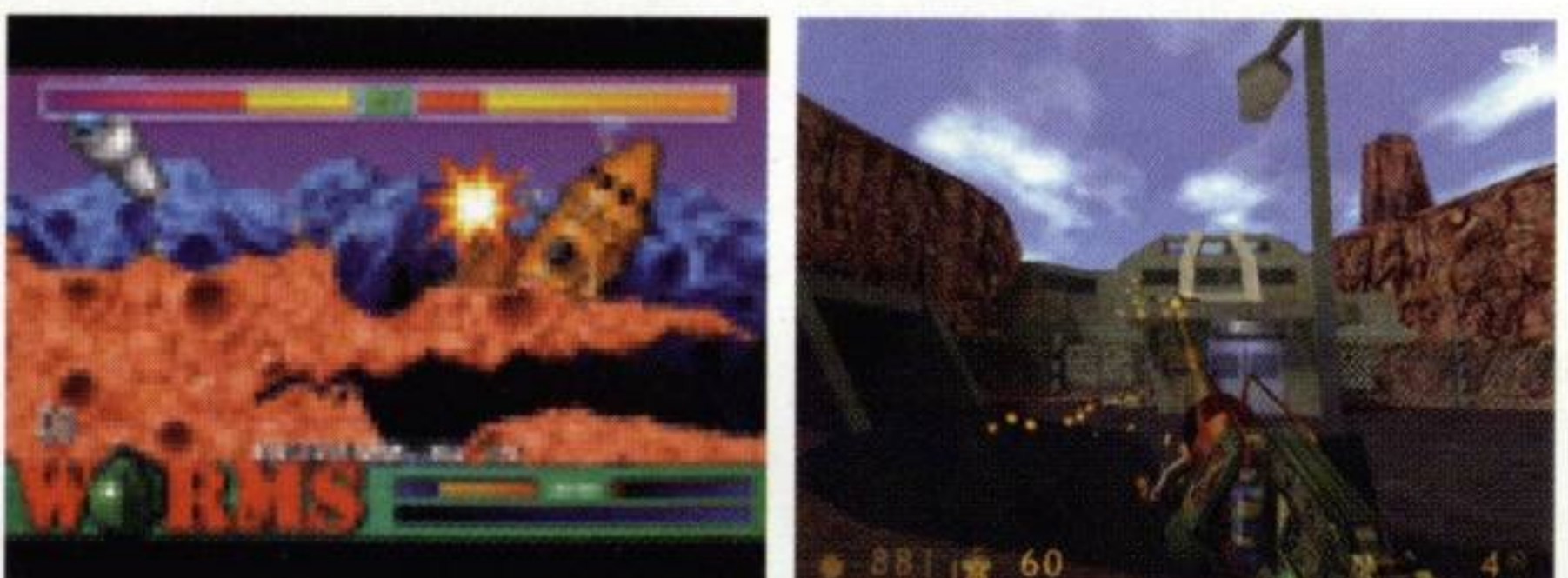
They're the most popular PC games of the moment. But are they any good?



1 (-) Sim City 3000 Electronic Arts
Strategy ■ 1 player **City-'em-up** Initially disappointingly similar to the original build-your-own-city game, but lurking underneath are far more intuitive controls, and the joy of seeing your creation grow. There are none of the battles you'll see in other strategy titles, but it's good old-fashioned fun. ★★★★★



2 (-) Delta Force Electronic Arts
Strategy ■ 1-30 players **Gung-ho action** A realistic battle sim. It's possible to embark on a killing spree, but true pleasure comes from finishing the tricky tasks. ★★★★★



4 (4) Worms Armageddon Hasbro
Hasbro ■ 1-16 players **Multi-player invertebrate splatter** Thwack the life out of your opponent's wriggles with huge weapons. Comical and lots of fun. ★★★★★



6 (6) Football World Manager Ubisoft
Sports ■ 1 player **Injury time** Tons of clubs and minimal financial rubbish, but your decisions don't affect the game outcomes. ★★★★★



9 (5) FIFA 99 Electronic Arts
Sports ■ 1-2 players **Ball and net game** It's fast, it looks good and it has that official license. Its main problem, though, is that it's far too easy. ★★★★★



12 (8) Gangsters: Organised Crime EIDOS
Strategy ■ 1-4 players **Mob rule** Combines the best of god games and strategy titles. ★★★★★



15 (11) Star Wars: Rogue Squadron Activision
Shooter ■ 1 player **Film-fest gunfire** First and third-person shooting, but far too easy. ★★★★★



18 (15) Settlers III Blue Byte
Strategy ■ 1 player **City life** Build cities and resource-manage 'til you drop. Beautifully designed and heftily fine-tuned. ★★★★★



7 (7) Combat Flight Simulator Microsoft
Sim ■ 1-16 players **Free as a bird** Lots of options and modes, lots of shooting and the chance to take part in WWII. ★★★★★



10 (10) Worms Sold Out
Puzzler ■ 1-8 players **Violent party fare** Nothing to offer in single-player, but splatting your opponents' worms is good fun with friends. ★★★★★



13 (-) Starcraft: Brood War Cendant
Strategy ■ 1-multi-player **Add-on** New units, terrain and missions. It's more difficult, but mainly the same again. ★★★★★



16 (14) Age of Empires Microsoft
Strategy ■ 1 player **Ancient battles** Build detailed empires and armies. Packed with ideas and easy to get into. ★★★★★



19 (20) Tomb Raider: Unfinished Business EIDOS
Platformer ■ 1 player **Who's that girl?** More of the same in an add-on to TR 1. ★★★★★



8 (3) Tomb Raider 3 EIDOS
Puzzler ■ 1 player **Croft returns** Intelligent level design and gob-smackingly gorgeous graphics to keep you up all night with Lara. ★★★★★



11 (9) The Simpsons: Virtual Springfield Fox Interactive
Adventure ■ 1 player **Why I laugh?** Splendid version of the funniest TV show ever. ★★★★★



14 (12) South Park Theme & Screensaver Telstar
Screensaver **Respect my authoritaah!** A limited set of South Park Desktop graphics. ★



17 (13) Microsoft Flight Simulator 98 Microsoft
Sim ■ 1 player **I'm flying!** Plenty to see and do, all rendered in breathtaking detail. ★★★★★



20 (19) Theme Hospital Electronic Arts
Strategy ■ 1 player **Run the NHS yourself** Interesting at first, but gradually becomes repetitive and unfunny. ★★★★★

AND THE REST...

3D Ultra Pinball 3: The Lost Continent
 ■ Pinball ■ 1-4 players ■ Sierra Originals **Ball antics**
 Despite adventurey sub-games, this is simplistic and tedious. ★★

Actua Ice Hockey
 ■ Sports ■ 1-3 players ■ Gremlin **Freezing fast-paced action** This has some glitchy graphics and tricky controls, but also a decent pace, a harsh computer opponent and plenty of tactics. ★★★★★

Actua Soccer 2
 ■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin **Actually football** Convincing graphics and a load of camera angles, but play is frustrating, with limited options. Quite shockingly, worse than its PlayStation incarnation. ★★★★★

Actua Tennis
 ■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin **Strawberries and cream sim** Packed with stats and gorgeous motion capture, but the powerbar sacrifices the directional control that you really need in a tennis game. ★★★★★

Or try: Game, Net and Match
 ■ 1-2 players ■ Blue Byte ■ Frill-free, networked tennis. ★★★★★

Andretti Racing
 ■ Racer ■ 1 player ■ EA Classics ■ Budget **Tarmac-burning driving sim** A dull race around several boring American ovals. A stock car racing section and some slightly more exciting tracks liven things up a bit. ★★★★★

Apache Havoc
 ■ Simulation ■ 1-8 players ■ Empire **Proper war flight sim** You're in a war, which will carry on regardless of whether you're actively controlling your troops or making a cup of tea. The missions are increasingly complex, tricky and time-limited for added tension, and it's all wrapped up in some splendid visuals. ★★★★★

Apache Longbow
 ■ Flight sim ■ 1-16 players ■ Sold Out **Chopper fun** An accessible, accurate and long-lasting helicopter simulation, although the graphics give away its age. ★★★★★

Asghan
 ■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Grolier **Third-person hack-and-slash** Woefully poor. ★

Baldies
 ■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players ■ Sold Out **Silly god game** Build up tribe of baldies and wipe out your enemies. Plenty of levels, but repetitive. ★★

Beavis & Butthead: Bunghole in One
 ■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive **TV-licensed comedy pitch & putt** Awful. ★

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain
 ■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Activision ■ Budget **Drac on your PC** Linear, monotonous vampire-laden, top-down role-playing. ★★

Blood II: The Chosen
 ■ Shooter ■ 1-32 players ■ GT Interactive **More first-person bloodiness** 3D wandering with some of the most violent and amusing blood-spillage this side of American wrestling. A strong story and good variety in the map layouts. ★★★★★

WATCH OUT FOR

There are always newcomers biting at the heels of the frontrunners. So watch out for:



Myth 2: Soulblighter
 ■ Strategy ■ 1-8 players ■ Bungie **Mouse-controlled war** Real-time battles in a medieval environment, rendered with a surprisingly large amount of blood. A little too tactical, and the 3D can prove difficult to get your head around. ★★★★★



X-wing Vs Tie Fighter
 ■ Space combat ■ 1-32 players ■ Activision **Classic Star Wars shooting** Construct your own battles and pilot ships from the Star Wars universe. The multi-player option leaves a little to be desired, and it's likely to be overtaken by X-wing Alliance, but otherwise it's a winner. ★★★★★



Blizzard Pack
 ■ Compilation ■ 1-4 players ■ Sierra **RTS compilation** Warcraft II and Starcraft, two real-time strategy titles that you simply can't be without, and Diablo, an isometric fantasy quest game that you'd be a fool to pass up, bundled together for the price of a single game. A must-buy. ★★★★★



Speed Busters
 ■ Racer ■ 1-8 players ■ Ubisoft **Stunt car fun** Race about Cannonball Run-style, where crashing into walls is part of the fun. Plenty of Hollywood movie references, coupled with a finely-tuned racing core. It looks superb, too. The multi-player battles round the package off brilliantly. ★★★★★



Ultimate Soccer Manager '98/'99
 ■ Sports management ■ 1 player ■ Sierra **Play to win** The best interface of any similar title, and your coaching decisions do seem to affect the outcome on the pitch. Might be too detailed for some, but a comprehensive and enjoyable game. ★★★★★

Broken Sword

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
Sold Out Gallic adventures
 One of the best examples of the adventure game genre, where talking to people and clicking on objects to solve puzzles will advance the storyline. The puzzles are logical, the story (an American investigating mysteries in France) is involving, and the characters and conversations are amusing. As an added bonus, it succeeds in being funny. Treasure this fact. ★★★★★

Buggy

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
Gremlin Radio-controlled racing lunacy The 16 teeny-weeny cars are heaven to handle, bouncing and skidding all over the shop, but the tracks are confusing, and there's little fun. ★★★

Bust-A-Move 2

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
Acclaim Match bubbles, go mad One of the most addictive puzzlers since *Tetris*, bringing its match-coloured-bubbles-to-get-rid-of-them idea to your screen in an explosion of rainbow-hued visuals. It's a simple idea, and provides much more of a challenge than you'd think, with the particularly addictive two-player mode highlighting the brilliance of the idea. ★★★★★

Caesar III

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
Sierra Roman-based strategy antics There are two ways to play this: either as a straight *Sim City* rip-off where you build your own empire, or as a mission-based Roman Emperor-'em-up. It's complicated, and the amount of stuff to do may bring on a "Caesar", but stick at it and you'll find it involving and addictive. ★★★★★

Cannon Fodder

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ **Sold Out Soldiering on** A real-time-strategy title, reduced in scale. The controls make guiding your little men across the World War battlefield intuitive, but not easy. Slightly dated. ★★★

Carmageddon 2: Carpocalypse Now

■ Racer ■ 1-6 players
Sales Curve Bloody car action The controversy added road-rager is back once again. With the game structure improved to include races, deathmatches and some interesting power-ups, it's a pleasing time-waster. ★★★

Championship Manager 2

■ Sports management
 ■ 1-8 players ■ **EIDOS Take your team to the top** This is slightly more attractive at its bargain price, but looking a little out-of-date now, and still far too easy. Nevertheless, it's engrossing and packed with neat details. Be aware of the sequel's imminence, though. ★★★★★

Conflict: Freespace the Great War

■ Space combat ■ Multi-player ■ **Interplay Sprawling, intricate, space shooter** Escort this, protect that, shoot the other – *Conflict* might at first seem like a direct *X-wing Vs TIE-Fighter* rip-off, but it's more the game that *X-wing* should have been. Watch out for the superb explosions, cleverly designed missions and plenty of replayability. ★★★★★
Or try: X-wing Vs TIE Fighter
 ■ 1-multi-player ■ Virgin
 ■ Impressive *Star Wars*-based shooter. ★★★★★

Curse of Monkey Island

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
LucasArts Fantastic point-and-click adventure Genuinely amusing, and with clever puzzles, *Monkey Island* scores well for its controls, which make exploring and examining as easy as possible. Great to look at and to listen to, if a tad frustrating and illogical, but mostly top notch. ★★★★★

Dark Reign

■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players ■ **Activision budget Another futuristic battle sim** The future-bound setting of this real-time battle control title, the intelligence of the missions and the clear interface make for a pleasurable experience. At this price, you can't go wrong, even if the visuals and sound leave a little to be desired. ★★★★★

Or try: Armour Command ■ 1 player ■ Take 2 Interactive ■ Tanks 'n' strategy. ★★★

Deo Gratias

■ Strategy ■ 1-16 players
Cryo Interactive Be God and run your own universe Confusing interface and very little feeling of being in control. ★★

DethKarz

■ Racer ■ 1-8 players
Infogrames More space-age racing Four worlds and 12 circuits, brilliantly designed in a rollercoaster vein, with tons of weaponry, but the amount of skidding about makes it unnecessarily tricky. ★★★

