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GAMEFAN

NEXT GENERATION GAME MAGAZINE
OLUME 4 • ISSUE 5

AOU SPECIAL REPORT

VIRTUA FIGHTER 3

SWAGMAN
RON RAIN
PANZER ZWEI
FADE TO BLACK
RON BLOOD
CRIMEWAVE
MACHINE HEAD
X-PERTS
LUFIA II
SNATCHER

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FINAL FANTASY VII

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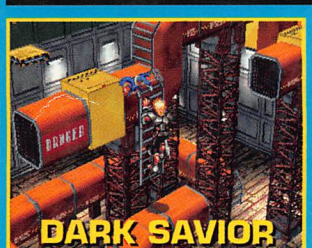

DARK SAVIOR

FIRST LOOK:
TUROK-DINOSAUR HUNTER FOR THE NINTENDO 64

INSIDE GF SPORTS:
KEN GRIFFEY JR'S WINNING RUN
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ULTIMATE MK3

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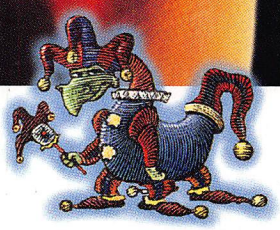

Trivet–The smarmy court jester. You know the type. Bitter, rude, cynical, ignored. Classic middle-child syndrome. Marsha Marsha Marsha!

Sir George (Cheech)–Referred to in English Lit. as The Protagonist. Greedy SOB. Steer clear. Unless, of course, you're driving a Mack truck.

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THE AWESOME SEQUEL TO ONE OF '95'S BEST GAMES.

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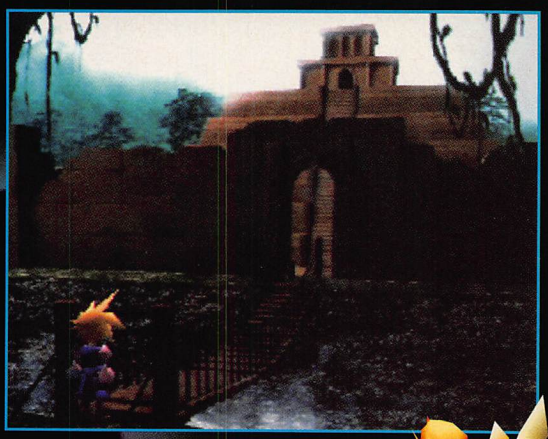

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HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI'S VISION COMES TO THE PLAYSTATION!

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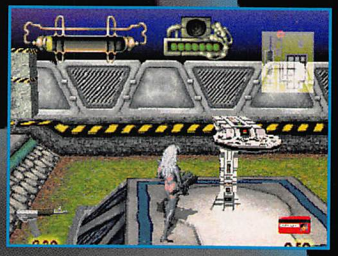

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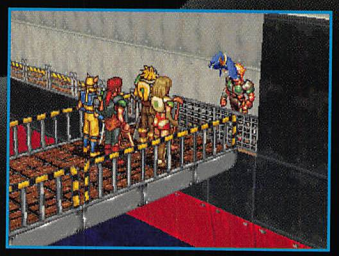

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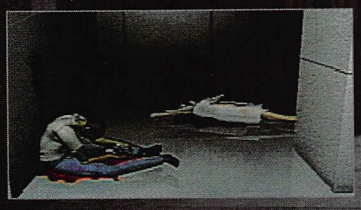
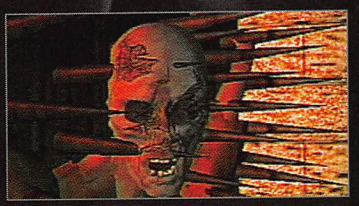


D... the Daughter.
A *full moon rises over L.A. National*
D... Darkness.
Hospital. Inside-the father, a doctor
D... Destiny.
gone mad. Outside-the daughter...
D... Delirium.
the innocent, the seeker. You are about
D... Death.
to enter the darkness forever!
D... Damnation.



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ISSN# 1070-3020

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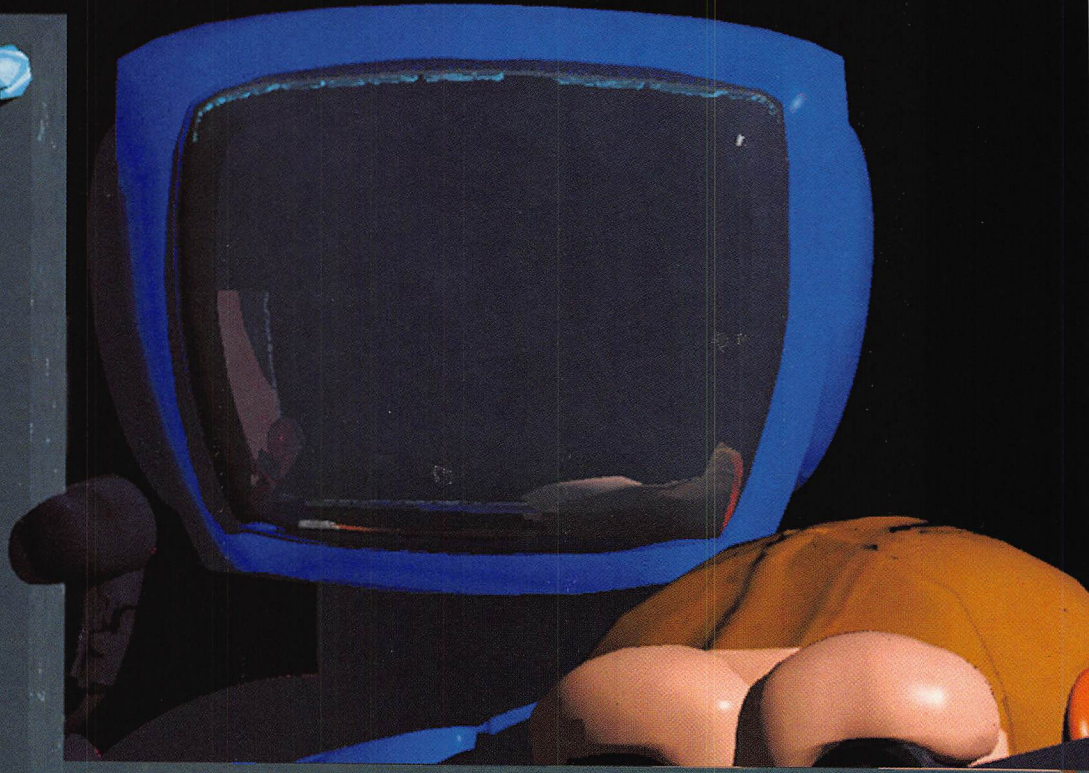

Alpha me this *Alpha* me that.... I guess I can stop worrying about the well-being of the traditional 2D fighter. We've received a bag of mail in regards to the March Saturn *Alpha* review and all but one of us agrees with our critics that the Saturn version of *SFA* is as good or better than the PlayStation game. Personally, I'm thrilled that we were ridiculed so harshly over the review. We've all been worried that with the recent success of 3D rendered fighters, the majority of you would be less than overjoyed with *Alpha*'s remaining traditional 2D concept. This is obviously not the case as *Alpha* seems to be selling at a fever pitch. Certainly all of our readers own a copy. So we are not alone in our opinion when it comes to the *Street Fighter* series. There is, however, more to this story than meets the eye. From the time we write a review to when it hits the newsstands and bookstores is roughly 3-4 weeks. With a cartridge game taking around 90 days to hit the stores, lead times were never a problem. A finished CD game, though, can be brought to market in as little as 2 weeks. For this reason, the game co.'s have to get us a reviewable game at least a month prior to its release in order to make the corresponding issue. Otherwise, we'd be reviewing boxed copies with reviews appearing weeks after a games release.

Being that the window is now so small, much of the time we receive 95-99% versions for review purposes. When we receive a 95-99% cartridge game that means there may be a deep-seated bug somewhere in the game. With CDs however, small changes can be made quickly—literally days before a game's release. So, once in a while, inaccuracies may occur, as was the case with *Alpha*'s Super shadows, and for that matter, Shun's bottle in *VF3*, which was not present in our copy marked 'reviewable.' After receiving the boxed copy of *SFA* (well before the March issue even hit the stands) we all realized the review in question was inaccurate. In order to alleviate this problem in the future, if changes are made post-review, we'll re-review the game, as we have with *Night Warriors* in this issue, after discovering many hidden extras in the final game.

Flamin' Yawn trashed my house.
Psycrow stole my lady.
I've got a backpack full of snott.
This ain't gonna be no picnic.
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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

READERS' TOP TEN

1. *Street Fighter Alpha* - Saturn
2. *Virtua Fighter 2* - Saturn
3. *Diddy's Kong Quest* - SNES
4. *Doom* - PS
5. *Killer Instinct* - SNES
6. *Sega Rally* - Saturn
7. *Yoshi's Island* - SNES
8. *Loaded* - PS
9. *Warhawk* - PS
10. *Chrono Trigger* - SNES

READERS' MOST WANTED

1. *Killer Instinct II* - U64
2. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
3. *Resident Evil* - PS
4. *Mario RPG* - SNES
5. *Tekken 2* - PS
6. *Panzer Zwei* - Saturn
7. *Mario*^{64} - U64
8. *Soul Edge* - PS
9. *Zelda*^{64} - U64
10. *Toshinden 2* - PS

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest

HIROSHI KAWAI
SQUARE JAPAN

1. *Y's Book 1 & 2* - PC Engine
2. *Panzer Dragoon* - Saturn
3. *Virtua Racing* - Arcade
4. *S.T.U.N. Runner* - Arcade
5. *Dracula X* - PC Engine
6. *Daytona USA* - Saturn
7. *Prince of Persia* - Apple II
8. *Wings of Fury* - Apple II
9. *Legend of Xanadu* - PC Engine
10. *Myst* - Various

GF EDITORS' TOP TEN

1. *Mario RPG* - SF
2. *Motor Toon 2* - PS
3. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
4. *Story of Thor 2* - Saturn
5. *Swagman* - PS

6. *Resident Evil* - PS
7. *Guardian Heroes* - Saturn
8. *Night Warriors* - Saturn
9. *Jumping Flash 2* - PS
10. *Wrinkle River Story* - Saturn

1. *Snatcher* - Sega CD
2. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
3. *Resident Evil* - PS
4. *Policenauts* - PS
5. *SF Alpha* - PS

6. *Night Warriors* - Saturn
7. *Wrinkle River Story* - Saturn
8. *Tekken 2* - Arcade
9. *Y's I & II* - TG16
10. *Diehard Trilogy* - PS

1. *Killer Instinct 2* - Arcade
2. *Super Mario RPG* - SF
3. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
4. *Super Mario All Stars* - SNES
5. *Resident Evil* - PS

6. *Diehard Trilogy* - PS
7. *SF Alpha 2* - Arcade
8. *SF Alpha* - PS
9. *PO'ed* - PS
10. *Gradius Deluxe Pack* - PS

1. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
2. *Iron Rain* - Saturn
3. *Resident Evil* - PS
4. *Genso Suikoden* - PS
5. *Night Warriors* - Saturn

6. *Romancing Saga 3* - SF
7. *Evangelion* - Saturn
8. *Wrinkle River Story* - Saturn
9. *Diehard Trilogy* - PS
10. *Devil Summoner* - Saturn

1. *Super Mario*^{64} - N64
2. *Killer instinct 2* - Arcade
3. *Super Mario RPG* - SF
4. *SF Alpha* - Arcade
5. *Sega Rally* - Saturn

6. *Soul Edge* - Arcade
7. *Tekken 2* - PS
8. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
9. *Doom* - PS
10. *Ridge Racer Revolution* - PS

1. *Super Mario RPG* - SF
2. *Policenauts* - PS
3. *Genso Suikoden* - PS
4. *Guardian Heroes* - Saturn
5. *SF Alpha* - PS

6. *Panzer Dragoon Zwei* - Saturn
7. *Resident Evil* - PS
8. *Tales of Phantasia* - SF
9. *Virtua Fighter 2* - Saturn
10. *Iron Rain* - Saturn

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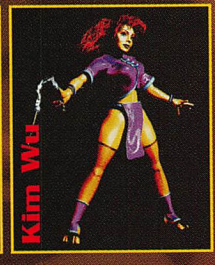

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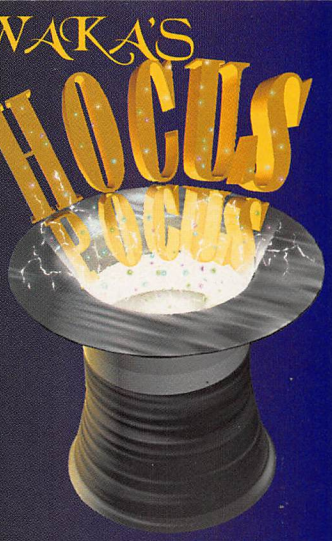
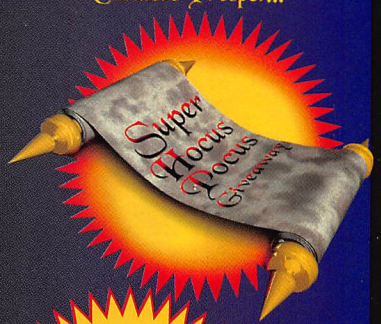


Travel With Thy Controller In Hand To A Land Where Cheaters Prosper...



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* Any video game featured in our "Viewpoint" section

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Second Prize:
Russ Lochte, Hoover, AL

Third Prize:
John Allen, Capital Heights, MD

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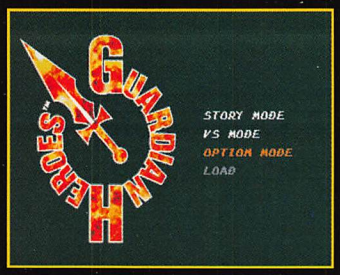
Guardian Heroes (Sega Saturn-Import) Debug Mode!



During this TITLE SCREEN, select OPTION and press START.

Next, at the OPTION SCREEN, press A, C and Y at the same time.

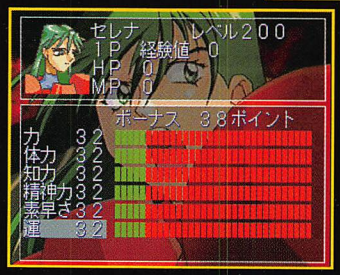
Now, in the DIP SWITCH SCREEN, go to DEBUG and select ON.

45 CHARACTERS!!

Now in VERSUS MODE, all of the characters from the game, including the defeated enemies, will be playable!

Wanna spoil yourself and see all of the endings?

Start the STORY MODE. Now you can even select the stage you want to go to!



Wait, I'm not done yet! Choose your character, and you can also "level-up" your character! Hmmm... Level 200?!

Try these extra debug commands during the game!

COMMAND	EFFECT
RIGHT SHIFT and START	SKIP 1 EVENT
RIGHT SHIFT, A and START	SKIP 2 EVENTS
RIGHT SHIFT, B and START	SKIP 3 EVENTS
RIGHT SHIFT, C and START	SKIP 4 EVENTS
LEFT SHIFT, RIGHT SHIFT and START	GO BACK 1 EVENT
LEFT SHIFT, RIGHT SHIFT, A AND START	GO BACK 2 EVENTS
LEFT SHIFT, RIGHT SHIFT, B AND START	GO BACK 3 EVENTS
LEFT SHIFT, RIGHT SHIFT, C AND START	GO BACK 4 EVENTS
X, Y, Z and UP	RECOVER ALL LIFE POINTS
X, Y, Z and DOWN	LOSE 1 LIFE

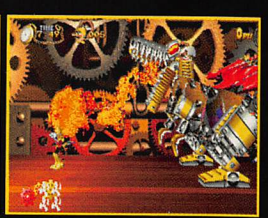
Clockwork Knight 2 (Sega Saturn-Import) Level Select

At this main TITLE SCREEN, press START.

Dameon Epperson
Boise, Idaho

Select this mode and then press START. Then in the following screen enter:

RIGHT, UP, LEFT, UP, RIGHT, UP, DOWN, UP, LEFT, UP, LEFT, UP. You should hear a chime if done correctly.



Now you can go to whatever stage you want!

Krazy Ivan (Sony PlayStation) Level Select

Start a Normal Game. Then at the screen where you choose your mission, start at RUSSIA.

Press RIGHT. Then press LEFT, DOWN & X, and then go immediately to the level of your choice!

Brandon Richardson
Landover, Maryland

Ridge Racer Revolution (Sony PlayStation-Import) — Search Laser

At this Galaga 88 game screen, press and hold L1, R1, DOWN, and SELECT.

When the enemies start coming out, simply press the TRIANGLE button to shoot.

Look! Super Deformed Cars with no problem!

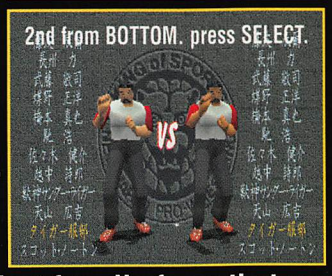
Toukon Retsuden (Sony PlayStation-Import) — Hidden Characters

All of the following codes are entered at this title screen. If done correctly, you should hear a bell.

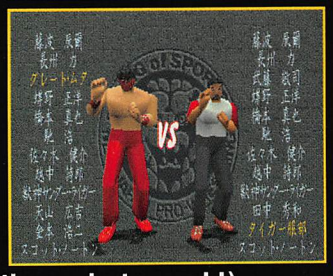
"GREAT MUTA"
CIR, RIGHT, TRI, UP, SQU, LEFT, X, DOWN, X, DOWN, SQU, LEFT, TRI, UP, RIGHT, SELECT.

"POWER WARRIOR"
SQU, X, SQU, X, CIR, TRI, CIR, TRI, UP, DOWN, LEFT, RIGHT.

"RING ANNOUNCER"
L1, L1, L2, R2, R2, R1, TRI, DOWN, X, UP, SELECT.



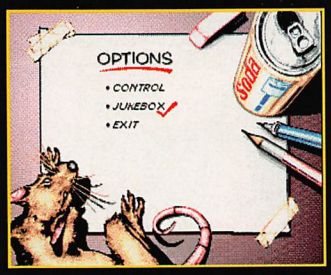
"THE REF"
UP, DOWN, LEFT, RIGHT, TRI, X, SQU, CIR, L1, R1, L2, R2.



You can input all of the codes at the TITLE SCREEN to play all of the characters at the same time!

Russ Lochte, Hoover, Alabama (Just for all of you that are trying to get the code to work!)

Comix Zone (Sega Genesis) — Invincibility, Stage Select



Go to the OPTION SCREEN, and then select the JUKEBOX mode. Press C after every number. You should hear "OH, YEAH" if done correctly.

"INVINCIBILITY"
3, 12, 17, 2, 2, 10, 2, 7, 7, 11.

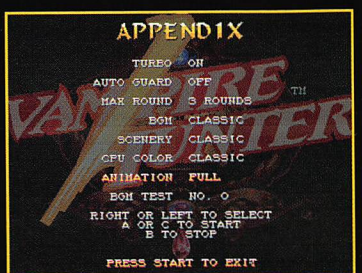
"STAGE SELECT"
14, 15, 18, 5, 13, 1, 3, 18, 15, 16.

Then go to 1-6 and press C to select the stage you want to go to.

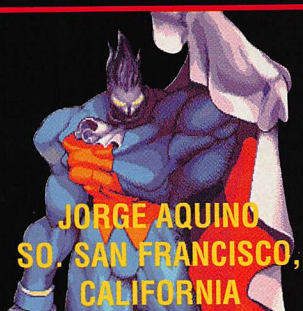
Adam T. Christner, Johnstown, Pennsylvania

Vampire Hunter (Sega Saturn-Import) — Appendix Code!!!

Go to the OPTION SCREEN, and highlight CONFIGURATION. Then enter: B, X, DOWN, A, Y.



If you do the code correctly, you will hear a sound. The command APPENDIX should appear.



Now you can set the BGM, CPU COLOR, and BACKGROUNDS! Set the ANIMATION to FULL and choose the same characters. WHAT?! ALL OF THE ANIMATION IS RESTORED! Check out the BIG difference!

THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE ARE THIS MONTH'S SUPER HOCUS POCUS WINNERS! CONGRATULATIONS! AND KEEP SENDING THOSE TRICKS IN!!

1ST PLACE
JORGE AQUINO
SO. SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

2ND PLACE
RUSS LOCHTE
HOOVER, ALABAMA

3RD PLACE
JOHN ALLEN
CAPITAL HEIGHTS, MARYLAND

Sega Rally Championship (Sega Saturn) — Mirror Mode, Backwards Course

Select the ARCADE MODE, and then at this screen, press and hold Y and press C.

Now you can race in MIRROR MODE!

Select the TIME ATTACK MODE, then at this screen, press and hold Y and press C.

Now the tracks in the game will be BACKWARDS!

Alien Trilogy (Sony PlayStation) — Passwords for every level!

Just enter all of the passwords normally, but get ready for some power-ups!

ALIEN 1	
33BNSBBB1LDB9RBR	
QVBTLBLMCGHZ9G3B	
Grenades	19
Charges	13
Pulse Rifle	997
Smart Gun	N/A
Flame Thrower	500
9 mm	150
Shotgun	52

ALIEN 2	
9VBQSBD6TBDBS4B2	
LBBTLBLMBQNO9DBJ	
Grenades	8
Charges	23
Pulse Rifle	364
Smart Gun	691
Flame Thrower	500
9 mm	142
Shotgun	100

ALIEN 3	
43BQVBCDH3DB94B6	
QVBLDBLMCBWM9GVC	
Grenades	18
Charges	27
Pulse Rifle	900
Smart Gun	131
Flame Thrower	385
9 mm	150
Shotgun	100

John Allen, Capital Heights, Maryland

Street Fighter Alpha (Sega Saturn) — Dramatic Battle

This trick is the quickest and easiest way to get the DRAMATIC BATTLE!

Todd Khatinha
Tempe, Arizona

Select ARCADE MODE. With the 1P controller, highlight RYU, and with the 2P controller, highlight KEN. With the 1P controller, hold the L & R BUTTONS, then press UP twice. Then release the L & R BUTTONS, and press UP twice again. Finally, hit X and press START twice. With the 2P controller, repeat the process, but replace the X BUTTON with Z.

Street Fighter Alpha (Sega Saturn) — L & R SUPERS?!

John D. Jackson
Dobson, North Carolina

Simply choose your fighter and select AUTO BLOCK. As soon as your SUPER GAUGE is full, press the LEFT SHIFT and RIGHT SHIFT buttons at the same time!

For the original blue super shadows, set the MUSIC to ORIGINAL!

Street Fighter Alpha (Sega Saturn) — Hidden Characters!

Simply hold the LEFT & RIGHT SHIFT buttons and move the icon to the ? Then input the following...

Terence Englis Jr., Glendale, California

"DAN"
Y, X, A, B, Y or Y, B, A, X, Y

"M. BISON"
BACK 2X, DOWN 2X, BACK, DOWN 2X, then hit X & Y or A & B at the same time.

"AKUMA"
BACK 3X, DOWN 3X, then hit X & Y or A & B at the same time.

THE POWER IS ON!
GAMEFAN
ONLINE
http://www.gamefan.com
HOT INFO
ReViews
DOWN LOAD
mail ROOM
USER FRIENDLY
MEGAFAN
ANIME FAN
THE DEEPEST VIDEO GAME SITE ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality

PO'ed
PLAYSTATION
ACCOLADE • CD
3D ADVENTURE

One of the brightest moments in the history of the 3DO, *PO'ed* brought vast 3D gameplay environments off the tracks, to a system that it seemed couldn't handle them as well as previously believed. Now on a true 3D powerhouse, this great game is even better. The brisk frame rate, and added features are welcome indeed. *PO'ed* goes beyond *Doom*-clone in stunning fashion and will provide even the most demanding gamer many hours of excellent (and very, very wacky) 3D gameplay.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M na O 8 **80**

I'm no huge fan of *Doom*, or for that matter games that look and play like *Doom*. *PO'ed* however, is definitely an exception. Complete with ultra long levels with a wealth of vertical elements, enemies with the ability to expel deadly flatulence and a couple of blood-stained frying pans, *PO'ed* is destined to be a hit on the Playstation. I can't wait for a sequel.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M na O 8 **82**

It's no secret that I have a soft spot for *PO'ed*. The PS version is everything the 3DO game should've been and more. *PO'ed* now has tight control and smooth 3D. In addition, the long quest, massive levels and warped sense of humor have been left intact. The much-needed practice level is a great new addition to this addictive game. I don't however, like the fact that *PO'ed* has no music at all (there is no excuse). Overall I really like *PO'ed*. Play it, and you'll know what I'm talking about.

G 7 C 7 P 8 M na O 8 **78**

RISE 2 RESURRECTION
PLAYSTATION
ACCLAIM • CD
FIGHTING

Oh my, what a mess. Flyin' scrap would be a better name for this, this, whatever it is. Why would anyone make a sequel to a terrible game? Somewhere, somehow, the painfully bad *Rise of the Robots* must have sold some copies. *R2* makes a bold attempt at becoming an actual fighting game but is too stiff, heavy-handed, and unbalanced to even come close. Once again though, the intro is really cool.

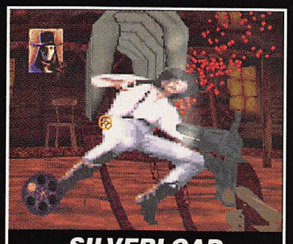
G 5 C 5 P 5 M 7 O 5 **40**

Rise 2 isn't the worst fighting game ever made, but it may be the next game down on the list—second only to *Rise 1*. Stiff backgrounds, miniature characters, no parallax, death tunes, and only slightly improved control add up to a massive non-purchase on your part.

G 7 C 4 P 3 M 5 O 2 **35**

Well, *Rise 2* is a much better fighter than the first game, but there are still some big problems here. First and foremost, a fighting game has to be exciting to play and *Rise 2* is boredom central. It also lacks the overall sheen and polished gameplay I come to expect in a fighting game. No, from the unexceptional music and sound effects to the cheezoid characters, *Rise 2* strikes out in most of the important areas. The rendered graphics are decent, but it's not enough to save this sinking ship. Next.

G 7 C 5 P 5 M 4 O 5 **56**



SILVERLOAD
PLAYSTATION
VIC TOKAI • CD
INTERACTIVE ADV.

Silverload is indeed a unique game. I happen to like the genre and have been waiting way too long for something meaty like this to come along. The puzzles are great, and the shooting sequences are even better. *SL* is a hard game to put down. My only gripe is that if you waste an item, you have no way to get it back.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 8 **82**

When I first saw this game, I thought I'd hate it... Weird Sierra-like interface, odd mix of FMV and drawn art, and weird *Virtua Cop*-like levels. But I actually had a ton of fun playing it. Though some of the puzzles defy logic, *Silverload* is a *very* cool town, and the storyline is really well done. I just wish there was more replay value...

G 8 C 6 P 5 M 6 O 9 **82**

Silverload represents a genre that isn't addressed nearly enough in today's games. Like *Snatcher* and *Policenauts*, *Silverload* is a point-and-click adventure game, not driven by fast action or incredible amounts of violence, but by its deep storyline and involving puzzles. I really do love these types of games—they're almost like being involved in a movie. And although *Silverload* isn't quite as good as Konami's games of this type, it still had me glued to the TV for hours.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 9 O 9 **88**

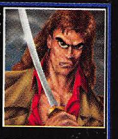
BAKUBAKU ANIMAL
SATURN
SEGA • CD
PUZZLE

BakuBaku is a very cool, and super addicting puzzle game. The overall concept is simple, but the true magic lies in the depth of gameplay. At first all you'll want to do is keep the screen clear, but before long you'll find yourself creating intricate "bombs" that when triggered, could wipe out your opponent in one strike (and if they were anything like Takuhi, cause them to burst into tears). I haven't had this much fun with a puzzle game in years...

G 8 C 6 P 10 M 8 O 9 **92**

Despite its cute exterior, there's a lot of depth to *BakuBaku Animal*. The skill and strategy involved are a step above *PuyoPuyo*, and thankfully, people like *Orion* who are still mentally frozen at a 4th grade level can no longer beat learned scholars like myself by just matching up the pretty colors. (Of course, Kei can still waste anybody.) Anyway, this is an excellent and highly addicting game.

G 6 C 7 P 10 M 6 O 6 **85**



For me to like a puzzle game it not only needs to be thoroughly addicting but contain graphics good enough to sustain my interest as well. *BakuBaku Animal* is one of the few puzzlers that has both. The other one's in my Saturn Previews section. The CG-rendered mashers in *BBA* (like the one on my right) look great as they descend on and crush Takuhi's overflowing puzzle. As far as the addiction level, well... *what? it's my turn?... excuse me.*

G 8 C 7 P 10 M 6 O 6 **84**

PANZER DRAGOON
ZWEI • SATURN
SEGA • CD
SHOOTING

PD2 is not just another blissful Saturn shooter, it's an event in the category that goes far beyond anything before it and should be treasured by each and every Saturn owner. The new playable intro and dramatically unfolding story line are just the beginning. Graphically *PD2* had me weeping tears of joy. The game is so replayable you may never put it down, and does so much, so right, that it scares me. Possibly the greatest shooter ever created.

G 10 C 9 P 10 M 9 O 9 **99**

After seeing this and *Dark Savior* (in the same month, even), I have to say that anyone who's still clinging to the outdated opinion that the Saturn can't do 3D is BLIND. *Panzer II* has the best 32-bit 3D environment I've ever seen, and more importantly, it's an incredible game. Though it's a tad short (like the first one) and the ability to change camera distance is gone, everything else is twofold better than the original. More freedom, more dragons, more secrets, longer levels, better textures, and the coolest bosses in any game, ever. This game is incredible.

G 10 C 10 P 10 M 10 O 9 **98**

The best game on the Saturn so far. *Panzer Zwei* is an indescribably flaming experience from start to finish, with unbelievably cinematic graphics, pretty good music, and an atmosphere that no game I've ever played, save *PD* and it's sequel, has captured before. You just have to buy it.

G 9 C 9 P 7 M 7 O 7 **99**

Having never laid hands on a PC game, I've always wondered what all the excitement over *Magic Carpet* was about. Now I really wonder. This game is way too complicated for its own good, has (at best) OK 3D and is basically a major pain in the rear to play. Now that Shiny's making a PC game (they're allowed 1) I'm gonna take the plunge and am hoping that *MC* is a whole lot better on PC. I just wanna see 'em fit the encyclopedia-sized manual into the case.

G	C	P	M	O	
5	4	5	6	8	50

When *Magic Carpet* was released for the PC (over a year ago), it was a cool game. Well...wait, it really wasn't that cool. I mean, it had a lame premise (wow, collecting manna balls) but the graphics were really good. Um...then again, maybe not. The 3D engine, with tons of "fog" (covering pop-up) just a few feet away from your face, kinda stunk. I have no idea why this game was so popular last year, or why they're even bothering to re-release it now.

G	C	P	M	O	
5	6	5	8	7	50

To be honest, I never liked *Magic Carpet* on the PC. Bullfrog has a bad habit of taking good games and cramming them full of *Populous*-like elements until they break. Pathetically, this isn't even a good version of *Magic Carpet*—you can't see more than a few feet in front of your face, the default controls are stupid and the game never changes much. Big pass on this one.

G	C	P	M	O	
5	3	5	4	7	52

MAGIC CARPET
SATURN
EA • CD
3D ADVENTURE

I could easily say *Brain Dead 13* is the best FMV game of all time—but that wouldn't be saying much. The video quality is amazing, the voice acting's hilarious, and the characters are very cool. It just suffers from what every game of its type does, almost no feelings of interactivity. I must admit I had a good time with it for the first few hours, and I'm sure fans of FMV (do they actually exist?) will dig it, but I've got a feeling most people kinda wish these types of games died when *Dragon's Lair* did. Fun the first time through, though...

G	C	P	M	O	
10	na	na	8	6	70

This a hard game for me to score. *Brain Dead 13* has so many positive aspects. It's brilliantly written, drawn and animated, and packed with wacky hilarity. The only problem is that it's an FMV title. Granted it's the best one I've ever seen and played, I just have trouble with a game that's really only fun once. Nevertheless, ReadySoft's put the time in to make fans of the genre very happy and are to be commended.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	na	na	5	3	75

Inherently I dislike these games with a vengeance. From *Space Ace* to *Dragon's Lair*, I'd always been more content to watch them than play them. ReadySoft however, has made a game that looks so cool, it's forced me to take a step back and re-evaluate the genre. Refinements in the way the game plays, simplifying it to a degree, makes *BD13* surprisingly playable. While I doubt I'll ever embrace the genre whole-heartedly, I *do* like this game.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	na	na	8	8	75

BRAIN DEAD 13
3DO
READYSOFT • CD
FMV

I'm confused. How did Square squeeze all of this joy into a tiny little cart? With SGI graphics, and Square and Nintendo behind the wheel, you can't possibly go wrong with *SMRPG*. This is as complete a package as there's ever been with Square RPG elements, and classic *Mario* gameplay! With games of this quality still coming, I'm beginning to wonder if 16-bit will ever die.

G	C	P	M	O	
10	9	9	10	10	99

What can I say—Square, Nintendo, Mario, and SGI graphics? Like there's even a remote possibility it's gonna be anything less than awesome. I'm particularly shocked at how well Square knows *Mario*. You'd swear you were playing a purebred Nintendo title if you didn't already know otherwise.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	9	8	9	10	95

Square has amazed me time and time again with what they've been able to do on the SNES, but with the recent announcement of exit stage left, I thought for sure those days were behind me. But with *Super Mario RPG* their 16-bit force has surfaced once again. *Mario RPG* is not only everything that a Nintendo *Mario* game should be but everything a Square RPG should be as well. The two combined equal a game that can only be described as *legendary*.

G	C	P	M	O	
10	10	8	9	9	98

SUPER MARIO RPG
SNES
NINTENDO • 32MEG CART.
RPG

Look! A good RPG, in ENGLISH! I know, I know, kinda shocking, but it's true! Once you get over the fact there's English in the text boxes, you'll notice *Lufia 2* has a very strong storyline (even better for the folks who played the original *Lufia*), clean and colorful graphics, cool puzzles, and a great soundtrack! This is easily the most enjoyable RPG I've played on my SNES in a long while, now let's just start getting some of those great 32-bit titles over here!

G	C	P	M	O	
9	na	10	9	7	90

After all these years of begging and pleading in vain for companies like Square and Enix to meet their RPG responsibilities, Jaleco just comes up and says "Here's *Lufia 2*! Comes out tomorrow!" Wow! While *Lufia 2* wouldn't have been my #1 choice for an American conversion, this is an excellent game. The battles get a bit tedious, but the storyline, music, and puzzle dungeons are all really cool. *Lufia 2* makes me happy.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	6	8	8	7	90

Jaleco is very wise to bring out this title! This game's been rated as one of Japan's favorite RPGs for over a year! The music, puzzles (which are most intriguing), storyline, and anything else you can think of are all new and improved. *L2* is put together very well. With games like this, *SMRPG*, and more coming, '96 is shaping up to be yet another promising year for 16-bit role playing fans.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	8	9	8	8	90

LUFIA 2
SNES
JALECO • 16MEG CART.
RPG

Game Arts has finally surfaced with their first Saturn title and, as expected, it's 100% joy to behold. *Iron Rain* is by far the best mech simulator I have ever played. The interface is genius, the control deep and precise using every button on the pad, and the 3D graphics are among the best I've seen on the Saturn to date. The game is a little short but is so replayable it hardly matters. I think it's time for *Silpheed* to make its move to 32-bit. Game Arts has the Saturn hardware completely dialed.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	10	9	8	9	95

After I wrote the preview, we got the final version in, and, unfortunately, there are no new levels. But even with the fairly small assortment of missions, this game has tons of replay value. Good graphics, lots of originality, and a great control scheme make *Iron Rain* the only mech game I've ever truly enjoyed. A very well designed game.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	9	10	6	8	93

If you even remotely like mech. simulations, you owe it to yourself to give Game Arts' *Iron Rain* a look. Besides the inspired 3D engine and beautifully texture-mapped polygon graphics, the missions in *IR* are diverse, unique, and feature a variety of weather conditions and terrain. The AI is actually intelligent and the designers did their homework in regards to materials, speed, destructive force, etc. The Saturn is going to be hard to beat this year!

G	C	P	M	O	
9	9	9	8	8	90

GUN GRIFFON (IRONRAIN)
SATURN
SEGA • CD
SHOOTING/SIM.

I had high hopes for *Linkle*—the graphics looked amazing, and it was by Nextech, the makers of *Ranger-X* and *Crusader of Centy*. I came away, six hours later, stunned with disbelief. For those six hours, *Linkle* was pretty cool. It had a decent game system, nice effects and some cool music. BUT IT'S TOO SHORT! No action/RPG should only last for six hours... It's a sin. There's no need to release this one here.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	7	7	7	5	65

Look, it's *Ragnacenty 2*! *Wrinkle River Story* looks good (this is some of the best overhead 2D 3D I've ever seen, if that means anything), but the music is poor and the play mechanics need work. I do like the weapons system, though, and it is a lot of fun to play through—once.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	7	5	5	7	85

Wrinkle River Story starts out with such an amazing presentation of overhead scrolling wonder that my adrenaline immediately shot to a *RayEarth* level. I quickly settled in for another great Sega action/RPG experience. Not only was settling in unnecessary as the game is way short, but the graphics got steadily less impressive throughout the game to the point of sheer mediocrity. This is not the game that *Crusader of Centy* was. *WRS* falls under the heading "Just OK."

G	C	P	M	O	
7	7	7	8	7	70

WRINKLE RIVER
STORY • SATURN
SOJ • CD
ACTION/RPG

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE OF ENTERTAINMENT

on

USA NETWORK

on

KIDS' WB!

UNIVERSAL

CARTOON STUDIOS

WING COMMANDER ACADEMY
Premiering Fall 1996

on

USA NETWORK

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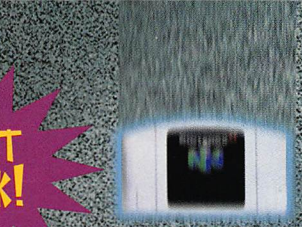
FIRST LOOK!



TUROK
DINOSAUR HUNTER

ACCLAIM'S IGUANA TEAM IS OFF AND RUNNING WITH THEIR FIRST N64 GAME, TUROK THE DINOSAUR HUNTER. LOOK FOR TUROK THIS SEPTEMBER WHEN THE N64 DEBUTS HERE.

40% CHARACTER DEMOS

ALTHOUGH THESE CHARACTERS ARE ONLY BETWEEN 30-40% COMPLETE (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE BIG YELLOW DUDE WHO'S 80%), THESE CHARACTERS ANIMATE UNBELIEVABLY SMOOTH. WHEN COMPLETED, EACH WILL BE FULLY TEXTURE-MAPPED, LIGHT SOURCE SHADED AND WILL MOVE AT 60 FPS. THESE ULTRA-FUZZY VHS GRABS DO THEM LITTLE JUSTICE.

AS PROMISED, THE N64 PRODUCES PIXEL-FREE ENVIRONMENTS. THE TEST AREA SHOWN ABOVE FEATURED SWEEPING CAMERA ANGLES, REALISTIC FOG AND A LINE-SCROLLING SKYLINE. THE MOST POSITIVE ASPECT OF THIS DEMO, HOWEVER, WOULD HAVE TO BE THE REALISTIC 3D. ALL OF THE PLANTS HAVE FULL 360-DEGREE VIEWING ANGLES AS DO THE WALLS, TREES, ETC. WHEN YOU MOVE AROUND AN OBJECT, THE PICTURE DOESN'T FOLLOW YOU. RATHER, IT HAS REAL-TIME PHYSICS, THE RESULT BEING THE MOST REALISTIC 3D GAMING EXPERIENCE YET SEEN AT HOME OR IN THE ARCADES. LOOK FOR THE FLOODGATES TO OPEN ON N64 COVERAGE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE E3 SHOW IN MAY. AGAIN, THE VIDEO SENT US WAS FUZZ CITY, RESULTING IN THESE FUZZY GRABS. MAYBE WE CAN SHAKE SOME TRANSPARENCIES LOOSE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE...

FINAL FANTASY VII

Everyone knows about it by now, but just in case you somehow missed it, *Final Fantasy VII* is a-coming to the PlayStation. Last week we went down to visit the developers of the newest chapter in what is probably the most well-known RPG series worldwide, as they celebrated the opening of their new Marina Del Ray development center. A lot of the details are still classified, but our quick preview of this two-disc epic left us drooling for more.