Destruction Derby 2

■ Racer ■ 1-10 players
Psygnosis Hit-and-run turn-taking rivalry Fine as a normal racing game, but better as an all-out smash-'em-up that provides edge-of-your-seat thrills, coupled with gorgeous visuals and fantastic images of your car as it disintegrates. Great tracks, genuine speed and smart computer cars, too. Yay! ★★★★★

Diablo

■ Strategy/RPG ■ 1-4 players ■ **Blizzard Hack 'n' slash adventure** A real-time strategy RPG that's incredibly intuitive, with hidden depths and complexity to be found if you delve deeper into its dark and sticky innards. A whole load of monster-killing and spell-casting to keep beardy types happy. ★★★★★

Dune 2000

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ **EA The granddad of strategy** This new build-your-own-empire game houses 27 levels and three "tribes" to choose from, but it's too simplistic to be great. ★★★

Dungeon Keeper

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ **EA Classics Your very own dungeon** Run your own murky torture chamber in this strategy-laden epic. Difficult at first, especially with the mixture of game modes and cameras, but the sense of humour and finely-tuned gameplay will eventually hook you. ★★★★★

Falcon 4

■ Flight sim ■ 1-multi-player
Microprose Long-running air manoeuvres Only one craft to fly, but it's all extraordinarily realistic, with accurately-mapped terrain and a pilot and engineers advising on the simulation's finer details. Hardly a game, more of a proper realisation of mid-air flying. Rather good, then. ★★★★★

Fallout 2

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ **Interplay Old-skool RPG antic** As you find your way around in this apocalyptic city, you'll be shocked by the isometric 3D, turn-based combat and an overload of stats, but *F2* will still win you over, thanks to its simplicity. The intelligent unfolding of the plot merely adds to the pleasure. ★★★★★

FA Premier League Football Manager 99

■ Sports ■ 1 player ■ **EA Be Glenn Hoddle, but better** Including both Scottish and English divisions, and with plenty of coaching and business matters to deal with, this is the most realistic football management title out there – your decisions really affect the games. ★★★★★

F1 Racing Simulation

■ Racer ■ 1-8 players
Ubisoft Driving for would-be Demons All the stats and tracks are here, and the handling and controls are perfect. There's a lack of realism and customisation options, but it's fast and offers a real challenge. ★★★★★
Or try: Alain Prost Grand Prix ■ 1 player ■ Ocean ■ Similar but less realistic. ★★

The Fifth Element

■ Puzzler ■ 1 player
Ubisoft Obscure futuristic movie tie-in Twenty three levels of poor *Tomb Raider*-style shenanigans. ★★

Fighter Squadron: The Screamin' Demons Over Europe

■ Flight sim ■ **Activision Parsoft Be a 1920s Tom Cruise** Almost too real, with floating-point maths used to simulate every last force acting on your aircraft, and planes designed to react to a clip with the ground in the same way as the real thing. Plenty of vehicles and a diverse range of missions, but only for fanatics – there's no arcade flying about and shooting things here. A fantastic simulation. ★★★★★

Final Fantasy VII

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ **EIDOS Why shouldn't the PC have the best RPG ever as well?** It'll keep you up all night, it'll make you cry, it'll make your nose bleed, but only if someone hits you in the face with a copy of it. Which they ought to, if you don't buy it. A great story, lavish graphics and brilliant selection of spells. It's a little confusing, rarely enabling you to see your opponents before you get into a fight, but put this down to Japanese quirkiness and you're on to a winner. ★★★★★

Forsaken

■ Shooter ■ 1-16 players
Acclaim Almost Quake – almost certainly better One of the most intense 3D games you'll have on your PC, *Forsaken* wastes no time at all dumping you in a room full of droids, missiles, gun emplacements and whizz-bang special effects, and it features the best tunnel-based combat action and 16-player deathmatch since time began. ★★★★★
Or try: G-Police ■ 1 player ■ Psygnosis ■ Compulsive, hard-to-control shooter. ★★★★★

Future Cop: LAPD

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
EA Prophetic police drama Satisfyingly large levels to sink your crim-catching skills into, but too instinctive, with little scope for challenge or any variation from mindless shooting. ★★★★★

The Golf Pro

■ Sports ■ 1 player
Empire Novel golf sim A new swing system, makes play initially difficult, though it gets easier with practice. The scenery in both courses will make you want to bring a picnic to the game, and the ball physics are superb. ★★★★★
Or try: Actua Golf 2 ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin ■ Realistic and fun golf simulation. ★★★★★

Grand Theft Auto

■ Racer ■ 1 player ■ **Take 2 Drugs, death and driving** Notorious for its lack of scruples, the game encourages the killing of bystanders and the trafficking of drugs, *GTA* gives you a sense of freedom as you drive around massive cities. The graphics are disappointing, but the missions are enjoyable, if repetitive. ★★★★★

Grim Fandango

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
LucasArts Death warmed up The style, presentation and content of this odd, amusing adventure, where you play a travel agent who shuffles people between the living world and heaven, leave it towering head-and-shoulders above everything else. The puzzles are difficult and obscure, but you'll forgive it for its neat touches, absorbing plot and downright loveliness. ★★★★★

Hardwar

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
Gremlin Exciting mix of trading and combat This unofficially updates the great 8-bit space-trading game *Elite* for the late '90s. The environment is enormous, but the gameplay is hampered by too much waiting around. ★★★★★
Or try: Privateer 2: The Darkening ■ 1 player ■ EA ■ Dark and spooky. ★★★★★

Heretic II

■ Shooter ■ 1-32 players
Activision 3D Medieval marauding A traditional three-dimensional shooter, that sticks main character on the screen, shoves in a set of offensive and defensive spell-casting, and makes sure that the controls, damaging weapons and graphics are all in place. It works. ★★★★★

IF/A-18E: Carrier Strike Fighter

■ Flight sim ■ 1 player
Interactive Magic Fly planes Simulating a craft that won't be flying for five years, for the most part *Strike Fighter* looks gorgeous. The missions are varied and convincing, and your success alters what you're offered to do in future levels. ★★★★★

Incoming: Lux et Rubor

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ **Rage Software Fancy, multi-vehicle blaster** A triumph of conventionality over originality, *Incoming* features every shoot-'em-up cliché known, but the gorgeous starry visuals, variety of *Babylon 5*-style vehicles and frenetic action prove there's plenty of life in the genre yet. ★★★★★

Jane's Combat Simulations: WWII Fighters

■ Simulation ■ 1-multi-player ■ **EA The FIFA of flight sims** Both the vehicles and the ground below look sufficiently realistic, and there's a host of planes to crash. Damage and physics are handled realistically, and there's the chance to put together your own missions. ★★★★★
Or try: Flight Simulator '98
 ■ 1 player ■ Microsoft ■ Ultra-realistic aeroplane antics. ★★★★★

LONG TERM TEST

Fade To Black

Does EA's stylish shooter still shock?



■ PC & PlayStation
 ■ Puzzle/Shooter
 ■ 1 player ■ EA
Stylish shooting
Fade To Black's Conrad B Hart taught Lara Croft everything she knows about being an adventuress, pumping bullets, flicking switches and wandering about in the third-person. After his silky 2D adventures on the Amiga in *Flashback*, Conrad returned for this 3D Electronic Arts sequel, which kick-started the trend for behind-the-player views. It was great. But what's it like now?

Its graphics may look like the result of an accident involving a roll of Sellotape, a small child and some cardboard, but *Fade*

To Black has atmosphere in spades. The claustrophobic interiors and the strange, other-worldly sounds echoing off the walls pester a small area of your brain into a minor panic, making it impossible not to repeatedly swing the view round to check that nothing's behind you.

True, your ability to shoot things is hindered by the camera's frequent trips behind walls and into the depths of Conrad's hair, and the linear puzzles and relatively simplistic gun-play often don't compare well to Lara's. But *Fade To Black* is still a scary, engrossing adventure and is as near as games get to offering *Tomb Raider* thrills without the tits.

Jedi Knight

■ Shooter ■ 1-16 player
Activision Classic Force-d 3D A timely re-release for this exciting *Star Wars* *Quake*-a-like. The Force itself crops up in a surprisingly meaty role, and the level designs and puzzles have had some genuine thought put into them. For both fans and enemies of the film. ★★★★★

Jeff Wayne's War Of The Worlds

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ **GT Interactive No one could have believed** ...that marrying C&C-style combat with a *Risk*-like map could have been so dull. ★★

Jimmy White's 2: Cueball

■ Sports ■ 2 players
Virgin Snooker loopy nuts are we Superb snooker and pool sim, with a highly playable game engine, and the added bonus of wacky darts, draughts and fruit machine sub-games. ★★★★★
Or try: Virtua Pool 2 ■ 1-multi-player ■ Interplay ■ Pool without the celebrity. ★★★★★

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ **Cendant Third-person romp** A graphically-impressive third-person game which attempts to disguise the fact that it's an RPG by using fancy effects. But the combat and puzzle-finding action gives the game away. Still, approachable, easy to use and fun. ★★★★★

Klingon Honor Guard

■ Shooter ■ 1-16 players
Microprose Pasty-headed Doom-style exploits A full complement of niggling factors in this *Star Trek*-based 3D walking shooter – such as suddenly completing levels without realising you were anywhere near the end of a mission – are negated by the sheer intensity of the big-weapon shooting action. ★★★★★

Links LS '99

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
EIDOS Golf for it! The visuals are lovely, but it takes time to draw the scenery and – predictably – *Links* uses the same powerbar system as all other golf games. Still, with four courses, eight players at your disposal and 30 modes of play, who's complaining? ★★★★★
Or try: Microsoft Golf 1998 ■ 1-multi-player ■ Microsoft ■ Motion-captured players and dodgy controls. ★★

Madden NFL 99

■ Sports ■ 1-4 player ■ **EA Sports Oval-shaped ball sim** A proper sim, with all the options, tactics, bells and whistles included. Only really recommended to die-hard fans. ★★★★★

Mad Trax

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
Black Friar Futuristic bottle-necking Bad handling, bad opponents, bad collision-detection, bad trip. ★★

Hidden Gem | 15 minutes of fame for a PC great.

Wetrix

■ **Puzzler** ■ 1-2 players ■ **Infogrames**



Can this really be "the next Tetris?"

■ As anyone who's checked out the Gameplay Challenges in this month's Kick Ass (page 84) will know, *Wetrix* is a puzzle game. The aim of the game sounds simple: manoeuvre pieces of wall and drops of falling water to create lakes, then use fireballs to evaporate them. But when you find yourself in the midst of rain, mines, rubber duck bonuses, rainbow multipliers and earthquakes, your brain begins to reach its limits – in a good way.

Wetrix has come closest to achieving the fabled honour of "The next *Tetris*", with its emphasis your tactical development, and the familiar theme of trying to prevent the landscape's stubborn rise upwards. ★★★★★

Magic & Mayhem

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Virgin Swords and sorcery in strategy shocker** Featuring knights and wizards, this real-time strategy gives you a great spell-casting, creature-creating environment. The main characters are well-designed, the story sucks you in, and the 30 maps are realistic enough to make you feel you're there. ★★★★★

MechCommander

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microprose Real-time strategy, management and big robots** Based on the BattleTech board game, but a strategic step away from the action of previous MechWarrior games, Commander boasts clearly laid-out logistics, intricate detail and superb level design. ★★★★★
 Or try: **MechWarrior 2** ■ 1 player ■ Activision ■ Huge, hulking exoskeleton robots. ★★★

MicroMachines v3

■ **Racer** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Codemasters Top-down, miniature racing** Embrace a world where you race round table-top tracks in a mini car, boat or ice cream van, preferably against as many other human players as possible. It's showing its age these days, with the simplistic graphics and old-fashioned one-screen multi-player taking a bit of time to adjust to, but this is as good on the PC as on any of the consoles. ★★★★★

Motorcross

■ **Madness 3D**
 ■ **Racer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microsoft Motorbikes and dirt tracks** A huge array of racing modes and more tracks than you can shake a Kawasaki at. No two-player mode, but a fair amount of racing thrills. ★★★

Motorhead

■ **Racer** ■ Multi-player
 ■ **Gremlin Futuristic sports-car visual drooler** Nine cars, slick track design, a myriad of tiny road-side animations (such as monorails and space craft) and the right difficulty pitch: a cinch to drive, but hard to drive well. Fast, too. ★★★★★

NBA Live 99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **EA Ball-in-the-basket fun**
 Although it's too easy, mainly because of the limited computer opposition, NBA Live 98 never pretends to accurately represent basketball. It controls well, looks fantastic and provides a wealth of options. ★★★★★

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **GT Interactive 2D alien puzzling** Budget release of a pointless PlayStation conversion, with dated gameplay that involves moving your alien from one screen to the next to save his pals. ★★★

Outwars

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microsoft Starship Troopers: the (unofficial) game** Drop down a lift shaft in an overrun research installation, then try to raise a cargo lift as big as a *Quake* level. *Outwars* breathes fresh air into this 3D shoot-'em-up/arcade adventure, *Quake/Tomb Raider* cross-over. ★★★★★

Pandemonium 2

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Ubisoft budget Deathly dull running and jumping** It initially looks like it's in 3D, but *Pandemonium 2* is 2D in a cunning disguise, and your path is tediously restricted to one route. Irritating characters, dated gameplay. ★★★

Phantasmagoria II: A Puzzle Of Flesh

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Sierra Gory story** Click your mouse to explore locales and watch a time-wasting amount of video. ★★

Player Manager '98-'99

■ **Sports** ■ 1 player ■ **ANCO Mediocre management**
 Funless player tinkering. ★
 Or try: **Player Manager 2**
Extra: Chase For Glory ■ 1 player ■ Sold Out ■ Budget ■ Tedious footy coachmanship. ★

Pod Gold

■ **Racing** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Ubisoft Budget Future racing... again** The circuits are designed to make life as difficult as possible, but there are plenty of tracks and vehicles, a multi-player option and a budget price. ★★★