Final Fantasy VII is due for a Japanese release this December (although extensive magazine and TV advertising has already begun). The game will only be 5800 yen ($55), which is less than half the price of *Final Fantasy VI* (which sold nearly 3 million copies). The good news is that there is an American release planned, but... Late Summer, '97. Ouch. Still, that's only 15 months away. Merely 75 weeks. A scant 525 days. Just 12,600 hours. A paltry 816,000 minutes. Let the countdown begin!

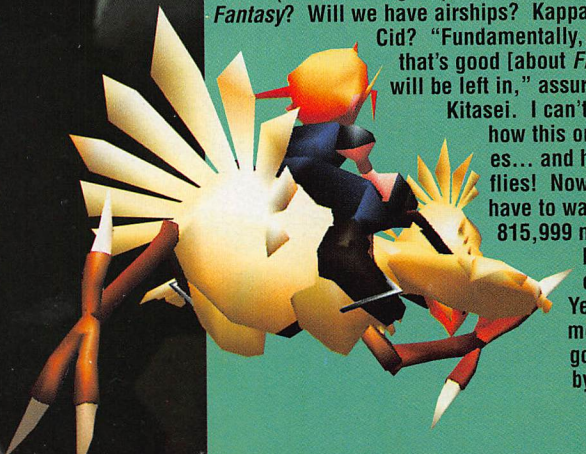
Anyway, where did this game come from? 2 months ago, it seemed absolutely certain that *Final Fantasy VII* was coming for the Nintendo64. A 3D polygon version of *Final Fantasy VI* was shown at the August SIGGRAPH show, running on SGI hardware. The Nintendo64 was designed by Silicon Graphics, so, I mean, obviously they were going to attempt some kind of conversion, right? Nope. That demo existed only to show the new direction SQUARE was taking with their game development, and to get people trained in 3D modeling. Skills that would be put to use on the PlayStation *Final Fantasy*.

The decision to use PlayStation hardware was reached, it seems, around October or November of last year. But actual work on the game didn't begin until the beginning of this year. That's right—the game you see here is barely 2-1/2 months old!

Most *Final Fantasy* games take about a year and a half to make. So how is SQUARE going to do this one in 2/3 the time, with the added burden of having to adjust to new hardware? SQUARE's been hiring at a feverish pace, and the *Final Fantasy VII* team is now double the size of the *Final Fantasy VI* team. That's over one hundred people working on one game!

But you needn't worry that the beautiful *Final Fantasy* series is being turned over to newbies and amateurs. All of your old friends are back: Producer Hironobu Sakaguchi, Director Yoshinori Kitasei, and Composer Nobuo Uematsu. True *FF* fans will notice that the art on the following pages is not Yoshitaka Amano's, but he's still around. Since his insane level of detail doesn't apply too well to characters reduced to a few hundred polygons, he's handling image illustrations and many aspects of the world design this time around (none of his pictures have been released yet, by the way). The character art is instead by Tetsuya Nomura, whose simpler but equally stunning characters are far more appropriate for a 3D game. His drawn art is amazing... This man truly is one with his colored pencils.

Unfortunately, no details have been released about the storyline, except that it probably takes place in an alternate dimension, and that it clearly involves a comet (hence the logo...). But will it truly be *Final Fantasy*? Will we have airships? Kappas? Moogles? Cid? "Fundamentally, everything that's good [about *Final Fantasy*] will be left in," assures Mr. Kitasei. I can't wait to se how this one progresses... and hey, how time flies! Now you only have to wait another 815,999 minutes before you can play it! Yep, these 15 months are just gonna zip on by... —Takuhi



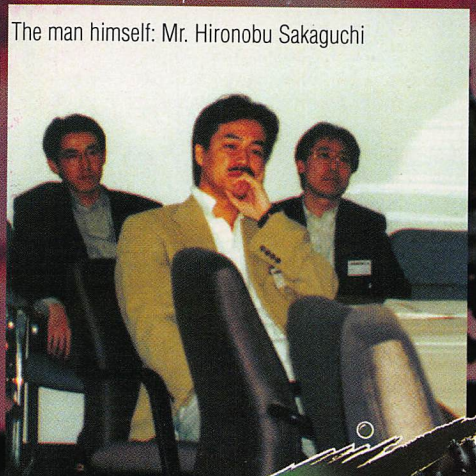
Our opportunity to see *Final Fantasy* came during the open house of SQUARE LA, SQUARE's newest game development subsidiary. This division is concentrating heavily on the computer graphics field of the game industry. The building was full of SGI Indigo2 computers, and had enough high interference-producing $50,000 Onyx machines to bring down every low-flying plane within 20 miles of their penthouse suite.

But hey, don't get the idea that SQUARE LA is just the *Evermore* team with a couple million dollars worth of new toys. SQUARE LA is a new team assembled from a number of computer artists with extensive graphics experience. These are people who worked for Industrial Light & Magic, Digital Domain, and Boss Studios (they also seem to be responsible for just about every car commercial ever made). But even more impressive is who's in charge... The president of SQUARE LA is none other than *Final Fantasy* creator, Hironobu Sakaguchi. Although he's keeping his job as Vice President of SQUARE Co., Ltd, Mr. Sakaguchi will be spending half of his time right here in the states.

Whoa! Let's all of us—especially LA residents—stop and think about this for a moment. Imagine: you're waiting in line in the ten-items-or-less aisle at Ralph's, eager to pay for your Slim Jims and wheat germ and the new issue of GameFan. Then you notice the mustachioed Japanese man in front of you... Is it? Could it be? YES! That's the creator of *Final Fantasy*, right there, buying canned peaches! And maybe you happen to have a coupon for 30 cents off canned peaches! You could give it to him, and since this is Ralph's ("Double coupons every day!"), *you just saved the creator of Final Fantasy 60 cents!* Only in America. What a country!

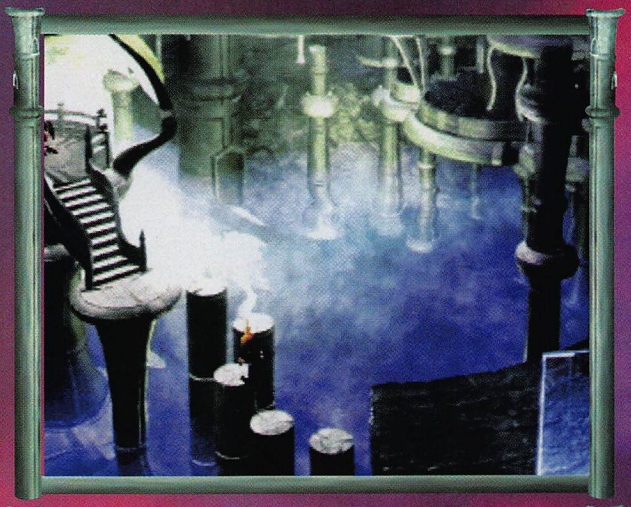
Er, anyway, I've gotten a tad off track. So, they've got the staff, they've got the equipment, what are they gonna do with it? Well, first of all, they're helping out with *Final Fantasy VII*. They're doing bits and pieces of the game, designing a town, maybe a couple of characters, and various other design tasks. You can see some of their handiwork in the backgrounds of the battle scenes.

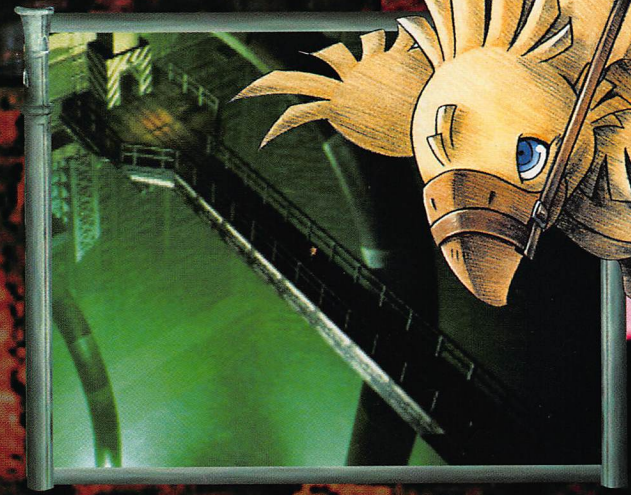
They've also begun their first solo game, an untitled science fiction-themed RPG. Unlike *Evermore*, the game's actually being aimed for a Japanese audience, but will also be released here. Not much had been decided on yet, as the game still exists only on paper. But our conversations with the developers seemed to suggest an RPG in which you could participate much more actively in the battles, which would utilize hundreds of brief, rendered FMV clips. We'll have more on this one as it develops.



The man himself: Mr. Hironobu Sakaguchi

The Characters Thus Far...





20 SQUARE PlayStation Games in Development!

No, your eyes do not deceive you. In an interview in the March 1st issue of *Famicom Tsushin*, Hironobu Sakaguchi said SQUARE intends to release 20 PlayStation games (that's as many Super Famicom games as they've made in the last 5 years!) before the end of 1997. Even more exciting is the prospect that *Final Fantasy VII* might not be the first. SQUARE is hoping to have an as-of-yet-unannounced game out in early autumn!

From that point on, SQUARE intends to release a new PlayStation game (this is all in Japan, of course) roughly every 3 weeks, a release schedule that puts them second only to Sega. But the big question is, what are these games going to be?

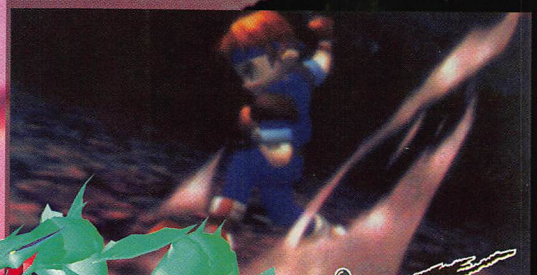
No titles have officially been announced yet, but he did say that games from all of SQUARE's strong series, specifically *Seiken Densetsu* (*Secret of Mana*), *Front Mission*, and *Romancing SaGa*, would be in the twenty. One title he didn't mention was *Chrono Trigger 2*, which we hear is already in development, and features 3-D battles similar to *Final Fantasy VII*. This could be one of the games released this year.

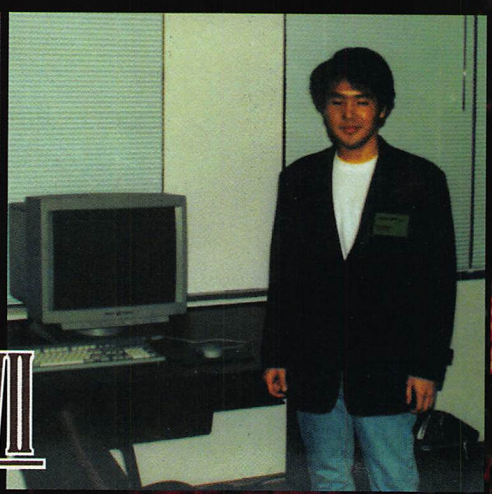
How many titles will be made in-house, and how many will be by outside teams like Omiya (*Gun Hazard*) and Sting (*Treasure Hunter G*) we don't know. We asked SQUARE LA vice-president Junichi Yanagihara if SQUARE will be sticking with their commitment to RPGs, and it seems that they will. While SQUARE is interested in exploring the extremes of the genre, such as strategy games and simulations, he had heard nothing of any plans to expand into fighting games and such.

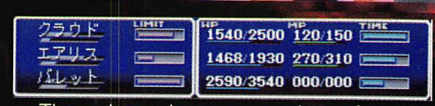
He also hadn't heard about any developments between SQUARE and other hardware manufacturers, namely Sega and Matsushita, whom they are reported to be in talks with. They have no plans for the Nintendo64 as of yet.

Ah, remember SQUARE's beautiful SIGGRAPH demo (*GF* Vol. 3, Iss. 10)? Though it wasn't the Nintendo64 game everyone assumed it to be, it still holds a valuable spot in *FF* history as the most direct ancestor of *FF VII*'s battle system. Believe it or not, it's actually a pretty cool (and totally playable) little game. Instead of the usual menu system, you control your characters by drawing shapes (a star for magic, for example) with the mouse. Maybe SQUARE will send you a copy if you buy an Onyx... (or maybe not)

To the right is Hiroshi Kawai, one of the SIGGRAPH demo designers (and this months' Top 10 Guest Developer), who is now hard at work on *FFVII*'s battle system.

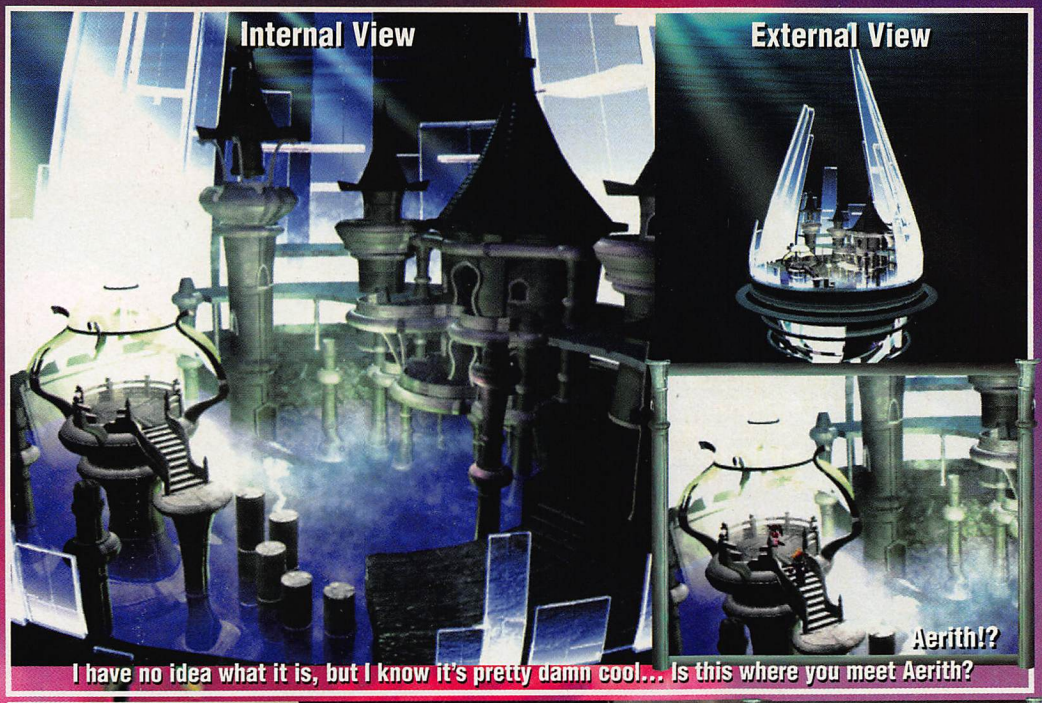






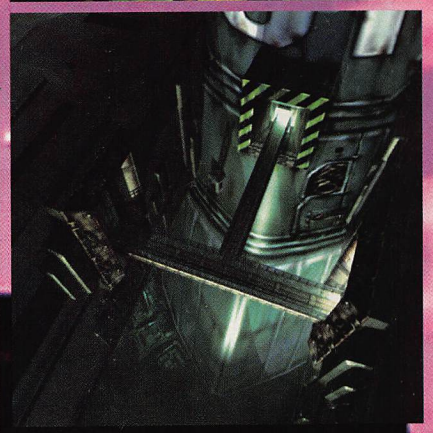
There have been a number of subtle changes in *Final Fantasy VII*'s battle system (just as there has been in every *Final Fantasy* sequel). Above, you'll notice that in addition to the common MP, HP, and Time counters, there are a few new ones. One new bar is marked "limit," and there are also two mysterious bars beneath the name of each character. SQUARE has yet to release the meaning of either of these new gauges.

In the bottom shot, you'll notice two options in addition to the usual Fight, Item, and Magic. One is Steal, a *Final Fantasy* staple, but the other is Blitz, the special ability Mash (Sabin in U.S. *FFIII*) used in *Final Fantasy VI* (in which you entered *Street Fighter*-style motions to do special attacks). Although both of these bars are just mock-ups, some of the designers we talked to confirmed that Mash/Sabin-style attacks will be a part of the play mechanics in *FFVII*.

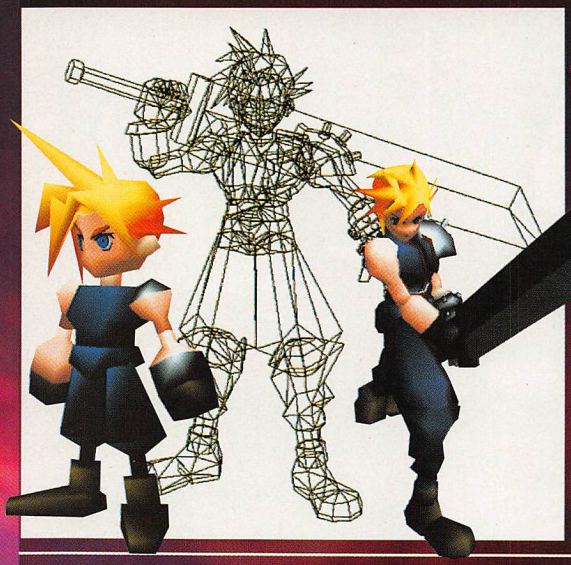


I have no idea what it is, but I know it's pretty damn cool... Is this where you meet Aerith?

The only small shred of storyline that SQUARE has released is that this town, Midgar, will be the central town in *FFVII*, much like Narshe was in *FFVI(III)*. As you can see, it's breath-taking... The Japanese characters written on the towers separate the town into numbered wards, each one of which may be a town the size of the segment shown up above. The genius who designed Midgar, Motonori Sakakibara, is pictured on the left. On the far right are four scenes from a dungeon: These are maps of the actual game graphics, before they've been broken up into screens and had collision added.



So, what exactly is going on here? We have a ton of beautiful images from *Final Fantasy VII*, but how is the game going to play? A lot of people may find this obvious, but just in case there are any questions about the game's system, we've prepared a little guided tour...



The Characters

Everything in *Final Fantasy* is rendered, including, of course, the characters. Like Cloud on the left, each character has 2 different renders. The one on the left is for the overhead maps, and the one on the right is used in the battle scenes. The characters are Gouraud-shaded (they have some textures, too, such as the markings on Red-13, and Bullet's tattoo), and use around 300 and 600 polygons. Since all of your characters disappear when a call spell is cast, summoned creatures like Bahamut and Leviathan can be made out of 3 times as many polygons as your characters. Bosses that replace 3 or 4 standard enemies can also use the same trick.

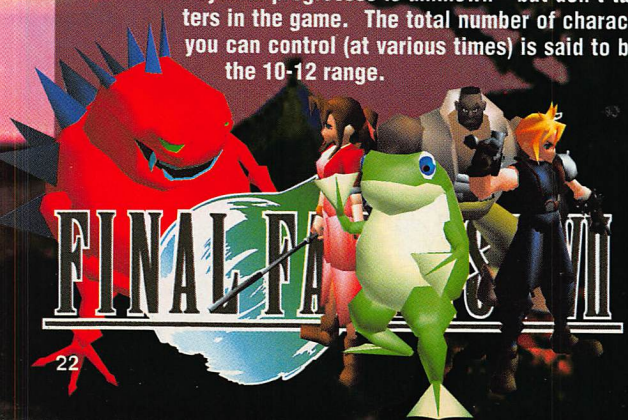
The Environments

Although *Final Fantasy VII*'s dungeons, towns, and overhead fields looks 3D, its actual construction is far more similar to that of a 2D game. All the environments are rendered on computers, then saved as still pictures. These stunning graphics take full advantage of the PlayStation's high resolution and 16 million colors—but are (as far as the hardware is concerned, at least) only 2D. The only 3D elements are the characters, whose size and orientation are programmed in along with the background, to create the effect of walking up to the foreground or further into the background. Collision is also programmed in, so you can't walk straight through buildings or other obstacles (well, obviously). It's pretty much the same technique that was used in *Resident Evil*, but *FFVII*'s maps scroll (both horizontally and vertically) instead of cutting to new screens or different camera angles as you move. On the right, we've made a composite of 4 town pictures to show you what we mean: Cloud scales out as he walks into the background, and scales in as he walks towards you. A more drastic example is to the left.

Battle Scenes

As far as play mechanics go, the battle scenes are about what you'd expect from *Final Fantasy*. But visually, they're a huge departure-this is the one area of the game that is entirely real time 3D. The camera angles switch rapidly, to zoom in on your attacks, and show a perspective from behind the heroes when it's your turn, and behind your enemies when it's theirs. As you can see in the left-most shot, transparencies are being well utilized, and even though light-source shading and other effects (such as mist) aren't in these pictures, we've been assured that they'll appear in future versions.

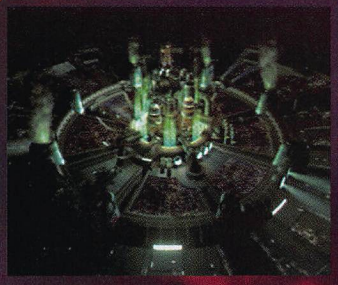
All of the action is handled at a respectable 15 frames per second. So far, the maximum number of characters fighting at once (on your side) appears to be three. Whether that number will grow as the battle system progresses is unknown—but don't take this to mean that there are only 3 characters in the game. The total number of characters you can control (at various times) is said to be in the 10-12 range.

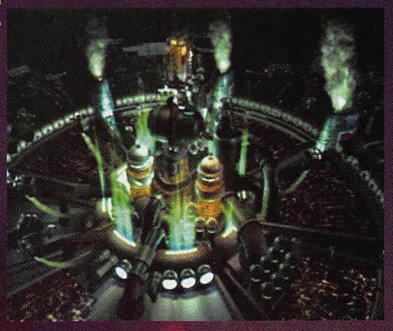


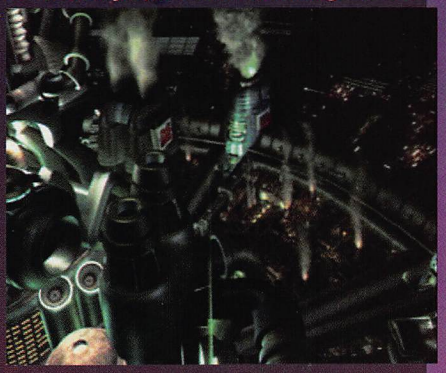
Intermissions

No matter how long your game is, you're not going to be able to fill up 2 discs without some FMV. Yep, SQUARE hired a bunch of actors, rented a set in Hollywood, and has already begun filming low-budget movie sequences for *Final Fantasy VII*. Wait, no, JUST KIDDING! The day live actors appear in a *Final Fantasy* game is the day I leave the videogame industry to go live in a hermitage up in the Rockies.

There *will* be many intermissions interspersed throughout your quest, but they'll all be done with lovely computer-rendered graphics... (phew) The intro (?) sequence we have here, including the huge shot that opened this article, is the only example we've seen yet, but it's astounding. It took SQUARE's computers *four days* to create just these 10 seconds worth of video—that's some pretty amazing CG! The big question is: voice actors? One person we talked to said no, but Hironobu Sakaguchi has yet to confirm that, stating only that "it's a secret." Hmmm...







Special Effects?

So far, all of the areas we've seen have had frozen backgrounds, no movement of any sort. In the future, SQUARE will likely add simulated light sourcing to scenes like the one on the right, but making the waterfall on the left move would be a monumental task. It will be interesting to see how this world comes to life.

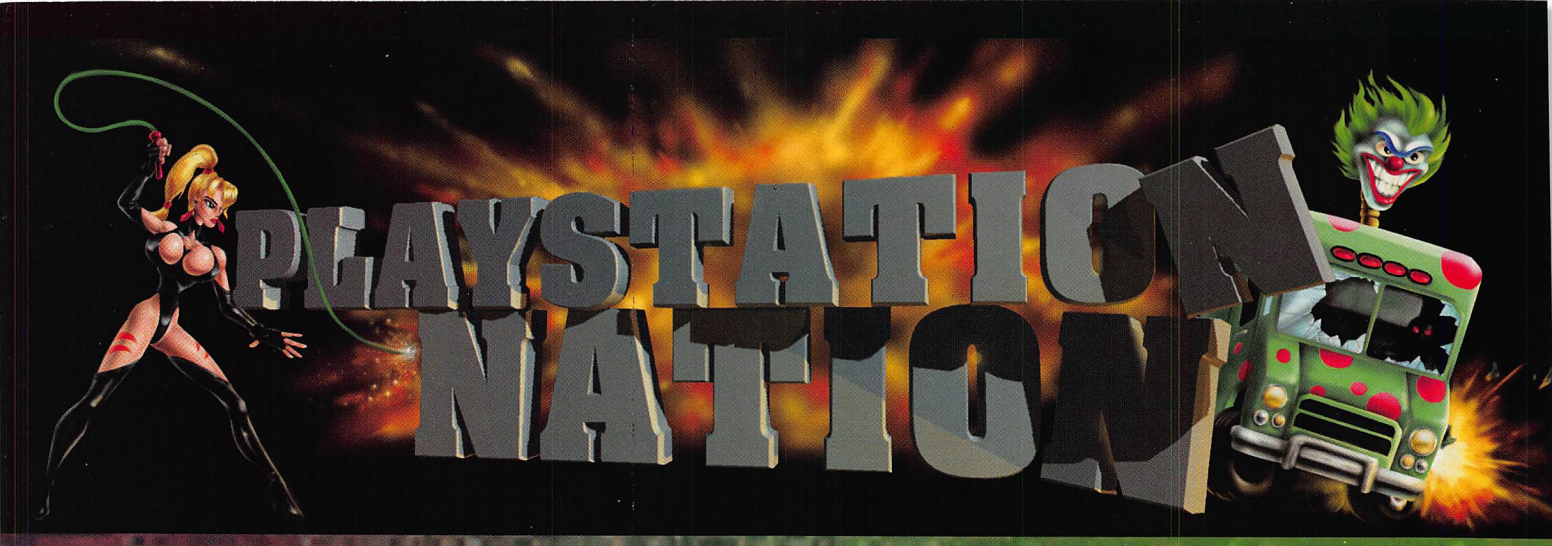
Music, Length, and Loading Time

We have yet to hear any of the actual music from *Final Fantasy VII* (the music on the Japanese TV commercial is amazing, but not actually from the game), but in Nobuo Uematsu's hands, we all have high expectations (it's good to see him back where he belongs—*Gun Hazard* was not exactly his best work). The music's going to be through the PlayStation's internal hardware, which means that while it won't sound quite as good as his arranged CDs, there will be plenty of it (and *Arc the Lad* proved that PCM soundtracks can be nearly as stunning as the real thing).

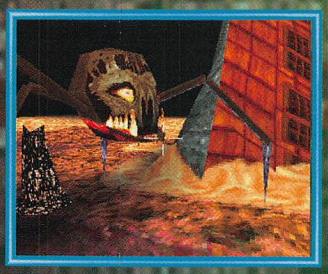
In the length department, Mr. Sakaguchi promises a play time of 40 hours, definitely a quest worthy of the *Final Fantasy* name. But how much of that time will be spent staring at a "Now Loading" screen? This is SQUARE's first CD game, and with such richly detailed overhead maps interspersed with the complex battle system you'd expect of *Final Fantasy*, it's very doubtful that both could be kept in memory at once. The issue is still being researched at SQUARE.

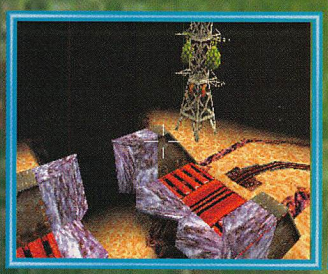
But hey, whether it's the 2 or 3 second loading time between overhead scenes and battles, or the 49 million seconds we all have to endure before it actually comes out here, *Final Fantasy VII* definitely looks to be *well* worth the wait. —Takuhi

FINAL FANTASY VII



BLAM

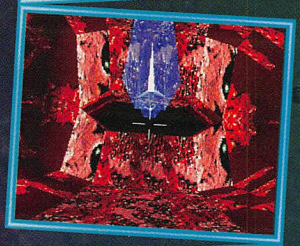


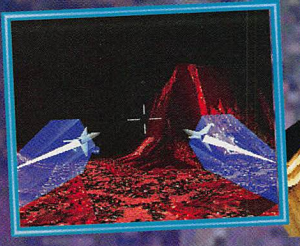


PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CORE
PUBLISHER - US GOLD
FORMAT - CD
 # OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - N/A
AVAILABLE - SUMMER

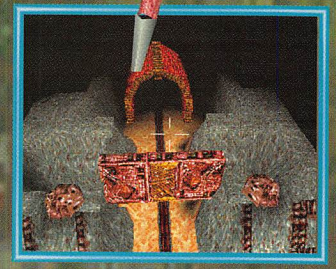


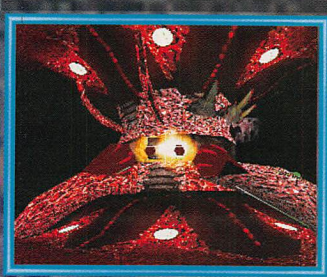


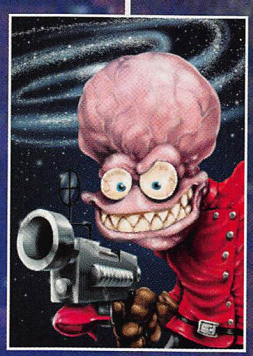
Core's *Machine Head* (previously named *Blam*), though early, is turning out to be one of the more promising 3D battle games I've seen on the PlayStation so far. The plot's...well...we're not sure yet. With the many cars and planes half buried in the sand, and the guys running around in radiation suits, it looks like we may have a post-nuclear war scenario here. That would also explain the hordes of deformed creatures roaming aimlessly about, why the pools of water are a stale purple, and why there are rivers of blood flowing down the walls of cryptic caves (or maybe not).

Anyway, you pilot a jet-cycle armed to the teeth with destructive firepower, enough to blow away anything that moves. And everything, whether they're exploding (showering you with body parts), bursting into cool looking flames, or just disintegrating into a poof of yellow smoke, disintegrates in a spectacular display of flying shrapnel. The playfields are vast and fun just to explore, with ever-changing textures and lighting effects. One minute you're cruising along the desert, the next you'll find yourself falling into a water duct. Very cool. I'm personally going to follow *Machine Head*'s development very closely, and can only hope the final version lives up to my now towering expectations. Core is bursting with promising titles.

-Orion







ORION
I'LL BET YOU THINK I HAVE A HUGE BRAIN... WELL, I DON'T!

SWAGMAN

the swagman cometh soon so don't go to sleep. just listen to ozzy records—backwards, over and over... that oughta do it.

PREVIEW

PlayStation

I remember dreaming about graphics like this just about a year ago. Hey, maybe I'm under the Swagman's spell and dreaming right now...nah, that clock on the wall looks to real. As you can see, all you can do in *Swagman* currently is walk around and check out the eye-popping joy of it all—but what a fine walk indeed. The animation is **insane** and Core's at the helm so you know the gameplay will be there as well. See those monsters up above? Well, that's you. Yeah right. In your dreams buddy... Exactly.

check out the shadow!

DEVELOPER - CORE

PUBLISHER - US GOLD

FORMAT - CD

 # OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

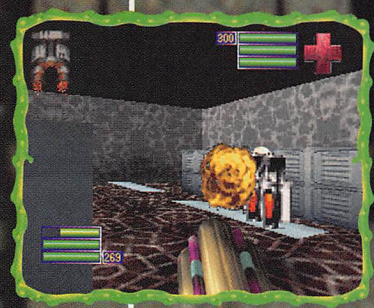
AVAILABLE - SPRING

core wants to sleep over for a couple nights.

PO'ed

One of my all-time favorite 3DO games is already on the Sony launching pad. It's Any Channels' *PO'ed*.

The 3DO version of *PO'ed* more than did the hardware justice—in fact, it's likely the 3DO's best 3D action adventure. The innovative, 3D, texture-mapped environments taxed the hardware to such an extent that a slow frame rate, and slightly jerky control resulted. Those glitches are now a thing of the past thanks to the PS's powerful 3D capabilities. While this isn't an outright sequel to the 3DO game (expect to see *PO'ed 2* later this year or early '97), there are many refinements besides the improved playablilty and frame rate. I consider the training level, which allows you to hone your skills without the constant threat of imminent death, the most welcome new addition.



REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - ANY CHANNEL

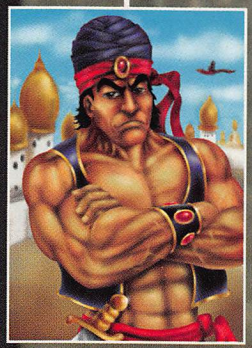
PUBLISHER - ACCOLADE

FORMAT - CD

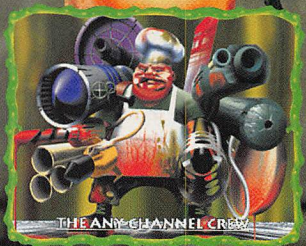
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY

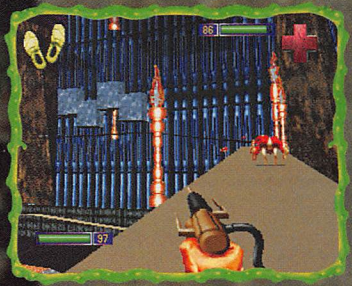


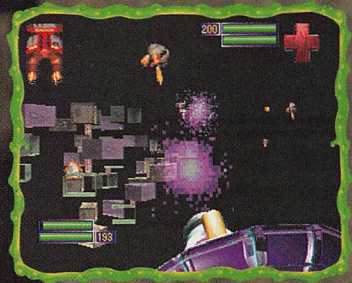
TAKAHARA
I FOUND ELVIS...
I FOUND ELVIS!



PO'ed's catch from the beginning has been its uniquely vertical environments, some towering hundreds of feet high. It's just you, your jet-pack and a whole lotta' walkin butts in a vast chamber teaming with nasty and very, very twisted, busted freaks. Of course, you've got to find the jet-pack first, along with a multitude of other key items and locations. You have to think as well as blast in *PO'ed*. AC's years of development are apparent throughout the entire adventure.

Most importantly, *PO'ed* is non-linear intelligent fun. The further you get into *PO'ed*, the more addicted you become. The people at Any Channel deserve snaps for producing a game that has great playablity, innovative design and a unique look and feel that place it in a class far above the ever-growing horde of *Doom* clones. -Takahara





GOOD ORAL HYGIENE IS A MUST!

STEEL HARBINGER

PlayStation

PREVIEW

DEVELOPER - MINDSCAPE

PUBLISHER - MINDSCAPE

FORMAT - CD

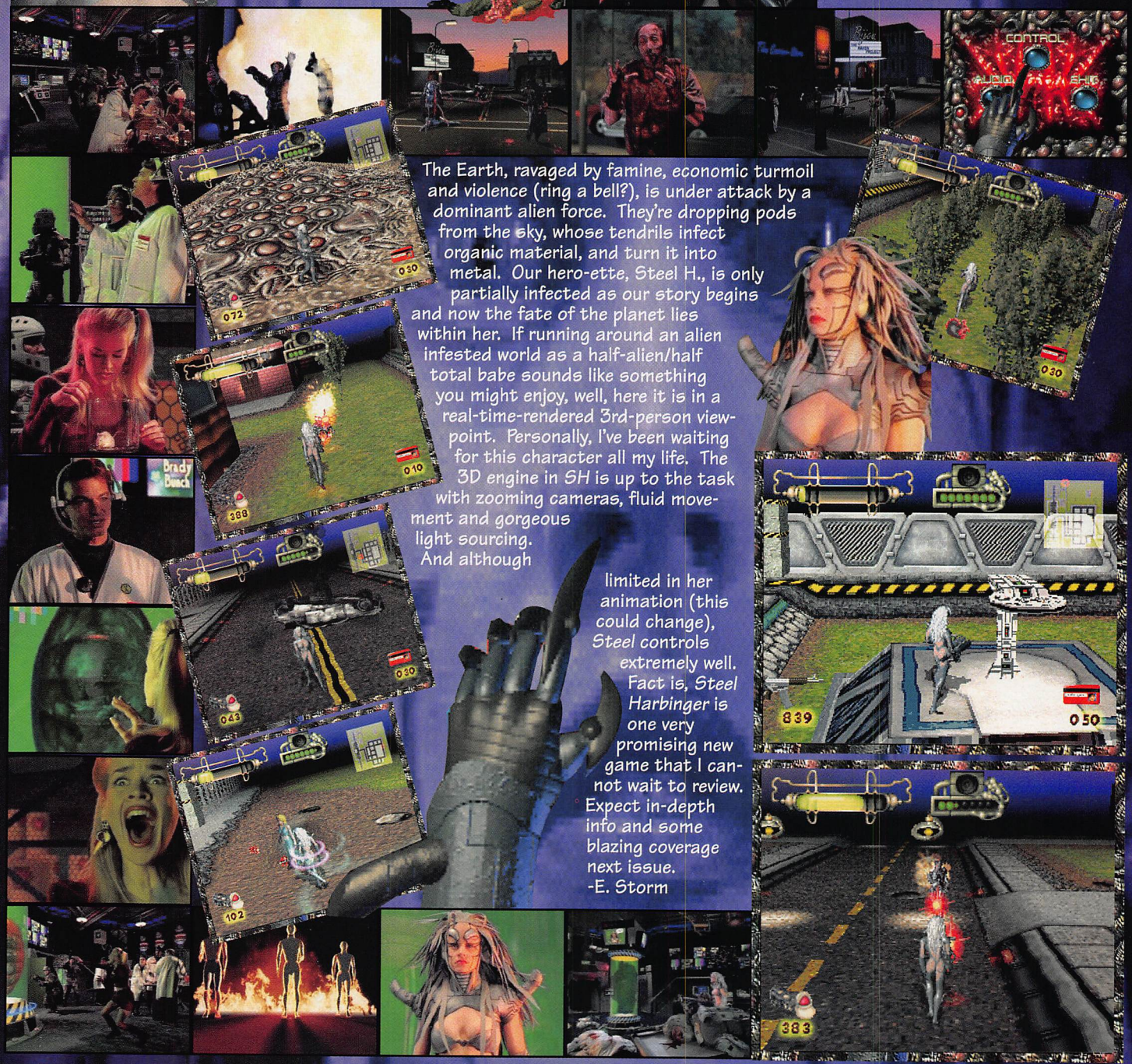
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - SUMMER '96

The Earth, ravaged by famine, economic turmoil and violence (ring a bell?), is under attack by a dominant alien force. They're dropping pods from the sky, whose tendrils infect organic material, and turn it into metal. Our hero-ette, Steel H., is only partially infected as our story begins and now the fate of the planet lies within her. If running around an alien infested world as a half-alien/half total babe sounds like something you might enjoy, well, here it is in a real-time-rendered 3rd-person viewpoint. Personally, I've been waiting for this character all my life. The 3D engine in *SH* is up to the task with zooming cameras, fluid movement and gorgeous light sourcing. And although limited in her animation (this could change), Steel controls extremely well. Fact is, *Steel Harbinger* is one very promising new game that I cannot wait to review. Expect in-depth info and some blazing coverage next issue.

-E. Storm



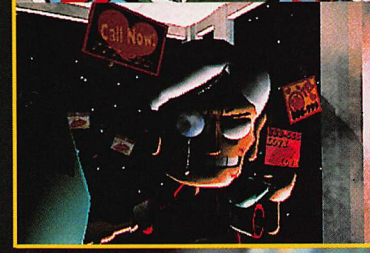
Jumping Flash! 2

The good news: *Jumping Flash! 2* is coming soon! The bad news: Sony Computer Entertainment isn't sure if they're bringing it out in America yet. Apparently *Jumping Flash!* wasn't too popular here, which is shocking—the game is simply one of the best entertainment experiences I've had in the past few years...while it lasts. Exact, the game's developers, have recognized the length problem of *JF!1* and have increased the size of the game's stages tremendously, as well as requiring you to play through them twice, each time with different item, goal and enemy locations.

The wacky story has it that after Robbit defeated Baron Aloha, he retreated to the planet of Muu Muu, where he and his pathetic assistants, the Muu Muus themselves, reside. From out of nowhere, a mysterious being that called itself Captain Suzuki appeared, and stole Planet Muu Muu to "add to his collection." Luckily (or unluckily, depending on your position) Baron Aloha escaped and pleaded with the Galactic Council to save his planet and the pitiable Muu Muus. The council approves Baron Aloha's request and sends Robbit 2.0 after the bizarre Captain Suzuki.

JF!2 is due in Japan in late April, so you can bet we'll have a review soon after. In the meantime, let your voices be known to SCEA and tell them that you demand a *Jumping Flash! 2* release in the US!