Populous: The Beginning

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ **EA Become omnipotent** You're God! Build huts, breed warriors and braves, get new spells to alter the land, fight and conquer enemies, and all that. Essentially the original all over again, but it's a lot easier and, of course, it's all 3D. You'll be playing for hours. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Riverworld** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Cryo** ■ Weird time-warping real-time strategy. ★★

Powerboat Racing

■ **Racing** ■ 1-multi-player
 ■ **Interplay Watersports**
 Clumsy, blocky, jerky visuals and stunted gameplay – *Powerboat Racing* is no fun. ★★

Power Racing Pack

■ **Racer** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Sierra Twin-wheels pack**
Nascar Racing 2 and *Indycar Racing 2* bundled together for US racing fans. It's good value, and both games are realistic, but neither can make driving around an oval circuit seem like much fun. ★★

Powerslide

■ **Racer** ■ 1-8 players ■ **GT Interactive Rough terrain driving** Looking lovely and moving like a gerbil on speed, this racer behaves realistically, but can be frustrating and takes too short a time to complete. ★★

Premier Manager '98

■ **Sports manager**
 ■ 1 player ■ **Gremlin Footy managerial action** There's an accurate database update, but the imperfections that bugged PM's previous incarnation remain and now stick out further than Jimmy Hill's chin. ★★

Prost Grand Prix

■ **Racer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Infogrames Variable F1 sim** Has you driving like a member of the McLaren team when you use the automatic setup, and like that woman from *Driving School* when you don't. ★★
 Or try: **Grand Prix 2** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microprose** ■ Crammond's absurdly accurate F1 sim. ★★

Quake II

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-multi-player
 ■ **Activision Seminal first-person baddie-beater** More of the same, but that's more of one of the finest games in the world. *Quake II* is best played over a network and offers bigger, better (although not cleverer) monsters, massive guns, improved level designs and a customisable game engine. ★★★★★

Railroad Tycoon II

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-16 players
 ■ **Take 2 Thermos-'em-up** An improvement on the original, with financial management and train direction given more emphasis at the expense of tedious railway construction. There's a pot full of time zones and trains to play with, and the range of options leaves you with scope to customise the game. Chuffing great. ★★★★★

Rainbow Six

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-16 players
 ■ **Red Storm Stealthy first-person hostage action**
 Starring SAS-style combat heroes, this is a third-person shooter set in real-life terrorist situations. The healthy dose of realism works well and the overwhelming amount of strategy makes it more cerebral than your usual shooter. ★★★★★

Rayman

■ **Platformer** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Ubisoft French vertical platforms** Unsatisfying, over simple, retro-style platforming. ★★

Redline Racer

■ **Racer** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Ubisoft Motorbike madness** Plenty of tracks and a pleasing number of opponents in this speedy, attractive superbike racer. Happily, the racing is more than just holding down accelerate, as staying on your bike requires a fair amount of skill. ★★★★★

Roland Garros 1998: The French Open

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players
 ■ **Grolier Accurate tennis sim** Garros's great strength (making sure you have control over where the ball will land) is also its weakness (it's too easy to beat the computer opponents). ★★★★★

Sanitarium

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Mindscape Crazy talk** Start the game trapped in a lunatic asylum and fight your way out. The text is stilted and linear, and the adventure infuriating, but it's still reasonably engrossing. ★★

Shadows Of The Empire

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Activision Star Wars hotch-potch** An ill-advised mix of *Star Wars*-style sub-games. ★★

Shogo: Mobile Armour Division

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-16 players
 ■ **Microcroids Big robots** A first-person shooter distinguished by its anime stylings and the opportunity to dress up as a robot. Getting about in a hulking great metal suit is easier than you'd think and the visuals perfectly complement the intelligent level design. ★★★★★

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **EA Classics Re-live obscure American battles** Sid Meier turns out another fun, real-time strategy game. Take control of either side in the American Civil War – you get equal measures of good, head-hurting strategy and all-out shooting action. ★★★★★

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **EA A new beginning**
 Rebuild Earth's society with a host of resources and several clicks of your mouse. Highly derivative, and without a genuine feeling of discovery, but the new additions – including undulating terrain and new technologies – and the huge scope for learning the game's nuances save it. ★★★★★

Sin

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-16 players
 ■ **Activision Traditional shooting action** The graphics of *Quake II*, the mission style of *GoldenEye*, and the big guns of *Duke Nukem*. Unfortunately, *Half-Life*'s done it all better. ★★★★★

Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Gametek First-person war sim** Complete five separate missions where stealth and the need to learn tactics are vital. The graphics and AI are top-notch, but you'll need a top-notch PC to go with them. ★★

StarCraft

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-multi-player
 ■ **Blizzard Entertainment Real-time strategy** The same mix of building, research, resource management and combat as its prequel, but with enough intricacy and sidesteps to inject life into the genre. ★★★★★

Star Trek Federation Compilation

■ **Compilation** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Interplay budget It's a compilation, Jim** Ignore the *Next Generation* titles, enjoy the 25th Anniversary title for the self-indulgent fun that it is; then concentrate your efforts on *Star Fleet Academy*, which provides you with the great opportunity to sit in the Captain's chair. ★★★★★

Star Wars: Supremacy

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **LucasArts Write your own plot** An R2-D2-with-the-top-removed-sized bin full of strategies, with over-complex gameplay. ★★

Team Apache

■ **Flight sim** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Mindscape Convincing chopper sim** Few other flight sims introduce the novice in such a friendly way, before proceeding to let all hell break loose around them in such a terrifyingly convincing fashion. Recommended. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Total Air War** ■ 1-multi-player ■ **DiD/Ocean** ■ Hey you! Up in the sky. ★★★★★

Terminal Velocity

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-2 players
 ■ **Activision Classic Close encounters** Whizz over 3D landscapes shooting at spaceships. Good fun at the time, this jaunt through over simplistic landscapes has dated, but it's still fun. ★★

This Means War

■ **Wargame** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Sold Out Isometric 3D warfare** More point-and-click action, as you save the world from a computer virus, but it's fiddly and over-complicated. ★★

Thief: The Dark Project

■ **Sneaker** ■ 1 player
 ■ **EIDOS Medieval sneak-'em-up** A first-person shooter with all the brazen room-crashing and gun-toting replaced by *Metal Gear Solid*-style sneakiness and tip-toeing. Atmospheric, but unabsorbing. ★★

Toon Struck

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Sold Out Cartoon capers**
 A clumsy *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*-style marriage of cartoon graphics and real-time action, this point-and-clicker contains enough inventive moments to grip for a short time. ★★

Total Annihilation

■ **Strategy** ■ 1-8 player
 ■ **GT Replay Futuristic**

strategy nonsense More intense than your *Command & Conquers* and the like, and as easy to use as an inflatable sheep (straightforward for beginners and yet challenging for experts), the battles are great and there are plenty of patches and additions available on the Web, too. Buy this or feel stupid. ★★★★★

Trespasser

■ **Shooter** ■ 1 player ■ **EA Disappointing dino shooter**
 Shooting dinosaurs is difficult, dull and depressing. ★

Triple Play '99

■ **Sports** ■ 1-4 players ■ **EA Baseball for the fans** Not the most exciting sport in the known universe, so we recommend this fine translation, with the option of a single game or complete 170-game tourney as well as Internet games, and loads of players and stadia to choose from. ★★★★★

The X-Files

■ **Adventure** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Fox Interactive Spooky cash-in tie-in?** It may be a pile of video clips stuck together with VirtualCinema glue, but the seven weeks of exclusive filming and relative freedom of movement elevate this above the head. ★★★★★
 Or try: **Bladerunner** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Virgin** ■ More film tie-in shenanigans. ★★★★★

UFO: Enemy Unknown

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player ■ **Sold Out budget Alien-filled brain-tickler** Turn-based combat from the boys who invented Spectrum classics *Chaos* and *Rebelstar*. It might not look good, but the plot is complex, and the controls helpful. ★★★★★

Ultima Collection

■ **RPG compilation** ■ **Player numbers vary** ■ **EA Seminal titles collected** Ten games from the last 20-or-so years, this suffers the same fate as most retro groupings; yesterday's faves are inestimably dull compared to today's delights. ★★★★★

Unreal

■ **Shooter** ■ 1-multi-player
 ■ **GT Interactive Doom clonetic** This has to be the fastest, most enjoyable *Doom* clone available for the PC to date. It's packed with luscious scripted moments, a fully pumped-up atmosphere, strictly intelligent denizens and enough eye candy to rot your lashes, although the slightly poor weapons do sometimes give the feeling that you are defending your corner with nothing more dangerous than a pair of curling tongs. ★★★★★

Urban Assault

■ **Strategy** ■ 1 player
 ■ **Microsoft Post-nuclear skirmish** Battle alien scum in an adventure that's marred ever-so slightly by blurred textures, thin walls and some sharply polygonal structures. ★★★★★

Viper

■ **Racer** ■ 1-8 players
 ■ **Sierra Screaming sports cars** Over-realistic car mechanics give way to some frighteningly comprehensive racing, that's added to by network multi-player options and individual tweaking. ★★★★★

Virtual Karts

■ **Racer** ■ 1 player ■ **Sold Out Rubbish racing** Go-karts for idiots. ★

Nintendo 64 Top 20

Cart shortages keep *Zelda* from the top spot. But for how long?

Warcraft

■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players
■ Sold Out **Wizards and warriors** Amusing, yet complex at turns, *Warcraft* has long been bettered, but this budget release still provides some astonishingly challenging and atmospheric real-time strategy exploits, with all kinds of wizards and knights at your disposal. ★★★★★

Wargasm

■ Strategy ■ 1-16 players
■ Infogrames **Ultra-realistic war sim** With graphics that'll have your family convinced you've taken to watching non-stop videos of the recent Gulf War-type incident, and the option to control battles from either the squaddies' boots or the commander's throne, *Wargasm* is a breath-takingly comprehensive death-'em-up. ★★★★★

Wing Commander: Prophecy Classic

■ Shooter ■ 1-8 players
■ EA Classics **Space battling** As your brave space pilots face an unidentified alien threat, *Prophecy* presents less monotonous video footage and more 3D shooting than we'd expect from this occasionally tedious series. At its best, the game looks like a particularly thrilling episode of your favourite sci-fi TV programme, with only the odd on-screen stats display spoiling an otherwise perfect space opera. ★★★★★

WipEout 2097

■ Racer ■ 1 player
■ Psygnosis **Argentum Space-age racing** Hover vehicles scream over gaudy neon tracks suspended in the sky, and use fair means or foul to get to the front of the pack. It's since been superseded. ★★★

World Cup '98

■ Sports ■ 1-20 player ■ EA **Licensed kickabout** Judged by graphics and licensing (as football games often are), this one wins hands down. But, while improving a little on *Road to the World Cup*, it also enables you to play smooth and exciting games (with or without the easy-to-pull-off fancy moves), and there's even a limited strategy element. Goal! ★★★★★

World of Combat 2000

■ Simulation ■ 1-100 players
■ Novalogic ■ **Budget Real-world combat sim** Fancy getting your hands on a military helicopter, jet fighter or tank? Of course you do, and this is the compilation for you. All the vehicles are based on genuine military specs, and the controls are easy enough if you're just beginning, yet complex enough if you're an expert. The visuals suffer slightly, but that doesn't matter a jot. ★★★★★

X-COM: Interceptor

■ Space strategy ■ 1 player
■ Microprose **Latest in the long line** The combination of real-time strategy and 3D action is perfected just as smoothly and effectively as the mix of strategy and tactical infantry combat in the prequels. And the result? Another corker. ★★★★★
Or try: **X-COM: Apocalypse** ■ 1-2 player ■ Microprose ■ The prequel. ★★★

X Games Pro Boarder

■ Racer ■ 1-8 players ■ EA **Sports Funky frozen freestyling** The graphics don't look particularly special, but there are enough crazy moves and tree-high flips to make keep you amused. The multi-player suffers, though. ★★★



1 (1) Star Wars: Rogue Squadron Nintendo
Shooter ■ 1 player **Be Luke Skywalker** Slow and covered in fog, but you're flying a real *Star Wars* ship, and the missions are well-crafted. ★★★★★



2 (2) Zelda: The Ocarina of Time Nintendo
RPG ■ 1 player **The best N64 game in the world** Keeping the traditional *Zelda* hallmarks and creating a beautiful 3D world, this is an absolute must-buy. ★★★★★



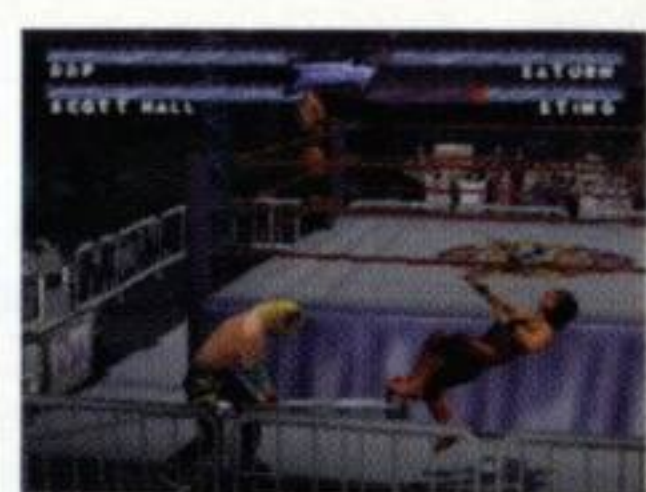
3 (3) Turok 2 Acclaim
Shooter ■ 1-4 players **Make dinos extinct (one more time)** This looks stunning, and is helped by impossibly large guns and no more of the precision jumping that marred the prequel. ★★★★★



4 (4) 1080° Snowboarding Nintendo
Racer ■ 1-4 players **Cool!** Great range of modes, plenty of tricks to pull off, loads of boards and lots of courses. Beautiful controls and brilliant replays. ★★★★★



5 (6) Banjo-Kazooie Rare/Nintendo
3D platformer ■ 1 player **Bear-bird combo** Levels that beg you to explore and a quest full of variety. It apes *Mario* a little too much, but holds its own well. ★★★★★