-Nick Rox



PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EXACT

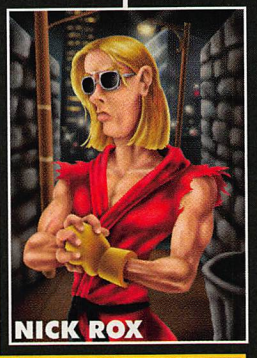
PUBLISHER - SCE

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - APRIL JAPAN/US TBA



Slam Dragon

PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - JALECO

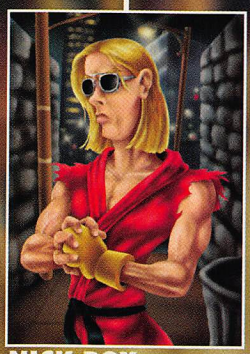
PUBLISHER - JALECO

FORMAT - CD

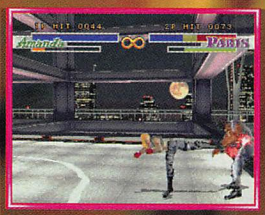
 # OF PLAYERS - 2

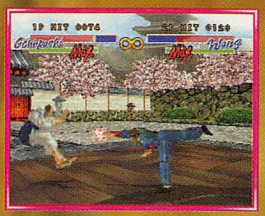
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY



NICK ROX
SO FAR...SO GOOD!





My idea of the perfect formula for a fighter consists of 2-D characters on a 3-D background, ala *Dragon Ball Z* on the PlayStation. And, of course, gameplay. Jaleco's first PlayStation game, *Shokendo* (as it will be called in America), has the first part right, but it doesn't quite have the second part—yet.

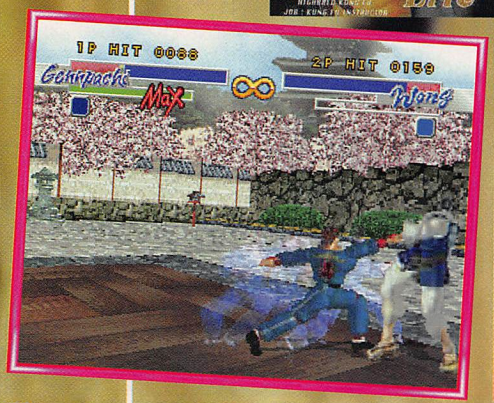
Shokendo tries REALLY hard to be *Killer Instinct*. Not in the way it plays, but in its look and presentation; all the fighters are motion-captured and CG-rendered, the select screen and win poses are FMV, Round 2 begins right where Round 1 left off, and many moves and even wins are lifted straight from *KI*. But *Shokendo* plays nothing like *KI*. There's a block button, and the moves are a mix of VF taps and *SFII* motions. Pressing up and Δ or down and Δ will make you switch onto another line, like *Fatal Fury*. You also have a super bar that's filled up by taunting, which allows you to unleash a shadowed super move.

The background graphics are excellent, with vast amounts of detail and little touches like a *Toshinden*-style monitor, reflections and perfect shadows. With all the PlayStation's polygon-processing power used on BGs, Jaleco came up with some wacky ones: a basketball court with skyscrapers stretching into the distance, an unfinished building consisting of only girders, a dance club with colored strobe lights, an Aztec ruin with multiple pyramids and a secluded temple on a cliffside. The characters are less impressive, as Jaleco went heavy on the JPEG compression to fit an extensive amount of animation frames into RAM. The result is grainy-looking, sometimes blocky characters.

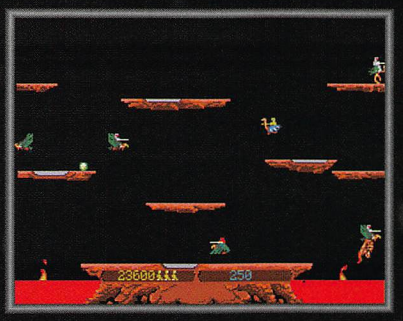
Shokendo's tunes are nondescript gaming tunes for the most part, and the voices are hilarious. Most of them consist of Japanese voice actors desperately trying to sound American. The result is mangled phrases like "You Going Down!" "Good Vibration," "Kick Me!" "Bulls___!" and "Get up, son of a b____!" The voices are well-acted, however, and there's a *lot* of them.

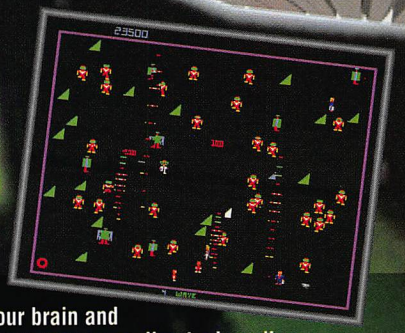
Shokendo's looking pretty cool, and it may shape up to be an excellent fighting game. My advice to Jaleco at this point: remove the block button, add two-in-ones and make the last boss less cheap! We'll be back with a review as soon as a final version is made available.

-Nick Rox



Williams' Arcade's Greatest Hits





REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - WILLIAMS

PUBLISHER - WILLIAMS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - APRIL

You're getting sleepy, your eyelids are getting heavier... Heavier... HEAVIER... psst... hey... dude... are you asleep? Ahh, you ARE asleep! Now I want you to go back... back... baaack... back in time, to the eighties. Back to a time when the name Williams reigned supreme in arcades. Back to a time when their games were known far and wide. Names like *Joust*, *Bubbles*, *Sinistar*, *Robotron*, *Defender* and *Defender II* (*Defender II*?, I thought the game was called *Stargate*? Oh well, such is life in the crazy world of licensing).

Now, fast forward to the present day. Imagine playing those six games in their original form on one PlayStation CD. Sound like fantasy? Nope, Williams Entertainment has created an emulation program for the PlayStation that turns the PS into an ancient arcade machine! Change it back, change it back!

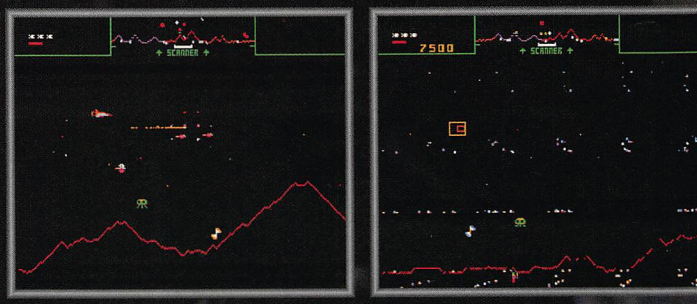
So how are the games? In a word, perfect. Playing *Williams' Arcade Greatest Hits* collection is like cleaning out all those dusty cobwebs inside your brain and giving your long-term memory a direct adrenaline shot. Instantly your mind zooms back to a time when "Lightning Bolt" terry cloth shirts were hip and Survivor's hit song "Eye of the Tiger" lit up the radio charts...scary!!

Seriously though, playing these classic games did bring back many memories (all of them good). Even though the Williams reps went to great lengths to stress that these games were unfinished, you could plainly see that the coin-op-to-PlayStation conversion was unblemished.

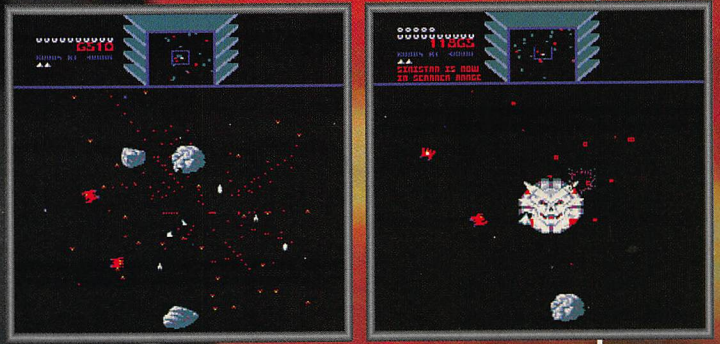
Although I personally love these games, I'll have to reserve my personal opinions for the review next month. By that time we should have a complete copy of *Williams' Arcade Greatest Hits*. I, for one, can't wait... "Burn, baby, burn...Disco Inferno..." -K. Lee

DEFENDER

BUBBLES

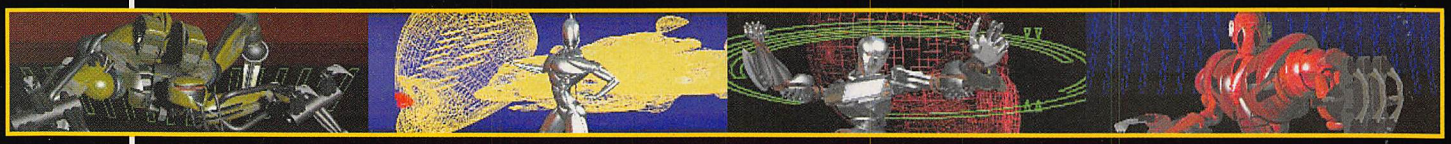


DEFENDER II



SINISTAR

K LEE
WE'VE COME A LOOONG WAY!



REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - MIRAGE

PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW

RESURRECTION

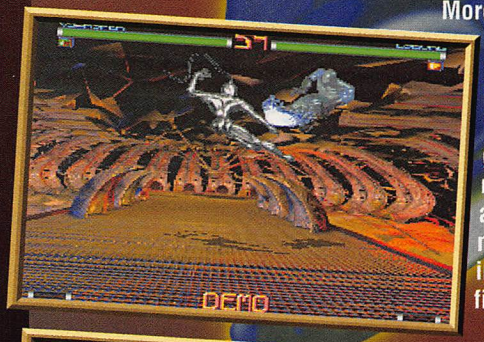
RISE 2

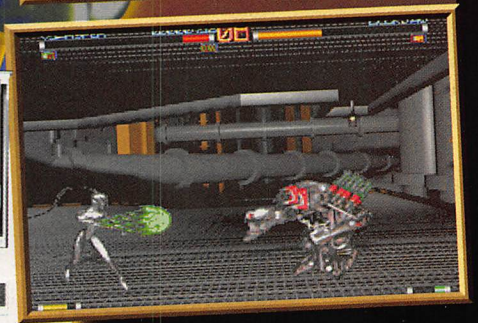
Rise of the Robots was the worst fighting game in all of creation. That's just all there is to it. It had flat backgrounds, no gameplay, and lame characters. What does the sequel add?

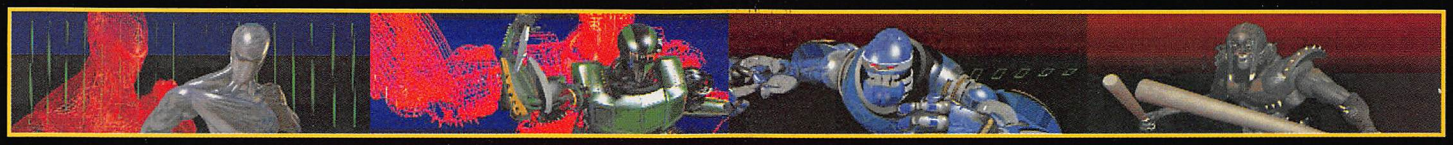
More lame characters with pretentious names like "Insane," "Steppenwolf" and "Prime-8," backgrounds that actually move left and right, and a bunch of hot new "features" found in almost any other fighting game.

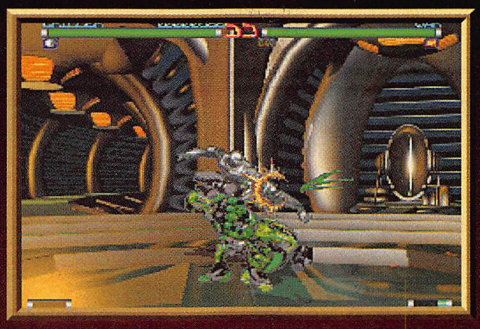
The somewhat cool yet highly-convoluted storyline has it that the villain of *Rise 1*, the Supervisor, had in fact destroyed the physical body of Coton the cyborg, your player character, yet kept his mind alive. Much inexplicable randomness then occurs, and Coton's mind-essence finds himself before 18 robots. He must choose one and continue his mission to terminate the Supervisor.

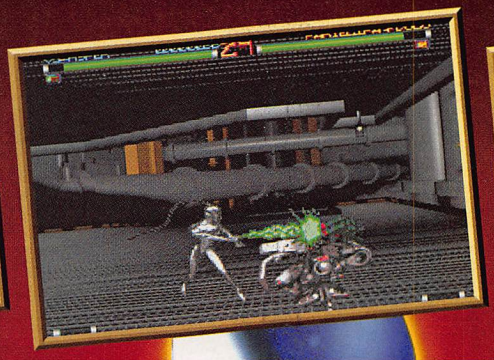
18 (yes, 18!) characters are selectable, plus an unknown number of hidden characters. Each

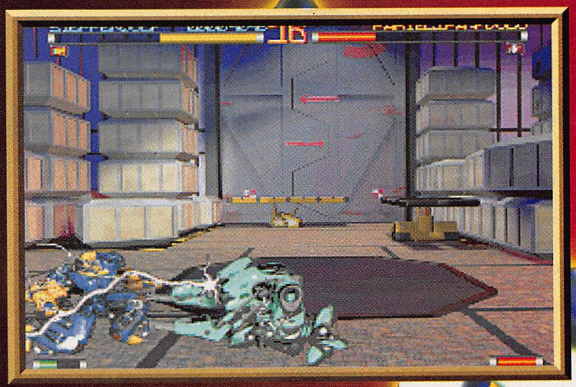


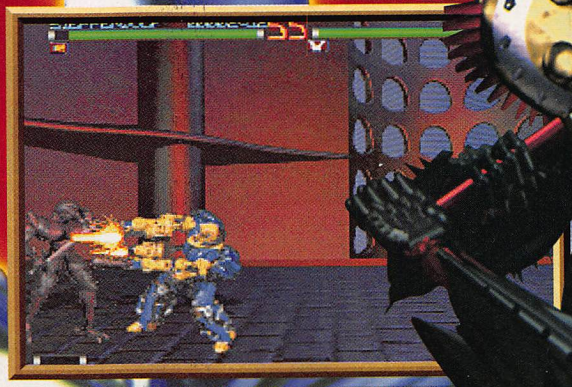










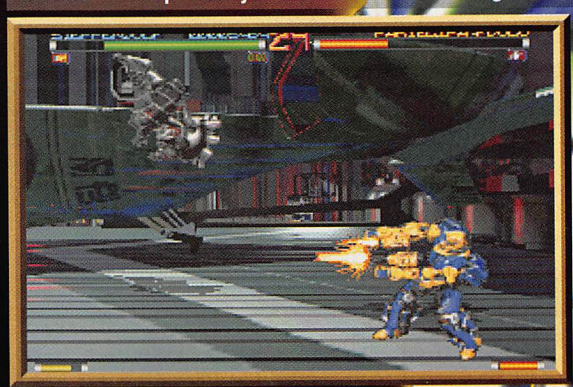


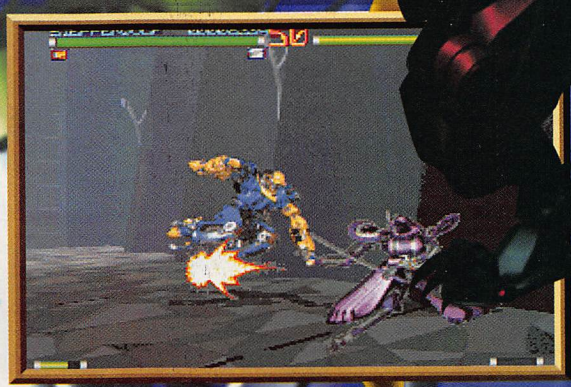
has around five moves, a substantial increase from Rise 1's two. Also added were super moves for each character and blazing new "chaos combos," basically a form of chain combos. You can also gain the moves of the computer opponents, *Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer*-style, by defeating them with a "termination move" or fatality. These moves usually consist of a projectile, and can only be used a couple of times in the entire game.

The graphics? What can I say—a bunch of NES-sized dudes dukin' it out in front of COMPLETELY flat BGs—except now you can move left and right! YEAH! Now *that's* 32-bit force. To its credit, the animation is very nice and smooth, with little touches like electric sparks that surround the robots when they're low on energy.

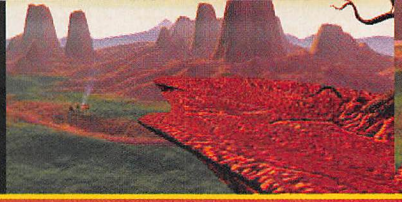
I do not recommend *Rise 2* in any way. Painful graphics and gameplay make the game not worth your effort, especially with so many other great PS fighting games available. If you really want a burning 2D fighter, *Alpha* awaits.

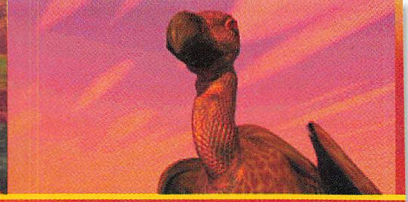
-Nick Rox





The West 1879





R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - VIC TOKAI

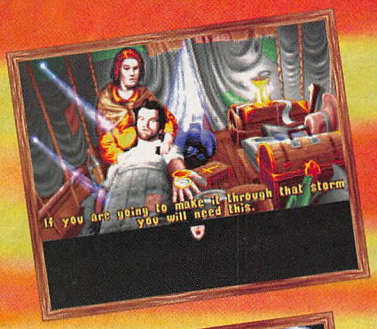
PUBLISHER - VIC TOKAI

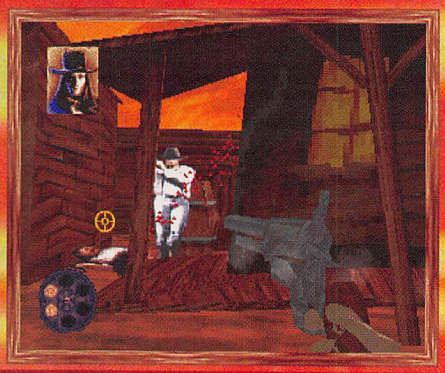
FORMAT - CD

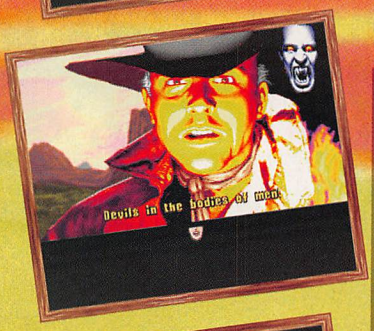
 # OF PLAYERS - 1

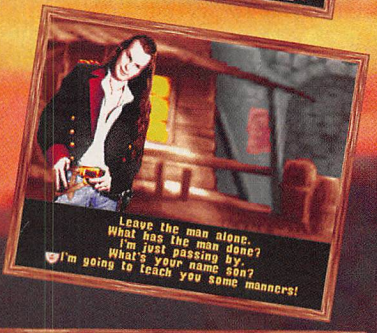
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

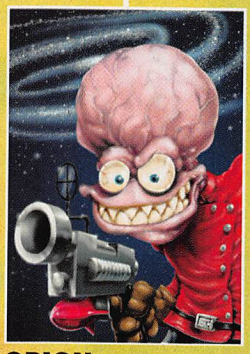
AVAILABLE - NOW









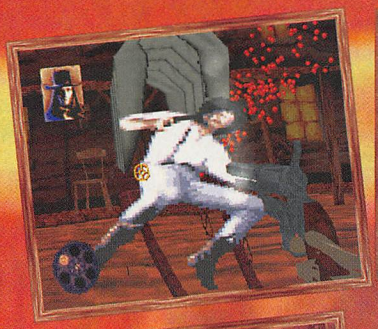


ORION
HANG 'EM HIGH!

Something's happened to the once-bustling town of *Silverload*. Something...*evil*. Using an interface more popular with computer games (point and click), Vic Tokai has created a title that not only challenges your mind with puzzles, but draws you in with its uniquely disturbing plot.

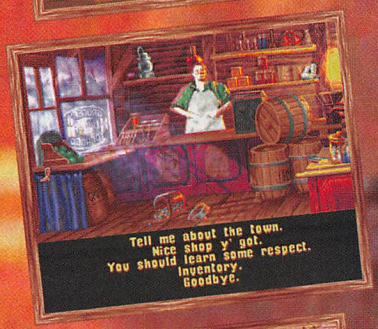
It's 1879 in the Old West. Acting on a promise to save a man's kidnapped son, you venture into the mining town of *Silverload*. Right off, you notice this town's different. It might have something to do with the numerous gravesites, the lack of any horses, or just the way its inhabitants look at you. The dwindling population has strange tales, stories of death and folks just disappearing. A few of them seem nice, but you can't help feeling like they want you to leave (they all tell you to). The rest of the people though, give you a feeling of dread. They smile and sometimes talk nicely, but their eyes tell of something dark. For some reason almost no one knows of the kidnapped child, and those that seem as though they might, shut up quickly. The answers must lie with the mysterious preacher who lives up on the hill, but to get to him there are puzzles to solve in the main town. Why have there been so many deaths lately? Why do those red-eyed buzzards always seem to be

SILVERLOAD

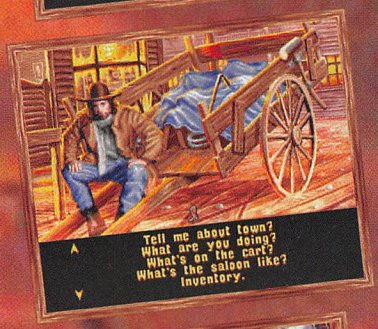


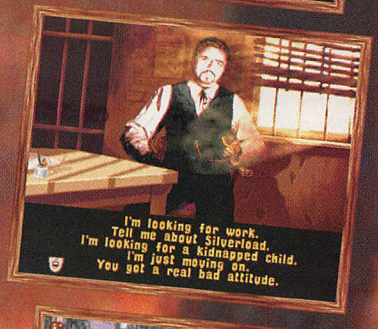
around? What's with your strange dreams? And why is it that when people smile, you almost see a hint of...sharp teeth?

The game slowly unfolds by gathering information from the townsfolk, finding items and solving puzzles. The overall format is very PC-like, with a cursor always present on the screen, allowing you to walk, look at, talk, or anything else that needs to be done with a single press of a button. You have to explore everywhere, as there are items hidden that need to be found before you can go further in your quest. Sometimes it's just finding a key so a door can be opened, but it's usually not that apparent (such as how to quench the thirst of a crazed man who yearns for blood). The only true "fast action" parts of the game are a few shooting scenes done in *Virtua Cop* "on rails" fashion.

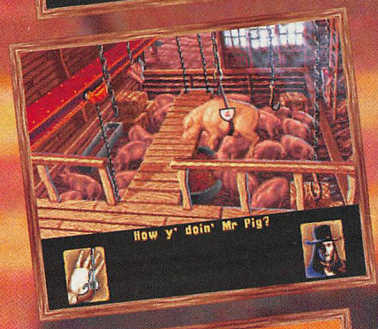


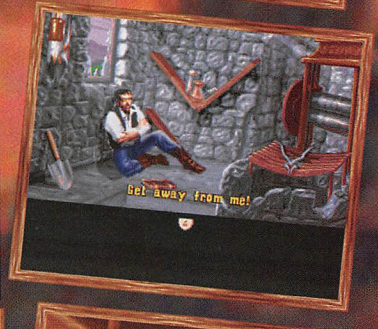
The people of *Silverload* are represented by a strange combination of digitized and hand-drawn graphics. Half of the population are almost cartoony in look, while the others look like rejects from *Night Trap*. This actually looks better than I thought it would, as Vic Tokai washed out the "real" actors faces enough to allow them to blend in with everything else. The backgrounds are still pictures, but have many animated pieces (such as mist on the floor or flickering light coming through a window), giving them a bit of life. The shooting scenes are cool looking, but the digitized characters you're trying to kill can get quite pixelly.



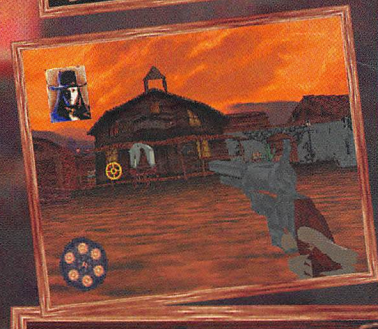


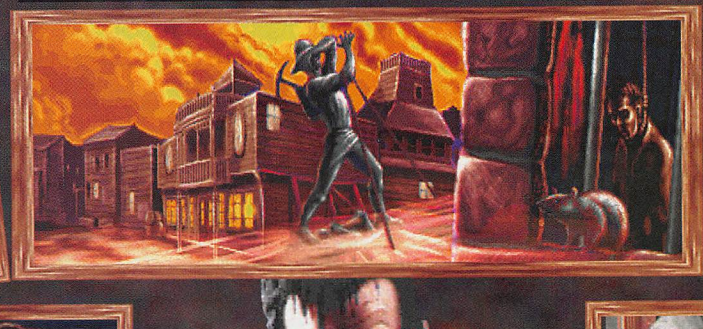
Every character you talk to has tons of speech (which can be skipped or turned to text in the option screen), and the voice acting, while sometimes cheesy, really isn't that bad. The overall music (most notably in the amazing-looking opening film and other small cinemas scattered throughout the game) is some of the best I've heard on the PlayStation so far, and accurately echoes the mood of the game.

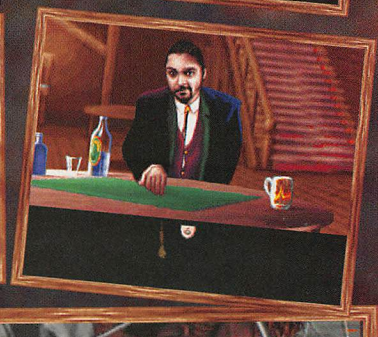


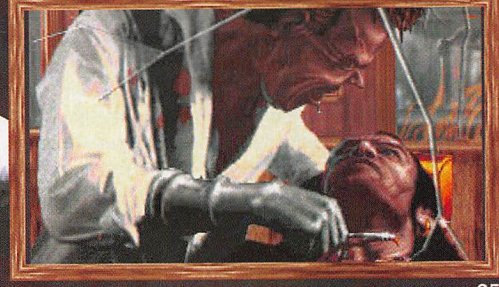


That mood is the best part about *Silverload*. The uneasy atmosphere and horrific undertones hooked me almost instantly, and I'm still addicted to the involving gameplay. Sure, it has a few small problems (the interface is a tad clumsy), but if you enjoy adventure/puzzle solving games, this is one title you'll want to check out. -Orion









AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAKERS OF F1

FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

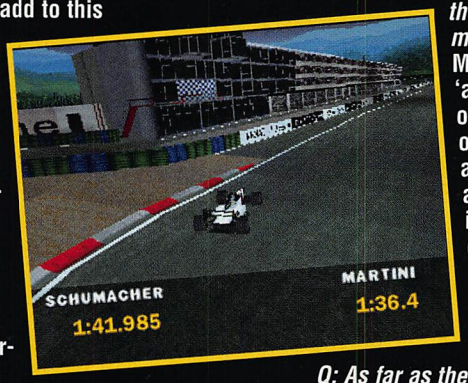
THE KING OF ALL RACING GAMES?

Besides being the most complex racing game of all time, *Formula One* is Bizarre Creations' very first PlayStation outing. It's an impressive debut. Martyn Chudley, Senior Developer on the *F1* project and head of Bizarre Creations, recently spoke out about this groundbreaking game at his Liverpool, England headquarters. Here's what he had to say:

Q: Where did you get hold of the official Team Diagrams?
MARTYN CHUDLEY: These were obtained through Fuji Television (who supply the license) via FOCA. They include (to varying completeness) car diagrams, slides, team and driver photos, and technical and historical information. These (official FOCA Maps) are copyright of the surveyors contracted for each official circuit.
Q: We understand the artists have used external video footage to assist them in ensuring the highest levels of accuracy are obtained?
MC: We have recorded every practice, qualifying session and race of the 1995 season ourselves, but also already had some footage from the previous season, being F1 fans! We have bought some video reference, and have been given a lot of generously donated footage from a well-known TV station!
Q: How is the racing strategy designed? What are the variables that alter decisions? What can drivers actually decide to do?
MC: The drivers are all trying to win (obviously!), by going as fast as they can in every situation, and sticking to the racing line when possible. However, they are all affected by the straight line and cornering speeds of their particular cars, and the situation on the track around them.

The decisions are the basic ones every driver faces: whether or not to move out to pass (or be passed), which direction to make that move in, whether to accelerate or decelerate, when it's time to make a pit stop. The decisions are made based on what part of the track they are on, whether there's a car in front or behind, and what those cars are doing (and at what speed). They even assess their own speed and race position, and make the decision to move accordingly.
Q: Are all of the driver personalities truly unique?
MC: The 'personalities' are added driver by driver, based on assessing each one's performance and driving style in the 1995 races. The AI has been coded with a set of 'tunable' parameters—basic ones such as car performance, and complex ones such as aggression levels. These parameters will be tweaked to represent each driver, and we are therefore going to end up with 35 individuals, rather than, for example, 8 'fast' drivers, 8 'quite good' drivers, etc.
Q: Where did you get the actual telemetry data from?
MC: Aha! We have our sources! Unfortunately, we can't reveal most of them, although they have come with the official permission of the teams. Recently, we have had some great support from a top F1 team, which has helped greatly in the simulation of the Formula One cars. Watch out for the official press release on this joint venture!
Q: You suggest that there will be assisted (selectable) dynamics for the arcade player. Can you give us a breakdown of what is or isn't selectable?
MC: The Arcade mode has a proper 3D physical model for the interaction of the car with the track and other cars, but this does not follow the actual feel of a F1 car. Formula One cars are incredibly "grippy"—with a great amount of down force, they appear to stick to the circuits like glue! The acceleration and braking are both very intense, but don't necessarily give the 'feel' suitable for an arcade racer.

Therefore in Arcade mode the car will be easier to handle than the real thing—you can powerslide, 4-wheel drift and even do 'donuts'! You can add to this the selectable options of assisted steering, where the car is aided to keep on the racing line and assisted braking, where the computer will automatically apply the correct amount of braking suitable for the corner you are approaching.



Q: How are pit stops carried out?
MC: They aren't at the moment—we haven't got the code in yet! We're planning to have selectable pit stops: off, preset (your team will call you in), or user-defined (where you can plan your strategy on tires and fuel). The pit stops will be used for tires, fuel, damage and the dreaded stop-go penalty, but the actual format and graphic representation is currently being worked on.
Q: In Grand Prix mode, have you thought about custom-designing the different options, so the player can decide just which of the extra factors they'd like on or off?
MC: Yes, it's important to us that you can set up the game to suit your preference in racing. Even within our development team, there are those who prefer Arcade play, those who like the simulation of the Grand Prix, those who want assisted options, those who want to race a full 2 hours, etc. We've included a memory card option so that you can save your ideal configurations.

There are also a host of other options which will be included if we have the time, such as corner markers, tire wear, etc. We are also still deciding which of the many car set-up options we will be including in the selectable options.
Q: Have you decided on the number of camera views you'll be able to choose from? Any update on the "viewing from another car" mode?
MC: At the moment, you can view from anywhere, even under the track, but I don't think we'll be allowed to keep that in! For playing the game, you will have at least the following options: overhead, above and behind the car (distant), above and behind (close), in-cockpit and the brown-trousered 'nose-cam'—placed in the same position that Schumaker had last year—about 6" off the ground!

As for the replays, we've got other views in addition to the above, such as from front left, right, and immediately in front of the car looking backwards. We've also got the official TV camera positions, and are currently working on dynamic replay cameras. And yes, we've managed to get the replay viewed not only from any car (AI or otherwise), but from all of the above cameras pointing at any of the cars.

Q: How far are you into the game's development right now?
MC: We've reached the 'alpha' stage of development. The main bulk of the programming and artwork is done, and we're now working on perfecting the options, focusing the 'arcade' and 'advanced' modes and putting in the fine detail.
Q: As far as the outside world knows, this is your first PlayStation title. But is the outstanding quality of F1 seen so far really the result of a mere first attempt?
MC: Bizarre Creations were one of the first third party developers to be given a development kit, and were lucky enough to have Psygnosis's backing to allow us to spend time experimenting with the machine without the pressures of project deadlines. After a few months, we embarked on a long-term project, code named 'Slaughter," which has had to be put on temporary hold due to the immense work-load of *F1*.

F1 has greatly increased our knowledge of the PlayStation in a time-frame that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Psygnosis chose us to develop the game for them, and we've worked hard to fulfill their trust. I think we've surprised ourselves with what we've achieved, even with such intensive development.
Q: Could F1 be described in any way as a "second generation" PlayStation title?
MC: It depends on how you classify "second generation." It's not our second

released title, but then would you say *Ridge Racer Revolution* is enough of a leap up from *Ridge Racer* to call it second generation?

We are constantly developing our 3D engine. We're onto our 'third generation' there! Advancements are being made to the rendering all the time, and we have seen a distinct leap in our use of the machine during the project's development.

So in answer to the question, if you classify second generation as our second release, then no—but if it is classified as a marked leap forward (over currently available products) in the utilizing of the PlayStation's hardware, then yes!

Q: What were your priorities when you started the development of F1*, in terms of providing gamers with both an enjoyable gaming experience and a realistic simulation?*

MC: The number one priority for any game developer has got to be playability. If a game is boring, unplayable, or badly designed, then it can have all of the features in the world, but it won't be enjoyable.

So first, we've aimed to produce a playable game—fast paced action for the arcade player, and enough depth in the advanced mode to satisfy the older or more experienced gamer. The next on the agenda was the realism—from the intricate detail and accuracy of the circuit model, to the dynamics of the car—to give a realistic driving experience.

Q: In what ways has the official endorsement of the FIA (FOCA) helped in the development of the game?

MC: We have been able to call on the teams, circuits and even TV stations to assist us in an official capacity. Without official endorsement, we could not use any real circuits, drivers, cars or even use words like 'Grand Prix' or 'Formula One.' When we've been researching for the game, the FOCA license has opened all the right doors!

Q: What's your opinion of the PlayStation as a games platform?

MC: We're currently shifting 150,000 fully-textured polygons per second—with about 20% of those gouraud-shaded—on a sub-$300 machine. How much would an equivalent PC cost? The PlayStation has turned the phrase 'arcade perfect' into a reality, rather than the sales hype that magazines used to snicker at!

And the machine is still surprising us! We recently put in the code for the starting grid set-up—26 gouraud-shaded cars on one of the most detailed parts of the circuit—and cringed, waiting for the game to drop a couple of frames. It didn't! As you see all the cars heading into the distance at 30 frames per second, you realize how powerful the PlayStation is!

As to the range and quality of games, it's only a matter of time. The standard in the marketplace at the moment is already good, and these are games that have been written for a new platform, usually with strict deadlines. Imagine what we're going to see when developers have had a chance to really study the machine!

Q: To what extent does PlayStation's rigid development environment restrict a team that is no longer new to the system?

MC: The more you work on it, the better you'll become. Look at the [Genesis], for example: Compare the technology of the recently released *Toy Story*—large sprites on multiple parallax backgrounds, a racing section and even a *Doom*-style 3D engine—to the original *Altered Beast*! Technological advancements are just a matter of time and effort.

The development environment has vastly improved since the early days of the machine, and therefore developers new to the system can achieve good results with little experience, which benefits the consumer. However, as you get to know your way around, you learn to write your own formats and routines to work in conjunction with the Development Libraries, which are in turn being developed and improved.

Q: What aspects of F1 *do you believe push the PlayStation farther than ever before?*

MC: Generally, we hope to achieve a higher accuracy and attention to detail than any other game. We feel that the graphics are visually more impressive than the current racers. Being based on the real thing, they're also close to what you would see on television. In terms of polygon power, we think that we are processing and drawing more polygons than the current racers, especially with the considerable number of polygons that are gouraud shaded.

Q: From what you've seen of Nintendo 64, how do you feel F1 *on the PlayStation will compare, from a technological point of view, to whatever racing games may be published for N64 in 1996?*

MC: Well, *F1*'s going to be available before September/November 1996 for the US and Europe! Nintendo's keeping the details about who is releasing what pretty vague at the moment, so it's hard to know where our real rivals are coming from.

Mario Kart-R has been most publicized, and has the advantage of being a fictitious game, meaning that programmers can design any game to suit the machine, whereas *F1* is 'real life'—we've had to solve our problems the hard way! The look and feel of *F1* is far removed from the cutesy graphics and simple gameplay of the Nintendo characters, and we feel that this will have more appeal to the 'next generation' audience.

One obvious advantage we're going to have over any N64 game is the sound. We have 45 minutes of CD quality music—including licensed tracks from Joe Satriani and Steve Vai, and 12 specially-written tracks from 'Overdrive' at Psygnosis. Add to this over 20 pages of varied commentary script from Murray Walker (and regional commentators for Germany, Spain, France and Italy) and you can see why *F1* is essentially a CD-based game!

With two years' experience behind most developers for the PlayStation, and an ever-increasing level of developer support from Sony (and in our case Psygnosis as well), Nintendo's going to have to do a lot to catch up. Technologically speaking, it's hard to say whether one system will be better than the other. Like anything in this industry, time will tell!

Q: Have you bettered the two Formula One Grand Prix *games that have appeared on PC?*

MC: I don't think anyone can claim to have bettered Geoff Crammond's six or so years of constant work to perfect his simulation. *Formula One* is a different type of game, aiming to appeal to a wide gaming audience rather than just the simulation player. Yes, our 'Advanced' mode cars do handle like the real thing, but if you want to pick up a racing game and play, the 'Arcade' mode caters to the less 'technical' audience.

If we have bettered *F1GP/F1GP2* in any way, I think it would have to be in our attention to detail. We have had five artists working full-time on modeling the game's elements to precise detail, with huge amounts of reference material. We think the circuits are as close to the real thing as you can get, within the limitations of today's consoles. Murray Walker said our overhead of Aida was 'just like being there,' and he's one of the lucky few who are qualified to say that!

Q: What are the problems involved in putting together a simulation that relies on its accuracy?

MC: Without a doubt it's getting the accurate information. With the amount of money and high technology involved in *Formula One*, teams are very skeptical about letting their information go. It's taken 19 months of gentle persuasion to get the information we have, and we still can't name our sources!

Q: Any thoughts on a split-screen option?

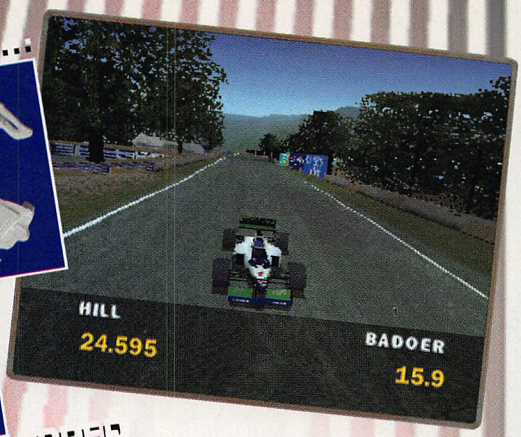
MC: Our lead programmer has been thinking very hard about it! We're pushing the machine with the processing and numbers of polygons, and as with other split-screen modes, there will have to be a trade-off between frame rate and detail—and then only if we have time.

We already have the link option in—two player or full race modes. You can also set up the second PlayStation to watch the other one on TV footage viewpoint, either as a stand-alone option, or if the second player crashes out! And when the PlayStation network capability comes out, we'll be fully supporting it.

Q: Does the 3D engine lend itself to any other racing games? Are there any more in the pipeline?

MC: All the code has been written with future projects in mind as well as *F1*. The 3D engine is constantly being updated, but yes, it can also be used for future projects. As to more games in the pipeline, we can't really say anything at the moment. Bizarre Creations were halfway through an interactive concept project for the PlayStation, but *F1* took priority. Code-named *Slaughter*, this game will be back on the agenda soon!

FIA FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - BIZARRE CREATIONS

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

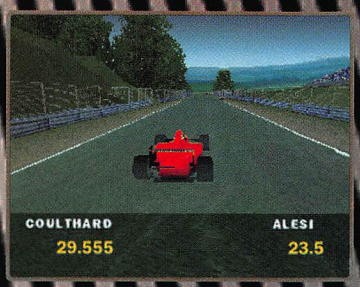
AVAILABLE - SUMMER

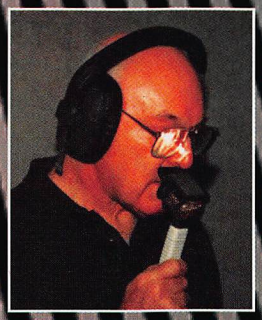
Psygnosis' most ambitious software project yet for the PlayStation is due to arrive this summer. Put simply, it is the culmination of Psygnosis' desire, passion and raw ability to produce ground breaking games. It is one of the most complex games in years. "IT" goes by the name *F1*, and from what we hear, it is the god of all racing games and Psygnosis' flagship game of 1996.

As you may or may no know, Formula One racing (the sport, not the game) is by far the most competitive, demanding, expensive and elite motorsports racing league on the face of the planet. It is a world unto itself. A world where top drivers can command salaries of more than 2 million dollars per race, carbon fiber brake pads and discs cost more than 15 grand a set, and Ferrari's estimated total race budget for 1996 is somewhere north of $100 million—serious stuff indeed.

And how has Psygnosis gone about creating a PlayStation game that properly represents this elite sport? The same way Frank Williams runs his top rated F1 team: cold, steely-eyed, disciplined, and without compromise. It is that type of discipline and uncompromising quality that is the spirit of *F1* (the game *and* the sport). By all accounts, *F1* is the best and most accurate Grand Prix racing game of all time. Don't believe me? Well, consider this...

Psygnosis signed the rights for the official 1996 Formula One license, which means all 13 teams, all 35 drivers and all 17 circuits are included in the game. All the tracks have been precisely modeled from the official FIA surveyor's track maps, providing the game with accurate dimensions and heights for the circuits. Tracks (ranging from 3.3 to 7 km in length) have 60,000-90,000 polygons and 256 color backdrops. The game itself has around 150,000 texture-mapped and gouraud-shaded polygons per second and runs at 30 fps. All surrounding scenery (buildings, pits, grandstands, trees, etc.) has been

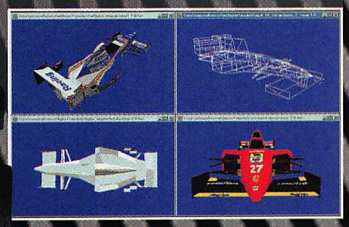


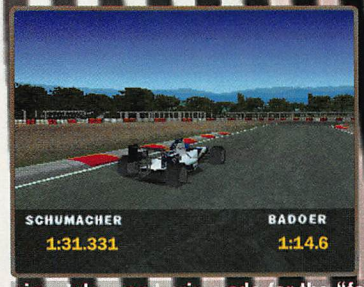


ACTUAL COMMENTARY BY MURRAY WALKER, WORLD-RENOWNED F1 ANNOUNCER!

accurately added from carefully-studied site photographs and over 100 hours of live video footage. So whether you're looking at the pits at Imola, the grandstands at Magny-Cours or the hotels in Monaco, everything emulates its real-life counterpart perfectly. All 26 cars are modeled from team diagrams, photos and video footage, for the sake of accuracy. In fact, every logo and sponsor (except for tobacco sponsors) are included in both car and circuit models.

There are 2 different race modes (arcade mode for casual racers and a





sim-style grand prix mode for the "foaming-at-the-mouth" hard-core F1 fans like K. Lee), and on either mode you can choose to practice, race a "quickie," or go for the full-blown 2 hour champion-ship races....this game is insane!

The realism in *F1* is stunning. All 35 drivers have their own individual personalities and AI, mirroring their real world counterparts (so expect a major struggle when trying to pass Michael Shumacher's Benneton). Race dynamics are based on real telemetry data from F1 teams, so expect accurate lap times, acceleration, braking, and cornering behavior from all cars. But wait, there's more...

In-car sound effects were taken from a DAT recorder physically strapped to a driver's body. The soundtrack includes tunes from Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, and various other artists - all in your choice of mono, stereo, Dolby Surround, or even Q-Sound... Cool. World famous F1 commentator Murray Walker does voice-over during the races. *F1* also features 7 different camera views, multi-player link-up option, NeGcon and Mad Catz steering wheel compatibility—the list never ends.

Next month we'll go further in depth into this hyper-complex racing game. Until that time, look over these screen shots of what could go down in history as the best racing game of all time. Hear me now, or believe me later... the choice is yours.

-K. Lee

RETURN FIRE

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SILENT SOFTWARE

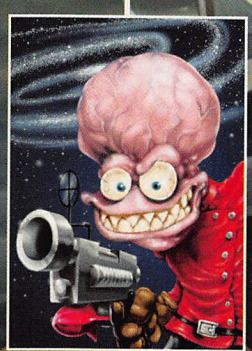
PUBLISHER - TWI

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW



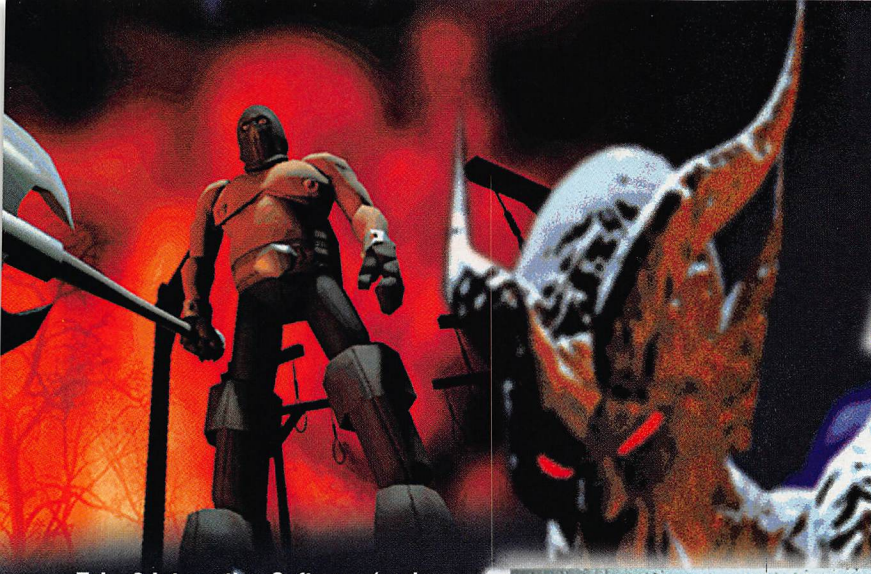
ORION
WAR ISN'T HELL ANYMORE!

When it was released for the 3DO over a year ago, *Return Fire* was a smash hit. It had the perfect blend of action and strategy, a great 2-player vs. mode, and an outstanding classical soundtrack. It was just a blast to play, so when *Return Fire* was announced for the PlayStation with some new features in tow, I became quite excited. The version we received for the March issue had almost nothing (sans a closer viewpoint) changed from the original, and was reviewed accordingly. Then, just recently, a copy with many new additions was sent to us.

Nothing's really changed in the basic formula—the PlayStation version of *Return Fire* is still a glorified game of "Capture the Flag." Using your fleet of Tanks, ASVs, Helicopters, and Humvees, you must knock down your enemy's defenses, find his flag, and take it back to your base. That's where the similarities end though, as this game has many, many improvements over the 3DO version. There are now over 200 maps, some even having an original "theme" (one is actually shaped like a giant chessboard, and all the gun turrets are in the form of huge chess pieces). The new closer viewpoint is still intact, and you can now have a full-screen mode by removing the instrument panel. Other improvements include improved computer AI (making the one-player game more intense), memory card or password save, a more useful radar, and the Hummer, replacing the old Jeep. Arnold would be proud.

Return Fire has more than enough improvements to justify another look even if you've played the original. And if you've never played *Return Fire* before (hey!), this is your perfect opportunity to check out one of the most addicting war games I've ever played.

-Orion



DNN
DIEHARD NEWS NETWORK

Ironblood

TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE • M2/PS

Take 2 Interactive Software (makers of popular PC games such as *Ripper*, *Hell* and *StarCrusader*), are developing their first one-on-one, weapon-to-weapon fighting game, entitled *Ironblood*. Due for the PlayStation in late July (and also for the M2 sometime in 1997), *Ironblood* is a 3D fighting game set in a medieval fantasy world.

The combatants are made up of warriors, gladiators, goblins, gargoyles, wizards, archers, paladins, dwarves, thieves, elves and monsters. Take 2's developers are going to great lengths to make certain *Ironblood*'s atmosphere is darker and more menacing than any other 3D fighting game to date. Players will also be able to choose between the straightforward "arcade mode" or the "campaign mode" which features medieval-style objectives.

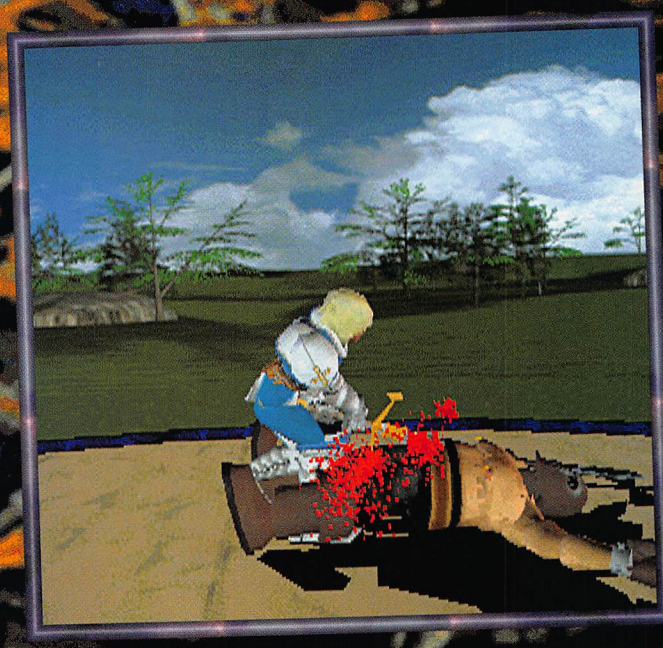
In the campaign mode, the player chooses half of the available combatants to be on his/her team (there are a total of 16 selectable characters), while his opponent selects the other half. There are 2 classes of combatants, 'Knights of Order' and 'Warriors of Chaos.' The terrains that these combatants are placed on will provide advantages to the combatants. For instance, a wizard who is near his power source could be far more dangerous than if he fights in the wilderness. Additionally, through use of the campaign mode, the player can build up his combatants, earning them extra magic items, hit points and magical abilities, effectively making them far more powerful in combat.

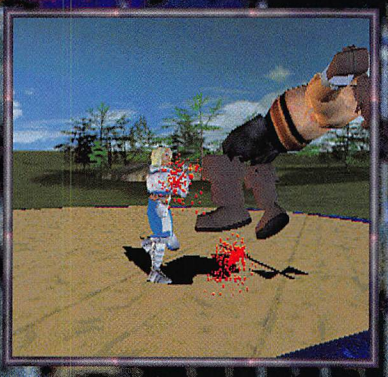
The programmers at Take 2 are planning on using many of the advanced 3D features of the PlayStation and the M2. For example, both versions of *Ironblood* will incorporate various lighting effects. With the lighting in the arenas being somewhat dark, visual effects such as fireballs or magical weapons will illuminate the corresponding fighter and area of the arena.

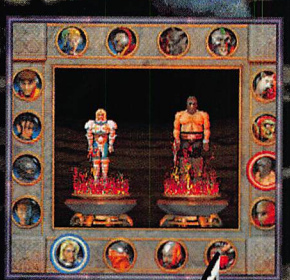
Each character will feature up to 4,750 texture-mapped and gouraud-shaded polygons each, on the PlayStation. In the M2 version, each character will be made up of at least 6,000 polygons and could even exceed 10,000 polygons per frame for one character alone! The M2 version will also incorporate better texture mapping and will take advantage of the system's advanced features (perspective correction, z-buffer, filtering, mip-map interpolation, alpha channel, anti-aliasing, etc.).

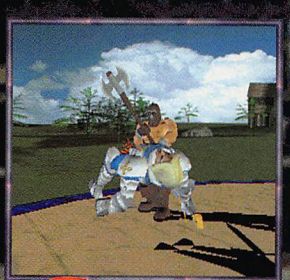
Take 2 is looking into incorporating some type of virtual sound imaging in *Ironblood* (such as Dolby Surround, SRS or perhaps even Q sound). This would be used for directional sound effects (such as fireballs and lightning bolts) which would sweep from one speaker to the other and bring more realism and depth to the game.

The programmers will be producing character combat animation through the use of Ascension Technology's motion capture harness. Since martial arts play no part in *Ironblood*, Take 2 will instead be utilizing the services of SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism), a group of enthusiasts who are skilled in the use of archaic weaponry and medieval combat. Take 2 will capture the motion of the fighting movements of the SCA experts and apply the data in *Ironblood*.





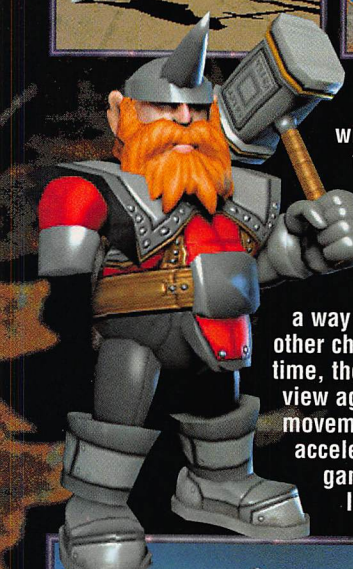


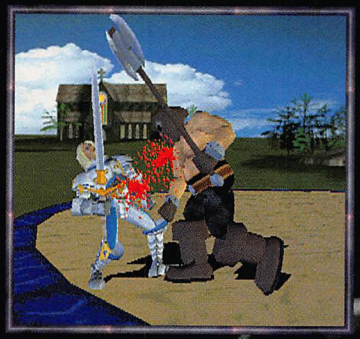


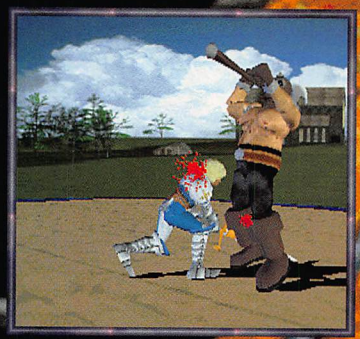
Ironblood will also feature an intelligent "floating camera." The camera will float at a height of 1-5 meters above the floor of the fighting arena, depending on its distance from the combatants (similar to *Killer Instinct* and *Samurai Shodown*). Additionally, if during the course of combat the characters become oriented in such a way that one is obscuring the view of the other character for more than a set amount of time, the camera will swing around to a profile view again. The camera also uses a nonlinear movement model (the implementation of acceleration and deceleration) to give the game more of a filmed look and feel.

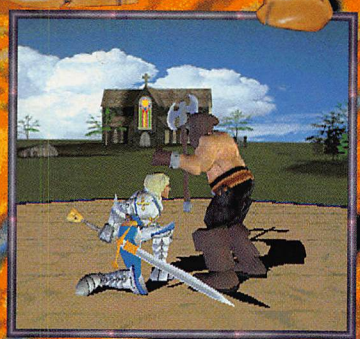
Ironblood's control layout consists of: high attack, medium attack, low attack, medium block, low block (both using a block button), evade and rotate. The game is also said to feature fatalities and hidden artifacts in each level.

Next month, we hope to receive a playable version of *Ironblood* for the PlayStation. We also expect to obtain additional details of the M2 version of *Ironblood* (perhaps shots?). Until that time, feast your eyes on these exclusive shots of *Ironblood*. -K. Lee

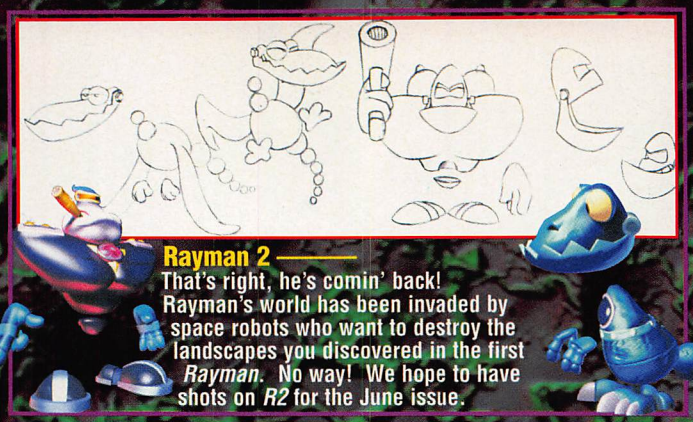








PLAYSTATION PREVIEWS

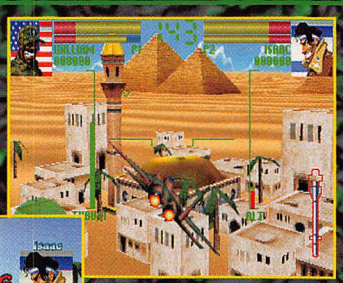


Rayman 2

That's right, he's comin' back! Rayman's world has been invaded by space robots who want to destroy the landscapes you discovered in the first *Rayman*. No way! We hope to have shots on *R2* for the June issue.

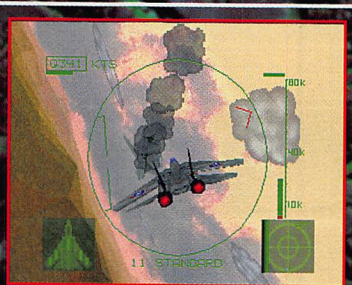
Aeon Flux

One of the coolest things to come out MTV since it was actually a music video network, *Aeon Flux* is coming to the PS, with real time 3D characters in a 3D environment. Look for *AF* from Parisian developer, Cryo, this Winter.



Deadly Skies

One-on-one fighting in the sky complete with fighting game like controls and awesome anime-like characters? Is that legal? Yes, but does it work? *Deadly Skies* is coming soon.

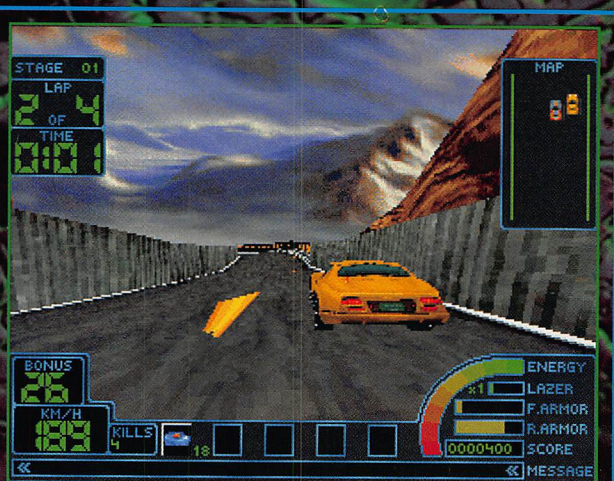


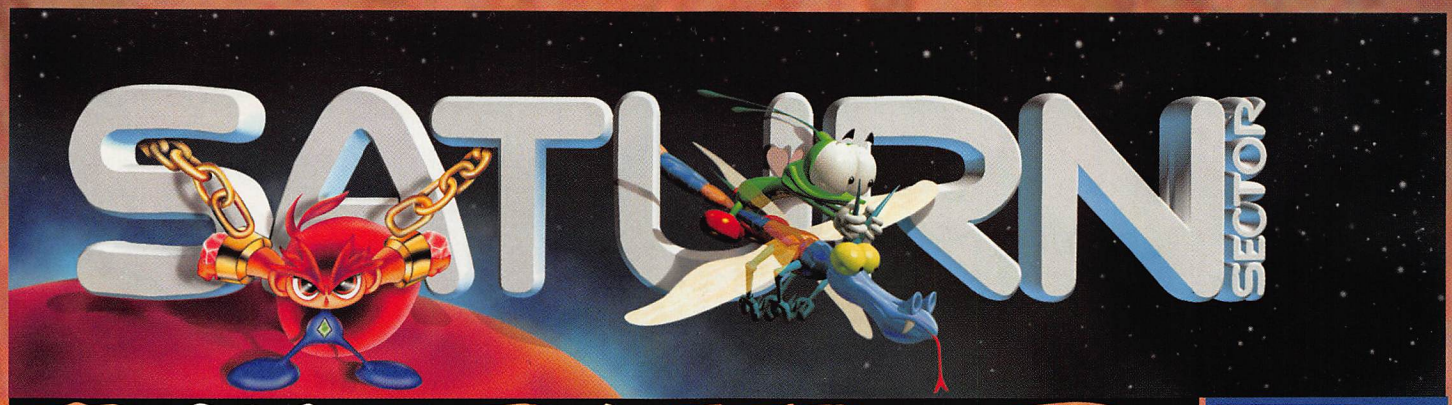
Top Gun

I wanna be like Tom, if Nick will be Goose... gettin' wet Nick? The bald guy from the movie is actually in the FMV portions of Spectrum's cool looking dog-fightin' game, *Top Gun*. Tom Cruise, however, is nowhere to be seen. Don't write any checks your body can't cash. We'll review *TG* soon.

Impact Racing

JVC's *Impact Racing* is nearly complete and looking quite good. One thing's for sure, the frame rate in *IR* is *fast*. The goal is to annihilate a pre-determined number of enemies while not only staying alive, but coming in under the allotted time. This cool racer should be reviewable by April. I still wish a third person perspective was available, but I'll live.





ANCIENT BEYOND OASIS 2

PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - ANCIENT

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

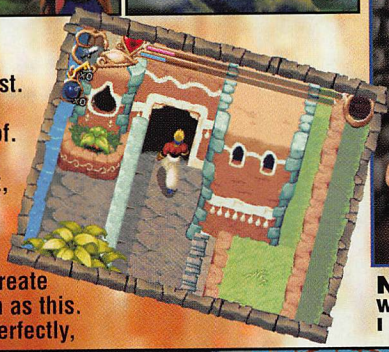
OF PLAYERS - 1

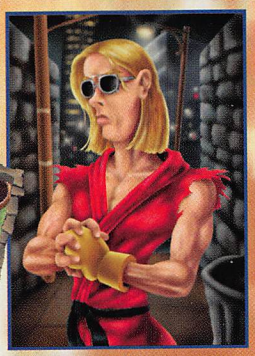
DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - JUNE

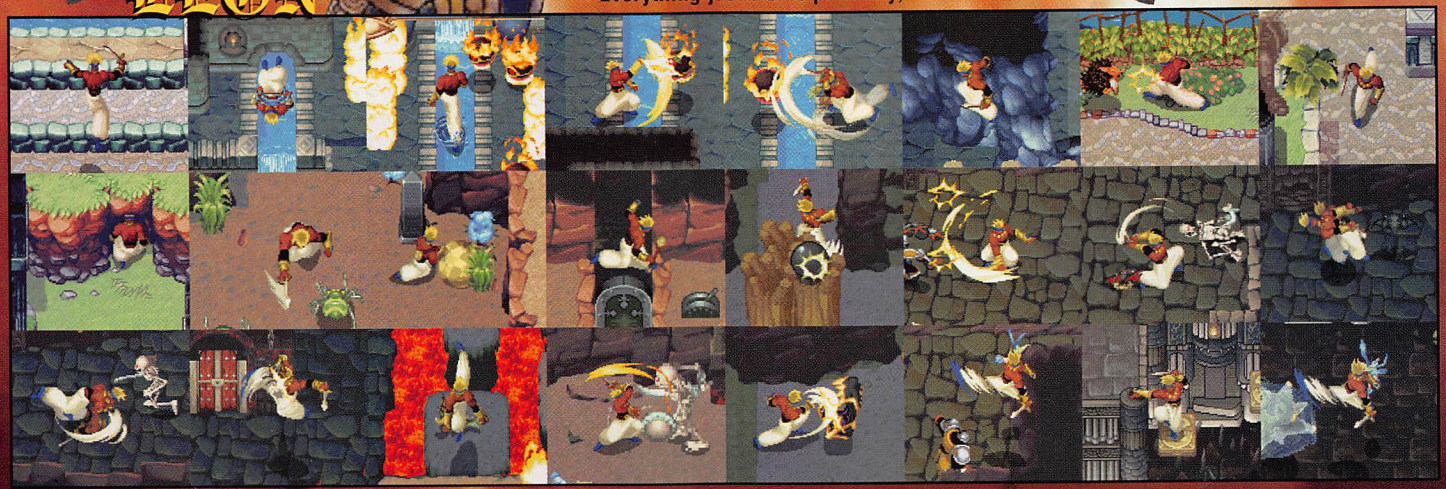
LEON

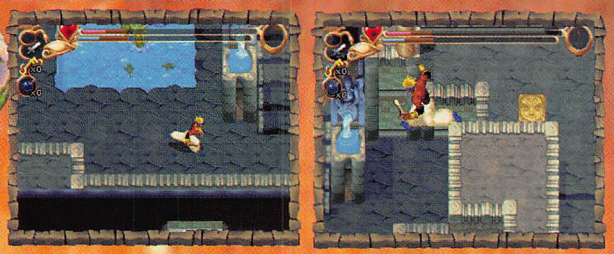
I have just played the best action/RPG of all time, barring *Zelda*...not to mention the hardest. Ancient's *Beyond Oasis 2* is the stuff gaming legends are made of. The first *Oasis* was excellent, but never did I dream Ancient, who had previously programmed the *Streets of Rage* series of games on the Genesis, could create a game of majesty such as this. Everything just works perfectly,





NICK ROX
WHAT'S THIS? A GAME I ACTUALLY LIKE?



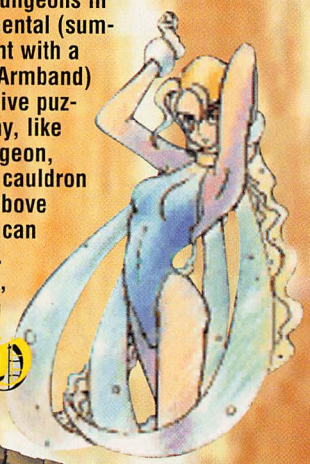


LAW

from the perfect control to the meticulous puzzle design.

It seems the Golden Armband of the long-ago hero Reharl and the Silver Armband of the demonic Agito have once appeared in Oasis, upsetting the balance of the world. The Golden Armband is found by a warrior named Ordan, but passed on to his apprentice, Leon, who bears a striking resemblance to Ali of *Oasis 1*. Ordan instructs Leon to follow in the footsteps of Reharl and collect the six elementals—Dytto, Elemental of Water; Efreet, Elemental of Fire; Bau of Earth, Shade of Darkness, Aerle of Wind and Brass of Sound—to combat the menace of the Silver Armband. Meanwhile, the Silver Armband is collecting dark energy and manifesting a terrifying physical form for itself...

Leon is one of the most controllable characters in gaming history, with the ability to attack with four different weapons, increase or decrease in size by eating Giant Ginger or Tiny Thyme, run, jump, duck, lie down, roll, and perform *SFII*-style special moves with motions. With these tools, Leon will traverse vast dungeons in which careful use of each elemental (summoned by blasting their element with a beam of light from the Golden Armband) is necessary to proceed. Massive puzzle elements will come into play, like traveling halfway around a dungeon, creating a path to push an iron cauldron from its perch several stories above down to your level, just so you can then use it as a stepping stone. This may sound simple enough, but to even GET to the cauldron



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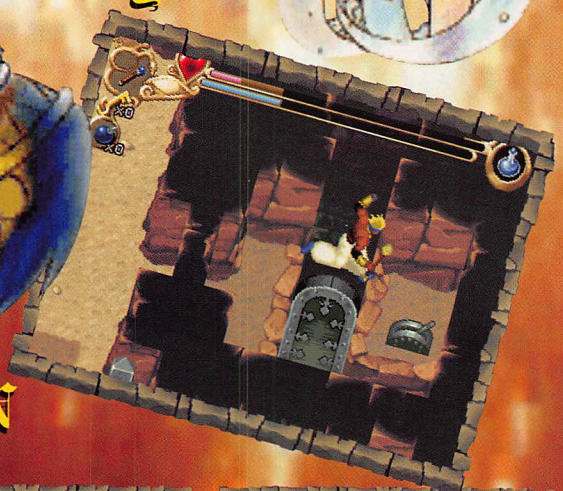

SHADE ORDAN

AGITO

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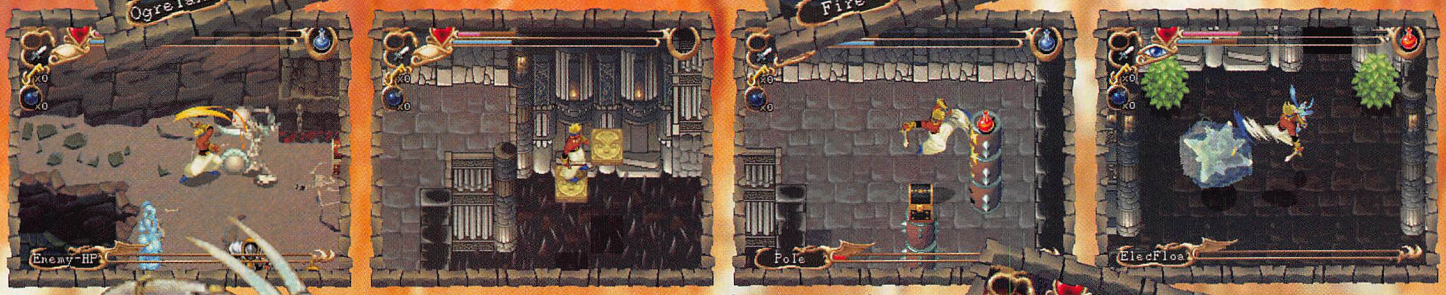
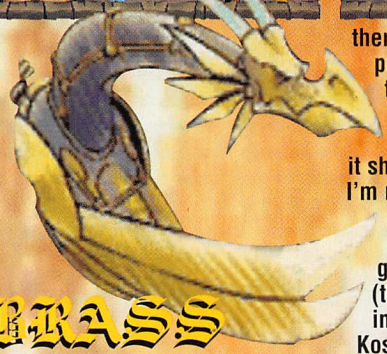
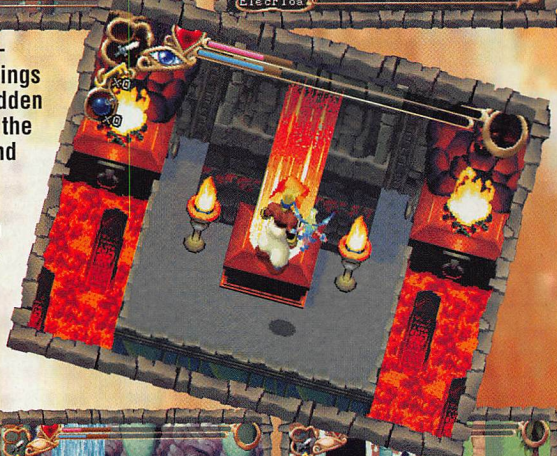




BRASS

there's a huge number of mini-puzzles, like switch-pressing, transforming bushes into bouncing springs to leap up to higher platforms, searching for hidden keys and the like. As I said before, *Oasis 2* is the most difficult action/RPG ever programmed, and it should take a good long while to beat.

I'm running out of space, so all I can say is that *Beyond Oasis 2* has rapidly become the Saturn game I'm looking forward to the most, with its gorgeous combination of lush, hand-drawn (though there are a couple of rendered enemies in there) graphics and surprisingly-OK Yuzo Koshiro tunes. We'll be back with an *Oasis* review as soon as possible. -Nick Rox



AERIE REHARL

IRON RAIN

THE EURASIAN CONFLICT

PREVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - GAME ARTS

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - JUNE

TAKUHI
THE MOST INNOVATIVE AND WELL THOUGHT-OUT MECH GAME YET.

The folks at Game Arts are without a doubt some of the most talented coders in the industry. I expect quality from them, and nearly always get it. But I simply cannot comprehend how the company that made its name from a series of excellent RPG's and puzzle games could be responsible for one of the best 3D sim titles I've ever played.

The graphics are good—low on pop-up, well-textured and smoothly animated—skills Game Arts picked-up, I suppose, in their Silpheed days. But it's the interface, level design, and feel that are truly remarkable. Iron Rain is the best playing, best-constructed mech game I think I've ever played. It's unthinkable that a company with so little experience in this field could so completely reinvent the genre.

The control in Iron Rain is a pain to get used to, but after a few trips to the training mode, you'll appreciate its ingenuity. You can walk, run, retreat, stop, turn, strafe, look up, look down, jump, and even sort of fly, with relative ease. I have not a single complaint with Iron Rain's control, and that's something I can say about no other mech game ever created.

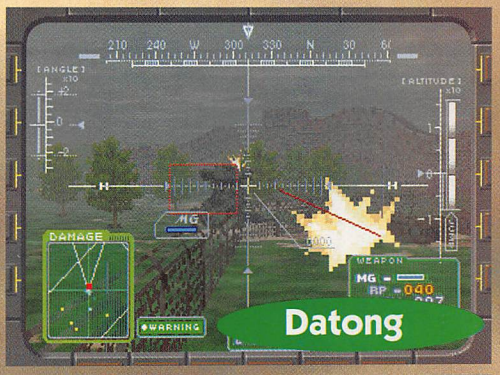
In the level design department, Game Arts impresses once again. Unlike another recent 32-bit mech game I won't mention (oh, who's gonna care—I'm talking about Krazy Ivan here), there is no shortage of variety in terms of backgrounds, enemies, or mission objectives. Every level is something new. Defending a base with your army, invading an enemy stronghold, or just clearing an area. And every level's scenery changes drastically, as well. You'll fight in the middle of a blizzard, a rainy day outside of a ruined castle, desert canyons at noon, a city during a star-lit night, and an army base at sunset... The brilliantly done finale is a Doom/Kileak-inspired underground maze. With such drastic variations in its settings and objectives, Iron Rain is one of the most versatile games this genre has to offer.

Visually, Iron Rain is very impressive. The pop-up is well masked by mist, snow, and night, and the enemies are very well done. You can approach them until they practically fill your sights, and still see almost no pixellation. The full-screen battle view is full of action, with large windmills, buildings, and fences littered among the 3D playing fields, and large armies on both sides fighting furiously in every corner of the battle field. You really do feel that you're fully interacting in a large scale war.

Also worth mentioning is the intro—2 or 3 minutes of beautifully-rendered warfare. (I understand that Game Arts analyzed 100s of hours of actual military video footage to give the intro and game itself a very realistic feel.) The mech and tank design are also noteworthy, and the whole production makes me want to rush out and buy the entire line of Iron Rain toys, if any such products actually existed.

Our US version wasn't quite finished, but the import version (titled Gun Griffon) came in just before we closed. You can read the import review in Viewpoint and then begin looking forward to Iron Rain's US debut. More coverage will follow soon as SOA is nearly done with the US translation. -Takuhi

Kharhov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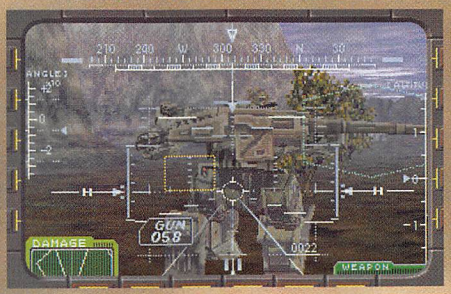

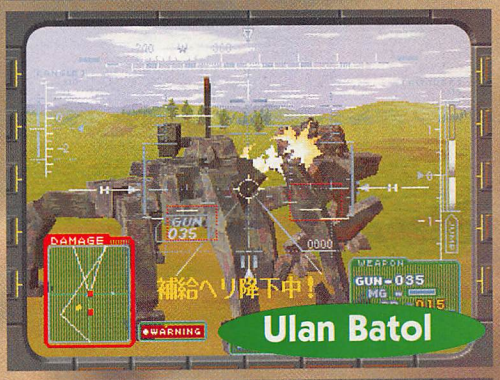
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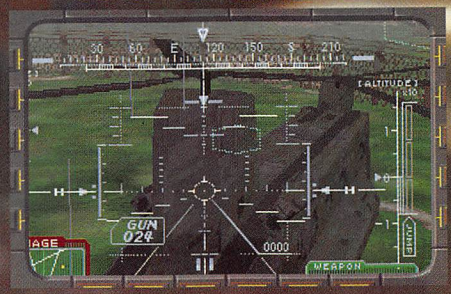

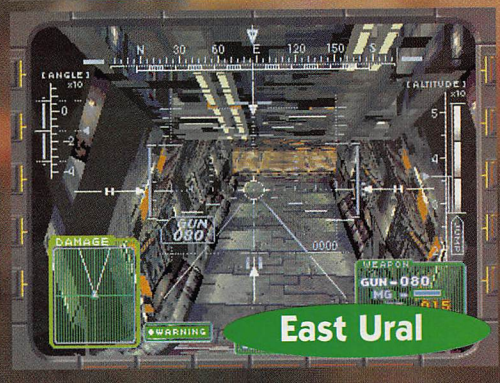
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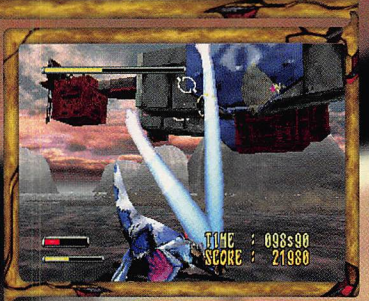


Panzer Dragoon II Zwei

REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - TEAM ANDROMEDA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

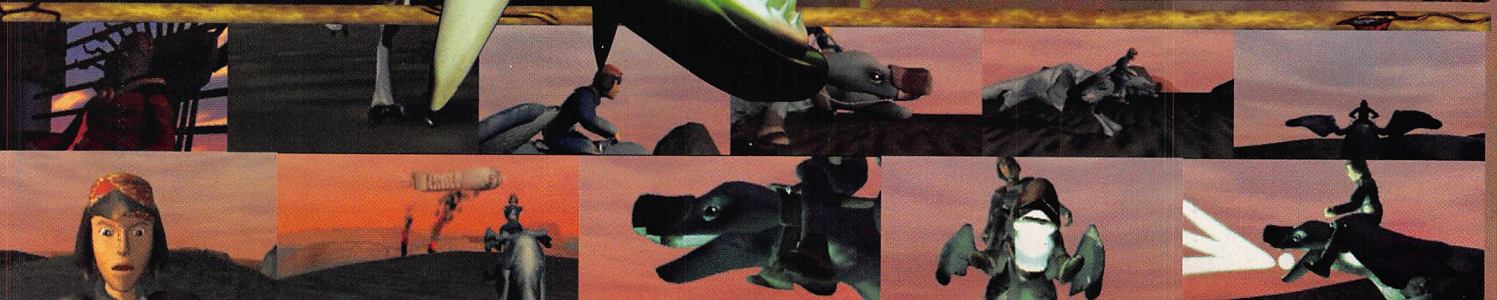
DIFFICULTY - AVERAGE

AVAILABLE - MAY

Panzer Dragoon was a transcendental experience. The obvious quality of the game's visuals, to me, was but a small part of it. It was the atmosphere of post-apocalyptic, heavily *Nausicaa*-influenced organic technology, the beautiful, unconventional soundtrack and the tale of a darkly mysterious, all-powerful Empire gradually crushing the few remaining outposts of resistance with ancient weaponry. Team Andromeda has fleshed this world out to such a degree (but in the process creating a vast amount of questions we can only hope will be answered in upcoming PDs) that they've even developed a vaguely Germanic spoken language that all the characters use. You can tell this isn't improvisation - it's just too perfect. Details like this simply reinforce the fact that Sega loves you... But let's not forget that *Panzer* was rumored to be the costliest game Sega has ever produced, and judging by the quality of the sequel this one cost a *lot* more.

PD Eine, which ostensibly takes place many years after *PD Zwei*, (Speaking of that, why does every other mag call this game *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*? That's like saying *Street Fighter II Two* or something...) was but a small chapter in the *Panzer Dragoon* saga that takes place in the years that follow *Zwei* when the winged dragons become widespread weapons used against the Empire. In this game we learn how they came to be.

The law of the land, enforced by the Empire, states that if any Khourieat (reptilian beasts of burden used throughout the continent) are born deformed, they must be killed at birth. Randy, a 14-year-old boy in an un-named village, cannot bear to kill a "deformed" Khourieat born to his family, and so he raises it as his own, keeping it a secret from his fellow villagers. What Randy soon discovers, however, is that *this* Khourieat has *wings*, and that's exactly the sort of thing the Empire was trying to stamp out when they mandated that abnormal Culias be destroyed. A year passes... One day just as Randy comes over a hill trying to get his winged Khourieat, which he named Lagi, to fly, he sees his home incinerated in a blind-



ing blast from the sky. Somehow, perhaps, the Empire had discovered that a winged Khourieat had been born in Randy's village and they sent an armored cruiser to obliterate it. Randy doesn't know, but he follows the Empire's army into the charred ruins of the town—and the game begins.

How cool is that? Sega's promise (in Japan, at least) of a "dramatic shooting game" is wholly fulfilled, as the story gets more and more complex as you advance through the game via cinemas featuring full voice in the above-mentioned Teutonic language. I won't reveal the outcome, suffice to say it's just as baffling (if not more so) than the ending of last year's *Panzer Dragoon*.