6 (10) WCW/NOW Revenge THQ
Sport ■ 1-4 players **Crazy blokes in leotards.** Up-to-date wrestlers, but there's not enough here for any excitement. ★★★



7 (5) Mario Kart 64 Nintendo
Racer ■ 1-4 players **Mario on track** Lonely one-player game, but the time-trial and multi-player are the best ever. ★★★★★



8 (8) GoldenEye 007 Nintendo
Shooter ■ 1-4 players **Spy sim** A believable and immersive 3D world and the best multi-player fun you can buy. ★★★★★



9 (7) V-Rally 99 Infogrames
Racer ■ 1-2 players **Roads and revs** It's a tricky game, pleasing to master and there are a wealth of challenges to sink your teeth into. ★★★★★



10 (-) WipEout 64 Midway
Racing ■ 1-4 players **Funky face-flapper** Plenty of weapons and lovely graphics, but floaty and temperamental vehicles. ★★★



11 (12) Super Mario 64 Nintendo
3D platformer ■ 1 player **Welcome to Mario's world...** Huge levels, sublime controls and immersive gameplay. ★★★★★



12 (9) F1 World Grand Prix Nintendo
Racer ■ 1-2 players **Play Damon Hill** Looks as good as the real thing and comes with all the stats you'll need. ★★★★★



13 (11) Diddy Kong Racing Rare/Nintendo
Racer ■ 1-4 players **Comedy karting** Superb graphics and an absorbing one-player adventure mode in this top game. ★★★★★



14 (13) Shadows of the Empire Nintendo
Shooter ■ 1 player **Star Wars revelry** A curious mix of styles, including *Doom* and racers, that doesn't really work. ★★★



15 (14) Mission: Impossible Infogrames
Spy sim ■ 1 player **Tom Cruise in 3D roamabout** Not bad looking, but wastes great ideas via its blandness. ★★



16 (15) WWF: Warzone Acclaim
Sports ■ 1-4 players **Leotastic** Looks good, but boring in one-player. Get some mates over and it has lots to offer. ★★★★★



17 (16) International Superstar Soccer '98 Konami
Sports ■ 1-4 players **Goal!** Silky controls, a wealth of options and smooth football. ★★★★★



18 (17) F-Zero X Nintendo
Racer ■ 1-4 players **Speedy space race** The fastest, smoothest racer in the world. Sublime handling, horrendously difficult tracks. ★★★★★



19 (19) Lylat Wars Nintendo
Shooter ■ 1-4 players **Foxy magic** Easy, and would have benefited from a level select, but it's a well-crafted blast. ★★★★★



20 (-) Yoshi's Story Nintendo
Platformer ■ 1 player **2D dino antics** Few fresh ideas and lack of challenge, but dig deeper and difficulty arises. ★★★★★

WATCH OUT FOR

Five games destined for Top 20 greatness sooner rather than later:



Micro Machines 64 Turbo
Driving ■ 1-8 players
■ Codemasters **Aged toy car racing** Top-down driving that's renowned for its unequalled multi-player fun. Unfortunately, it's almost too simple, and it has aged considerably. ★★★



Mario Party
Board game ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **Bring your own controller** A traditional board game featuring all your favourite Nintendo characters and a plethora of original and enjoyable multi-player sub games. Not for solo gamers, but a laugh a minute with friends. ★★★★★



South Park
Shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Oh my God! It's rubbish!** A particularly cynical cash-in at the expense of fans of the show. ★★



NFL Blitz
Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ GT
Interactive **US footy arcade-style** A simple, accessible version of The Sport That Will Never Be Popular Over Here. Cut-down teams, basic rules, lots of violence and an emphasis on action rather than stop-start gameplay, creates bloody, violent fun. ★★★★★



Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA
Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ GT
Interactive **Rollicking racer** An instantly playable arcade racer that takes you through a garishly coloured and shortcut-laden series of US tracks, dispensing with any pretence of realism along the way. Fun, and handles well. ★★★★★

STAB IN THE BACK

Nasty twist

N64's *Chameleon Twist* really is crap.



■ N64 ■ Platform
■ 1-4 player
■ Infogrames
Terrible tongue twisting tedium
■ With its loveable bug-eyed central character using his extendible tongue to pull himself around the brightly-coloured levels, *Chameleon Twist* is difficult to hate. That is, until you start playing it. After just a few minutes of slow, frustrating, unsatisfying progress, you realise that your life would be infinitely more pleasurable had you bought an empty N64 box instead. Or even an N64 box full of pooh.

If *Legend of Zelda* represents the peak of camera efficiency in 3D games, *Chameleon Twist* is the 300-metre-deep underground cavern with spikes at the bottom. Attempt to get a better look at the next platform to jump to, and the camera will stubbornly fight back, no matter how frequently

you prod the button to swing it round. Difficult precision jumps are turned into blind leaps of faith, and even simply walking forwards is best done at a snail's pace, in case the camera suddenly reveals a gaping chasm right beneath your toes.

Despite the fact that the claustrophobic levels all take place indoors (which should give the N64 less to draw and afford it time to move everything more quickly) the game's as jerky as a child's first steps. And willing your character to respond to button-presses made half an hour ago simply isn't any fun.

Given that the game features puzzles that wouldn't fool a mollusc, the camera and the syrupy movement are the only things preventing you from finishing the game in less time than it takes to boil an egg. So, in a strange masochistic kind of way, you find yourself glad for their inadequacies. Avoid.

AND THE REST...

Aero Fighters Assault

■ Flight sim ■ 1-2 players
■ Konami **Sky-based shoot-'em-up from the *Pilotwings* team.** Aerial dogfights against massive aircraft and submarines, but chock full of unforgivable flaws and levels you can complete in your tea-break. ★★★

All Star Baseball

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Realistic bat-on-ball action** Wide smiles all round for baseball fans, with smooth-looking players and gorgeous backgrounds. It's more of a straight sim than most other titles, and a lot more thoughtful and challenging as a result. ★★★

Automobili Lamborghini

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **Drive around racetracks** A lack of options, decent courses and proper handling add up to an experience worth forgetting. ★★★

Blast Corps

■ Blast-'em-up ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo/Rare **Utilise a variety of vehicles to smash up buildings.** A truly unique game (the closest comparison is *Godzilla* emulator *Rampage*), and if you think knocking down buildings sounds like great fun, then you're right, especially when you have plenty of fantastically inventive vehicles to control. Too simple to complete, but the additional goals will have you tearing hair out from all over your body. Yes, even there. ★★★★★

Body Harvest

■ RPG/shooter ■ 1 player
■ Gremlin **Bug-blasting, B-movie invasion; lots of aliens** Loads of weapons, 100 vehicles to drive around in, and five varied levels single out this interesting blaster. The graphics are ropey, and the character dialogue terrible, but the mix of RPG and intense, panicky alien shooting works a treat. ★★★★★

Bomberman 64

■ Platformer ■ 1-4 players
■ Hudson/Nintendo **Bomb-based maze antic.** The one-player game's awful and the multi-player is in ruins. ★★

Buck Bumble

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ Ubisoft **Honey bee-based shooting** Mission-based shooter with puzzle elements. There's a varied bunch of enemies, but the levels just aren't involving. ★★★

Bust-A-Move 3 DX

■ Puzzler ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Multi-coloured spherical fun** So simple, and yet so utterly absorbing, this bubble-bursting sequel wipes the floor with most other puzzlers. There's a new four-player mode, and a ton of other options and challenges, although the story mode is a smidgen too easy. ★★★★★
Or try: *Bust-A-Move 2* ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim ■ Addictive bubble-matching puzzler. ★★★★★

Chameleon Twist

■ Platformer ■ 1-4 players
■ Ocean/JSS **Get about with your tongue** Interesting platformer, but the camera and simplicity damage it. ★★

Clayfighter 63 1/3

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Interplay **Plasticine beat-'em-up** Tries to be funny. ★

Cruis'n USA

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **Lacklustre racing** Too easy, too samey and far too stupid. ★

Dark Rift

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ Vic Tokai **Dark beat-'em-up** Dark they say, and dark it is. There are some good graphics beneath the blackness, but there's a lack of the kind of moves and inventiveness that you'll find in *Fighter's Destiny*. ★★★

Doom 64

■ First-person shooter ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive **Seminal PC shooter** Nothing wrong with this conversion, but the alien-blasting gameplay has been knocking about too long to push the N64 in any way. ★★

Dual Heroes

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Hudson **Boring robots fighting** A good complement of moves, but no challenge in one-player. ★★

Duke Nukem 64

■ Shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ GT Interactive **Bad taste alien gunplay** No bare-breasted ladies this time, but still plenty of death and destruction, and a decent four-player deathmatch mode. But isn't there a better first-person shooter out there? Some James Bond licenced thing or something? ★★★★★

Extreme G

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Futuristic racer to melt your face.** *Turok*-style misting enables this to run at a phenomenal speed, and pounding along tracks with 90-degree turns while beautiful scenery flicks past is a pure adrenaline rush. ★★★★★

F1 Pole Position

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Ubisoft **Disappointing driving** Schumacher and friends shouldn't have to put up with poor handling and terrible pop-up like this. ★★

Fighters Destiny

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Ocean **Laydeez and-ah gentlemen, we present the world's best N64 fighter...** Well-defined characters and plenty of moves make this, by default, the N64's *Tekken*. As with so many N64 games, it's too easy, but the excellent range of challenges ensures longevity. ★★★★★
Or try: *Bio Freaks* ■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive/Midway ■ Arm-attachment beat-'em-up. ★★

Forsaken

■ First-person shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim **Futuristic space-tunnel-hoverbike-shoot-'em-up thing** The controls let this one down, but it's the most frantic and absorbing shoot-'em-up you'll find. Each tunnel is filled with robotic baddies to take out with your big gun, while you try not to smash into the walls and die horribly. The graphics, with their impressive lighting techniques, will even impress your Mum. ★★★★★

Gex 64: Enter the Gecko

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ GT Interactive **Rubbish reptilian roam-about** Laughable. ★

GT64

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Ocean **Another racer to forget about** Ocean won't fool anyone with more pop-up than my Nan's toaster and visuals that make it look like someone's sneezed on the screen. ★★

Hexen

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ Midway **Early goblin battler** Shoddy conversion of *Doom* that uses magic spells instead of guns. ★★

Iggy's Reckin' Balls

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Incredibly ugly spheres roll for their lives** Racing without cornering. It doesn't work. ★★

Knife Edge

■ Shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ Microware **Into-the-screen gun action** Boring. ★

Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside

■ Sports ■ 1-2 player
■ Nintendo **Basketball, but good** Effectively the *Madden* of basketball games, as it provides an easy-to-use control system, coupled with gameplay that behaves properly. But who the hell is Kobe Bryant? ★★★★★

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

■ RPG ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **The best game in the world ever** You can't write the word "Miyamoto" without following it up with "has created another masterpiece" – it's in the rules. Keeping all the traditional *Zelda* hallmarks and wrapping them up in a beautifully realised 3D world, this platformy RPG makes it worth buying an N64. The wandering about, talking, fighting and cut-scenes have been tweaked and tuned until they're perfect. ★★★★★

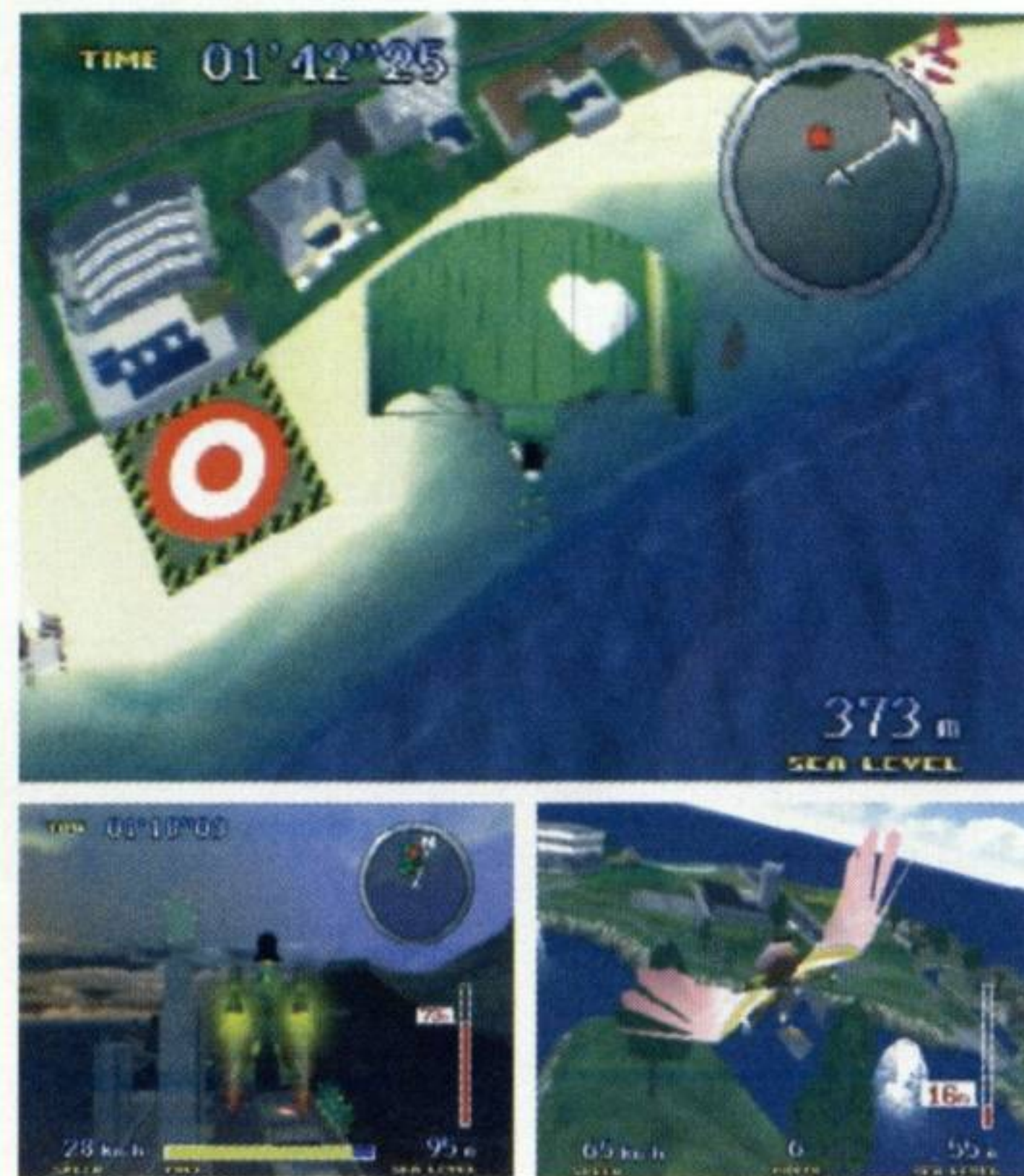
Madden 64

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ EA **Another version of the ubiquitous US football series** Looks sparse, especially without the official logos that Quarterback Club offers, but the controls and game mechanics are so intuitive that you'll feel like you actually understand what's going on. Hut! Or something. ★★★★★

Hidden Gem | Have you played this N64 classic?