The gameplay system remains largely the same, with the lock-on laser and the ability to turn in a full 360° to blast the enemy. The only addition is the Berserk meter, which slowly fills up during an episode and allows you to unleash a super-attack that will hit every enemy on-screen. Two amazing features that don't directly affect gameplay but are awesome are the option of heading right or left for two totally different paths in most levels and the evolution of Raguy, explained below. But hey, it's a shooting game, what are you gonna change? *Zwei*'s biggest improvement is undeniably in the graphics, which totally smoke *Eine*'s. There don't seem to be a substantially larger amount of polygons being used, but the way Team Andromeda is using them is much more efficient when compared to *1*. *Panzer* still suffers from grainy false transparencies, but this problem is, sadly, unavoidable on the Saturn. *Zwei* more than makes up for this shortcoming, however, with almost no perceivable pop-up, gorgeous texture quality and...well, let's just say that if the water in Stage 1 of last year's *Panzer* made you ill like some claimed, you will be a *dead man* after viewing the rippling effect in Stage 4. The locales are what really make *PDZ* a joy to play. They're brilliantly designed to have maximum beauty while whipping around in hyper-cinematic and ultra-dramatic camera angles.

Panzer Dragoon Zwei is a game you just have to buy if you own a Saturn, and one of many superb reasons to buy the system. My only complaint is the "just OK" music, obviously not by the godlike Yoshitaka Azuma of *Panzer Eine* fame, and nowhere near as resplendent. The game seems a bit easy, but *Panzer Zwei* has enough hidden treats to keep you entertained for quite a while. Team Andromeda's done it again, and I don't really see how this game could be improved on, especially on the Saturn. - Nick Rox

THE EVOLUTION OF LAGI

After almost every stage of *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*, Randy's dragon, Lagi, evolves into a bigger, faster and deadlier incarnation. Shown here are the five forms Lagi will take in a normal game. Expect at least five more hidden dragons, including some familiar mounts from the past!

BAKU BAKU ANIMAL

REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY

TAKUHI

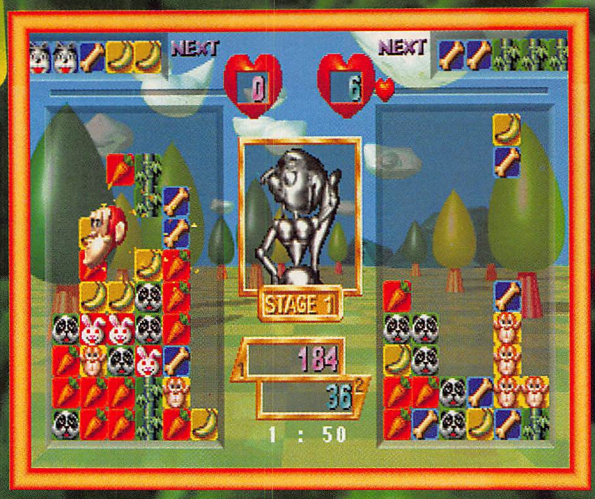
I'M EXHAUSTED!

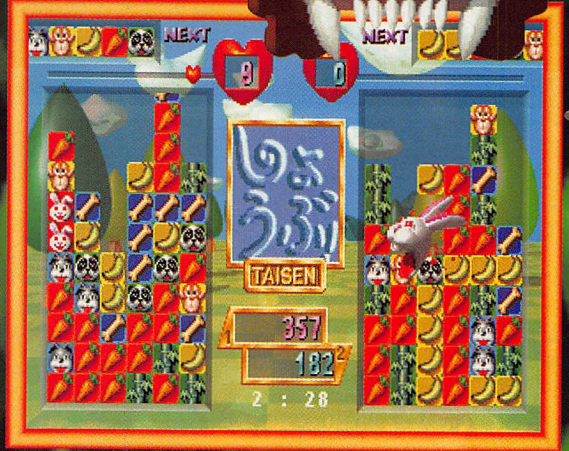
How many different twists can you make on the linked-blocks-that-fall-from-ceiling genre? *BakuBaku Animals* is the category's newest entry, and is, in my opinion, the best yet. Though some of the basic strategies you used in *Tetris*, *PuyoPuyo* and *Dr. Mario* will get you started, *BakuBaku Animals* has more depth than the three of them combined.

Quick explanation: blocks fall from above in groups of two, and when they fill up your entire screen, you lose. Some are animals, and some are food, and when the animal pieces land adjacent to their food of choice, they eat as many of that type as are connected, and disappear. The trick is to get this to start various chain reactions that place other animals near their food. Not only does this clear pieces away from your side, it drops pieces on your opponent. There are a few twists, but it's basically as simple as that. Dog eat bone, rabbit eat carrot, panda eat bamboo, monkey eat banana—and that's really all you need to know.

The thing is, the more you play, the more your strategy will grow and mature. At first, the most you can hope to do is match the right animal with the right food as quickly as possible, with the hope that your enemy will screw up and lose before you do. But as you gain experience, your entire perspective on the game will change time and time again, until your entire existence rests upon the hope of building an ultra-complex trap that can destroy your opponent instantly (this is actually possible). That's when reality starts to blur, and monkeys become triggers, bananas become fuses, and an evil concoction of panda and bamboo becomes a bomb capable of dumping 70-some pieces on your opponent. Then you laugh and jump and dance and scream with joy, spitting on Orion's dejected face as he makes pitiful excuse after pitiful excuse ("I just needed one more carrot...!"), until he finally gets annoyed and pinches that nerve under your armpit until you scream like a pre-pubescent girl. Errrr... um, well, your personal experience may vary slightly... (heh...)

Anyway, *BakuBaku Animals* has a depth and level of psychological addiction unprecedented in the puzzle game field. As tired as you think you are of falling-block games, you should not let this one pass you by. -Takuhi





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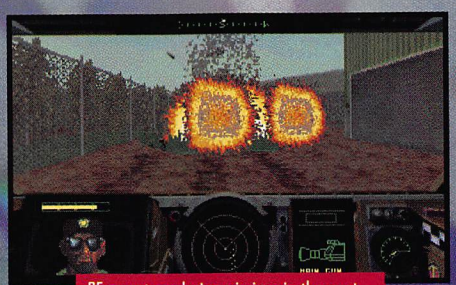

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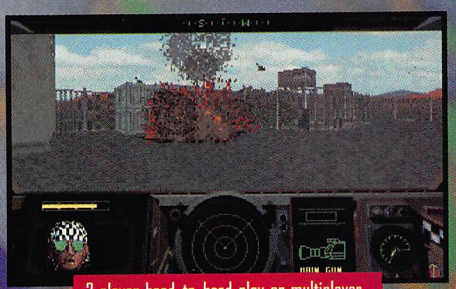

2 player head-to-head play or multiplayer network in the PC version—up to 8 players wage war.

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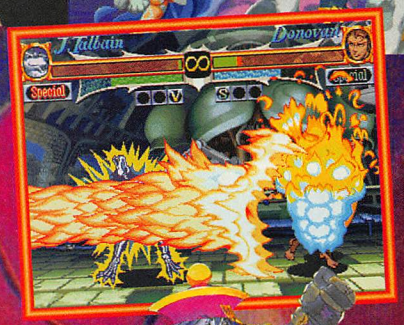
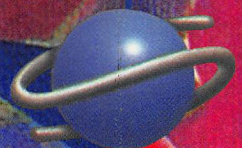
R² RE-REVIEW





NIGHT WARRIORS

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - CAPCOM

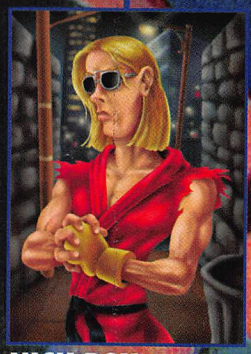
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW



NICK ROX

Last month when I gave the Saturn version of *NightWarriors* a 90%, we had no idea a code such as this existed(see pg. 9). Now, not only has Capcom gone above and beyond to bring you the best version of *NightWarriors* possible at home, they've added the greatest collection of options in any fighting game, even surpassing *Alpha*. Two words: FULL ANIMATION. Yes! Capcom loves you beyond belief...simply select the full animation option in the new "Appendix" option screen, pick the same character VS. same character and revel in luxurious 100% framage. Going beyond this feature from the gods, Capcom has added the option to play on the original *DarkStalkers* backgrounds with original *DarkStalkers* music! Although the gameplay system remains the same, (i.e. new voices, moves and chain combos remain intact) this code even restores the original *DarkStalkers* intro! With these new features, we had no choice but to re-viewpoint the game. I now have to give the game a 98%, with two points missing due to no arranged soundtrack. You now have no excuse not to buy *NW* if you even remotely like fighters. Capcom is BACK!

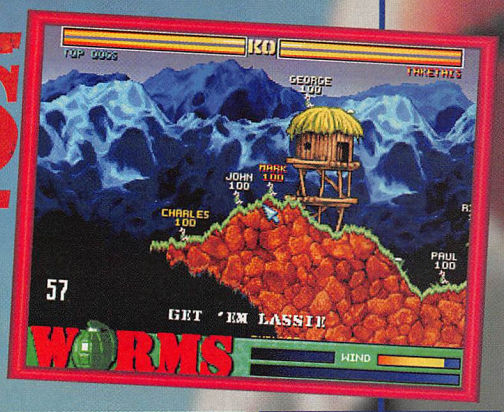
-Nick Rox

The added features in *Night Warriors* spell the best arcade to home translation yet. *NW* Saturn actually surpasses the arcade experience. The more I play it the more I love it! Make that a 98%.

My favorite Saturn 2-D fighter just got a whole lot better! This utterly unanticipated code easily bumps my 91 up to a 95. Capcom appreciates your patronage!

There is no cooler company than Capcom. Their excellent translation of *NW* on the Saturn was more than enough, but the beyond-belief Bolischoy Tavieda Appendix code raises my 90% to a 99%.

WORMS

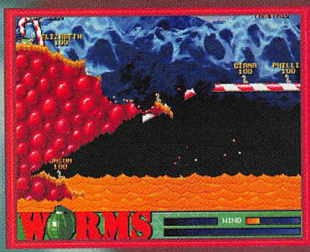


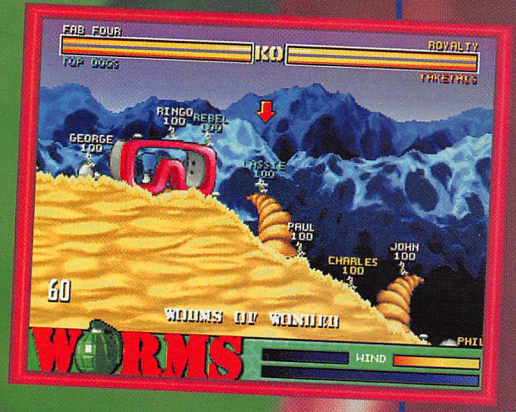
Worms is an interesting game. With some potentially great strategic elements, a fun theme, unlimited amounts of battlefields and a crazy option that allows up to 16 people to fight it out at once, this turned-based "war" game had a lot going for it. But, thanks to the ultra tiny (and sometimes confusing) sprites, awkward fighting methods, and a nasty computer AI, *Worms* didn't quite live up to my expectations.

The idea was cool though. You're in command of a battalion of four worms, each fully loaded with a ton of weapons. The object is simple—kill the other team. Taking turns, you and the computer (or friend) have a limited time to move each worm around, and have it fire its weapon/perform special move.

With over 10 different weapons at your disposal (including bazookas, shotguns, and even dynamite), you shouldn't have any problem finding creative ways to destroy your enemies. Getting to them, though, is another problem. The stages (over 6 billion different types can be created), with their multiple levels and seemingly impassable mountains and bodies of water, are very similar to, and actually remind me of, *Lemmings*. They can be quite a challenge to cross if you don't use your transportation devices (ropes, bungee cords, etc.) wisely. It is possible to fire your weapons from long range, but with the constantly-changing wind, it's almost impossible to judge exactly where your shells will fall. This is one of the things that irked me about *Worms* the most, the enemy seems to have no problem hitting you dead center every time they fire. You'll find yourself being blasted to pieces by worms who are firing from off-screen, and it's almost impossible to nail them back.

I like the idea behind *Worms*, their personalities (they scream out funny little words) and the cinemas are hilarious, but the gameplay killed it for me. *Worms* did well in Europe with Amiga owners and may find a home here with the same people who grew fond of *Lemmings*. I suppose puzzle gamers know what they like, so check it out, then bring it home or bait the hook. -Orion





REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - OCEAN

PUBLISHER - OCEAN

FORMAT - CD

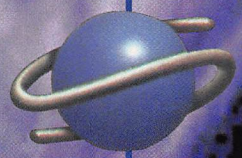
OF PLAYERS - 1-16

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - MAY

ORION
BAIT THAT HOOK!

PREVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - WILLIAMS

PUBLISHER - WILLIAMS

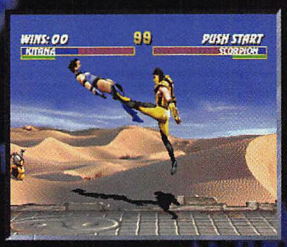
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - APRIL

K. LEE
PASS MK2 AND GO DIRECTLY TO ULTIMATE MK3!



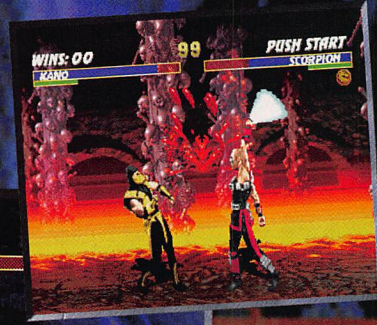
ULTIMATE MK3

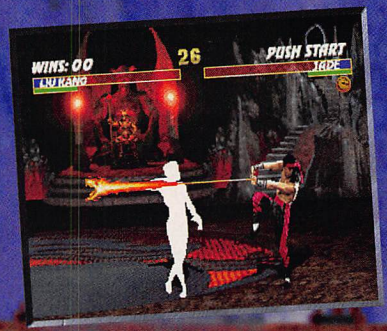
We all knew it was coming sooner or later and now it's finally arrived. It is *Ultimate MK3* and this newest Midway coin-op adaptation is Saturn-bound thanks to Williams Entertainment. Due out in the second quarter of 1996, *UMK3* has all of the characters (22 in all) fatalities, new moves and new backgrounds found in the coin-op game. It even has the arcade game's 3 different fighting modes (regular Mortal Kombat, 2 on 2 Kombat and the grand battle royal-8 player tournament Kombat).

Although the game is currently still under development, you can plainly see that *UMK3* for the Saturn is going to be an excellent translation (provided things continue to proceed smoothly during the last 30% of the game's development).

For the record, Shang Tsung's morphs now happen instantaneously (unlike the PS version), and almost all of the music and sound effects emulate the coin-op game perfectly (unlike *MKII* for the Saturn).

I could be wrong, but it seemed to me that *Ultimate MK3* on the Saturn had slightly less color than the coin-op (this home version of *UMK3* is probably at a lower resolution than the arcade game, which would explain why it looks a little different). To be fair, the PlayStation version of *MK3* has the exact same problem (in fact, it looks basically the same as this Saturn version), and nobody complained much about that game. I feel that the vast majority of *UMK3* players will feel that this Saturn game is purely immaculate, while the nit-pickers will moan and groan (remember, you can only please all of the people, some of the time). Keep your eyes peeled for a GameFan review of *UMK3*, next month. -K. Lee





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3DO ZONE

R REVIEW

3DO

DEVELOPER - READY SOFT

PUBLISHER - READY SOFT

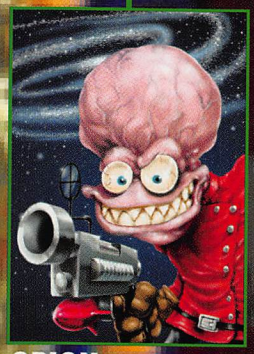
FORMAT - 2 CD'S

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOW

BRAIN DEAD 13™



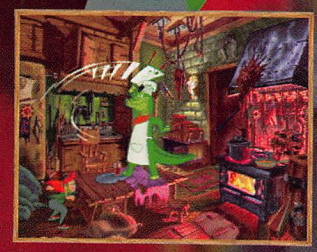
ORION
MOVE OVER, DRAGON'S LAIR!

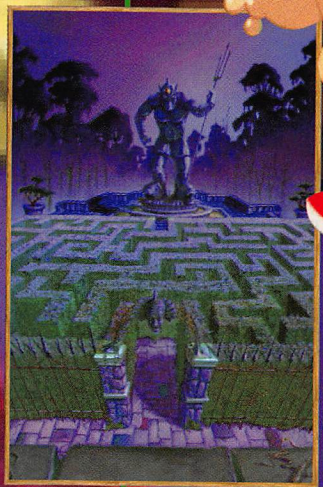
I haven't had fun playing a cartoon-based FMV game since the days of my youth, plastered in front of *Dragon's Lair*. Of course, those days are gone, and currently playing something with super-linear gameplay and almost no replay value doesn't quite appeal to me. Yet, here I am, playing *Brain Dead 13* and having a great time.

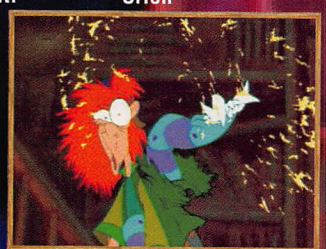
Why? The reason is simple—*Brain Dead 13* isn't just another FMV game. Sure, it's still basically a movie, with life-or-death choices for you to make in certain areas. It still only has limited ways to move (and one action button), and you'll find yourself dying many (many, many, many) times before completing each step by trial and error. But this is the first FMV game I've played that feels...*right*. Like someone finally got the right idea about how these types of games should look and feel. First of all, *Brain Dead 13* has the best animation I've ever seen on the 3DO (or on any other system for that matter). In fact, the animation is so clean, so fluid, it's almost comparable to a Disney flick in terms of quality. There isn't even a hint of frames or pixels anywhere, and it must be seen to be believed. You also feel more involved with the action, as *Brain Dead 13* gives you quite a few more places than the average FMV game where you must input a correct direction or hit the action button to proceed. Of course, this means you'll find yourself dying more often, but that's not a problem thanks to the unlimited lives you're allowed (and as the instruction manual states, you'll probably need them all). But the best part is, many of the rooms allow you more than one way to go, and if you go through most of the rooms backwards, totally new challenges (with new enemies) will take place. You see, *Brain Dead 13* is one of the few FMV games that can claim to be mainly non-linear. Nearly every hallway allows you multiple directions you can go, and the many rooms can be visited in almost any order you choose.

The cast of characters are another reason *Brain Dead 13* rises above all others of its type. Not only are the ghosts, goblins and the evil Dr. Nero Neurosis (one of those mad, disembodied scientist guys bent on taking over the world) animated flawlessly but they have so much personality (so much *twisted* personality) that by the end of the game you'll feel like you know them. The best character though, by far, is Fritz. This little freak follows you throughout the game, and if you don't make your decisions quick enough, will catch up to and kill you (in very humorous ways). Rounding off this excellent FMV title is some of the best voice acting I've ever heard and a perfectly cartoon-like (but very good) soundtrack.

Ready Soft spent nearly two years creating *Brain Dead 13*, and it shows. The quality is there, and if you enjoy these types of games, the gameplay is there. Actually, even if you don't enjoy FMV titles, you'd be foolish not to check out *BD13*. It's different—and better than anything before it. -Orion







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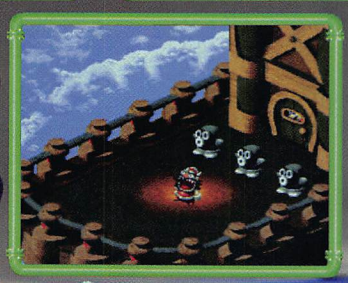
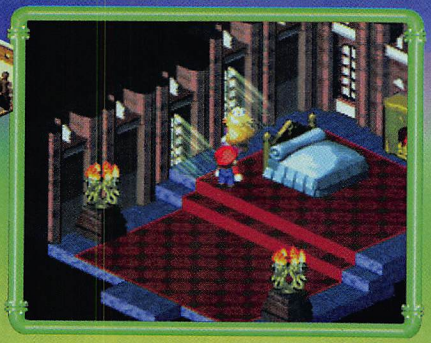




REVIEW

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

DEVELOPER - SQUARE

PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

FORMAT - 32 MEG/C1

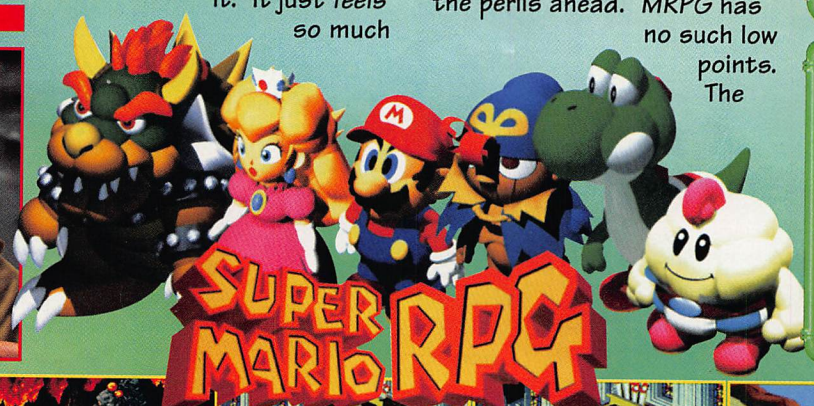
OF PLAYERS - 1

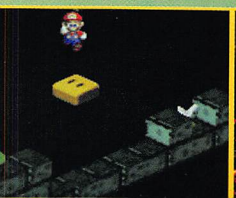
DIFFICULTY - N/A

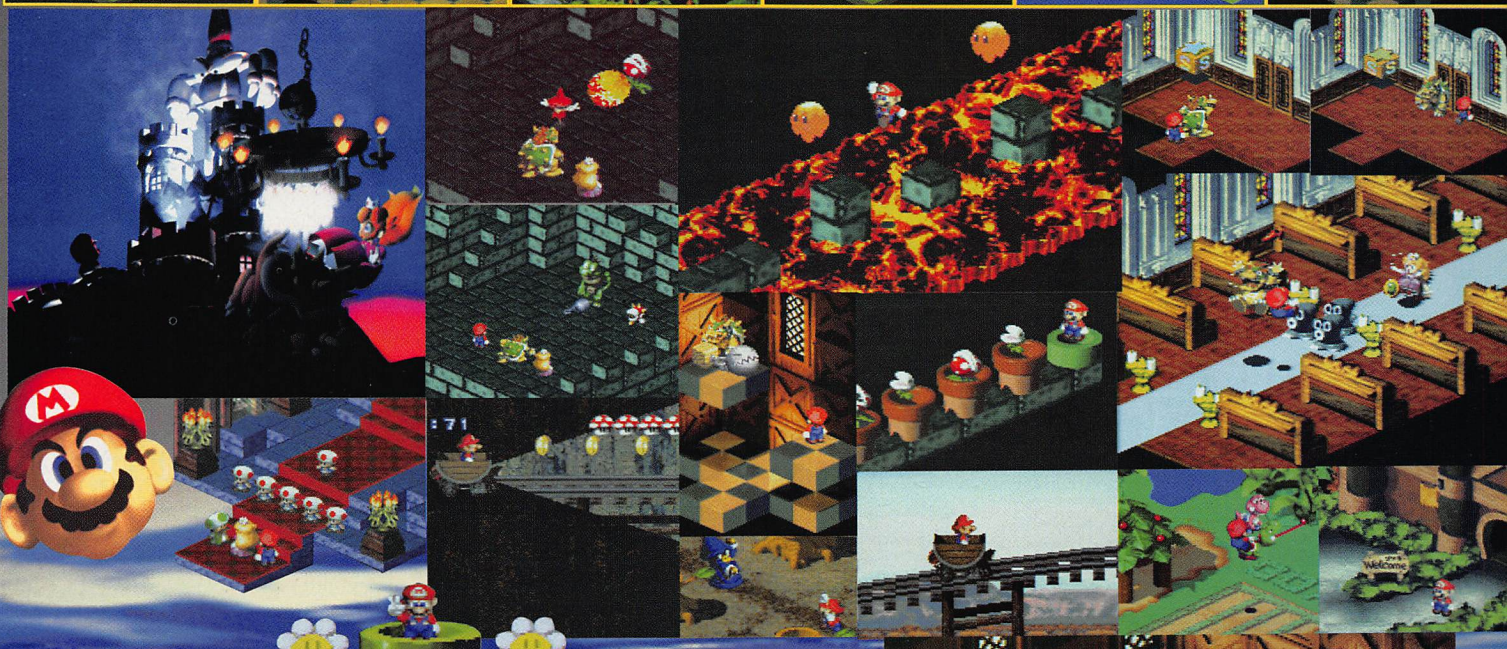
AVAILABLE - MAY

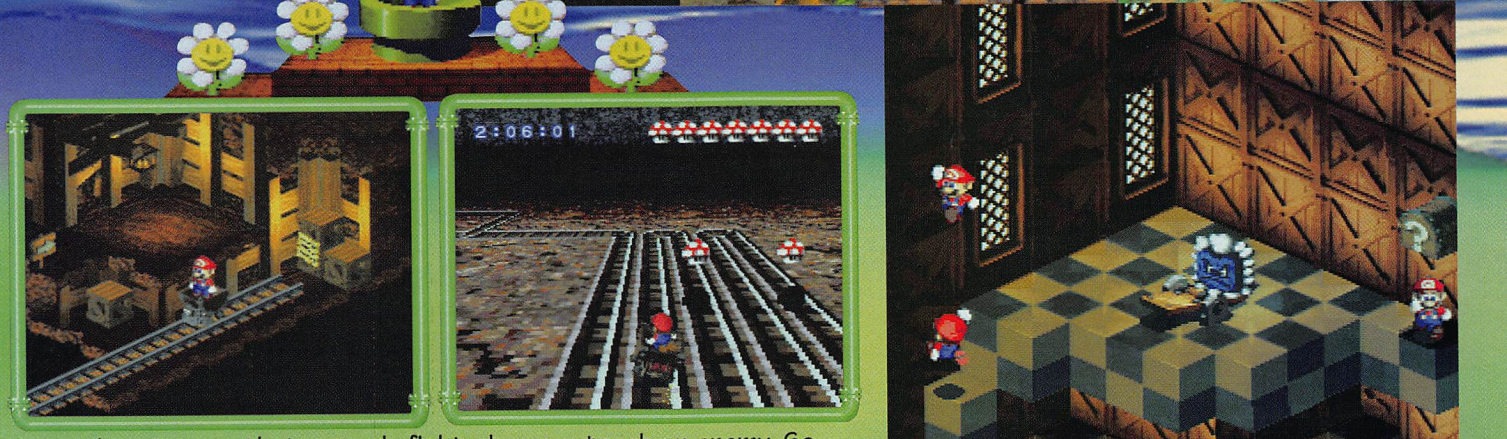
To say that Square has done it again would be an understatement. They've done the impossible. In the midst of all the 32-bit powerhouses Square has managed to create an action/RPG that will have you singing praise to your SNES once again. The more I play *Mario RPG* the harder it is to believe that Square developed it. It just *feels* so much like a Nintendo-bred title. You know, that polished feeling that *Metroid*, *Zelda* and *Mario* all have.

Somehow, they've managed to squeeze everything that is Mario into the role-playing genre as only they could. Even the best RPGs traditionally suffer from mundane acts where you either encounter too many fights on the overhead map or simply grow weary leveling up to face the perils ahead. *MRPG* has no such low points. The



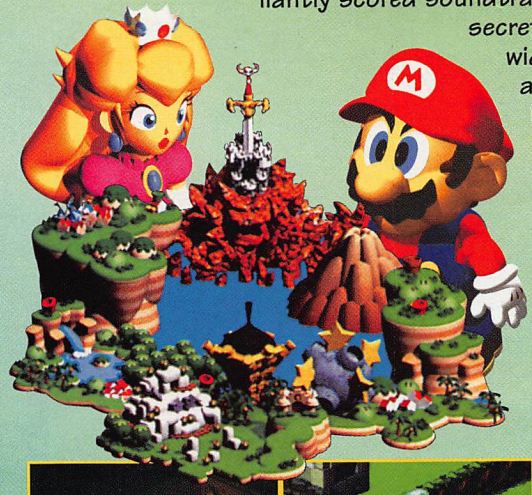






game is set up so that you only fight when you touch an enemy. So sharp platforming skills often come in to play helping you avoid battles if you so desire. There's nothing worse than being totally leveled up and having to fight enemies from hours before over and over just to go back to a shop or town. Besides it's genious design MRPG features the best riddles I've ever unscrambled, an unbelievably vast and brilliantly scored soundtrack, hidden suprises galore, secret mini games, great special effects, a wide variety of perfectly rendered characters and mannerisms from Mario himself that I'm sure I will never forget. I'd buy a SNES all over again (if I didn't already have two) just to play this game. It's that good.. no it's even better than that. Buy this game immediately. I will sorely miss Square games on my future Nintendo systems and hope now more than ever that they come back home where thay belong. Playing Square games on mutiple platforms would suit me just fine!

-E Storm



Lufia II
Rise of the Sinistrals

REVIEW

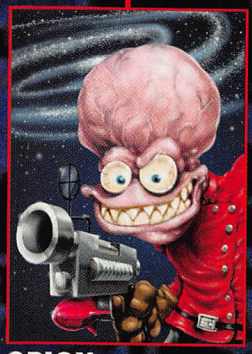
SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

- DEVELOPER - TAITO
- PUBLISHER - JALECO
- FORMAT - 16-MEG CART.
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
- AVAILABLE - MAY

More than 100 years before the events of the original *Lufia*, a mysterious island appeared in the sky. Four evil beings, named Sinistrals by the people they terrorized below, lived there in a giant fortress...the Fortress of Doom. A small group of courageous warriors, led by the fearless Maxim and his Duel Blade, were humanity's only hope to stop these destructive creatures. After a difficult battle, Maxim and his three comrades were able to defeat the Sinistrals, setting in motion a chain reaction that would spark the original *Lufia*'s story. But what of the legendary Maxim? How did he become the warrior that would save the world? What of the Dual Blade—where did it come from and what was its purpose? And the Sinistrals themselves, who were they? What led them to attack humanity, and what was their true agenda? All these questions will be answered in *Lufia 2: Rise of the Sinistrals*, as you take the role of the young Maxim, and work your way through his life. It's up to you to live his adventures, and mold him into the warrior who would one day bring down the Fortress of Doom.

The first *Lufia*, when it was released 3 years ago, was a solid game. It had a great plot that developed quickly, some nice tunes, and a long quest. The graphics, on the other hand, were very, very bland. The characters were super-smashed, the towns and other locations lacked diversity, and the game looked 8-bit much of the time. Thankfully, *Lufia 2* improves on almost every aspect of the original (and that's a bit of an understatement).

Well, let's start with the graphics, they're...well...amazing. Everything's gone through a complete overhaul, from the charac-



ORION
ONE FANTASTIC RPG!

ters (who are a bit less squashed, and look a lot cleaner), to the overworld map itself. The improvements made in the towns and castles are almost indescribable, not only do the houses finally have a roof (for some reason these were left off in the first *Lufia*), but everything was packed with color and detail. Even the fight scenes, which in the original game were these painfully cheap-looking battles where your enemies just "appeared" above you, have been changed into a great looking isometric-view battlegrounds.

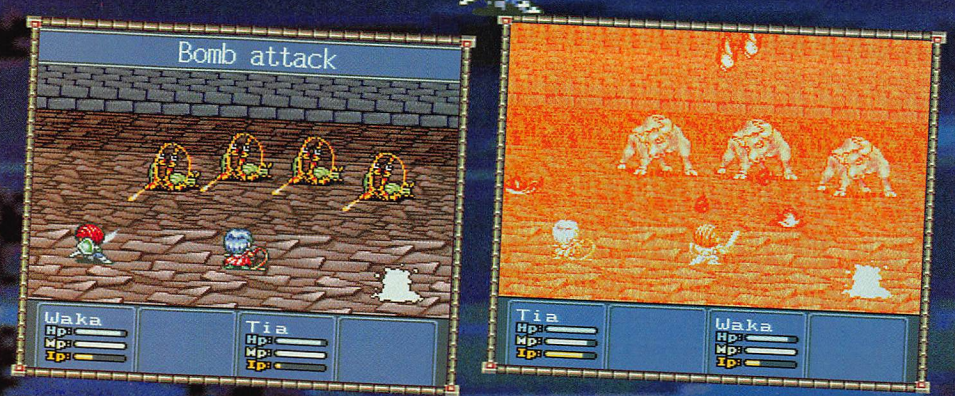
Another new feature to the game is the IP bar. When you're damaged in battle, your rage increases, filling the bar. Certain weapons and armor can produce special effects (tearing apart certain enemies), using a portion of your IP, thus adding a bit more strategy to the battles. There was also the addition of Capsule Creatures. If you can find these little guys, they'll join your party and help you in your battles. You can even help them grow stronger by feeding them old equipment and weapons.

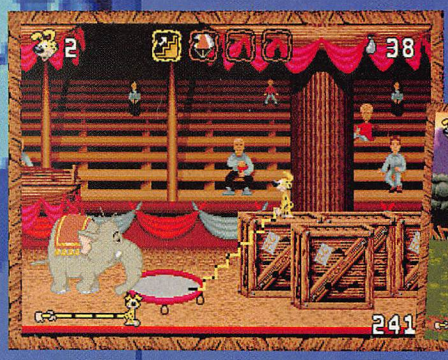
But the best change, by far, lies in the caves and dungeons. Although not much different than the original *Lufia* in appearance, they've been totally re-designed to add an entirely new element to the game. Enemies still attack randomly on the overworld map, but now battles in caves and other underground locations are almost like *Chrono Trigger* (the creatures are visible, but if they touch you, a standard fight begins). This was done so random attacks wouldn't be a problem as you fool around with the new *Zelda*-type attributes found here. There are blocks to move, switches to throw, and cracked walls to blow open, as well as many puzzles to solve. This is quickly becoming my favorite part of *Lufia 2*, some of these puzzles are extremely well designed, and are a blast to figure out.

Just as the first *Lufia* seemed to borrow a bit from *Phantasy Star* for it's soundtrack, *Lufia 2* does the same with *Final Fantasy*. Of course, this means the music is very good and is full of many memorable pieces. In fact, if it wasn't for it being a tad repetitive in a few places, *Lufia 2* could be considered to have one of the better RPG soundtracks on the SNES.

Lufia 2 did tremendously well in Japan, holding a place in the top 5 of the Super Famicom's reader's all time favorite game list for over a year, and thankfully finally made it to our shores. See, *some* Japanese companies care! Now, if we could only get *Tales of Phantasia*, *Genso Suikoden*, *Romancing SaGa 3*... Ahhh—then I'd truly be a happy man... -Orion

AFTER DEFEATING THE CATFISH BOSS, GO BACK TO THE PUZZLE ROOM AND SAVE TIA. THEN "TIA JOINS THE PARTY!"





MARSUPILAMI

REVIEW

SEGA GENESIS
LEADER OF THE 16-BIT VIDEO REVOLUTION

DEVELOPER - HARSU

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW

JACE FURY
BOB DOLE'S FAVORITE GAME!

Hey, it's Bonkers the Bobcat.... Well, sort of. Actually, what you see here is one of Europe's most popular Disney characters, Marsu. Correction, Marsu and his elephant pal Bonelli. I can't believe I've never seen these guys before on a thermos.

Marsu and Bonelli have been captured by a ruthless hunter and sold to a circus (you know you'd pay to see them). And now, it's up to you to take command of Marsu, complete with multi-purpose tail, and successfully lead Bonelli, the incompetent elephant through all sorts of dangers and wacky obstacles, back to their jungle home.

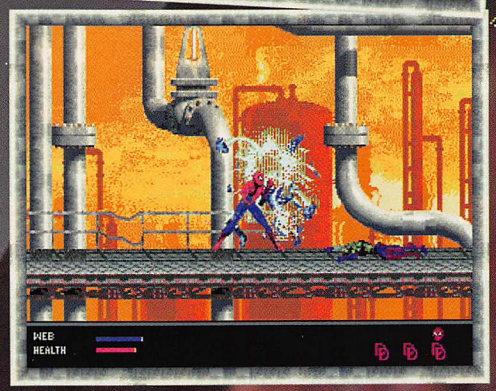
In true 16-bit Disney fashion, the graphics in *Marsupilami* are well-drawn, placed, very colorful, and animate smoothly at what looks like about 17fps. As Marsu, you must constantly scout ahead of Bonelli in each stage, looking for obstacles and ways around them. Marsu's wondrous tail can perform many needed functions, transforming into a staircase, bridge, parachute, and yes, even a mouse's head to scare Bonelli into warp speed. The gameplay is neither intense platforming, nor fast action, but remains interesting nevertheless, by incorporating several methods of play (action, shooting, problem solving, and exploration) into each stage. The backgrounds scroll both horizontally and vertically and feature many layers of parallax scrolling. The music (come on, it's a Disney title) is nicely arranged, fun, and happy, though the bops and squeaks of 16-bit ring a bit harsh on these 32-bit ears.

Marsupilami is more 2D Disney family fun (albeit for younger gamers) at it's best. My only gripe: the unnerving time limit set for each level. While this may seem minor, bear in mind that Bonelli moves about as fast as an injured sea cucumber.
I hate time limits!

Taking into account how many 16-bit units have been sold worldwide, and that the majority of young gamers are probably playing either a SNES or Genesis, games like *Marsupilami* are still a viable source of family entertainment. 16-bit may be in for another good year. Continued support of the Genesis and Nomad is greatly appreciated by a vast majority of gamers, including myself.

-Jace Fury

SPIDER-MAN
WEB OF FIRE



DAILY BUGLE

SPIDER-MAN SHORT CIRCUITS THE EEL!

SPIDEY LAST SEEN HEADED FOR GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE

With the early success of the Saturn, and far less interest in the poor man's 32-bit system than forecasted, Sega's production of 32X games has halted. I guess when it comes to home console technology, people are willing to spend a little more to get the best available bang for the buck. A middle ground seemed to many a good idea, but the lack of a serious sound chip, a game drought early on, and two other new platforms to occupy developers' resources, have all but sealed the 32X's fate. Sega's final game for the unit, *Spider-Man: Web of Fire* lies before you. Although Blue Sky (developers of the beyond-16-bit *Vectorman*), are behind this one, I can't help but feel it didn't get their undivided attention. Still, they do great work and to this day, haven't produced a *bad* (bad meaning a purchase which results in a flying controller) game yet.

The story is classic Marvel—Manhattan has been taken hostage by Hydra, an evil corporation whose only goal is world domination. They've covered the entire city with a web of lasers—a *Web of Fire*. Assuming the role of Spider-Man, you must kick, punch, and swing your way though the city, and destroy the web generators that lie at the end of each level.

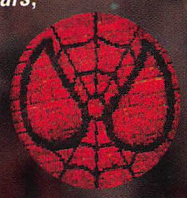
With the ability to cling to walls and ceilings armed with web shooters that allow you to swing across gaps or tie up your enemies, *Spider-Man: WoF* is anything but a "generic" platformer. The stages are long and somewhat vast, with hidden power-ups (restoring your life or web fluid) concealed throughout. Generous parallax is abundant and the animation and color are clearly post-16-bit, as are the bigger and more numerous sprites.

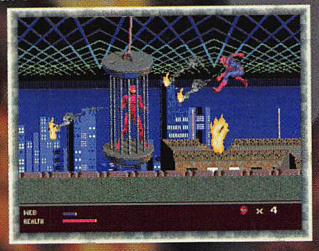
After saving Daredevil in the first stage, you can activate him when you're out-numbered, engaging a boss, about to die, etc. This effect is only mildly cool but very effective. The enemies in *Web of Fire* are relentless and attack constantly, they'll even fire at you from off screen, the lil' %$#@!'s. You'll have to master Spidey's controls, which at times seem almost too fluid, to clear each stage with enough life in tow to extinguish the boss. I found jumping in with a kick the most effective means of disposing of the weaker (and numerous) drones.

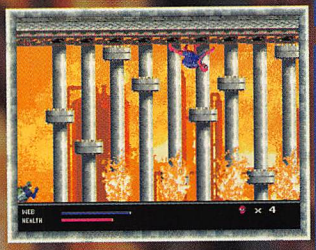
The bosses are for the most part, small, with the occasional big, rendered (most notably Dragon Man) variety stealing the show. The music, while a bit scratchy, is among the best the system has produced (though that ain't sayin' much) and there are numerous sampled sound effects throughout.