Pilotwings 64

■ Flying ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo



Turn those flying dreams into reality. Kind of

■ Ever dreamt about flying? Well that's exactly the kind of thrill that *Pilotwings 64* seeks to recreate. A mesmerising mix of hang-gliding, gyrocopting and rocket-belted, at turns horribly difficult and beautifully soothing, *Pilotwings* overloads your eyeballs with some stunning visuals. You can view the curvature of an entire island, or a flag on a hotel sitting on it, but – cruelly – you only get a "free flight" option when you've tackled at least some of the missions. There's a bewildering range of challenges (such as photographing oil rigs) and they're all guaranteed to have you banging your head against the TV in frustration. And you can have all this for only £20, right now. ★★★★★

Mischief Makers

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo/Treasure **Old-school 2D platformer action** Mad as you like, and decidedly old school, but absolutely top-notch platforming action. Well-crafted levels, coupled with difficult-to-learn but effective controls, make for a whole crate full of fun. So who said 2D platformers were dead? ★★★★★

Mortal Kombat 4

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive **Mad, bad blood-filled fist fight** Fighting that's simplistic but a great deal faster than its rivals. An amusingly frantic pace keeps this loads of fun, but it's just too easy to pull off more complicated moves, and there's no innovation. Still a laugh-a-minute fighter, though. ★★★★★
Or try: *MK Mythologies* ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive ■ Beat-'em-up/RPG marriage, but we can't recommend it. ★

Mortal Kombat Trilogy

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ GT **Three *Mortal Kombats* rolled into one.** Diabolical, even given that you get three offerings in one package. ★

Mystical Ninja

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Konami **Surreal adventure with a blue-haired maniac** More of an RPG-platform game than anything – the fundamental unfolding of the story is coupled with a range of *Mario*-style platforming tasks, and is all the better for it. The only real downer here is that once you've completed it, there's probably not enough to keep you coming back. ★★★★★

Multi-Racing Championship

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Ocean/Imagineer **Average racing** Far too easy and the handling is awry. Why can't anyone get the damn graphics right on these racing games? ★★

Nagano Winter Olympics

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Konami **Simulation of snow sport** Utterly boring. ★

NBA Hangtime

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ GT **Basketball again.** Strip away 80% of the players and you get this take-turns-to-score farce. ★★

NBA Jam '99

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Option-heavy basketball sim** Looks good, plays fast and contains enough options to enable you to shape the game to your requirements. It's tricky – defending, in particular, is a nightmare – but a sports game that's realistically difficult is a refreshing change. ★★★★★

NBA Pro '98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Konami **Anyone for basketball?** Another sports game for the minority audience. A lack of any intelligence in the computer-controlled players, along with a general list of niggling faults, lets this one down. ★★

NFL Quarterback Club '99

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim **Stateside soccer** Visually more detailed than the real thing. Tackling and defending are made as user-friendly as possible – only the passing system causes frustration. ★★★★★

NHL Breakaway '98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Another ice hockey game** This sim fails to present anything that's either exciting or polished. The computer-controlled players are decent opponents, but you'll be completely scuppered by the speed of the game. ★★★

Pilotwings 64

■ Flight sim ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Fly about a bit and cry at the difficulty of it all** Along with *Mario 64*, this is the game that launched the N64. It boasts beautiful and the realistic scenery, coupled with some of the hardest tasks this side of Mensa – including pushing balloons to targets and piloting a jet-pack through an underground tunnel – make for a truly unique flying experience. Where else would you get to spring-boot up to a terrifying 100 feet? ★★★★★

Quake 64

■ First-person shooter
■ 1-2 players ■ GT
■ Interactive **PC owners have less to laugh about** There's nothing wrong with this version, but with no more than two players able to take part in the classic roaming blaster at any one time, the multi-playing that made the original such great fun is now taking rather a back seat to the monotonous one-player game. ★★★

Rakuga Kids

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Konami **Pastel-based punch-'em-up** The fighting hiding underneath these crayoned crazies is surprisingly solid, even if it's often rather difficult to work out whether you've made contact with your opponent. ★★★

Rampage World Tour

■ Smash-'em-up ■ 1-3 players ■ Midway **Your very own Japanese B-movie in a box** Taking control of King Kong and smacking down buildings provides short-term enjoyment – especially in three-player mode – but it won't last long. ★★★

Robotron 64

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ Midway **Primitive shoot-'em-up reborn** Admirable attempt that ends up dull and repetitive. ★★

San Francisco Rush

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ GTI
■ **Big cars and mean streets** The handling and controls simply aren't what you'd expect from a PlayStation racer, and you've got the Cellophane-over-the-screen blurry visuals we've come to expect from the N64. But it's fast, handles excellently and has a top two-player mode. ★★★★★

Snowboard Kids

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo
■ **Mario Kart for the snowboard generation** This looks, sounds and plays in a simplistic way, but it's packed full of fun and liable to make you a load of new friends if you show them the multi-player. ★★★

Spacestation: Silicon Valley

■ Puzzler ■ 1 player
■ Take 2 **Take control of animals (with nasty side)** Kill animals and then manipulate their bodies to solve tricky puzzles. The graphics do their job well, the controls and puzzles are great, and the attention to detail is second to none. ★★★★★

Starshot: Space Circus Fever

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Infogrames **Weird French 3D jumping about** As usual with 3D games, the necessary unwieldy camera and over-fiddly controls are present and correct. You'll also find a great deal of wandering between one place and the next. ★★★

Tetrisphere

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **Tetris, but transferred to a 3D sphere** Less like the original *Tetris* idea than the name would suggest. Trying to manoeuvre blocks into a sphere to free little robots is a great way to get incredibly annoyed and bring on a lovely thumping headache. ★★★

Top Gear Overdrive

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players ■ THE
■ **Devilish driving** The handling's a bit on the iffy side, and it's all slightly unfair, but the track design, visuals and vehicles means that *TGO* serves up a funky four-wheeled treat. ★★★

Wave Race 64

■ Racer ■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **How jet-ski games should be done** Still astonishing, even though it's over two years since its release in Japan, this title offers water-based frolics that are second to none, even when compared to coin-op titles at a thousand times the price. The tracks are beautifully designed, and the controls are as responsive and intuitive as you'd expect from Nintendo. Just remember to keep a bucket handy for the sea-sickness. ★★★★★

War Gods

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ GT
■ **Primitive shooter** A complete lack of moves and decent characters. ★

Wayne Gretsky 3D Hockey '98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ GT
■ **Interactive Updated version of original ice hockey sim** Fast and smooth enough to make for an accurate interpretation of the too-quick-to-watch sport. ★★★

WCW Vs NWO Revenge

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ THQ **Greasy blokes at it again** A largely unimproved update of *WCW/NOW World Tour*, its main claim to fame being a slew of up-to-date grapplers. Slightly better graphics and a quicker pace, though. ★★★

Wetrix

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ Ocean **Build lakes and fry 'em with fireballs** Much more of a successor to *Tetris* than *Tetrisphere*. Initially as difficult as hell, but stick with it and the clear – if rather limited – tactics become obvious. A *Tetris*-like addiction will then take control of your life. Again. ★★★★★

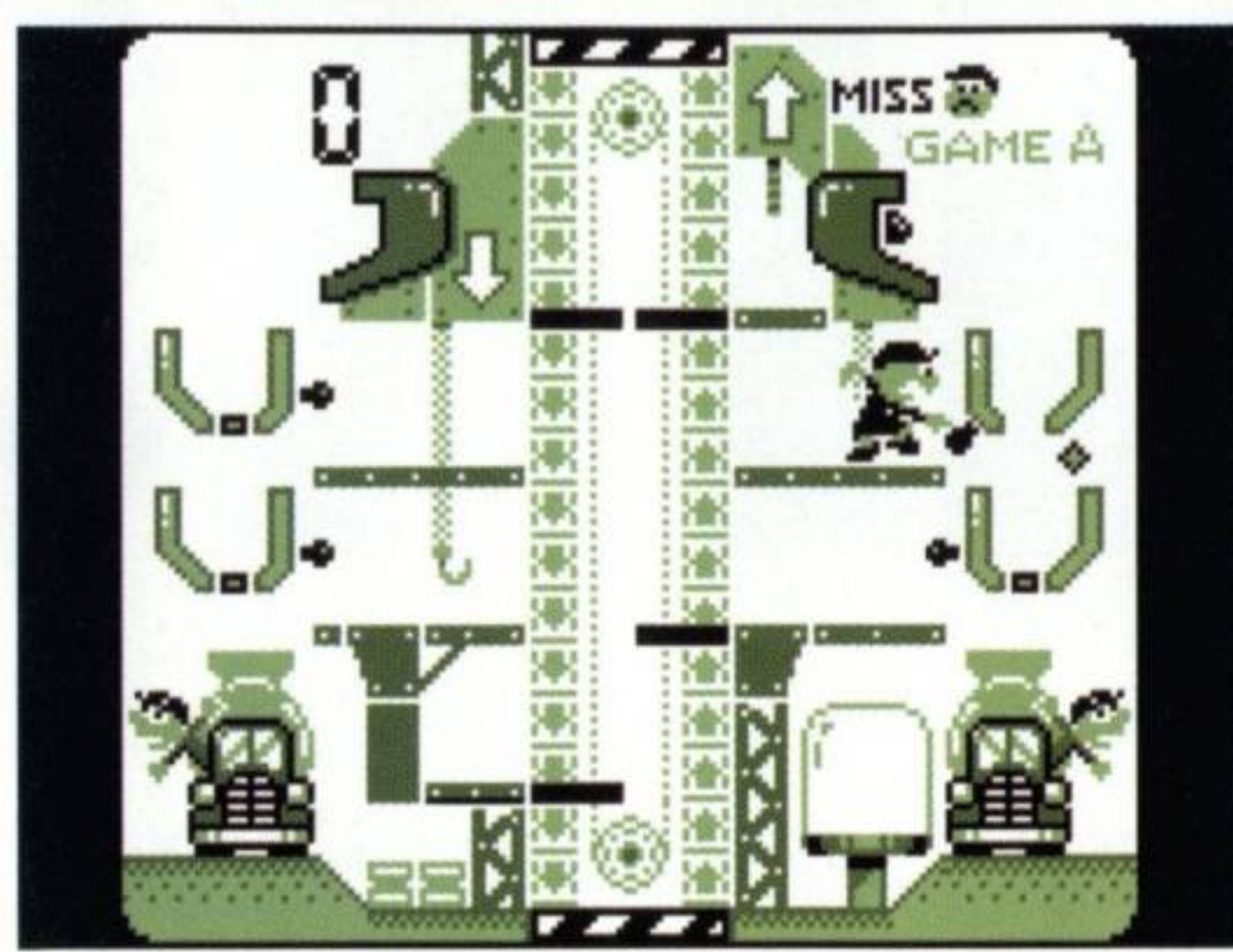
World Cup 98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ EA
■ **Sports A football game with a big cock on the box** The sluggish controls and rather disappointing visuals mean you'll be left with a sense of bitter disappointment. ★★★

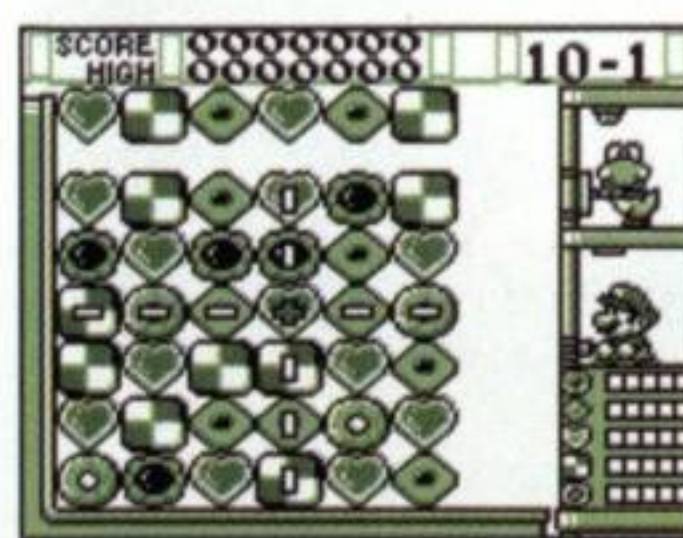
XG2: Extreme G 2

■ Racer ■ 1-4 players
■ Acclaim **Space-age motorbike sequel** Iguana hasn't done much to improve on the faults of the original game – you never feel completely in control, and the frame rate still dips dangerously low. ★★★

Game Boy Top 5



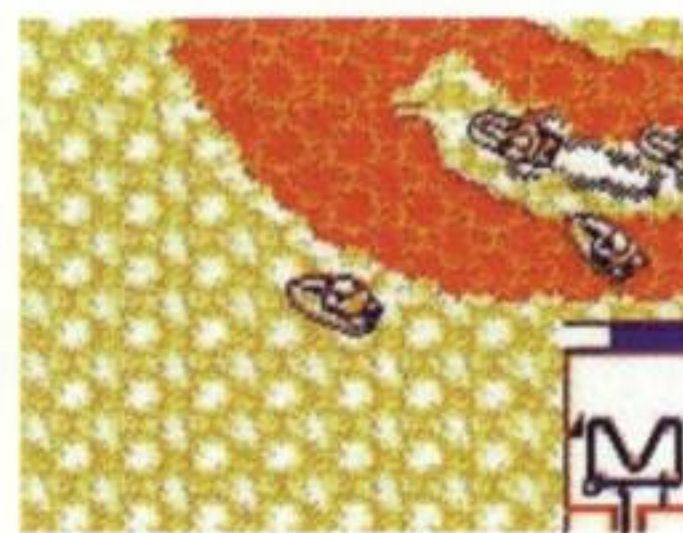
1 (1) Game boy Gallery Nintendo
■ Compilation ■ 1 player **Five game-and-watch items** Bundling together five ageing unplayable handheld curiosities was never going to be a good idea. ★



2 (2) Mario and Yoshi Nintendo
■ Puzzler ■ 1 player **Nintendo Tetris** An original brain-bender with a perfect learning curve and the best Nintendo characters. ★★★★★



3 (3) Zelda - Link's Awakening Nintendo
■ RPG ■ 1 player **The endearing elf in B&W** Involving plot, beautiful graphics and a big emphasis on engaging the player. ★★★★★



4 (4) Wave Race Nintendo
■ Racing ■ 1-4 players **Jet-ski sim** Doesn't reach the standards of the N64 version. Near-impossible to win, but comes with plenty of tracks and intuitive controls. ★★★



5 (-) Star Wars Nintendo
■ Shoot-em-up ■ 1 player **You must face Darth Vader again** 2D platforming with your favourite intergalactic heroes. Nothing new. ★★★

AND THE REST...

720°
■ Sports ■ 1 player
■ Midway **Colour Difficult skate stunting** Skate around town, pulling off stunts that '90s kids have long forgotten. Unfortunately, the Game Boy's D-pad doesn't lend itself well to skateboard action. Disappointing colour, too. ★★★

Bugs and Lola Bunny: Operation Carrotpatch
■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Infogrames ■ **Colour What's up, Doc?** The cast from every Warner Brother's cartoon is present and correct, but the clichéd running and jumping on offer isn't anything new. ★★★

Cool Hand
■ Card games ■ 1 player
■ Take 2 ■ **Colour Card games** Blackjack, solitaire and cribbage in one package. Extensive enough, but why not buy a pack of cards and save your cash for the gaming tables? ★★★

Donkey Kong Land II: Diddy's Quest
■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Miniature monkey stories** Tries hard to squeeze the SNES game on to the tiny grey handheld, and doesn't do a bad job. The visuals require you to squint a bit, but the controls and secrets makes it a worthy *Mario*-style jump-about. ★★★★★

Game & Watch Gallery

■ Compilation ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Four titles in one** Featuring *Fire*, *Manhole*, *Octopus* and *Oil Panic*, these games are simple fun, but weren't the original handheld games always a bit rubbish? ★★★

Game & Watch Gallery 2

■ Compilation ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Handheld retro collection** '80s *Game & Watch* classics *Parachute*, *Helmet*, *Chef*, *Vermin* and *Donkey Kong*, bundled together in both classic and updated guises. They're all surprisingly enjoyable, especially the full-colour versions with *Mario* characters. ★★★★★

Harvest Moon

■ RPG ■ 1-2 players ■ THE
■ **Colour Down on the farm...** Clear your land, till the soil, plant some seeds – there aren't many farming sims out there, but *Harvest Moon* proves that they should be more popular than *Lara*. Managing the animals and crops is trickier than you might think and the detail is astonishing, but it's the amount of stuff to do that'll have you gluing the Game Boy to your hand for a month. ★★★★★

Hollywood Pinball

■ Pinball ■ 1 player ■ Take 2
■ **Colour Flippin' average** Some acceptable ball movement but seven sparse, uninteresting tables. ★★

James Bond 007

■ RPG ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Shaken or stirred?** Nothing remarkably innovative about this top-down Game Boy RPG, but it's nice to see something like this set in the modern world, even if it is a tad simple. The sparse mazes are rather short and somewhat disappointing, but the emphasis on sneaking about is very welcome. ★★★★★

Killer Instinct

■ Fighter ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Non-violent fight** As with the arcade and Nintendo 64 versions, *KI* relies much more on combos than the other fighters, meaning that play sometimes gets tedious. Another problem is that the computer opponents are very unforgiving. On the plus side, the graphics are rendered, and thus very nice, but the lack of moves (thanks to the Game Boy's lack of knob) hinders the fun. ★★★

Mole Mania

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **Puzzle/RPG combo** It won't take long to finish, even though it's almost impossibly hard in places, but that said, it's cute, it's funny and it'll have you stuck to your Game Boy until you get to the end. Top fun. ★★★★★

Montezuma's Return

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Take 2 ■ **Colour Unknown quantity, Max, returns** A little character jumping about. Too retro to be good. ★★

Mortal Kombat 4

■ Fighting ■ 1 player
■ Midway **Disappointing fight-'em-up** Old-style, with a very jerky feel. ★

NFL Blitz

■ 1 player ■ Midway
■ **Arcade-style US football** Fast 'n' furious, with surprising depth, but – incredibly – the players suffer from the early-'80s problem of flickering on and off, which makes tracking them impossible. ★★★

Power Quest

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Sunsoft ■ **Colour Odd RPG/fight mixture** At heart this is a pure beat-'em-up. The ability to upgrade yer robot fighter is a welcome addition, and the fighting is complex, but generally it's only mediocre. ★★★

Rampage World Tour

■ Arcade action ■ 1-2 players ■ Midway **Old-skool arcade game returns.** Control King Kong and smash up buildings. Boring. ★

Street Fighter II

■ Fighter ■ Nintendo
■ 1 player **Classic small-scale fighting** The graphics are great, but all come at the expense of speed and control, since you have only two buttons to play with. Very difficult, too. ★★★

Super Mario Land

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **The pipe man cometh** One of the Game Boy's original releases, and *Super Mario* still excels in most areas, despite its now having reached a very elderly nine years old. The graphics are simple, but the subtlety of control and excellent level designs have been carried over to the bijou Nintendo with aplomb. ★★★★★

Super R.C. Pro-Am

■ Racing ■ 1-4 players
■ Nintendo **Dinky driving** This re-release of Rare's frantic remote-controlled car racing game looks primitive, but the races are a joy, with the chance to use weapons against the ruthless CPU opponents and upgrade your car as you go. ★★★★★

Tamagotchi

■ Creature-cossetting ■ 1-2 players ■ Bandai **A blob of your own** The original keyring concept extended with a wealth of options. For the kids. ★★

Tennis

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **Racquet fun** Despite its simplicity, *Tennis* is one of the most enjoyable such sims on any platform. With an addictive two-player option, a hard-to-beat computer player and some very intuitive controls, this is a great game if you want to avoid real-life John McEnroe-style ill-placed-abuse nonsense. ★★★★★

Tetris DX

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ Nintendo **Brick drop return shock!** The graphics, sounds and modes might have changed, but this is still the same old *Tetris*, known world-wide as the most addictive version of the Russian puzzler. Stemming the rising wall of bricks is, in fact, all the better for being able to save your high scores at long last, but sadly the game doesn't work too well in black and white. ★★★★★

The Smurfs' Nightmare

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Infogrames ■ **Colour Please don't sing** Another simple Game Boy platformer with little, if any, innovation. It looks lovely, though, making full use of the Game Boy's "Color". ★★★

Turok

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Acclaim **Dinky dinosaur hunt** Absolutely massive, and very difficult. However, the quite shocking lack of game originality – nabbing bits from platformers left, right and centre, and dressing them up in fancy graphics – counts against it. ★★★

Tweety & Sylvester – Breakfast on the Run

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Infogrames **Canary capers** Impressive visuals, but the 2D puzzle-solving is an insult. ★★

Wario Land II

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ Nintendo **Mario's arch-enemy returns** Features a novel "can't die" aspect and insists on your collecting all of the coins from each level, creating fist-clenching difficulty in the process. It's top quality – fiendishly challenging, and breathes new life into platforming. ★★★★★

WWF Warzone

■ Sports ■ 1 player
■ Acclaim **Men in Pants action** A bit of a looker, but jerky animation and finger-snapping controls. ★★

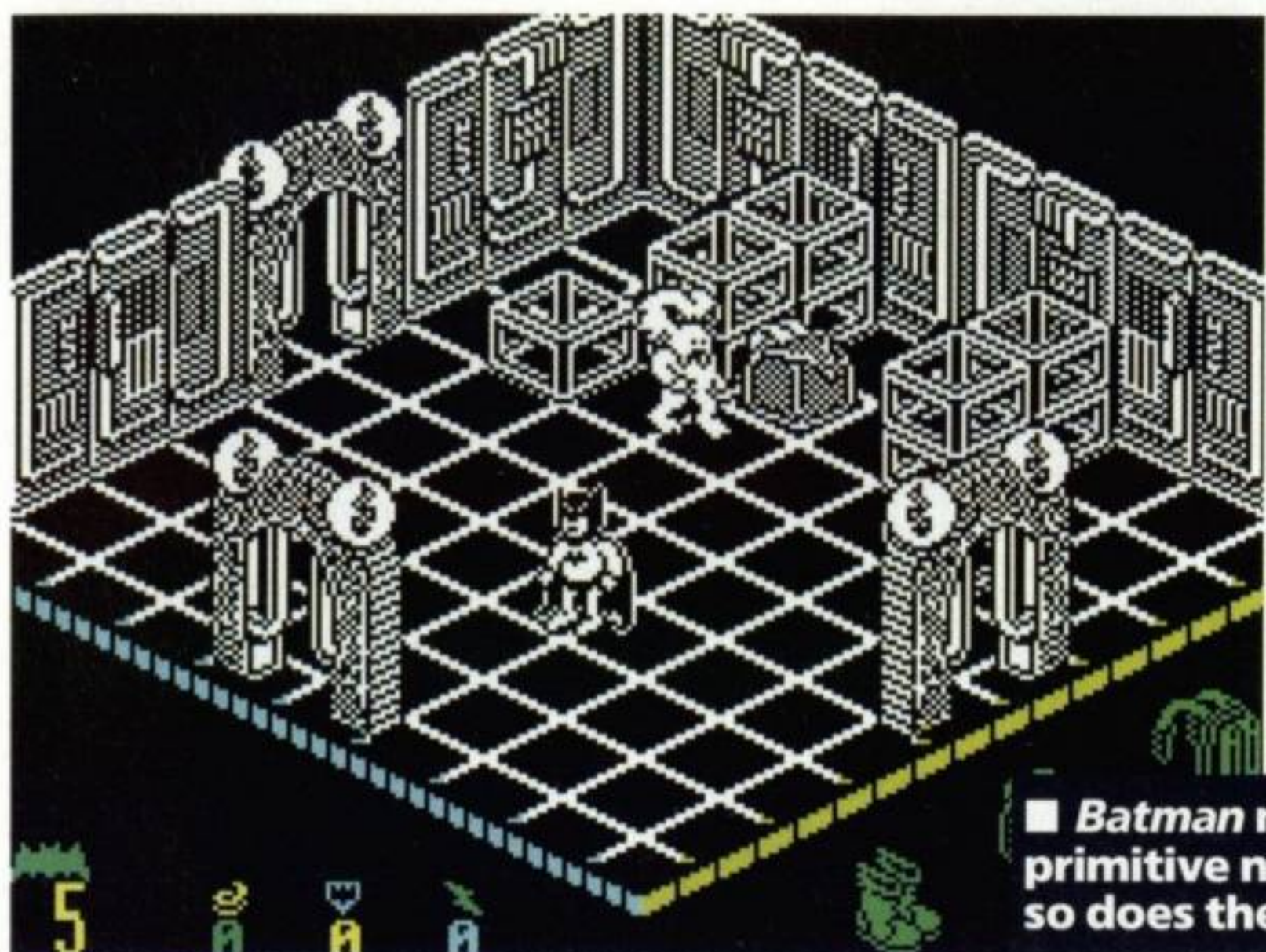
NEXT MONTH

■ Right, that's over 18,697 words (count 'em, if you don't believe us), all designed to tell you about the best (and worst) games currently on sale at your local games shop. And we'll be doing it all again next month. We simply can't wait.

Compiled by | Mark Green

April 1986

Batman! Clive Sinclair! Sam Fox! They were all knocking about **13 years ago.**



■ Batman may look primitive now, but then so does the TV show.