The small annoyances present throughout *Spiderman; Web of Fire*, like getting stuck and/or bounced around uncontrollably, and the advanced difficulty level kind of blow it, but considering the positives they shouldn't keep 32X users from purchasing an otherwise impressive game, the last of which to bear the Sega seal. The premature death of the 32X is indeed sad, but if you're holding *Kolibri*, *Chaotix*, *Blackthorne*, *Virtua Racing*, *World Series* (also from Blue Sky), *Motherbase 2000*, *Star Wars*, and now *Spiderman*, you do have a cool little piece of videogame history. Of course that's the positive outlook. You may also feel a bit toasted, if you know what I mean...

-Takahara







R REVIEW

32X

DEVELOPER - BLUE SKY

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - 32 MEG CART.

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOW

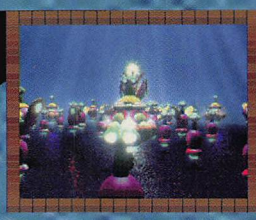
TAKAHARA
32-EXIT?

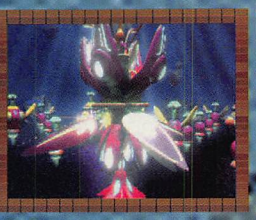
GEN-32

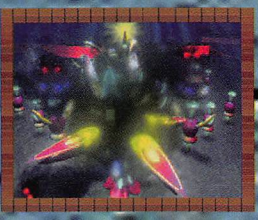
JAPAN SOFT

WRINKLE RIVER STORY

リンクルリバーストーリー







Linkle Liver Story (as it's written in the Japanese title) is a fun little game... for about six hours. I have literally never played a shorter action/RPG—or one that had so much potential to be something greater. The designers of *Linkle*, Nextech, went insane on the weapon and magic system, which would certainly not be out of place in an extremely lengthy title. Here, however, it's madness: You can never take advantage of it in such a short time. Every other aspect of the game, however, seems to have been short-changed, from the graphics (which are luscious to the point of slack-jawed disbelief at the games outset, but degenerate to 16-bitness by game's end), to the mindless ease of jaunting through the game.

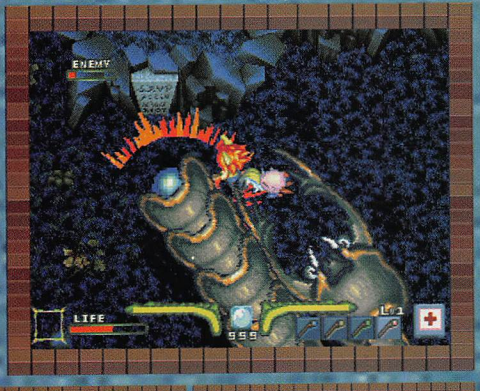
In the peaceful, happy, pastel-tinted world of Mamoona, the dainty Mother Flower holds the world in a delicate balance, deep beneath the waves in a place called Totem. Ungaro, a nasty bad guy, steals the Mother Flower, shattering Totem and throwing all of Mamoona into chaos. Enter Kicchu, a young lass from the happy forest of Ronde. Today she undergoes her test to become the

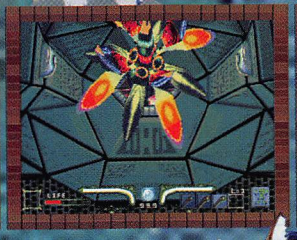
apprentice of a powerful magical master named Ausa. Just as she completes her training, however, a strange pink blob called Poochymook shows up, claiming a strange mole torched his village. He asks Ausa for help, but it's too late—the mole shows up. Ausa recognizes him as his friend Turumog, but the mole calls himself Ungaro. Ausa holds him off with magic, and Ungaro/Turumog runs off. Kicchu and Poochymook decide to follow him.

What a storyline, eh? That's pretty much it, too—no plot twists here. But hey, a game doesn't need a great story if the gameplay's there, right...? Unfortunately, *Linkle* doesn't have much gameplay, either. Nextech designed a madly elaborate weapon system, however, based on powering up four season-coded rods with six different Seeds: Fire, Earth, Water, Wind, Light and Darkness. Each rod can transform into one of eight weapons and back again through the use of Seeds and Pearls, which you get from defeating enemies. On top of that, each individual

weapon can be powered-up through four levels. That makes a total of 128 possible weapons! Just to let you know how ludicrous this is, I personally used MAYBE three different weapons throughout the course of the game. Kicchu can also dash, do a rolling attack, defend herself with her tail, and power up to release Poochymook *R-Type* style. There are no puzzle dungeons to speak of, either—something that *Crusader of Centy* (also by Nextech) was abundant in. Basically, *Linkle* is an *extremely* easy, straightforward top-down action game with little RPG elements to speak of.

The graphics are a wonder at the outset of the game, with polygonal trees changing perspective as you move, and reflections in the water below *also* changing perspective—not to mention rippling reflections of the clouds and sun above. This is the most impressive thing in the game, however; it's pretty much all downhill from the Ronde forest. The polygonal world map is very nice, though, and there's a semi-impressive





sequence when you're on a floating island rapidly tumbling towards earth. The music is VERY cheerful and mostly forgettable, although a couple of tracks made an impression on me. The sound effects are bland, too, and Kicchu's sole voice sample, "Ouch!" gets acutely distressing fast.

If you want an import Saturn action/RPG and you don't already have *Rayearth* or even *Shining Wisdom*, then you may want to get *Linkle*, but I don't recommend it. My advice: Wait until April 26th for the true king of Sega A/RPGs, *Thor*. In the meantime, check out E. Storm's preview on page 46. -Nick Rox

EXCLUSIVE

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - CLIMAX

PUBLISHER - SEGA/JPN & US

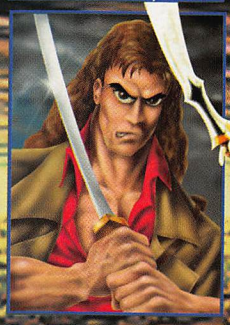
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE-APR. JPN, TBA US

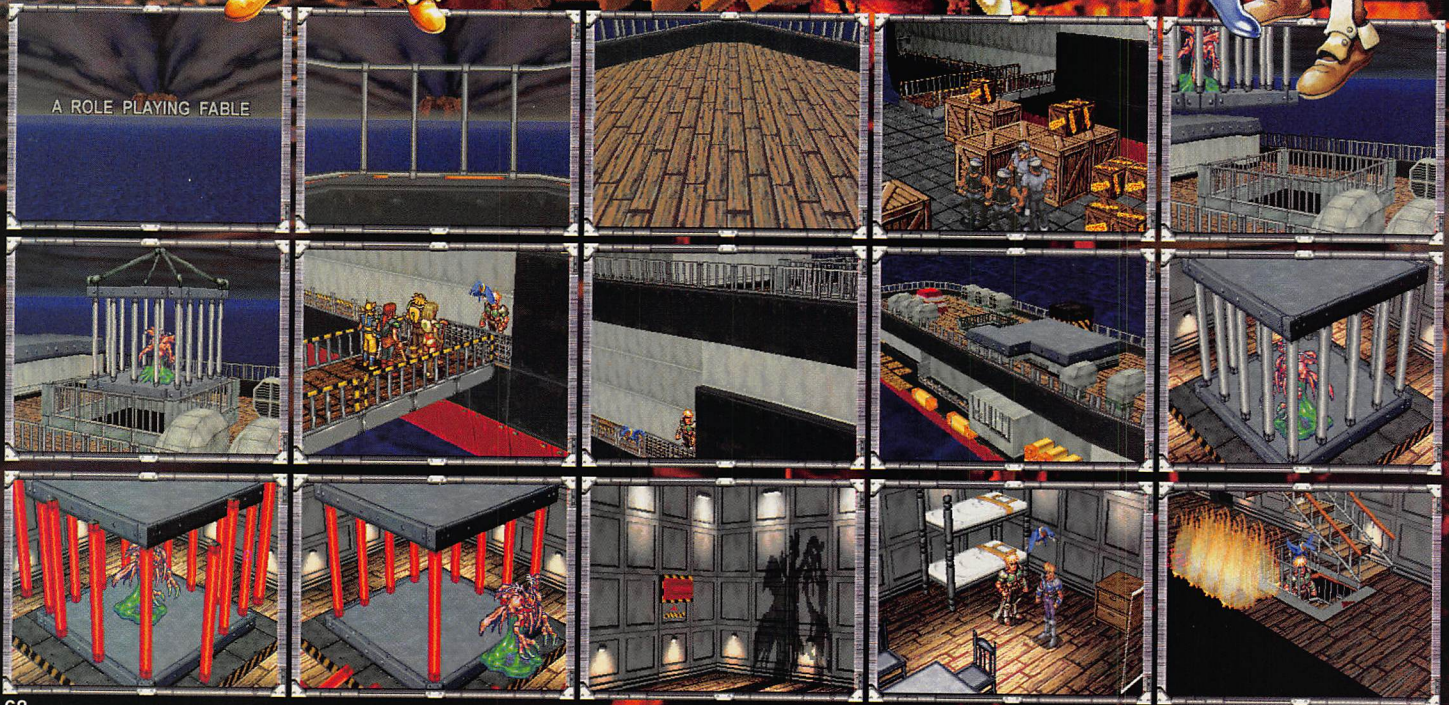
If you braved the mind-bending depths of LandStalker, Climax's amazing 16-bit DDS action/RPG, then, well, you should have a big smile on your face right about now. Just imagine those same designers with two years and a Saturn development system. The amazing technical aspects in Dark Savior, like screens loaded with shifting polygons many screens high, and ingenious game design that taxes the mind as well as the reflexes, go deeper than anything currently available on the Saturn or PS. Add to that brilliant gameplay, deeper than any you've experienced so far on a 32-bit home console, and you begin to see why Dark Savior should be parked in your Saturn the minute it comes out. Besides combining texture-mapped polys with conventional sprites in a free floating environment that



E. STORM
CLIMAX INDEED!

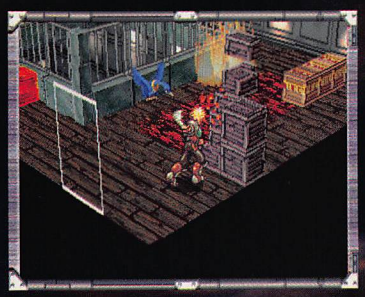
DARK SAVIOR

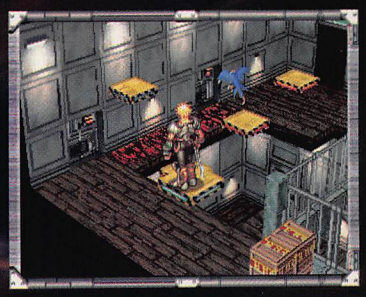
ダークセイバー

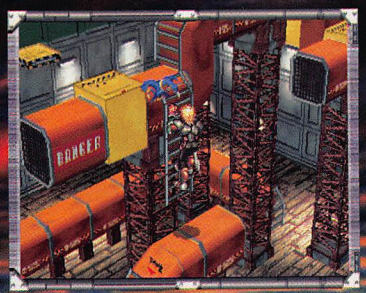


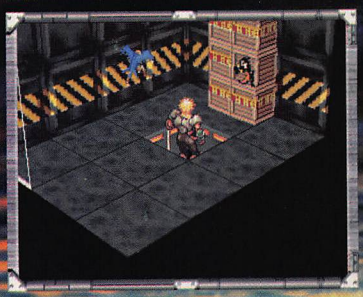
you can toggle at any time, Climax has brought in cinematic overtones this time out. There are dramatic pauses during the game and blazing cinemas between acts as well. Like LandStalker, Dark Savior perfectly melds action, strategy, puzzle and for the first time, one-on-one fighting. Whenever you encounter a key character, in comes the screen prompt, as it would in any fighter, with a vs. screen followed by two rounds. Of course you can move about freely in 3D during these battles using anything in the environment (such as tables, chairs, etc.) to your advantage. Our disc contained only one act (pictured here), which turned out to be a 20-minute playable intro. Though impressive, what you're looking at cannot prepare you for what lies ahead in this game. All I can say is that I have not seen anything as good using polygonal playfields, on any available home console. The music, by the way, is pure heaven. I'll be making the big purchase when the DS soundtrack is released. Dark Savior isn't just a game—it's an event. Games like this are why I will never tire of video games and why I've always loved Sega. I'll review the import version of Dark Savior next month.

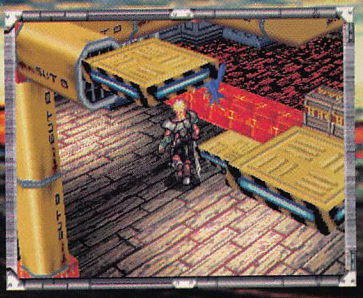
-E. Storm

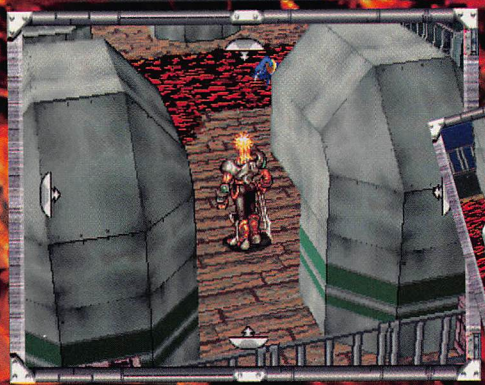


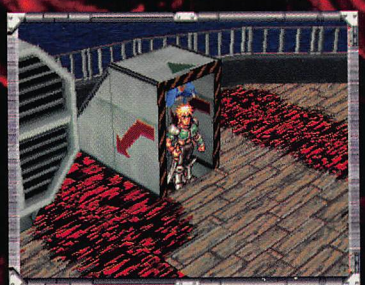


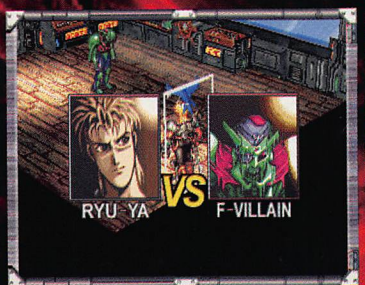


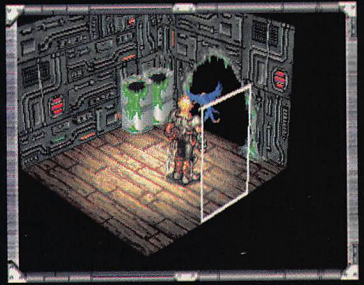






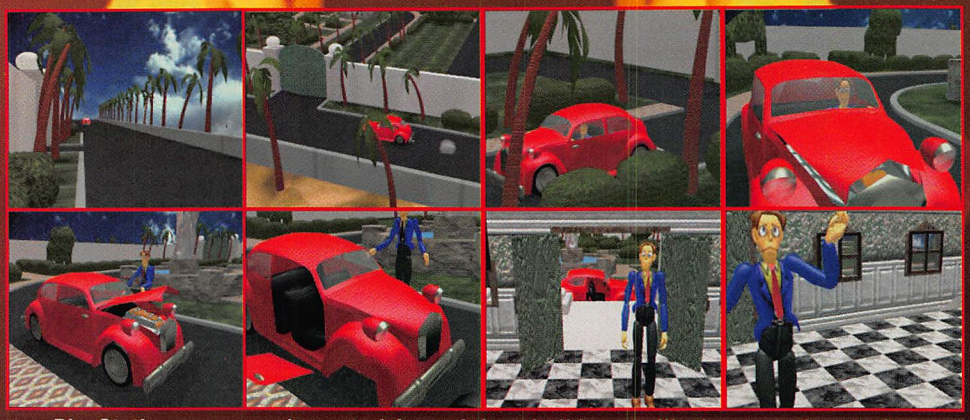






Welcome House

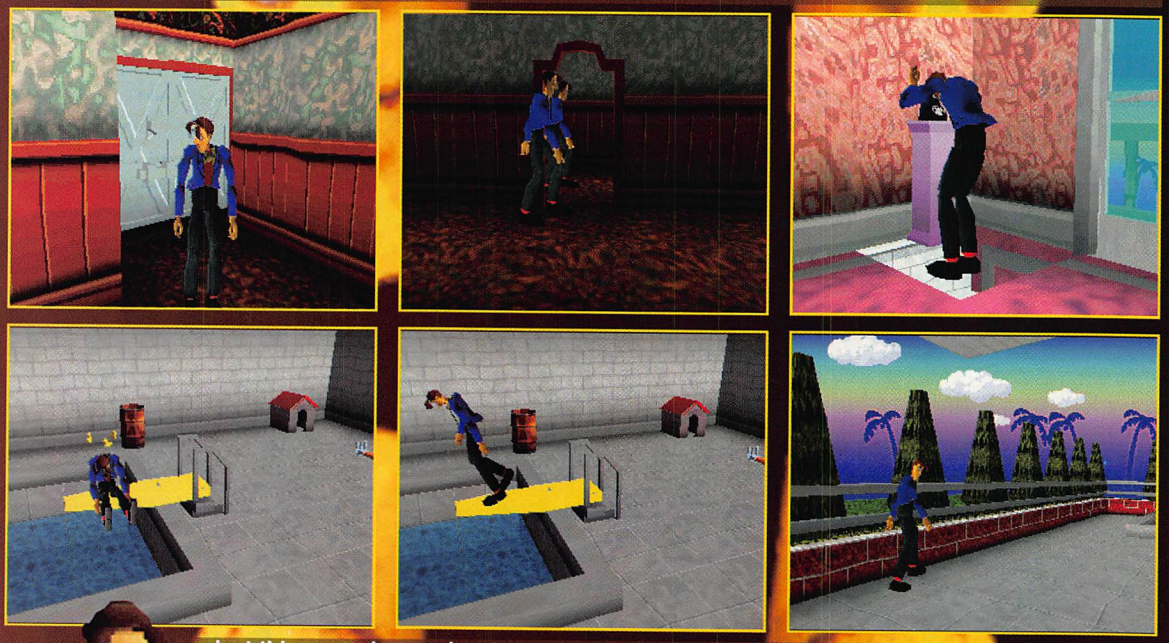
Keaton and his Uncle



The one PlayStation game coming out of Japan I thought I'd never like has turned out to be one of the most interesting I've yet played—*Welcome House*. While perusing the import mags (as we so often do here at GF), WH looked to be another in a long line of point 'n' click duds. Imagine my surprise when I popped it in and found a 100%-controllable character in an entirely-polygon environment.

If you liked Dr.Hauser, you'll love Keaton Packsman in *Welcome House*. The story goes something like this: Keaton is moving from Chicago to Miami where he's purchased a house from his uncle Perkinson. Just as Keaton arrives in the driveway his car pretty much desintegrates. But this is only the beginning of Keaton's problems. You see, unbeknownst to Keaton his uncle has two hobbies—money, and playing with boneheads like Keaton, his next victim. The moment he sets foot in his new home (or so he thinks), the door slams behind him and bolts shut. Don't be late on those payments, Keaton. You must now guide Keaton (the definitive geek) through some of the wackiest riddles ever devised and somehow find a way out of this crazy house.

Keaton can run, jump, sit, stand, and use about an abundance of collectable items. Just to give you a hint of WH's craziness, during the course of the game you'll prepare a stew in the kitchen, crawl through a secret refrigerator into a terrace garden, be squashed paper thin, meet your lifeless clone, catch fish (out of an aquarium no less), watch some TV, take a shower, and do possibly the



REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - GUST

PUBLISHER - GUST

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

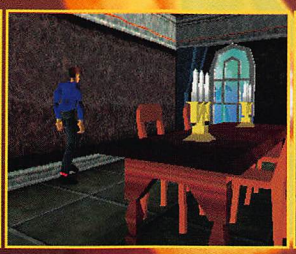
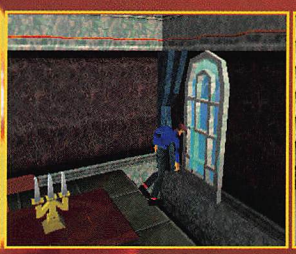
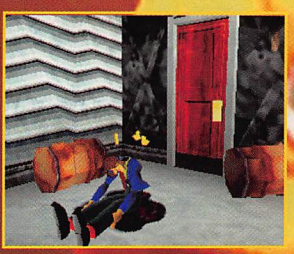
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

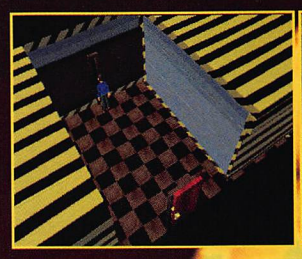
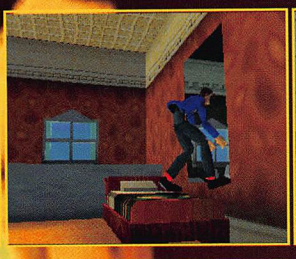
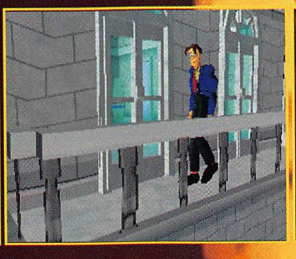
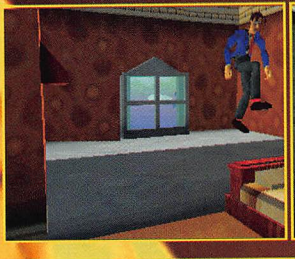
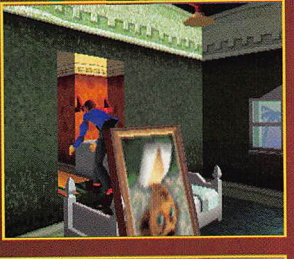
E. STORM

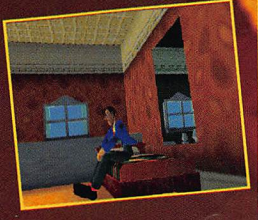
"OUR HOUSE, IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR STREET..."

coolest thing ever in an adventure game: find records which you can play in a jukebox located in the estate's private club. The first one I found was Doris Day's memorable "Que sera sera"—not an imitation, but the actual tune in its entirety! From jazz to classical Keaton finds 'em, plays 'em, and even does a little dance... crazy. I played *WH* a good 5 hours for this review and judging by the amount of items I've gathered. I'm convinced I have quite a

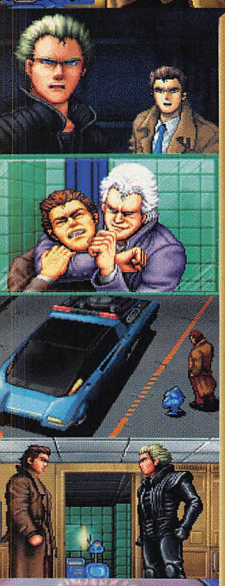




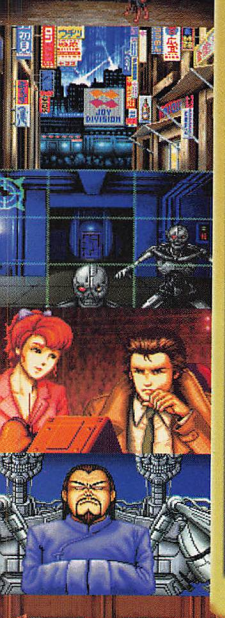
ways to go, so *House* must be at *least* a good day long. Although unlikely, I hope to bring you an American review on this one. WH is one of only a few titles in this category that I would actually recommend. Hey, Sony's bringing out *Aquanauts Holiday* so I guess anything's possible. -E. Storm



SNATCHER





R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - 1 CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - AVERAGE

AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN

Once again I'm faced with the dilemma I was last month with *Policenauts*: I gave last year's Sega CD version of *Snatcher* a perfect 100. How can I possibly score this upgrade? The PlayStation version of *Snatcher* adds much new art, a sick amount of Konamilicious new music, two fairly neat CG intros and an incredibly cool maze. What it brings with it from previous versions is one of the most compelling video game storylines of all time.

On June 6th, 1991, a mysterious explosion occurs at a remote virus research lab in Siberia, the Chernotan Research Facility. The detonation releases a Russian biological weapon under development there, Lucifer Alpha, into the air. A few years later, the virus abruptly mutates, eliminating its lethal properties—but not before decimating 80% of Eurasia's populace.

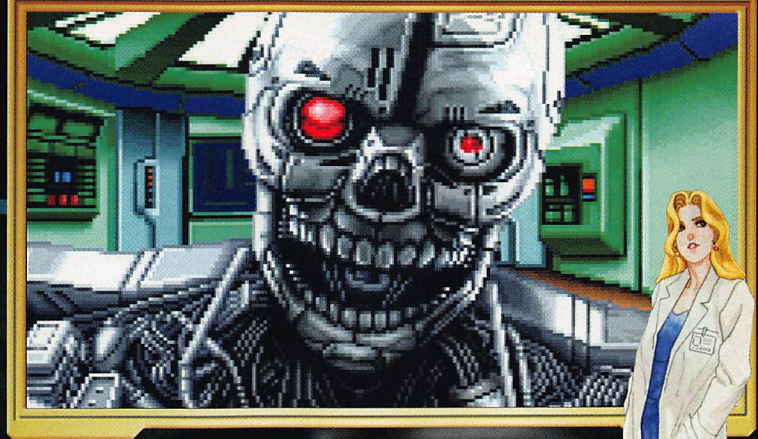
50 years later, in 2041, an alarmingly advanced bioroid is recovered in the wreckage of another strange accident at the site of the Chernotan lab. Soon, more of these bioroids appear in the form of relatively high-ranking officials in the world's governments, with an outer layer of human-like skin over their endoskeletons. The strange beings are quickly dubbed "Snatchers" by the mass media. Needless to say, they cause worldwide panic. The people of Neo Kobe, a city built directly on the water, demand a special law enforcement division dedicated to the destruction of Snatchers; licensed civilian "Hunters" are taking out more Snatchers than the police. In 2042, the Junkers (Judgement Uninfected Naked Kind & Execute Rangers; don't ask me!) are formed for this purpose. You play as their newest Runner, or detective, Gillian Seed. He and his estranged wife Jaime Seed were found at the scene of the first contact with Snatchers in Siberia, with no recollection of their past. Gillian has decided to become a Junker in order to spark his memory; the only fragment of their past that Jaime and Gillian can remember is the word "Snatcher."

Snatcher is a digital comic; you choose commands like "Look," "Talk," "Search," etc. But

GILLIAN SEED

SNATCHER: PLAYSTATION VS. SEGA-CD

SEGA-CD | PLAYSTATION | SEGA-CD | PLAYSTATION

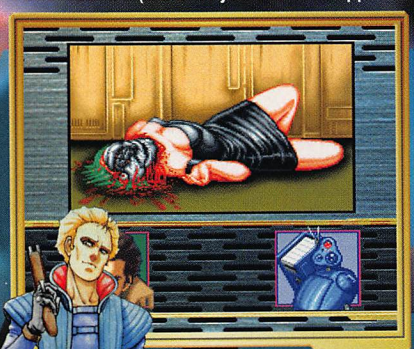


unlike many PC-Engine digital comics, you can die, the game isn't entirely linear and you can return to previous locales in an RPG-ish manner whenever you want. Even though the PS version's art has been renovated in thousands of colors (a scant few have been completely redrawn or CG-rendered) and numerous transparency, line-scrolling and parallax effects have been added, *Snatcher* isn't about graphics, and in fact it hasn't been since 1988, when the game debuted on the NEC's PC-8801. *Snatcher* is about storyline, and as I said before, it has that in droves. I desperately want to tell you more about it, but to give you any storyline beyond the first five minutes would diminish your enjoyment of the game.

If you ever get to play it, that is. Sports sovereigns Konami will probably never release *Snatcher* for the U.S. PlayStation or Saturn, even though they have all the voice recorded (excellently, I might add) and text translated; this would be a week-long conversion. Unfortunately, Konami of America no longer loves you.

Sadly, *Snatcher* for the PS is edited slightly, whether at SCE's behest or Konami's is unknown. The blood is toned down on Alice the dog's death, a rotting skull is pixelled out in prime *Real Stories of the Highway Patrol* fashion (the shot you see here appears in the split second before the mosaic appears) and Gibson's

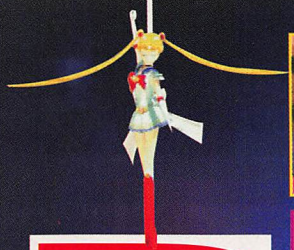
JAIME SEED



decapitation scene scrolls up so as to hide the severed head. These mini elements do little to detract from the splendor of the game, but are annoying. It remains to be seen if the Saturn version is uncut. In closing, I recommend *Snatcher* to any fan of the Sega CD original. You should be able to work your way through this one with little problems. To everyone else, get the Sega CD version if you can—you'll love me for it.

—Nick Rox

RANDAM HAJILE



REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - ANGEL

PUBLISHER - BANDAI

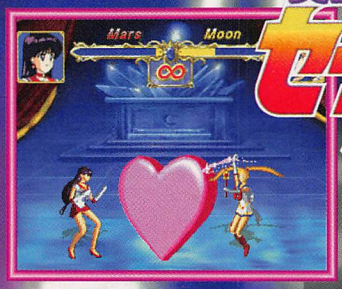
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

E. STORM
"VENUS LOVE AND BEAUTY SHOCK!"

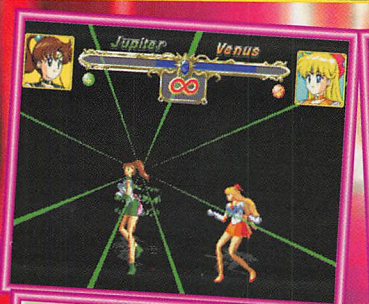


美少女戦士セーラームーンSuper S
Sailor Moon

I can't tell you how happy I am that you can role out of bed, flip on UPN and catch a Japanese anime series each and every weekday morning. *Sailor Moon* may be kind of a tame one, as its focus is a very young viewer, but nevertheless, it's a start. Its success may lead to such fantastic series as the Japanese *Sonic the Hedgehog* (which is amazing), *Magic Knight RayEarth*, *SFII*, *Virtua Fighter*, etc. hitting the US air waves.

Sailor Moon S, recently released in Japan, seems geared accordingly at the show's young audience. The game opens with an impressive display of anime culminating in a fighting game that for the most part is all show and little go, in relation to mainstream fighters such as *SFII*, *VF*, etc. What *SMS* does have in droves is CG-rendered teen babes who squeal out wacky incantations like "Pink Sugar Heart Attack," "Venus Love Me Chain," "Swinging Marshmallow," and "Venus Love and Beauty Shock," dramatic Supers that fill the screen, and spoken dialogue in both the vs. and story modes as the players taunt each other before battle. Rated as a serious fighter, the game moves way to slowly to have any technical merit, but as a showpiece for the anime it does quite well. I only wish that the backgrounds had either more parallax, or some line scrolling. The one aspect of *SMS* that does impress me is the fluidly animated rendered fighters. Their movements look extremely lifelike, but they do take some time to unfold. When these girls go into a Super for instance, they wave their arms and shout out spells for a good 3 seconds. Plenty of time to jump in and stop them. It's best to just sit back and watch the show, which I'm sure is exactly what the show's fans are doing right now.

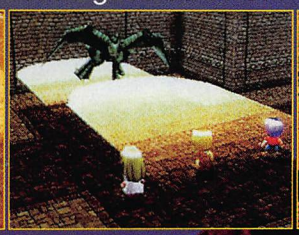
-E. Storm



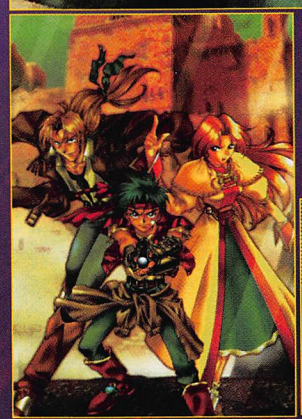
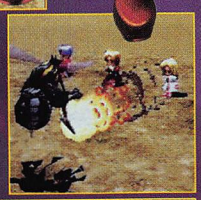
WILD ARMS

ワイルドアームズ

Here's a surprise: Sony themselves have a godly RPG coming your way for the PS sometime in Spring, and it looks almost as good as *FFVII*!

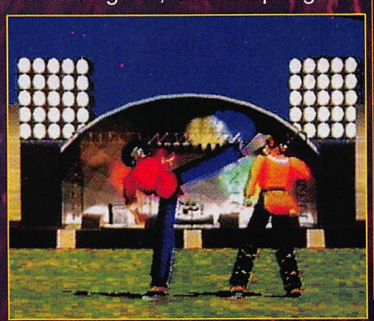


The makers of *Crime Crackers* and *Gunners' Heaven*, Media Vision, are back with *Wild Arms*, an orthodox RPG with *Beyond the Beyond*-style puzzle elements. The main attraction of *Wild Arms* is its gorgeous battle scenes, in which you can control the view angle via the "Motion View System." The battles are controlled with an icon system that's very similar to the one used in the *Shining Force* series. As you can see, the quality of the polygonal scenes in *Wild Arms* is astounding, even at this early state. The overhead sequences sport nothing we haven't seen before, but will contain many action RPG overtones, like pushing, throwing, and breaking blocks, blowing up walls, and pressing switches. There are no story details yet, as is the case with most just-announced Japanese RPGs, but the three main characters appear to the left: From left to right, they're Zack Van Brace, a treasure hunter, the hero Roddy Ragnite, and the magic-user Cecilia Rein Ardelheit. You can be sure we'll have more coverage of this stunning-looking game in upcoming issues!

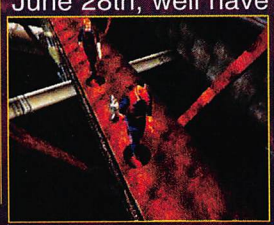
Ranma 1/2 Battle Renaissance

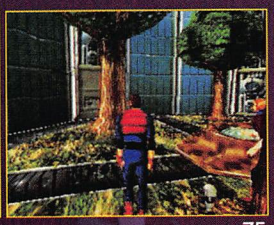
This is the only shot that exists of Shogakukan's new 3-D *Ranma* fighter, due in Spring.



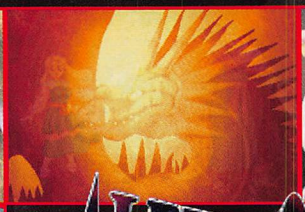
Over Blood

The first of what is sure to be a long line of *Resident Evil/Bio Hazard* ripoffs, *Over Blood*, is Riverhill Soft's first original PlayStation game. Directed by the creator of the 3DO game *Doctor Hauser*, *Over Blood* differs from *Resident Evil* in that the environments are 100% polygonal, rather than pre-rendered. The story has the player character, Lars Karsh, waking up from cold sleep in a deep-underground shelter without any knowledge of why he's there or even who he is. *Over Blood* is out on June 28th, well have a review soon after.





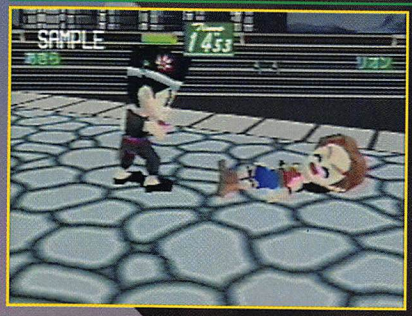
E.Storm's Saturn Previews



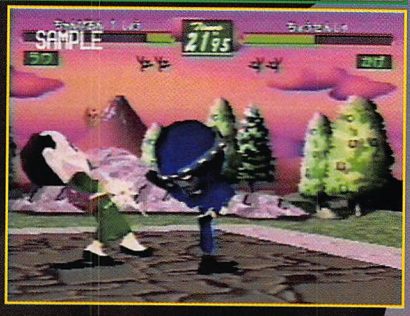
This April, Japanese gamers will enjoy Albert Odyssey Gaiden on the Saturn. The question is, when will we? I'll have more on AO very soon.

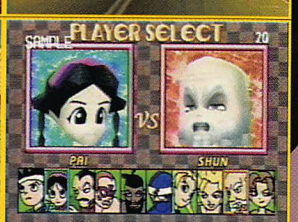
Albert Odyssey 外伝 Legend of Eldean

Here's yet another great Saturn puzzle game, PD Ultraman! PDU is 100% addicting ultra chaos, complete with rendered graphics and cinemas starring those wacky Gundams! If you like puzzlers seek out this import today!



Coming home to Japanese Saturns everywhere by Christmas '96 it's none other than Virtua Kids. Since VF Kids was developed on AM2's STV architecture we can expect a 100% perfect home translation if (or should I say when) VF Kids is released here in the States. VF Kids plays just like VF except for the big heads (which tend to knock around a bit) and the new pouting mannerisms. Personally, I like it even better than VF. These little dudes are just too cool!





GAMEFAN SPORTS

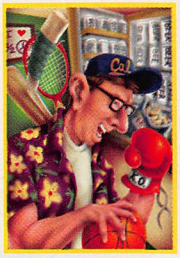
EA'S *NBA LIVE '96* COMES TO THE PLAYSTATION!

PLUS:
NINTENDO'S AMAZING

KEN GRIFFEY JR.'S WINNING RUN

GAMEFAN SPORTS

Chip



Cal Cavalier

CHIP'S CORNER

I know there's all kinds of stuff brewin' in the NBA right now, like the bonehead who wants to play in our country but won't pledge allegiance to our flag. But hey, whatever, if the guy doesn't stand up soon, I'll send Posty over to wax his back... I wanna' talk about the Tyson fight! Just how cool was that, huh? I think it's safe to assume that unification is approaching swiftly. For those of you who didn't see the fight, here's how it went; huge, ripped, confident English champ comes out at the bell. Huge, ripped, confident English champ feels the anvil that is Mike's furious right. Huge ripped... scared English guy panics and decides the tango may be the only way out of the whole mess. After two rounds of punishment, Mike's dance card is full and he unleashes a flurry of such lethal bombs that Mr. Bruno's head nearly shoots off of his body. The dude would have been in the front row had the ref not stepped in.

No one is gonna beat Mike. The guy has boxing down. Screw hoppin' around strategically, Mike needs only to find the other guy's head. My only question... How long will it take Acclaim to bag the license. By the way, how about those chick boxers!? That was brutal! Blood was squirtin' everywhere and they just kept swingin'. I'll bet their husbands *never* leave the seat up! Well, that's all I have to say about that. Tune in next month for more hot sports commentary. -*Chip*

VIEWPOINTS

VR SOCCER PLAYSTATION INTERPLAY

"Chip"

As far as soccer goes—and believe me I've played enough of 'em recently to know—it's hard to beat Interplay's *VRS*. Smooth motion cap, great playability, and user friendly sounds compliment this superb simulation. Move over *Striker*, *VR*'s the game to beat.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	9	8	7	7	90

"Cal Cavalier"

Interplay has made an impressive sports debut with their VR line and *VR Soccer* is their best attempt yet. The motion-captured players are smooth, the play control is great and the ambiance of each stadium is very realistic. Overall, *Striker '96* barely nudges this game off the podium for being the best 32-bit soccer title while *FIFA 96* places a distant third. You can't go wrong with *VR Soccer*.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	7	6	7	86

STRIKER '96 PLAYSTATION ACCLAIM

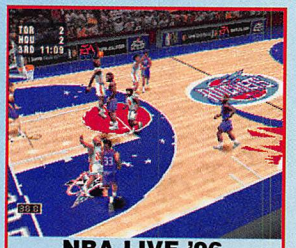
I'll give you that *Striker* is a great game of soccer with insane AI and superb playability, but the amplified announcer coupled with the less-than-fluid frame rate left me just short of totally inspired in the wake of VR. Honestly, folks, both games are fantastic. You can't go wrong with either.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	8	7	7	85

Striker '96 is the best soccer game I've played or seen on a 32-bit system since *FIFA Soccer* on the 3DO. It's a well-honed and refined piece of software with advanced 3D graphics, intelligent AI and a high degree of realism. The announcer's voice was a little cheesy and the character animation could've been even smoother but Acclaim got all the fundamentals right. I can't wait for the '97 version.