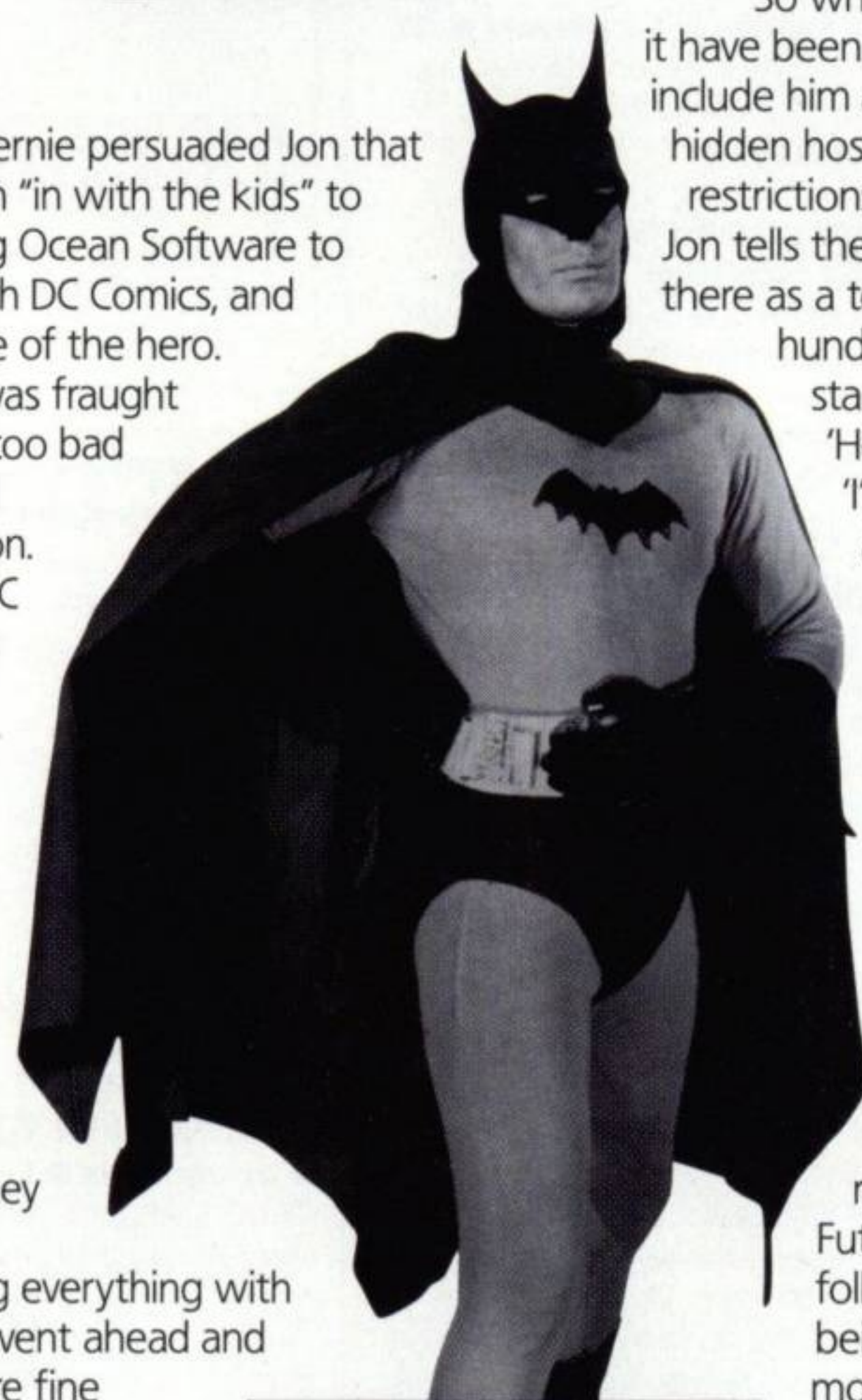
and rescue Robin – was head-and-shoulders above *Knight Lore*. The graphics bore little resemblance to the Batman legend, but were much more chunky, colourful and smoothly animated than *Ultimate's*. "Sometimes it was tricky to know what the stuff I was doing would look like in the game," describes Bernie, "so me and Jon had a system where I would do 20 graphics, and Jon would choose the good ones". According to Jon, "Bernie did sort of rely on me to say whether his stuff was cack or brilliant. Needless to say, most of what he did was fantastic."

But it was the puzzles that secured Batman's place in the swear-boxes of thousands, with vital objects hidden behind walls and perfect jumps required at every step. "I had a lot of fun designing the levels," says Jon. "It's just the sort of challenge I thrive on – I can do about 20 puzzles in the style of *Batman* a day. Unfortunately, I was often too devious – there was one early location that was just too hard, and I met people who told me they'd given up completely at this point."

So what happened to Robin? Wouldn't

it have been more faithful to the series to include him as something other than a hidden hostage? Memory and design restrictions were blamed at the time, but Jon tells the real story. "He was going to be there as a teaser, only appearing every few hundred games. It was intended to start those arguments such as 'Honestly, I have seen Robin!' and 'I've played it through and I assure you there is no Robin!', with some people having screenshots and being accused of doctoring them. Sadly, we ran out of memory, so he was left out."

Even without Robin, *Batman* flew into the number-one spot in the Spectrum charts on the day of its release, and sold almost 60,000 copies (and another 60,000 when it was re-released at a cheaper price). Future non-Ritman *Batman* games followed – the most well-known being the tediously formulaic movie tie-in – but true games fans will always hold the chubby little isometric 3D *Batman* closest to their hearts.



■ The Caped Crusader. "Is that camp enough for you. Eh?"

Holy isometric 3D!

Jon Ritman, having watched his fortunes rise with the successful football sim *Match Day*, sat wide-eyed as *Ultimate's* Spectrum game *Knight Lore* played on his TV screen. This was what he'd been waiting for. His dream had always been to create a game with Disney-style graphics, but his artist friend Bernie Drummond insisted that the pitiful storage space of 1986's computers wouldn't allow it. *Knight Lore*, despite looking primitive today, had gone some way to achieving the impossible with its revolutionary isometric 3D graphics, and Jon immediately set about "borrowing" all its ideas for a Caped Crusader game.

B-grade celebrity. But Bernie persuaded Jon that Batman was far enough "in with the kids" to warrant a game, leading Ocean Software to negotiate the rights with DC Comics, and giving birth to the game of the hero.

The development was fraught with danger. "It wasn't too bad compared with licensed games today," admits Jon. "About the only thing DC Comics objected to was my naming power-ups either 'Super Powers' or 'Bat Pills' – I was told that Batman was neither a super-hero nor a drug addict." Bernie became frustrated with this at points. "I just wanted to get it all done and then change things if they didn't like it, but Ocean would insist on checking everything with DC. In the end, we just went ahead and finished it, and they were fine about the whole thing."

Technically, the finished game – a quest to collect Bat-objects

It was 1986, and Batman hadn't yet made his dramatic leap to the big screen. He was still the cultish star of comic books and the shifty tights-wearing hero of the tongue-in-cheek TV show. Jon had doubts that a successful game could be based around such a

Batman will test your arcade/timing skills to the limit but it'll also burn your brain out with its bewildering range of tricks and traps.

■ From a *Your Sinclair* review of *Batman*. Before they'd seen the game, oddly.

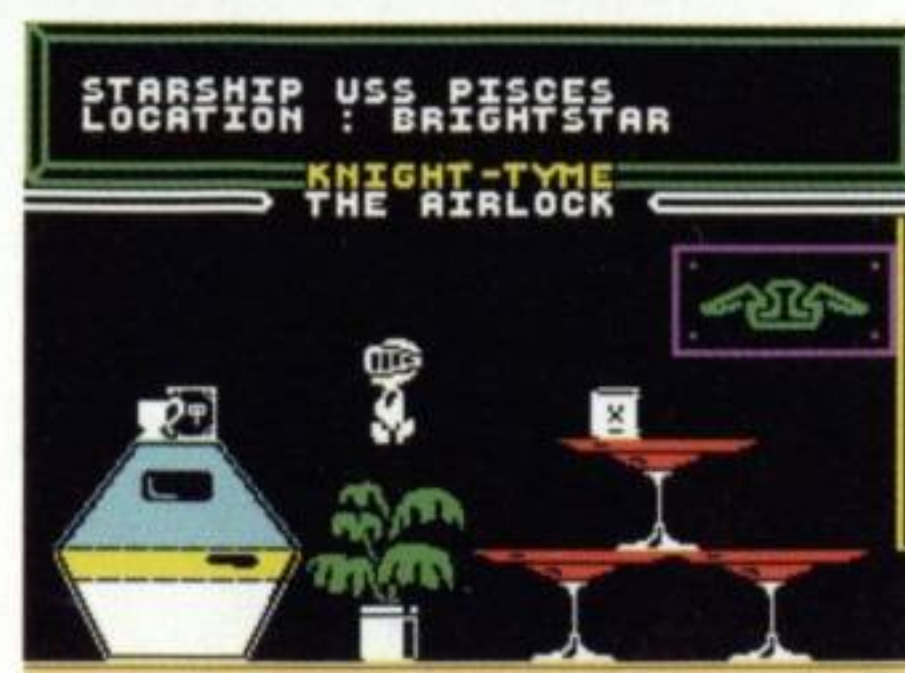
Games of the month | These were state of the art back in '86. Please try not to laugh.



Alter Ego
System: C64
Publisher: Activision
■ Videogames consistently fail miserably in their quest to simulate real life, and this was no exception. Its attempt to replicate the decisions and directions that an average person's life contains was unique, but ultimately about as interesting as your own tedious day-to-day existence.



Heavy on the Magick
System: Spectrum
Publisher: Gargoyle
■ A traditional text-based adventure game "jazzed up" with huge, blocky graphics. An admirable attempt to make adventure games more mainstream, but Gargoyle's earlier *Tir Na Nog* and *Dun Darach* were much better.



Knight Tyme
System: Spectrum
Publisher: MAD
■ The second in the *Magic Knight* trilogy proper ("prologue" game *Finders Keepers* was the very first to feature the white knight), this platformer/RPG combination revolved around taking objects to the right room and swapping them with others, and... er, that was it.



good. *Your Sinclair* magazine called it "all a bit sad really," and when ex-Amstrad employee William Poel stated that users could now sleep soundly in the knowledge that "the keys won't drop out, and the products will be available when they are announced" in a not-so-subtle dig at the Spectrum's reliability record, the magazine reacted with "Worra crawler!" No-one was looking forward to Amstrad tinkering with the Speccy.

Their fears were partly justified. The 128k Spectrum (a normal Spectrum with more memory) gained a

proper clattery keyboard, a dirt-cheap cassette player, and joystick ports that restricted the machine to using only Amstrad-manufactured joysticks. Soon after, the +3 Spectrum arrived "boasting" a three-inch diskette player (the three-inch disks were big, ugly, and sold mainly by – surprise – Amstrad). The Spectrum had gone from bedroom programmer's hero to a cynical attempt to monopolise Spectrum owner's wallets.

For many, the last straw was the release of Amstrad's first own-brand Sinclair machine – the Sinclair PC200. This scaled-down, four-colour PC, designed for games but struggling to run a decent word processor, had Sinclair magazine writers smiling through their tears as they half-heartedly trumpeted it to be "The future of games machines" and "A brave leap forward for the Sinclair brand".

Amstrad soon stopped production of the +3 entirely. Disk releases all but ceased and, in the face of competition from the new 16-bit computers and the console revival, the humble 8-bit Speccy was quietly sidelined. Sugar soon forget all about it, concentrating instead on satellite dishes and Tottenham Hotspur, leaving the games industry with only a warning – if you develop a multi-million pound, award-winning, universally loved computer, beware of anyone who bears a slight resemblance to Jeremy Beadle.

■ "Drive! Drive! They'll be ripping the wing mirrors off next!"

Sugar and spice

Sir Clive Sinclair's disastrously unsuccessful C5 electric buggy had dogged his company, Sinclair Research Ltd, since its release. Its conception and development stretched back to before Sinclair's success with the build-it-yourself ZX80 computer, but the C5's rushed release in 1986 had seen Sir Clive's original vision for the machine compromised and an impressive collection of faults inflicted on gullible owners. Sir Clive lost £7 million and the offshoot company Sinclair Vehicles in the process.

Few expected Sinclair to survive. The city was nervous at the shakiness of the home computer market, and the papers pounced upon a leak that revealed Sir Clive was looking for a buyer for Sinclair Research and its £15m debts. Media tycoon Robert Maxwell's interest waned once he'd seen the account books, while a temporary rescue package involving the sale of £10 million-worth of ZX Spectrum computers to Dixons wasn't enough. It was left to Alan Sugar – manufacturer of the Sinclair Spectrum's rival, the Amstrad CPC – to buy the rights to Sinclair's products and rescue Clive.

The reaction of the users who'd grown up with Uncle Clive and his friendly computers wasn't

World News Headlines

Signs of the times.

■ The Chernobyl nuclear power station in Russia caught fire, killing 200 people, and creating a toxic cloud that prompted the evacuation of an 18-mile wide area. Nice.

■ A spate of terrorist incidents was linked to Libya, which led the American President to carry out a full-scale bombing of Tripoli, alienating his allies in Europe and causing his popularity to plummet. Sound familiar?

■ Teaching unions in the UK threatened to boycott the new GCSE exams, insisting that more research should be carried out before the new syllabuses were implemented. Nothing changes, eh?

■ The Labour Party embarked on a brave new course, dropping its red flag, abandoning its socialist ideals, and aiming to become a party which would "concentrate more on presentation and image". Hmmm.



■ Get your finger out of there, Kinnock.