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	8	6	8	88

NBA LIVE '96 PLAYSTATION ELECTRONIC ARTS



Though not a graphic masterpiece, EA's Live '96 has just about everything else a growin' boy needs. Most importantly the game plays better than anything currently available. These developers are truly masters of the genre. With games like *Live '96*, EA may again reign supreme. Then again, the competition is becoming increasingly furious.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	10	9	7	7	90

EA's newest entry in the *Live* series is the best yet. Combining perfect control, a user friendly menu system and exciting gameplay is no easy feat, but lo and behold, EA's new 32-bit basketball game has it in spades. The only feature I didn't like about *NBA Live '96* were the much-ballyhooed 3D "virtual stadium" graphics. The rendered characters on real-time backgrounds don't work very well. All in all, a magnificent effort from EA.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	9	8	7	7	87

SLAM 'N JAM PLAYSTATION CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

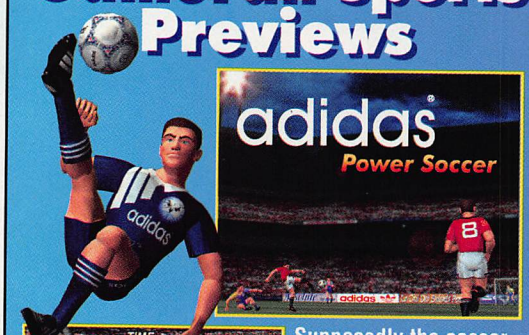
I don't know what Cal's smokin'. Arcade b-ball is where it's at! So the teams aren't real... they never will be! It's a friggin' game! Sure it's nice to fantasize (with a face like his, it's also necessary) but when the day is done Crystal's game is a kick in the turd cutter.

G	C	P	M	O	
9	8	8	8	7	90

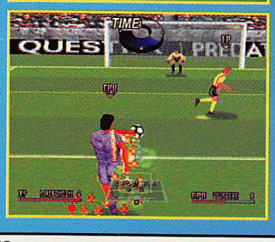
Well, what can I say about this game other than the fact that it currently occupies the bottom of the 32-bit basketball totem pole? Ironically, *Slam 'N Jam '96* is actually a good game with easy to play arcade-like control, high flying slam dunks and great fun factor. It's bottom-of-the-barrel status only reflects the quality of the competition. *NBA Shoot Out*, *NBA Jam TE*, *NBA In The Zone*, these are some serious games we're talking about here.

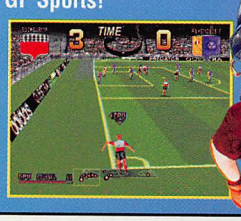
G	C	P	M	O	
6	8	6	7	5	75

GameFan Sports Previews

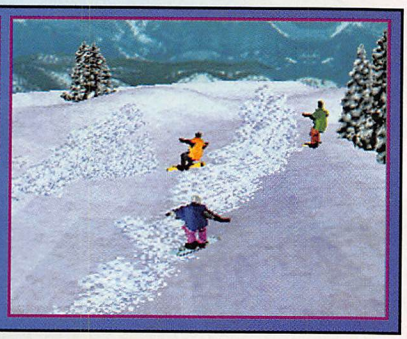


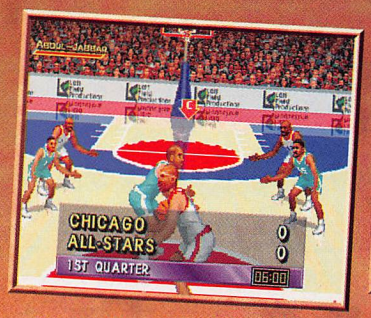
Supposedly the soccer game to beat all soccer games, Psygnosis' *Adidas Power Soccer* is on its way to our GF soccer lab for some close scrutiny. Stay tuned for a butt-kickin' review in next month's GF Sports!

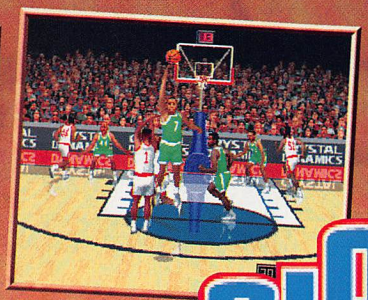


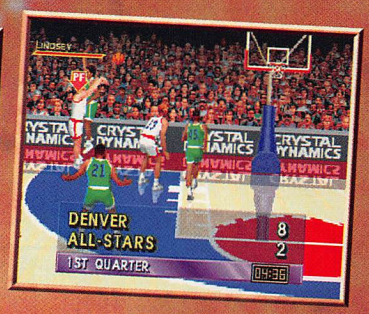


15 pro snowboarders in the game and the video, head bangin' tunes, 60 minutes of rad video including 4 music video's, realistic physics and texture-mapped terrain all from the team that brought us the infamous *Road Rash*! Life is good!! I need this game NOW!



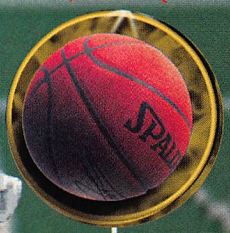






SLAM N JAM '96

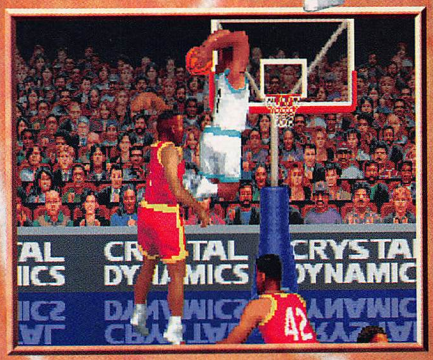
GAMEFAN SPORTS

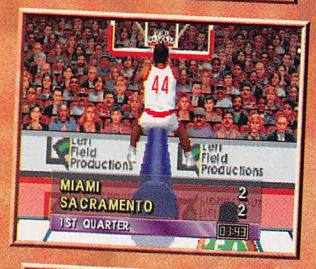


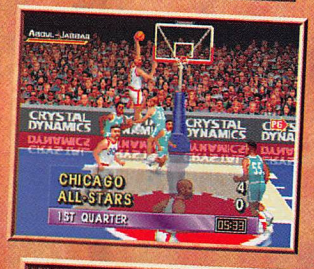
REVIEW

Crystal Dynamics' *Slam 'N Jam* was considered by many to be the definitive 3DO basketball game. The visuals were the best of any 3DO BB game, the moves were spectacular and most of all, *Slam 'N Jam* was fun to play. Now that Crystal Dynamics have taken *Slam 'N Jam* over to the greener pastures of the PlayStation, a few things have become clear.

First, *Slam 'N Jam '96 Featuring Magic & Kareem* (that's the full title of the PlayStation game) is as fun and playable as ever. Second, more changes and refinements have been made to the original *Slam 'N Jam* (for the better, I might add). The game has new features and refinements, making *Slam 'N Jam* good enough to play in the big leagues. But is it to dominate the PS basketball genre the way its 3DO predecessor did? Well, yes and no.







All of you b-ball simulation freaks out there looking for statistical perfection better turn the page right now, because *Slam 'N Jam '96* isn't for you. Other than Magic Johnson and the retired Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, there are no real NBA players to be found anywhere in this game. and there are no real NBA teams (the teams are called "Chicago" and "Detroit" rather than the "Chicago Bulls" and "Detroit Pistons").

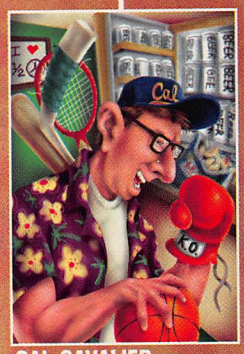
Graphically however, *Slam 'N' Jam* excels with larger player sprites and a cleaner overall look than the 3DO game , plus players that scale even smoother on the PlayStation (surprise). *Slam*'s a gas to play and is very precise and playable making it an excellent arcade style b-ball game.

With games like *NBA Live '96, NBA In the Zone, NBA Shoot Out* and now Crystal's *Slam 'N Jam out there*, it's a players market in the PS b-ball genre. You really can't go wrong with any of the above. Crystal's game will definitely soothe even the most demanding arcade sports gamer's appetite.

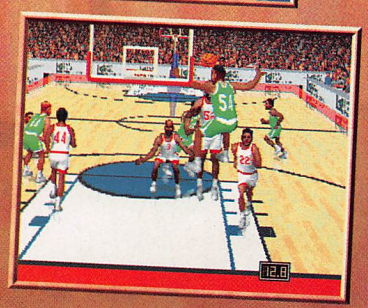
-Cal Cavalier

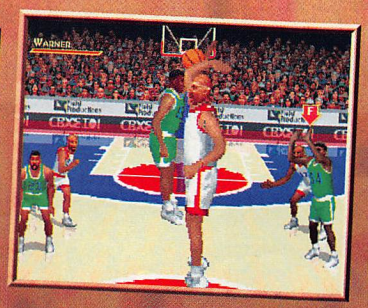
PlayStation

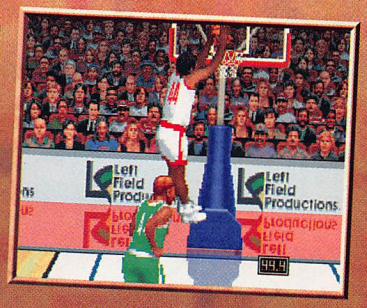
DEVELOPER - SONY
PUBLISHER - SONY
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-8
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - APRIL



CAL CAVALIER
ANOTHER FINE BASKETBALL GAME FOR THE PS.







GAMEFAN SPORTS

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - IGUANA

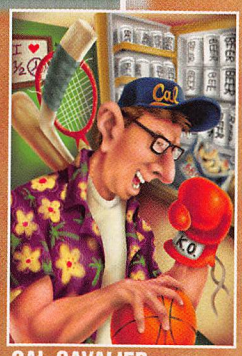
PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1 / TAP

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW



CAL CAVALIER
HAD ENOUGH *JAM* YET?

COLLEGE SLAM

Attention all fans of college hoops: Acclaim is taking their proven *NBA Jam: TE* game, substituting the big boys with college players and teams, adding new features, wrapping it all up and calling it *College Slam*.

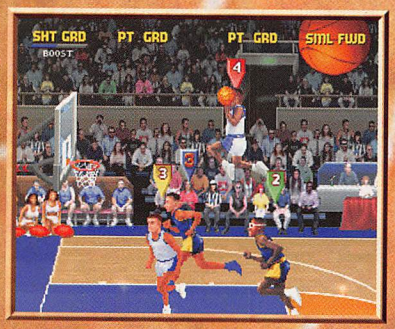
Due out next month for the PlayStation, *College Slam* has more than just a few things in common with *NBA Jam*. Considering how good *Jam* is, this is a very good thing. *CS* uses *Jam*'s two-on-two player configuration, graphic engine, most of the voice and sound samples, and all of the sprites. In other words, *College Slam* inherited the pin-point control, hilarious non-stop action and highly playable arcade feel of *Jam*.

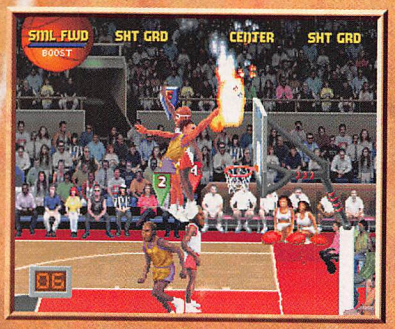
College Slam also includes the top 44 NCAA basketball teams, school-specific college fight songs, backboard smashes, net meltdowns, the ever famous "Hot Spots" and power pick-ups from *Jam: TE*, multi-player compatibility, colorful voice announcing, 5 players per team to choose from, alley-oops, 3 modes of competition (head-to-head, season match-up, and a final four-style tournament mode) player and team edit features, and even more.

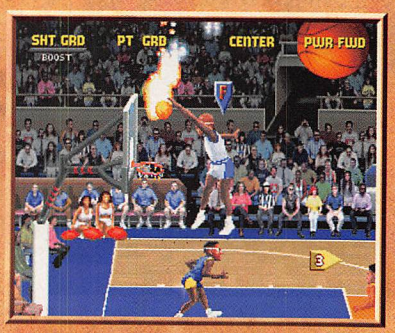
Not only that, but *CS* also has some cool and wacky touches. When you loft a ball from across the court, you can actually see mini-game monitors in the scoreboard. You can also do all sorts of wild stuff, provided you pick up a particular icon. Crazy stuff like exploding your opponents' rim so they can't score, becoming totally invisible, turning into a whirlwind and slipping all who come in contact with you off their feet, reversing the direction of the ball if it's in mid-shot and other wacky stuff.

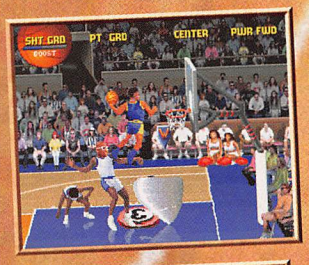
If you just can't get enough of the arcade-perfect PS *Jam*, or you're just a college boy looking for a good reason to fork out 250 bones, this last *Jam* is for you.

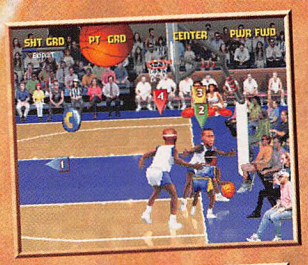
-Cal Cavalier

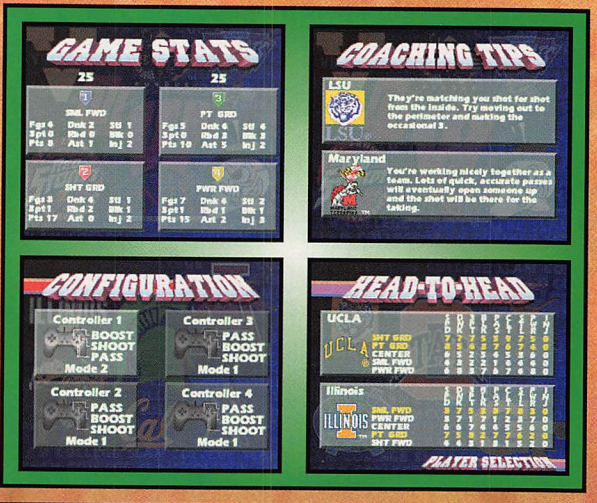


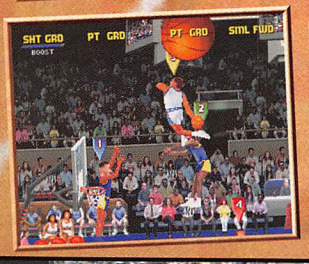


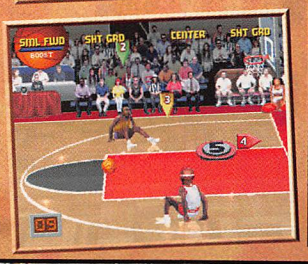












KEN GRIFFEY JR.'s Winning Run™

GAMEFAN SPORTS

The long awaited sequel to *Ken Griffey Jr. presents: Major League Baseball* (I know it's a long title but, hey, I didn't make the game) is coming out in June. Programmed by Rare, *Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run* is the first sports title to incorporate Nintendo/Rare's proprietary ACM (advanced computer modeling) graphics technique.

I got a chance to look at a 90% preview version of the game, and let me tell you, it's amazing! Although I'll have to save my opinions for our review, trust me, it looks and plays as good as (if not better than) other baseball games on the new 32-bit systems. Those Rare programmers are madmen!

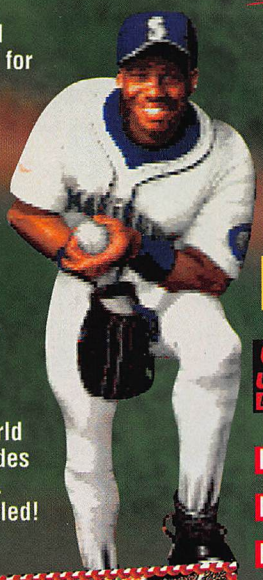
Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run has a lot of unique stuff like the exclusive "movable camera" feature. This allows the pitcher's field of vision to scroll instantly to check leadoffs of runners on first and third base and defensive alignments. I don't want to give away too much about this feature, but let's just say that it's an efficient and elegant solution to the awkward first and third base windows we've become accustomed to.

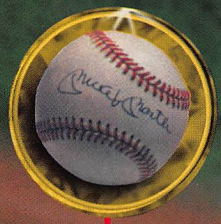
In addition to the players, major league stadiums are also rendered to make them more realistic, from the ivy-covered walls of Chicago's Wrigley Field to the towering superstructure of Toronto's Skydome. Rare put much painstaking attention to detail into *Winning Run*. Full motion-capture was also used for the main characters (pitcher, batter, umpire, etc.).

This game has a battery back-up feature for stats. The computer keeps track of league statistics as well as your own team. You can also check your individual stats at any point in the season among league leaders in home runs, strike outs, base stealing and even more.

Going into full detail about all the standout features and details in *Winning Run* would be the easiest thing in the world for me, but sadly, I must save my accolades and jaw-yappin' for the upcoming review. SNES baseball fans—keep your eyes peeled!

-Cal Cavalier





PREVIEW

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

DEVELOPER - RARE

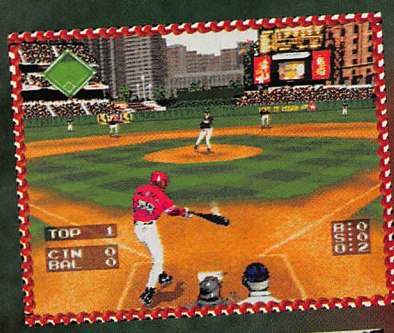
PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

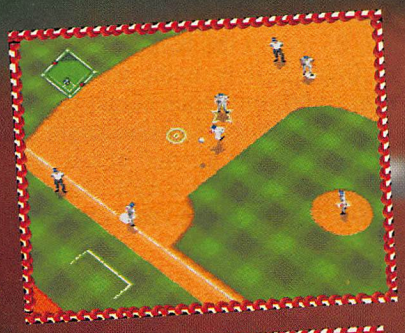
FORMAT - 32 MEG CART.

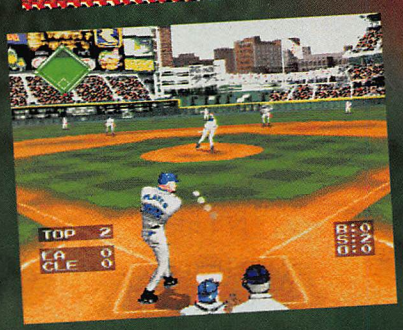
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

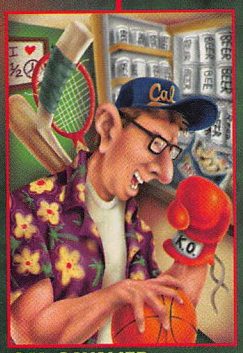
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE JUNE



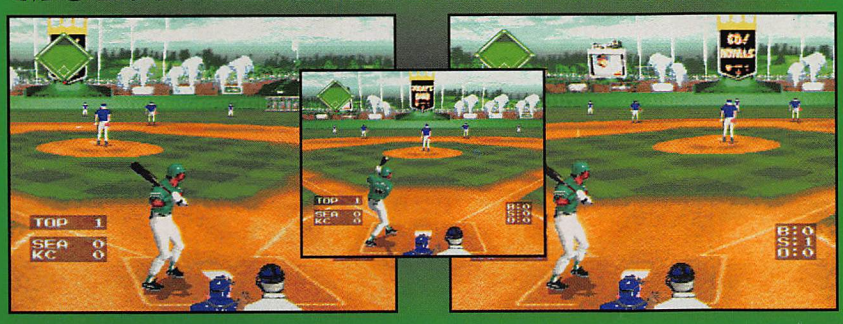


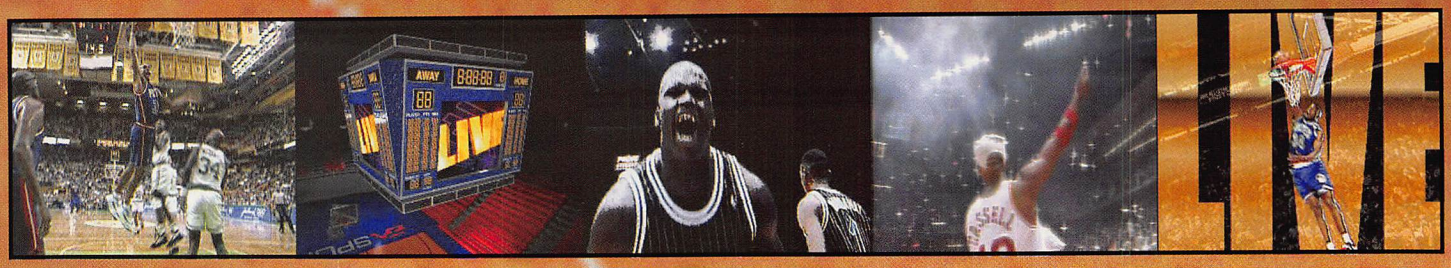




CAL CAVALIER
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS A 16-BIT GAME?

MULTIPLE BASE PERSPECTIVES





GAMEFAN SPORTS

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EA

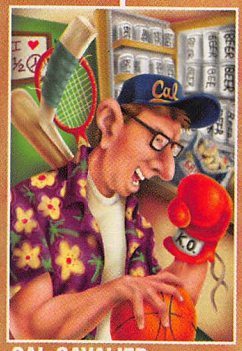
PUBLISHER - EA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-8

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW



CAL CAVALIER
EA DOES IT AGAIN!

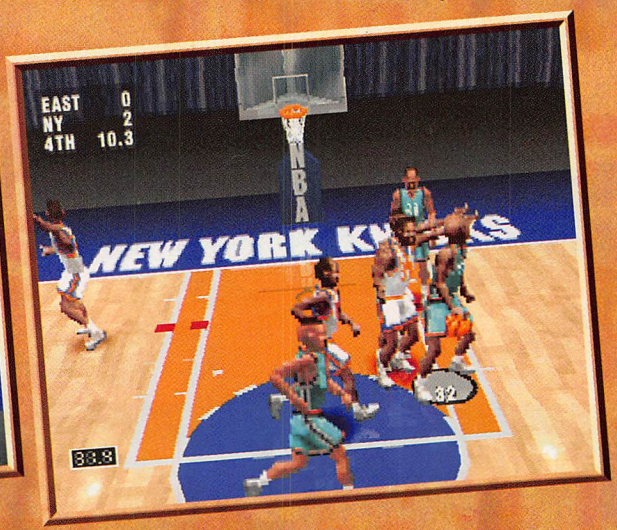
NBA LIVE 96

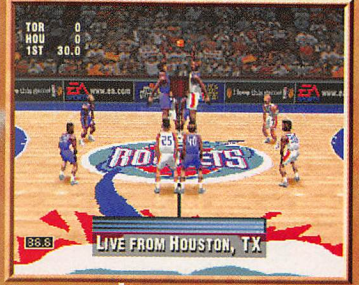
One of the most highly-anticipated basketball games for the PlayStation is just around the corner. EA Sports' *NBA Live 96* features real players from the 1994-95 season, expansion teams, rookies, 3D rendered players, multi-player compatibility, plus many new options and gameplay techniques. It all adds up to an impressive total package that should be hard to beat.

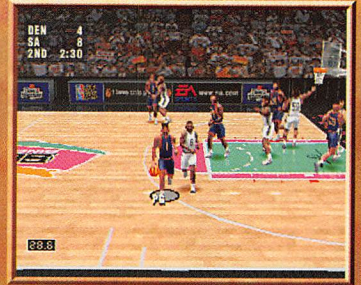
First off, this particular game incorporates many features that are new to the *NBA Live* series. The most obvious new feature is the 3D environment. EA is utilizing their "Virtual Stadium Technology" (seen first in *FIFA '96* on the Saturn and PlayStation) to display 3D graphics. In this application, like *FIFA '96*, EA unites 3D texture mapped polygons (used for the basketball court) with 3D pre-rendered sprites (the basketball players), a technically daunting task to say the least.

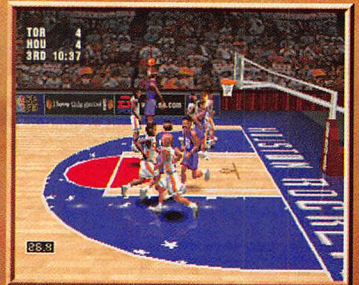
By using rendered players, EA avoids the hard, flat edges of real-time polygon characters at the expense of character smoothness. Unfortunately, using pre-rendered characters in a 3D environment require multiple angles of that character. And since each player is made up of more polygons than the PlayStation is capable of displaying in real-time, the different angle changes of the players are done in software, not hardware... Confused? Don't be. As a result of this, the players have jerky animation that lacks the smoothness of Konami's *In The Zone* and SCE's *NBA Shoot Out*.

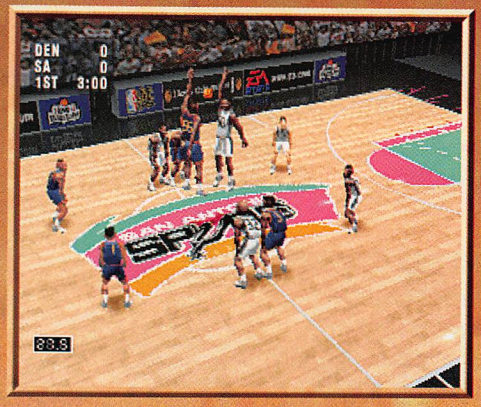
Where *NBA Live 96* scores the most (bad pun) is in the most important area of all: gameplay. To be hon-











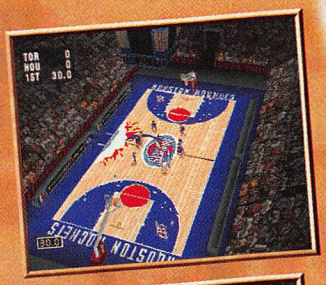
est, *NBA Live 96* plays a heck of a lot better than either *In the Zone* or *Shoot Out*. Even if you are a novice player, you'll experience much fun and joy within minutes. On first impressions, the movement of each player is a bit on the slow side (accentuated by the jerky player animation), but as you further familiarize yourself with the game, you begin reveling in the raw playability of it all. Trust me. Ignore the choppy graphics and open yourself up to a soothing world of instinctive play control and pin-point accuracy. Ahhh. Nice, isn't it?

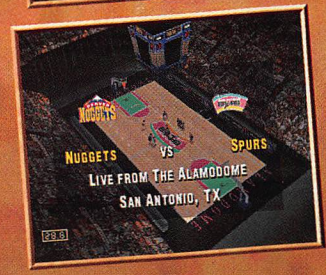
For those of you looking for other things new to EA's *Live* series, listen up. First, you got ALL 29 teams & rosters for the '95-'96 seasons (including the Toronto and Vancouver expansion teams), one-on-one moves, tip dunks, diving for balls, all new dunks and blocks... the list goes on.

Not only that, but *NBA Live 96* has 8-player adapter support, arcade and simulation game modes, trades, substitutions, in-game offensive and defensive full-team adjustments, multiple camera angles (11 in all) and more.

All of this gives *NBA Live 96* the best overall package out there. Beneath the hurtin' graphics lies a great basketball game (the best one available, in fact) with a friendly, playable feel and plenty of options (which should add to the game's longevity). If you're looking for a BB game with substance that actually surpasses the style, spare yourself the pain of sifting through the pretenders and deposit your cash directly into EA's bank account. You'll thank me later.

-Cal Cavalier





STRIKER 96

GAMEFAN SPORTS

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - COCONUTS

PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM

FORMAT - CD

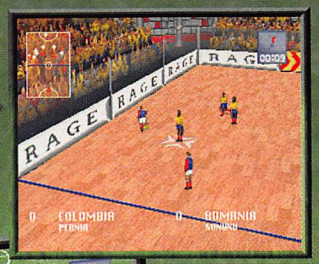
OF PLAYERS - 1 / TAP

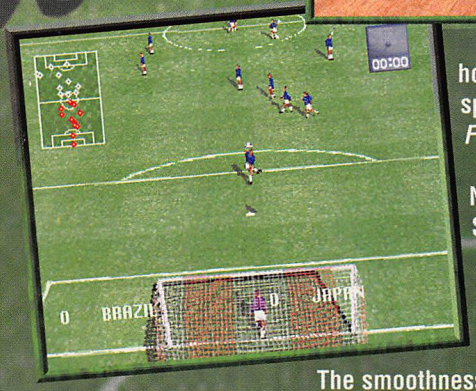
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - APRIL

CAL CAVALIER

SONY'S PLAYSTATION IS A SPORTS MACHINE!

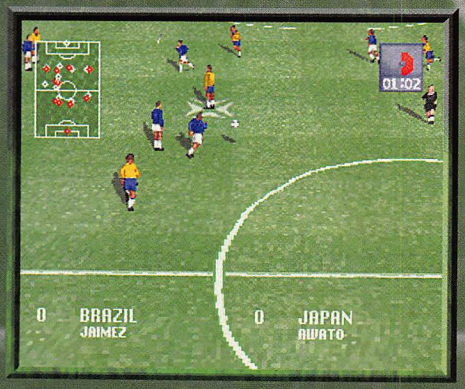




When one thinks of a sports game powerhouse, Acclaim isn't the first name that springs to mind. But alas, *Striker 96* eats *FIFA '96* for breakfast, in my opinion.

Let's start with the graphics, shall we? Now I'm not one to bash, but EA's "Virtual Stadium" graphics technology used in *FIFA '96* were amazingly underwhelming. In fact, I felt the graphics on the 3DO version of *FIFA Soccer* were much better than the PlayStation version—but that's just me.

The smoothness that the PlayStation version of *FIFA '96* lacked, *Striker 96* for the PS has in spades. The 3D scrolling field is the best I have ever seen in a soccer game, with realistic lighting effects on all the characters and seamless scaling.

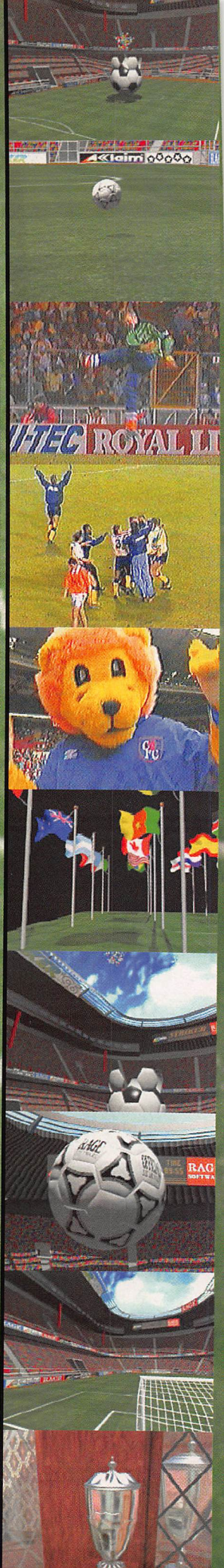


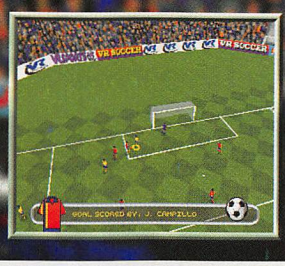
As far as authenticity goes, just listen to this: *Striker 96* has authentic play-by-play announcing, realistic goalkeeper warm-ups, national anthems, 38 international teams and more. This game also features 4 modes of play (exhibition, league, tournament and championship), simulation and arcade modes, seven different camera views, full-motion video of international highlights, adjustable field conditions, team formation edit mode, realistic crowd chants—shall I continue?

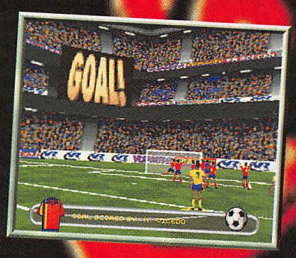
The game is also surprisingly playable. The control interface is precise yet very forgiving. And not only are there different types of kicks and throws, but you can also vary the strength of the kick/throw via a bar-graph at the top of the screen—a great idea in concept and in practice.

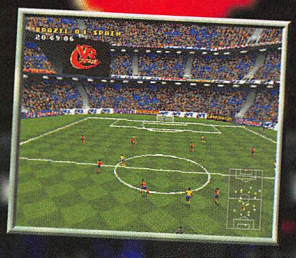
Depending on the level of difficulty selected, the computer AI can range from friendly to frustrating. So it doesn't matter how skilled you are, you can always find the proper level of challenge. Believe me.

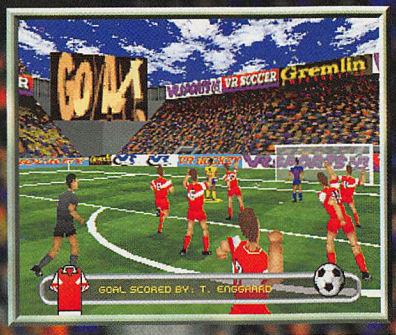
I feel Acclaim has a winner with *Striker 96*. It has exceptional graphics, enough authentic features for the hard-core sim freak and a playable enough feel for the casual soccer gamer. What more could any soccer gamer want? -Cal Cavalier

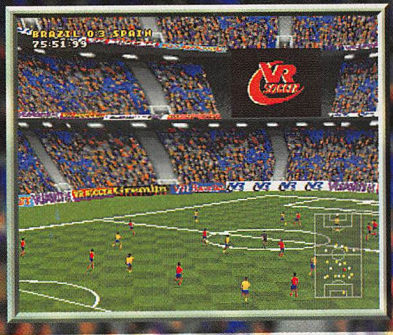












GAMEFAN SPORTS

REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - GREMLIN

PUBLISHER - INTERPLAY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1/TAP

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - MAY

VR Soccer, the first game in the much-anticipated VR Sports line from Interplay, is in stores now. Using motion-capture technology, *VRS* has some of the most realistic character movements I (and likely you) have ever seen in a soccer title.

Interplay, using their own Interactive Motion Technology, has captured each professional soccer player's movements, giving the game an ultra-realistic look. You can view the field from nearly every imaginable angle (including a first-person perspective!) and the cameras shift and move around the screen seamlessly. Interplay's soccer engine is stupendous.

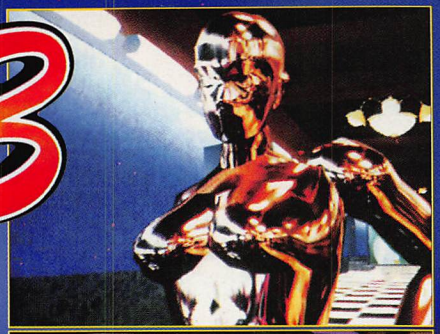
Along with the graphics you'd expect from a 32-bit sports game (but don't always get), *VRS* has ultra-tight gameplay. In fact, *VRS* plays as well as (and looks better than) *FIFA*! Kicks, slide tackles and the like are easily executed as the character control is instant and accurate. Down to the smallest details, such as the goalie bouncing the ball before the kick, the game is simulated perfectly. Even the announcing in VR was carefully orchestrated, something I personally find very important in today's vocal simulations. An annoying play caller can wear thin on the ol' patience meter.

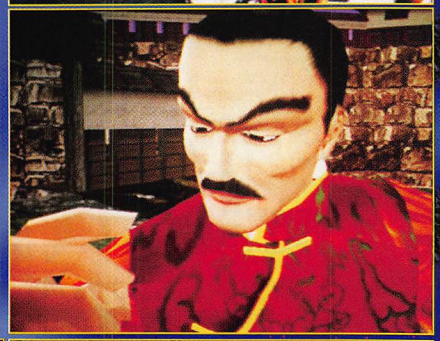
Overall, I classify *VR Soccer* as the best in the field of currently available PlayStation soccer titles, and that's no small order. Psygnosis' entry into the soccer field (*Adidas' Power Soccer*) is next, and early reports say that it will be the game to beat. We'll see about that. -Chip

CHIP
THE VR SERIES IS GONNA BE TOUGH TO BEAT!

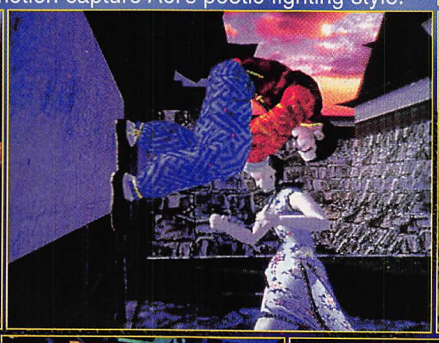
Virtua Fighter 3

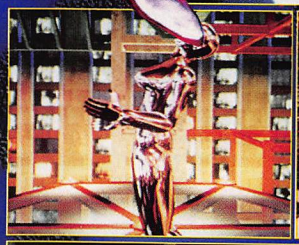
Never before has the gaming world witnessed anything as visually spectacular as Sega AM2's *Virtua Fighter 3*. There is simply no reference point for you to base a mental image of this game on—this real-time experience is vastly superior to most rendered CG intros. It's that good. Though nothing more has been shown on the game except a 15-minute demo running on preliminary Model 3 board, it's blatantly obvious that this hardware seems three to five years beyond what we're playing now—and it may be that long before we see this kind of performance at home. Now for the demo itself: There were only six characters shown: Lau, Pai, Jacky, Dural, Jeffry, and one of the two new characters, Aoi Umenokouji. Sega actually hired a Japanese expert of traditional dance to motion-capture Aoi's poetic fighting style.

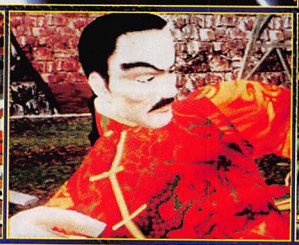




Aoi Umenokouji







▲ VF3 at the AOU show

Other highlights of the demo include Jeffry flexing his muscles, which actually bulge, the five-mile zoom-in intro to his stage, Lau's new throw in which he springs off of the wall and flips his opponent, and Dural's dazzling liquid-metal body. I could go on for pages, but I'm running out of space. We'll be back with more *VF3* ASAP!

Sega Model 3 Tech Specs

Hardware
Power PC 603e
Resolution—496x384-640x480

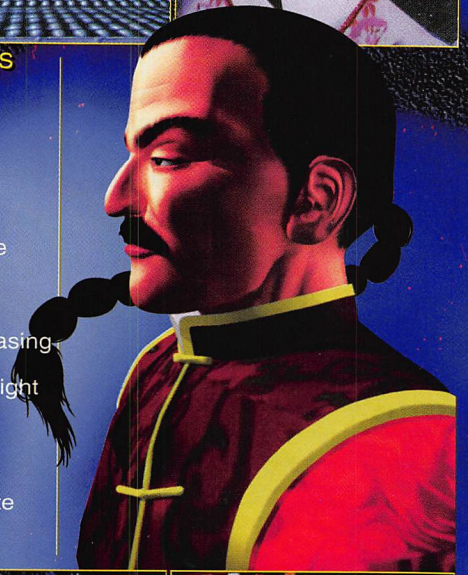
Graphics Performance
1,000,000 Polygons/sec
60,000,000 Pixels/sec
16.7 million colors per texture
Trilinear Interpolation Microtexture

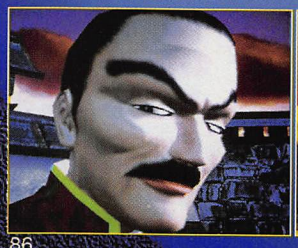
Shading
High-Specular Gouraud Shading
Fix-Shading, Flat-Shading
Texture and Edge Multilayered Antialiasing

Lighting
Parallel Light, 4 Spotlights, Pin Spotlight

Special Effects
Zone Fog
32 Levels of Translucency

Sound
68EC000 @ 44.1KHz sampling rate
SCSP x 2, MIDI Interface
16-bit, 64 Voice, 4 channel





Really cool AnimE and Manga.

check it out.

CD-ROM

Record of Lodoss War
subtitled
4 volumes
$24.95 each

Cyber City OEDO 808
dubbed - with 2 free comics
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Legend of Lemnear
subtitled
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Roujin Z *dubbed*
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Project A-KO - $34.95

Ranma 1/2 - $34.95

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The Slayers *subtitled or dubbed*
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$19.95 each (VHS)
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SOFTWARE SCULPTORS

TAKUHI'S

GUNSMITH CATS

Kenichi Sonoda, the man who brought us *BubbleGum Crisis* and *Riding Bean*, has just turned out what has got to be the highlight of even his very impressive career. *Gunsmith Cats* is one of the best OVA series to strike America yet—though each episode is less than half an hour, they pack in more action (and more frames of animation) than your average 2-hour movie. I watched it once, then hit rewind, and just started watching again.

Our heroines are the quick-witted, steady-handed, coldly beautiful Rally Vincent, and her partner, just-plain psycho explosives "expert" (you'd think an expert would know better than to wire her own house with grenades...), May Hopkins. They're the two coolest characters I've seen in a long time, and either one would make an excellent Mrs. Takuhi.

The two of them are part-time gunsmiths and part-time bounty hunters, pretty much willing to do whatever it takes to make a buck. The setting is contemporary America, and Mr. Sonoda's done a great job with his research (just about everyone involved with any sort of law enforcement in the state of Illinois gets special thanks credit at the end). There's something just plain cool about seeing animated characters going up against the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, ya know?