Music Charts

19 April 1986

- 1 A Different Corner *George Michael*
- 2 Living Doll *Cliff Richard & The Young Ones*
- 3 Rock Me Amadeus *Falco*
- 4 A Kind Of Magic *Queen*
- 5 Touch Me (I Want Your Body) *Samantha Fox*

■ Information © CIN

Film Charts

19 April 1986

- 1 Absolute Beginners
- 2 Out of Africa
- 3 Jagged Edge
- 4 Fright Night
- 5 A Room With A View

■ Information from Total Film

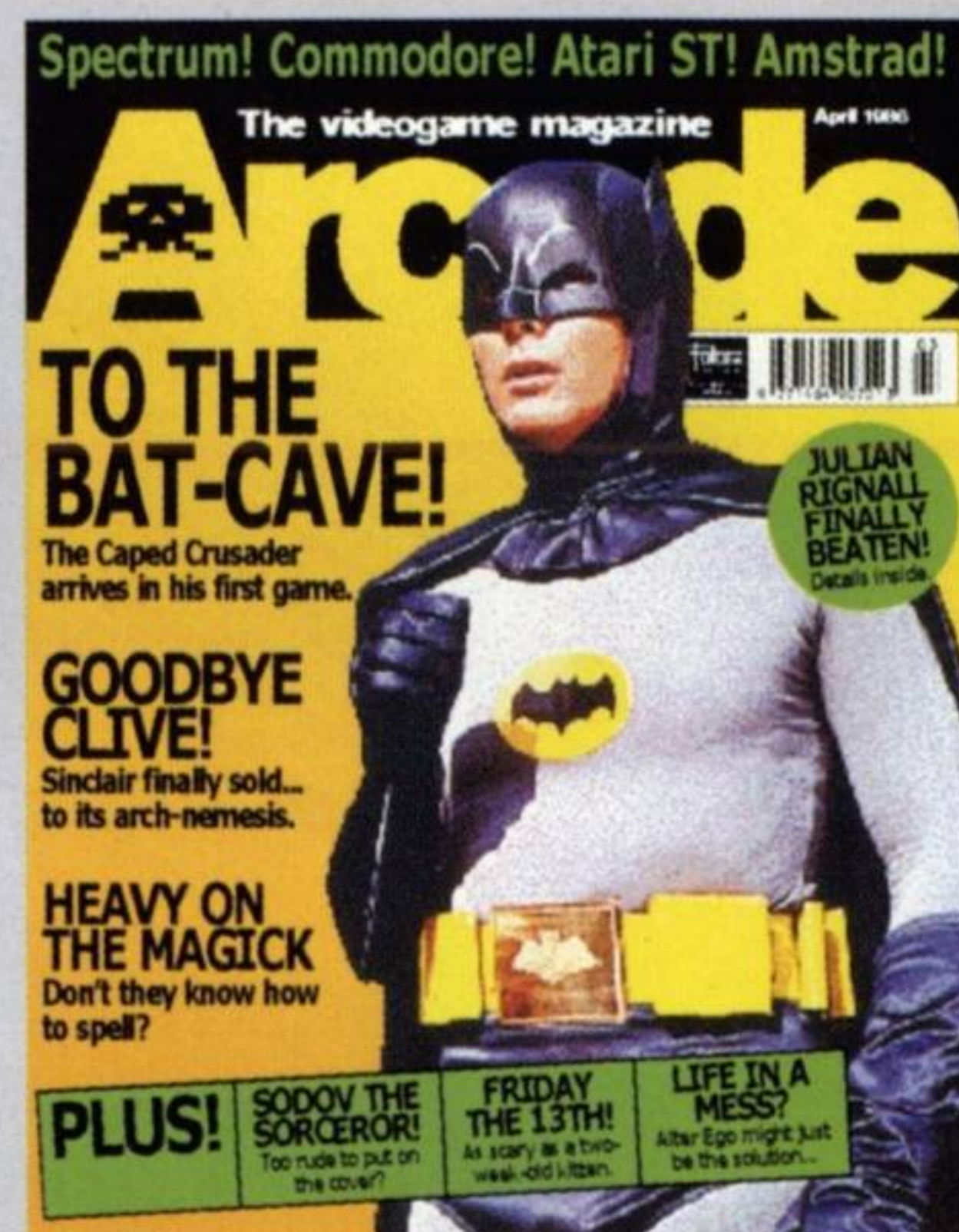
Gaming Round-up | Also going on this month

■ Ex-videogame champion, ex-Zzap!64 magazine editor and occasional *Arcade* columnist Julian Rignall, was soundly trounced on the Commodore 64 version of *Uridium* by the unlikely-sounding Mick O'Reilly. Previous attempts to better Rignall's legendary high scores had been scuppered as contestants were fazed by Julian's extraordinary mullet.

■ Domark announced *Splitting Images*, a puzzle game where players needed to piece together caricatures of celebrities such as Ronald Reagan and Neil Kinnock. It got the company in a whole pot of trouble – the makers of rubbery TV satire *Spitting Image* made noises over the name, until Domark changed it to the far less troublesome *Split Personalities*.



■ Aah, yes, the '80s. Crap, weren't they?



■ Adam West almost outshines Lara in the "big baps" department.

■ No let up for Domark as it released the hilarious *Friday the 13th* game, a spin-off from the film. Programmed by a team more used to developing obscure educational software, the game asked you to round up stickmen and fight off the

eponymous Jason with a big knife. Although it came with fake blood capsules, it aroused more controversy for simply being shit, especially as pressing Fire caused your little man to stab to his left while Jason always came on from the right.

■ Chris Yates and Jon Hare (who would later go on to found Sensible Software) unveiled an unremarkable medieval dinosaur shoot-'em-up, titled *Sodov The Sorcerer*. "It sounded a lot better than 'Go Away The Sorcerer'," said a spokesperson.

Your Sinclair/Gallup Spectrum Top 10

- 1 FA Cup Football *Virgin*
- 2 M.O.V.I.E. *Imagine*
- 3 Skyfox *Ariolasoft*
- 4 Barry McGuigan's Boxing *Activision*
- 5 Incredible Shrinking Fireman *Mastertronic*
- 6 Hypersports *Imagine*
- 7 Winter Games *US Gold*
- 8 Spellbound *Mastertronic*
- 9 Vectron *3D*
- 10 Commando *Elite*

Zzap 64/Commodore 64 Reader's Top 10

- 1 Paradroid *Hewson*
- 2 Uridium *Hewson*
- 3 Mercenary *Novagen*
- 4 Winter Games *US Gold/Epyx*
- 5 Summer Games II *US Gold/Epyx*
- 6 Bounder *Gremlin Graphics*
- 7 Way Of The Exploding Fist *Melbourne House*
- 8 Pitstop II *US Gold/Epyx*
- 9 The Eidolon *Activision*
- 10 Elite *Firebird*

■ PHOTOGRAPHY: PA NEWS, KOBAL COLLECTION



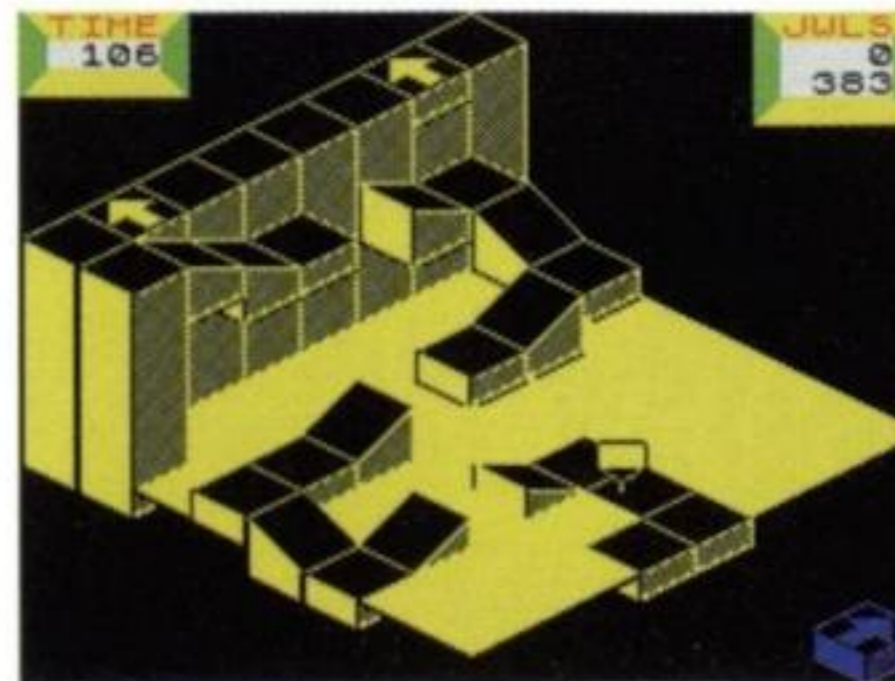
Ping Pong

System: C64
Publisher: Imagine
■ Not the first sport you'd think of converting to home computer, yet it worked bizarrely well. The simplistic nature of the forehand/backhand gameplay (the game would automatically place your bat relative to the ball) made for fast-paced, easy-to-understand action.



Quazatron

System: Spectrum
Publisher: Hewson
■ Heavily influenced by Andrew Braybrook's C64 droid-battling game *Paradroid*, Steve Turner's isometric 3D puzzler featured a lowly droid who had to work his way up through the ranks of the robots around him, before finally settling as top dog. A bit like our editor's illustrious career.



Spindizzy

System: Spectrum
Publisher: Electric Dreams
■ Converted from the PC original, this turn-based strategy game took players beneath the waves to a sinister underwater world populated by scary aliens. The blend of research-based weapons discovery and alien butt-kicking hasn't been bettered since. And that's official.

Great Gaming Moments

Lightning Bolt

Remembered by | **Robin Alway**

Who would have thought? Cutesy **Super Mario Kart** boasts a classic weapon...



Q *quake's Nail Gun. Turok 2's Cerebral Bore. WipEout 2097's Quake Disruptor. All big, scarily named weapons and worthy additions to the Argos catalogue (Genocide/Power Tools section). But they're mere popguns compared to videogaming's finest and funniest weapon. I'm talking about a power-up that inspires devotion and fear in anyone who's glimpsed its ungodly effects. It is, quite simply, Mario Kart's lightning. And no other piece of mountain-leveling or flesh-eviscerating weaponry from videogaming's arsenal can match its effect.*

Mario Kart's lightning is retribution from on high, the wrath of Zeus fused with friend-humiliating slapstick comedy in one

mighty "Kazaam!". Merely having its zig-zag symbol in your item box makes you feel all powerful and decidedly evil. Triggering it sets in motion a chain of devastating events. First, the screen flashes. Next, your opponents spin round, reeling from the shock. Then, most brilliantly, they start to shrink. Within seconds, they're inch-high racers sat on teeny putt-putting go-karts, and the only thing left to do is run them over before the effect wears off.

It's not so much the on-screen effect as what it does to the players sitting beside you that makes it so great. Laugh as they scream and start rocking forward and backwards on their chairs like demented jockeys, trying to squeeze a few more mph out of their microscopic karts. Make the most of it because you'll probably experience it yourself next race: the horrible feeling of helplessness that comes from suddenly being rendered very, very small, the indignity of your character's squeaky new voice, and – worst of all – the painful switch from race leader to also-ran as you're run over, reduced to steamrollered thinness and left to float down to Earth like a sheet of paper. "Warrgrgh!", as Wario would say.

Wanna play?

■ When Nintendo announced it was making a driving game featuring Mario and pals, fresh from the almost-perfect *Super Mario World* on the SNES, people thought the company was mad. But *Super Mario Kart* was one of the finest games of the 16-bit era and is still amazingly playable today (a secondhand SNES and a copy should give you change from £50).

The N64 version (*Mario Kart 64*, £40) is really the one to go for though. It looks great and offers some of the most competitive multi-player gaming yet seen.

But if every triggered lightning bolt is a Great Gaming Moment in miniature, the real master stroke is using it in Wario Stadium, *Mario Kart 64's* best multi-player track. By unleashing lightning at the right moment – just before the jump that leads to the final section of the course – you can bring about a riches-to-rags reversal in fortune for anyone who dares be in front of you. Shrink them with your bolt-from-the-blue at the right moment and their reduced speed won't carry them across the gap. Instead, they'll fall down on to a lower section of the course, a good half lap behind, their race as good as over. The timing is all-important. Fire too early and your opponents can brake before the summit and wait until they warp back to full size. Too late, and they'll make it to the other side. Which is no good at all.

But get it right and you'll triumph and smile at a Great Gaming Moment. **A**

It's like the wrath of Zeus fused to slapstick comedy in one mighty "Kazaam!"

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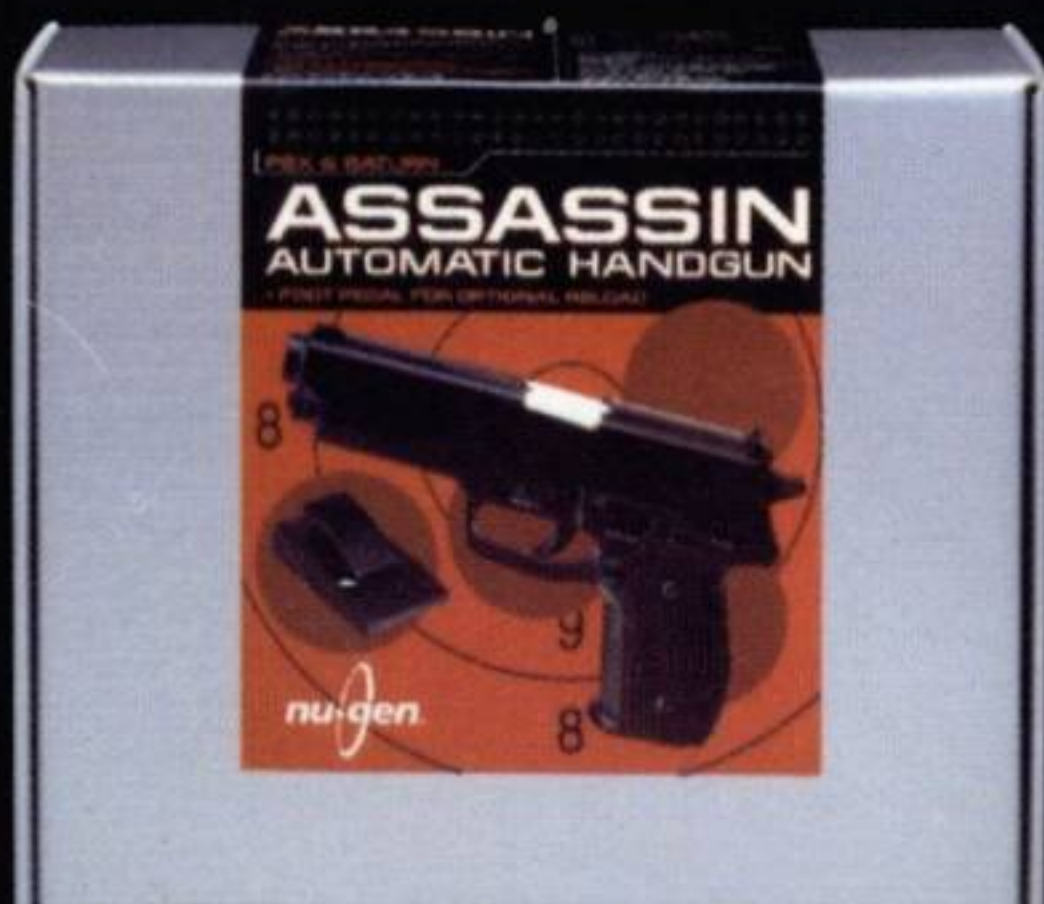
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