As the box cover ("Girls. Guns. Grenades.") suggests, there's plenty of gunplay to be found here, all of it incredibly well done. The angles, timing, and action used are awesome, almost—dare I say it—Tarantino-esque (but at least Kenichi has the sense not to act in his movies...). You just have to see the scene where the ATF guy dives under a shotgun blast, and the flailing end of his overcoat gets shredded by the buckshot. It's the type of thing you just have to rewind and watch again on frame-by-frame.

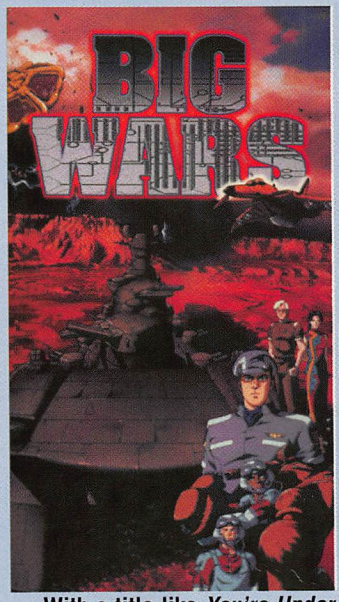
Credit must also be given to the translators and voice actors in the dubbed version. Rally's voice actress is—I can't believe I'm saying this—almost better than her Japanese counterpart.

Whether you prefer subbed or dubbed, *Gunsmith Cats* is one of the coolest anime releases this year. I can hardly wait for part 2...

By: AD Vision
Length: 30 min.
Subtitled
$24.95
Available Now
Dubbed
$19.95
Available Now

If you're looking for something a little more serious, a little more sci-fi, and a lot more bloody, *Angel Cop* is a series you won't want to miss out on. *Angel Cop* is a well done (and affordable) six-parter that starts out as a cool *Patlabor*-esque political/cop series, and ends as a somewhat cliche "my technology vs. your mental powers" violence-fest. Though it does flounder a bit near the end, the storyline was compelling enough to get me to watch all 6 thirty-minute parts in one sitting. And hey, you have to buy episode 6 just to hear the best anime line ever. At the action climax of a 3-hour series, Angel says... And I quote... "If this is justice, then I'm a banana!" Quite frankly, there wasn't a dry eye in my living room.

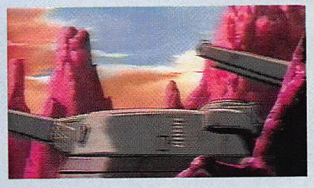
By: Manga Ent.
Length: 30 min.
Subtitled
Not Available
Dubbed
$9.95 (ea.1of6)
Available Now



I have to give *Big Wars* credit for one of the coolest plots ever... The Earth is locked in a war of attrition with *God*, or at least an alien powerful enough (and clever enough) to emulate a divine being. Their biggest threat is not this being's physical power, but his ability to entice others into joining his forces and betraying the majority of their race. Anyone can be converted at any time... "I'm God. I created you!" You have to admit, that's a pretty compelling argument.

Though the plot is cool, and *Big Wars* has a lot of cool scenes, such as the visions that plague Captain Akuh, it suffers from a pretty stale assortment of characters. It's unfortunate that Yoshio Aramaki's interesting perspective on the future comes second to the glut of dull dialogue, but *Big Wars* still has enough imagination to make it worth a look.

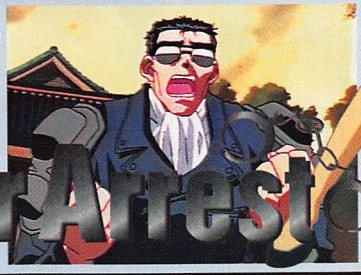
By: US Manga
Length: 75 min.
Subtitled
$19.95
Available May
Dubbed
Not Available



With a title like *You're Under Arrest*, you'd be forgiven for assuming that *YUA* was... well, action-oriented. But nope, those are the uniforms of *traffic* cops, and the action doesn't ever get too much more intense than, say, an expired car registration.

Not that *YUA* is boring—the excitement here is Fujishima Kousuke-style (*Oh My Goddess*), meaning plenty of romance, personal conflict and slightly off-beat characters (It also means excellent artwork—he also did the character design for Namco's *Tales of Phantasia*). *YUA*'s story revolves around the conflict between mismatched partners (and roommates) Natsumi and Miyuki, and a burgeoning romance between Miyuki and her shy admirer in the force.

Though the pace is a tad slow, *You're Under Arrest* is good for a chuckle or two, and is an excellent entry in the already-rich category of lighthearted romance anime.



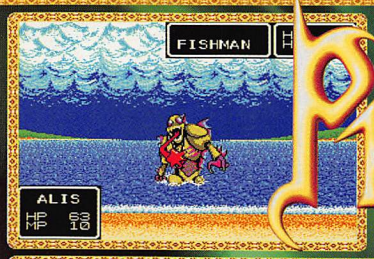
By: Animeigo
Length: 30 min.
Subtitled
$19.95; V. 1-4
Available Now
Dubbed
$14.95; V. 1-4
Available Now

You're Under Arrest

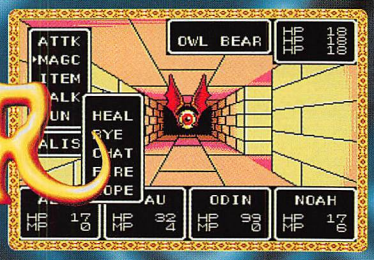
THE GRAVEYARD

1987

December, 1987—the month the greatest 8-bit RPG of all time was released. Just a year before its debut, in 1986, the first Japanese-style home console RPG ever was released, the 64K Dragon Quest. Phantasy Star *was eight times larger: four megabits, which at the time was like, say, a 256-meg SNES game.* PS, *needless to say, totally destroyed* DQ, Final Fantasy, *and every other RPG—until* Phantasy Star II, *of course.*

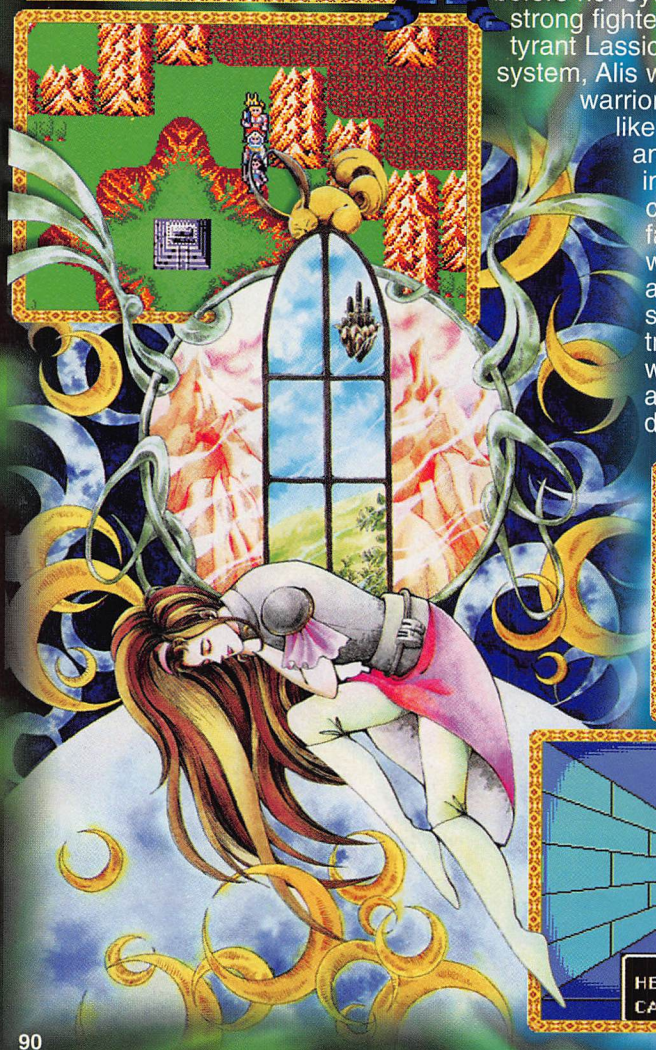


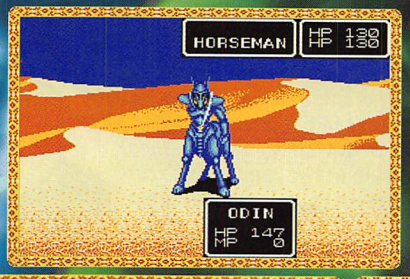
PHANTASY STAR

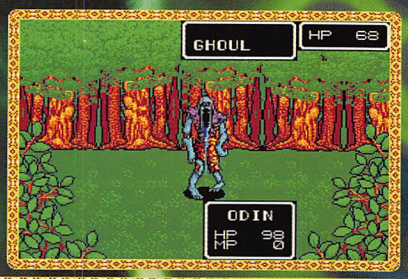


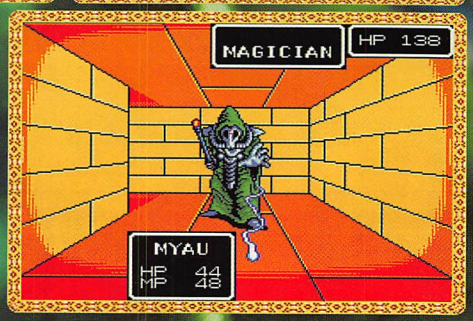
Phantasy Star was the first RPG I ever played. I was ten years old, and it took me a year to beat. Playing through it again (what sweet nostalgia) took about 18 hours...a fair enough time for an RPG, even by today's standards. What I discovered during those two days was that *Phantasy Star* was (and is) my overall favorite RPG (I must admit that much of this decision is due to nostalgia), and that it completely stands the test of time.

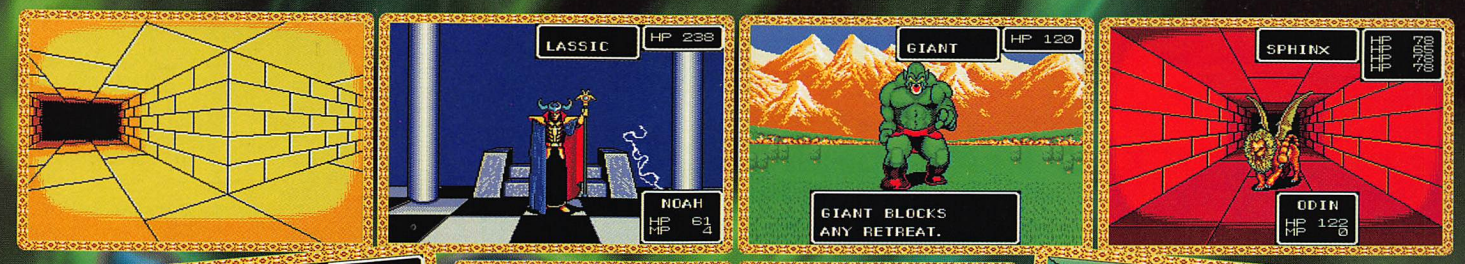
The time is Space Century 342. The place: the Algol Star System. On planet Palma, young Alis sees her brother Nero killed before her eyes. With his last breath, he tells her to seek out a strong fighter named Odin and complete his mission: to kill the tyrant Lassic. On her quest to bring peace back to the Algol star system, Alis will meet up with three companions: the warrior Odin, a mysterious, talking cat-like animal named Myau and an esper called Noah ("Lutz" in *Phantasy Star II*, just to clear up any confusion). It's a fairly basic story, which was harmed further by an extremely shoddy English translation. Not only was the grammar and spelling shredded, but names

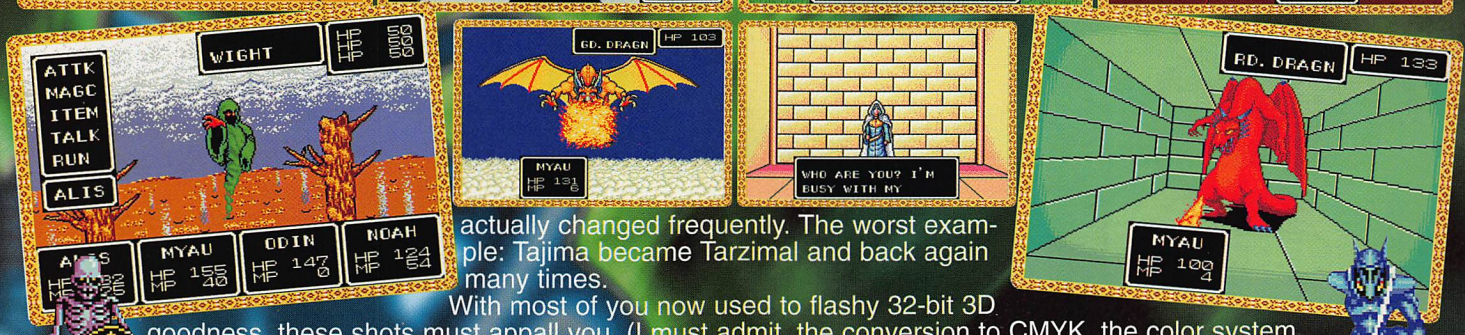






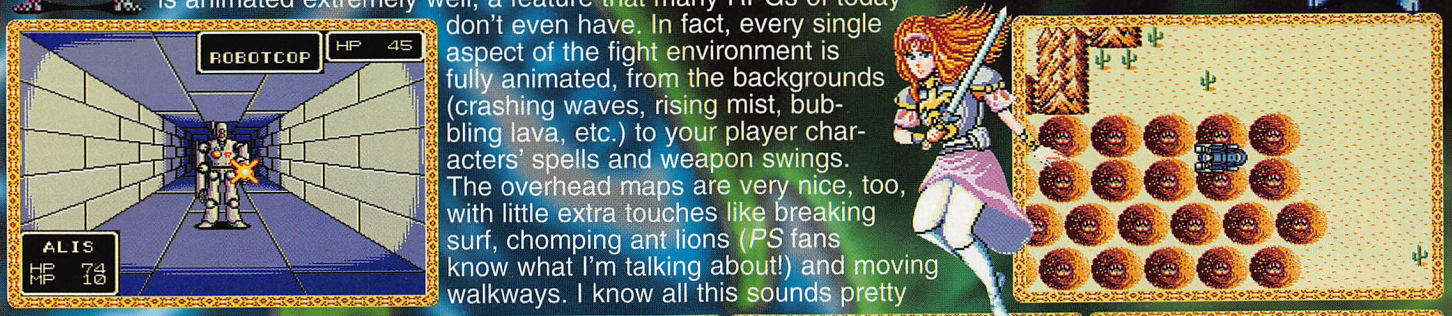


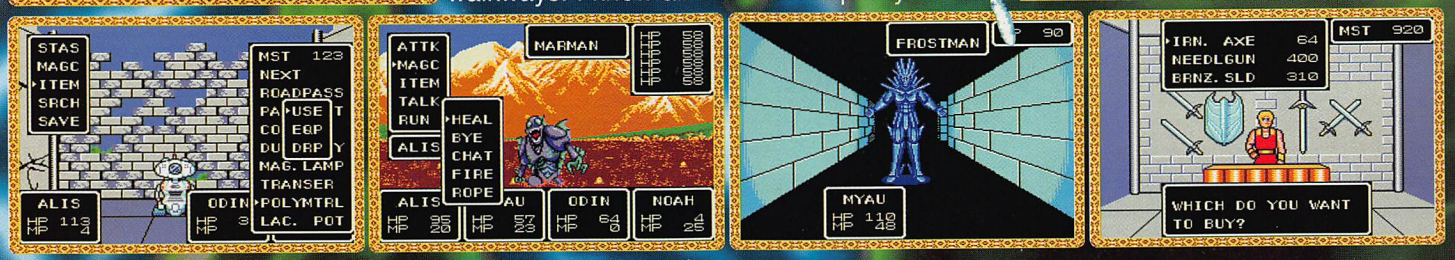




actually changed frequently. The worst example: Tajima became Tarzimal and back again many times.

With most of you now used to flashy 32-bit 3D goodness, these shots must appall you, (I must admit, the conversion to CMYK, the color system used for paper printing, HARMED them badly—the game looks much better!) but this game is no longer about graphics. At the time, however, they were quite shocking, the dungeons most of all. We're talking 3D like *Sword of Vermilion* or *Shining in the Darkness*, but in *PS* this pseudo-3D's full screen, something its 16-bit descendants can't claim. Also, every single enemy in the game is animated extremely well, a feature that many RPGs of today don't even have. In fact, every single aspect of the fight environment is fully animated, from the backgrounds (crashing waves, rising mist, bubbling lava, etc.) to your player characters' spells and weapon swings. The overhead maps are very nice, too, with little extra touches like breaking surf, chomping ant lions (*PS* fans know what I'm talking about!) and moving walkways. I know all this sounds pretty





mundane, but we're talking a year short of a decade ago!

Phantasy Star's gameplay is in its dungeons—nothing else is particularly hard, and there are only six bosses in the entire game, none of which are difficult. The dungeons however, are. Though not difficult to the point of madness like many PC RPGs, they can get up to thirteen floors deep and mapping is necessary. There's also a lot of unfortunate tramping around looking for monsters to fight to gain money for increasingly expensive armaments, but I'm hard-pressed to think of an RPG that isn't plagued by this affliction.

I owe much of my reverence towards *Phantasy Star* to nostalgia, but I think you'll find it quite enjoyable—if you can find it and a Master System/Power Base Converter. A warning to those that plan to play *PS*: There are two parts of the game in which you can get eternally stuck. In the dungeon on Dezoris when you're told to "go left," do not go left unless you have the flute or a transfer. Likewise, on Lassic's floating castle, bring a transfer or keep at least 8 MP for Alis' "Fly" spell so you can return to Palma. Hopefully we'll cover *Phantasy Star II* in an upcoming edition of the graveyard, so until then... -Nick Rox

SPECIAL K'S JAPAN NOW 日本今日

Long time no see! I, Special K, am back from a long, long vacation in the Bahamas. While vacationing, I used my laptop and supreme Internet savvy to expand my connections tenfold to bring you the newest and hottest information from Japan.

Special Notice: This page may contain information that conflicts with the information found in Other Stuff. Please realize that all the information in this section pertains to Japan only.

NEW SATURN MODEL ANNOUNCED AT THE SEGA POWER-UP MEETING SPRING '96

On March 7, Sega Enterprises had a press conference called the "Sega Power-Up Meeting '96" at the Takanawa Prince Hotel in Tokyo. Sega's vice president, Mr.Irimajiri, announced this year's Sega sales promotion, code-named "Hurricane." The focus of the conference was that Sega Enterprises will be releasing a cheaper version of the Sega Saturn with a price of ¥20,000 ($200 US) on March 22. As you can see, the system's color has been changed to "Mist Grey" and the pad's A, B, C, L, R and Start Buttons have been colored much like the N64. No corners have been cut either—changes that I was worrying about, like removing the video card slot, did not happen. Mr. Irimajiri also added that this move will take the Saturn beyond those two "other" home video game systems. He also commented on Square's drastic move from Nintendo to Sony. To combat this announcement, he said, Sega was releasing five excellent titles at the same time as the new Saturn. There were also a few titles announced at the show, including the *Sega Ages* series of games, a low-cost collection of old Sega arcade games like *Space Harrier*, *AfterBurner* and *Outrun*.

THE 1996 AOU AMUSEMENT EXPO

AOU AMUSEMENT EXPO 1996

This year's AOU show was held at Makuhari, Japan, on 2/21/96. Unfortunately, the Mac World Expo was right next door, so Makuhari was swarming with people. The main game of the show was, of course, *Virtua Fighter 3*. Sega played a 15-minute demo on two RGB monitors running directly off of the Model 3 board. I saw the demo many times, and each time nobody could talk, and the only sounds heard were sighs of disbelief from the audience. Also, famous Japanese *VF2* experts were asked to play the game. This seems quite early for test plays, but Sega has the confidence to make *VF3* happen by the end of the year.

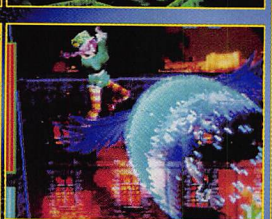
Sega's booth had the biggest crowds because of *VF3*, *VF Kids* and *Sonic The Fighters*. Since Sega has now released the third-party rights to Model 2, Tecmo was showing their first Model 2 game, *Dead or Alive*. The most impressive feature of this game so far is the fact that the female characters' chests actually bounce. Pretty amazing for a 3-D fighter, eh? Capcom's booth was also very popular because of *Street Fighter Zero 2*. They were also showing their first 3-D fighter, *Star Gladiator*, a sci-fi, armored robot-themed game. The title screen reads "Episode 1..." perhaps Capcom's looking to make a series out of this one.

AOU Show Official Top Ten Popularity List

1. *Virtua Fighter 3*—Sega
2. *SF Zero 2*—Capcom
3. *VF Kids*—Sega
4. *Ray Storm*—Taito
5. *Sexy Parodius*—Konami
6. *Psychic Force*—Taito
7. *Art of Fighting 3*—SNK
8. *Xevious 3D/G*—Namco
9. *Sonic The Fighters*—Sega
10. *Prop Cycle*—Namco

▲ Prop Cycle

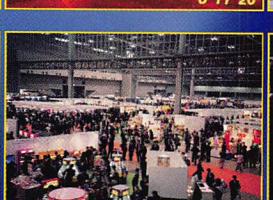
▲ Art of Fighting 3



▲ Psychic Force

▲ Star Gladiator

▲ Sonic The Fighters



▲ After this, Kei got beat up by Sarah fans

RUMORS

• In the 3/9/96 edition of Japan's *Nikkei* newspaper, Nintendo officially announced the delay of their next generation game system, Nintendo64. Previously announced for 4/21/96, the 64-bit machine has now been postponed two months to June 23rd. Nintendo stated this delay is due to a short supply of CPUs, but industry people are suggesting it's been delayed because of a lack of software. NEC, who makes the N64 CPUs for Nintendo, subsequently denied Nintendo's statement and claimed that they had met Nintendo's order for CPUs. Well, as far as I heard, the third parties are having a tough time developing software that's even close to what Mr. Miyamoto is doing... I hope the N64 won't have a lack of software until '97.

• At the Sega Power Up Meeting '96, the VP of Sega mentioned that none of the current video game systems can do *VF3*. Doesn't that include the Saturn, too? I have no idea, but last month a Japanese newspaper, the Yomiuri Shimbun, announced that Sega would be making games for the Panasonic M2. Sega made the newspaper print a retraction the very next day, but M2 uses the PowerPC 602 chip and Model 3 uses the PowerPC 603e...hmmm. The most powerful system scheduled to come out in '96-'97 is still the M2, and it seems like the logical choice for Sega. We'll see...

• As you know, Square's first title for the PlayStation is *Final Fantasy VII*, due in December. NOT! I've heard that their first title is coming out in June '96. I can't say for sure what type of game it'll be, but rest assured it'll make you say "Square's done it again!" Could it be a 3-D fighting game?

• Square has also announced that they'll begin selling their games at convenience stores like 7-11, Circle K, etc. Music CDs are already sold at convenience stores in Japan, so games shouldn't be all that different.

JN! COS-PLAY CONTEST

Since a few years ago, the latest fad among video game and comic fans has been to dress up as popular (and sometimes rather obscure) game, comic, and animation characters. This is called Cos-Play, which is short for Costume Play. Since there's no Halloween in Japan, the only time Cos-Players get to show off their costumes is at animation and game conventions, special Cos-Play clubs, and other events. Stores have even begun to spring up that offer custom-made character costumes for $300-$500! As you can see, Cos-Play is becoming (or has already become) one of the more popular hobbies for game and animation freaks. Check out some Japanese Cos-Players at the recent AOU on the left.

In JN!, we would like to ask our readers to send in a picture of you or your friends wearing the costume of a popular video game, comic, or animation character. We'll have special prizes for the top entries. Dress like your favorite character, pose, take a pic and send 'em in!

Welcome to the special E3 edition of Other Stuff.

This month's OS is more software driven than hardware, as it pertains to the games we'll see May 16-18 at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, so here we go...

Williams

Williams Entertainment Inc. will use the E3 expo to highlight their latest titles for 1996 and early '97. The first game is *NBA Hangtime*, a 2-on-2 *NBA Jam*-style basketball game due out in arcades around the same time as the E3. Williams will be showing early PlayStation, SNES and Genesis versions of *NBA Hangtime*. All 3 home console versions of *Hangtime* are due the 4th quarter of '96. Next we have *NHL Open Ice*, Midway's latest coin-op hockey game. This game will appear on the PlayStation this X-mas. *War Gods*, Midway's new 3D fighting game will be yet another arcade-to-home-console translation. The home versions of *War Gods* will be released in October or November for the PlayStation and Nintendo64. ID software is currently programming the last installment of the *Doom* series, called (ingeniously) *Final Doom*. *Final Doom* is due out for the PlayStation around the 4th quarter of 1996. Another original title is a game tentatively titled *Robotron 3D* also due out for the PS this X-mas. But wait, there's more. The Nintendo64 will be the proud recipient of 2 more Williams titles. The 1st title is *Doom 64*, which should be about 80% complete at the E3. *Doom 64* features new enemies, new music, new levels (complete with blazing, pixel-free graphics and crazy special effects), an enhanced storyline and even new weapons. *Doom 64* will be one of the launch titles for the N64 (9/30/96) The last game is known as *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3+* (tentative title) for the Nintendo64. The E3 version of UMK 3+ will be about 30% complete and is due out in November. *UMK3+* will have new characters, backgrounds, music and is an exclusive N64 title. While we're on the subject of *MK*, the sequel to *MK: The Movie* is set to be released in the Summer of 1997, followed by the arcade release of *Mortal Kombat 4*. The plan is to release *MK4* on 64-bit hardware, insiders describe as a Model 3 Killer. Following the recent trend of fighting games, *MK4* will incorporate real-time 3D graphics and gameplay, an *MK* first.

Accolade

Accolade will be showing *Bubsy 3D* for the Saturn and PS. Both are due out this fall. *Hardball 6* will be released for the PlayStation in May. Accolade's *Football '96* and *Jack Nicklaus "Golden Bear" Golf* are also due out this fall for the Saturn and PS. Accolade will be introducing 4 PlayStation-only titles: *Vandals*, an action game; *Star Control 3*; *PO'ed*; and *Dirt Race Extreme*, an off-road driving game. Any Channel has already begun work on a *PO'ed 2* for PS, due out 4th quarter.

Sega

Sega's big title for the E3 is an ultra secret game called *Nights*. Designed by Yuji Naka (the creator of *Sonic*). *Nights* is a 3D *Panzer Dragoon*-ish action game described by those who have seen it as unbelievable. Sega will also be showing *Sonic 4* for the Genesis, a Saturn version of the coin-op *Sonic* fighting game and (lo and behold) *Sonic 3D* for the Saturn. Other cool stuff to be seen at the Sega booth will include: Saturn versions of *Fighting Vipers*, *Virtua On*, *AfterBurner*, *Out Run*, *Space Harrier*, *King of Fighters '95*, *Virtua Cop 2*, *Bug Too!* and a new *Star Wars* game all for Saturn. And oh yes, the Saturn itself is now big news with a $199 suggested retail price.

Sony

The Sony booth will be the home of many, many PlayStation sequels. They include: *Warhawk 2*, *Twisted Metal 2*, *Jumping Flash 2*, *Wipeout 2*, *Destruction Derby 2*, *Reloaded* (Psygnosis' sequel to *Loaded*), *Rock 'n Roll Racing 2*, *Motortoon 2*, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* and too many other sequels for comfort. Other PS games to debut at the E3 include: *Final Fantasy 7*, *F1*, *Spawn*, *Mickey Mania*, and of course, the stunning *Crash Bandicoot*. One of the biggest surprises of the show will be the appearance of both *Amok* and *Scorcher*—FOR THE PLAYSTATION! As you may already know, these two games were originally Saturn exclusives, developed for Sega by Scavenger. From what we understand, both will now find a home on the PS as well! *Amok* and *Scorcher* are now due out for the PlayStation this Summer.

Nintendo

Last but not least, we cruise on over to the Nintendo booth where the N64 will make its North American debut. Nintendo's big N64 game will be (surprise!) *Super Mario 64*. Nintendo is also rumored to announce at E3 that the N64 may have a suggested retail price of $199. That 200 dollar package would include one *Super Mario 64* game pak, an AC adapter, one controller and (hopefully) a Nintendo64 hardware unit as well. SM64 now clocks in at 96 meg (up from 64) and is said to include more than 60 levels consisting of 3D Ice, Desert, Water, Fire and Jungle environments (some levels are said to stretch up to 1 square mile!). SM64 is currently about 90% complete (its programming deadline is April 30th) and has undergone a complete overhaul, which now includes vastly improved, hardware-enriched graphics (anti-aliasing, mip mapping, etc.). Other first and second party N64 games to be shown include: *Tetrisphear*, *Wave Race*, *Super Mario Kart-R*, *Cruisin' USA*, *Pilotwings 64*, *Goldeneye*, *Blastdozer*, and *Buggy Boogie*. Besides SM64, Shigeru Miyamoto has 2 other *Mario* games down the pipeline for the N64. The first game is a 2D *Yoshi* game and the 2nd game is a 2D *Mario* game. From what we hear, either game could appear on the 64DD (Bulky Drive). Nintendo will also show the long-awaited *Killer Instinct 64* (tentative name) at the E3. *Killer Instinct 64* gameplay is based on the arcade *KI2* and will have new music, 2 new characters, new no-mercies, more combos, 1 new move per character, and new backgrounds. Although the characters are still rendered 2D sprites, the backgrounds are now in real-time 3D. Each *KI64* background will have around 150,000 texture mapped polygons at 60 fps. We also hear Nintendo will have a few other N64 surprises at E3... Stay tuned...

Now watch me pull a rabbit out of my hat.....

Sega will use the E3 to show off their Model 3-powered *Virtua Fighter 3* coin op. Although this surefire crowd magnet is currently only around 25% complete and is high-tech beyond your wildest dreams, Sega is so confident in their abilities, they announced that they will produce a Saturn version of *VF3* in 1997. This flies in the face of reports in Japan that only the Matsushita (gesundheit!) M2 has the power to fully replicate Model 3 graphics and that Sega's planning to release *VF3* for the M2 in '97! One possibility of seeing a perfect translation of *VF3* on the Saturn is the Lockheed Martin connection. You see, not only is the Lockheed Martin Corporation soon introducing the REAL 3D, an M2-ish (and Model 3-ish) 3D graphics accelerator for the PC, but they were also commissioned by Sega to design the Model 3 arcade board. If Sega and LMC devise some sort of Saturn 3D accelerator add-on that contained the REAL 3D chipset (kinda like what Matsushita is planning to do to the 3DO with their M2 accelerator) then a *VF3* conversion on the Saturn would be a snap. And it's not as if LMC is unfamiliar with *VF3* or the hardware needed to run it. Sega could then make a version of *VF3* for the M2 as well and then sit back and relax while all that cash rolls in. Of course this is pure speculation. On a similar note, a Model 3 powered auto racing game (*Daytona 2*?) is in the design stages as we speak. Yu Suzuki (head honcho of AM2 and the man responsible for just about every high-powered Sega arcade game you can think of) recently spoke out about the future of Sega arcade games. He said that the Model 3 arcade architecture is just the third step in his 5-step arcade hardware plan. Yu plans to introduce *VF4* on Model 4 (currently in the design stages at LMC, believe it or not) and finally *VF5* on Model 5.

Nintendo's oversized bra

Now that Nintendo is about to rid themselves of all their N64 birthing pains (we hear that after the first 500,000 machines are produced, Nintendo and NEC will be able to manufacture up to half-a-million chipsets per month), we can concentrate on the buxomly titled 64 DD (formerly known as the Bulky Drive). The 64 DD add-on will be shown behind closed doors at E3 and will make its first public showing at Nintendo's upcoming Ishinkai show in Chiba, Japan. Originally, Nintendo's Japanese show was scheduled for August of 1996, but now the show has been pushed back to November and has also undergone a name change from Shoshinkai to Ishinkai. Go figure.

The 64 DD is expected to be released in Japan this December followed by a summer 1997 release here. The suggested retail price in Japan is rumored to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 13,000 Yen (around $120 US) complete with a 2-meg ram cart to shove into your hungry N64. Japanese 64DD will ship with *Zelda 64* (currently around 35% done) and *Dragon Quest Gaiden* will be released shortly afterwards. Nintendo will also release their Japanese 3rd party list at the E3 which will consist of names like Seta, Capcom, Konami, Enix and (surprisingly) Namco. Namco's first game is rumored to be *Dirt Dash* on the 64DD. Konami is working on a cartridge soccer title and Capcom is working on a N64 fighting game. Hmmm, what could that be? Japanese 3rd party N64 licensees must agree to a one-year exclusive agreement of their first title only. After they produce that first N64 title (or 64DD title) they are free to produce games on competing systems...how generous.

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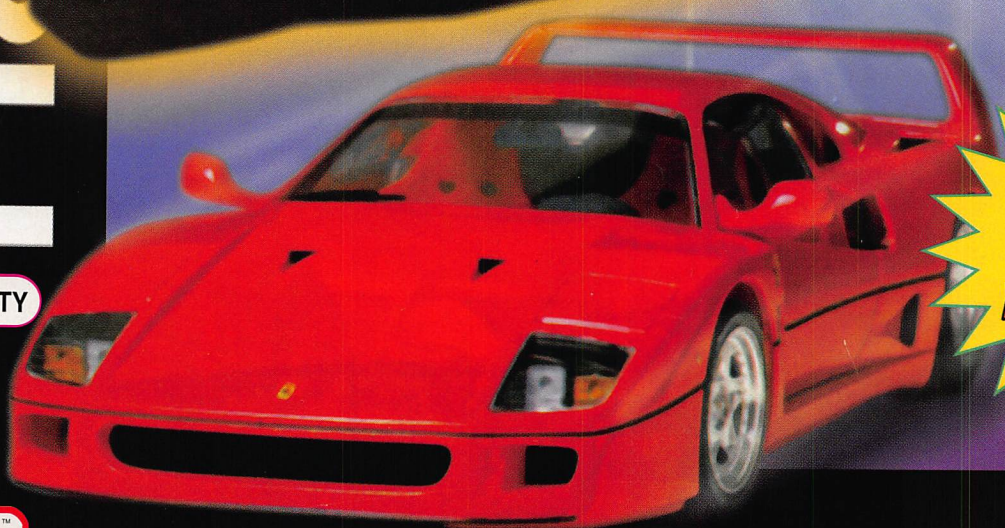

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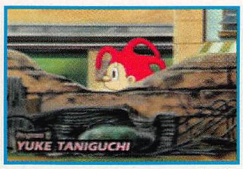
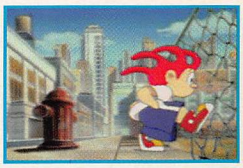




FEBRUARY '96 AT THE YUKE'S (*HERMIE HOPPERHEAD, JAPAN PRO WRESTLING, JUMPING FLASH*) TOKYO HQ.

YT=Yuke Taniguchi, 27, President of Yuke's Co., Ltd.
TY=Tetsuji Yamamoto, 35, Director of Hermie Hopperhead, SCE Inc.

GF: First of all, tell us a little about Yuke's. When did you form the team?

YT: In February of '93, and we now have a staff of 20.

TY: When I first met him (Yuke) there were only 4!

GF: Mr. Taniguchi, how did you begin your career as a programmer?

YT: I joined Compile when I was 15 and helped on the *Aleste* and *Puyo-Puyo* series.

GF: Was Hermie your first project for the PlayStation?

YT: That's right...

GF: And what hardware were you working with prior to this?

YT: I was doing a lot of work on the PC Engine. For example, I converted *Xevious* and *Columns*.

GF: How about you, Mr. Yamamoto?

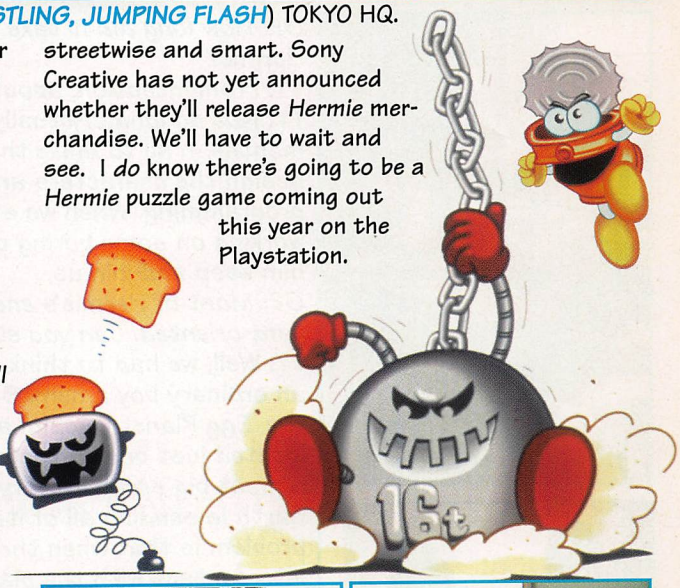
TY: I most recently helped on *Philosoma*, which was released in the states this past January. Prior to that I worked on *Jumping Flash* and before that *Gamba League Baseball* for the SNES. I've been with Sony Computer Entertainment since '93.

GF: Are you pleased with how Hermie turned out?

YT: Oh yes. Technically, it's superb. I just wish it was a little easier.

GF: I think the difficulty is perfect for the US market. Tell us about all of the merchandising—Hermie seems to have quite a presence here in Japan.

TY: Sony Creative Products found and hired the designer for the *Hermie* project. Usually this indicates strong merchandising support for the character. It took us six months to refine *Hermie* and get him exactly right, so he's particularly close to our hearts. We eventually settled on an ordinary 14-year-old boy who's streetwise and smart. Sony Creative has not yet announced whether they'll release *Hermie* merchandise. We'll have to wait and see. I *do* know there's going to be a *Hermie* puzzle game coming out this year on the Playstation.

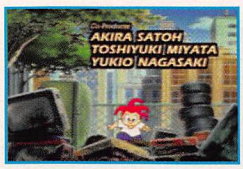


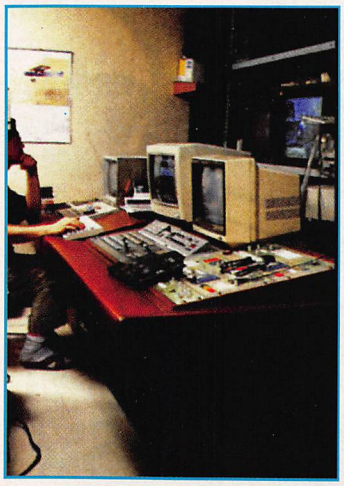
Tetsuji Yamamoto

Yuke Taniguchi

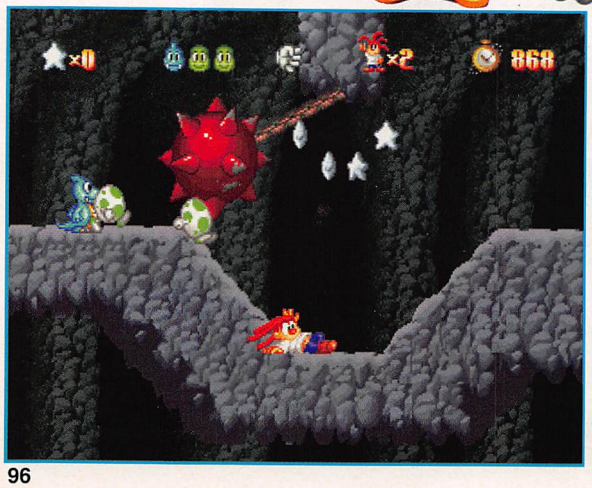
JNN PRESENTS AN INTERVIEW WITH YUKES

BY NAO KOMAI & E. STORM





"Why did we buy this painting?"



GF: How long did it take to develop Hermie?

YT: From inception, about two years.

TY: Not so long. Actually about 14 months in all to make the game—6 to design the characters and 8 to do the programming. When we started, Yuke was working on some boring project so I made him stop and join us.

GF: Most of Hermie's *enemies are junkyard-oriented. Can you elaborate?*

TY: Well, we had to think of a way to make an ordinary boy a hero. So we came up with the 'Egg Planet,' a calm and peaceful world located just behind the moon. It's home to a great big scrap factory where the planet Earth is sending all of its garbage. The problem is that when the scrap comes into contact with the planet's stars it comes alive and turns nasty, seeking revenge on those who banished it from the earth. Hermie is summoned by the eggs to combat the evil garbage.

GF: Hermie *features many layers of parallax scrolling. Was this an easy task on the PlayStation hardware?*

YT: It took a long time just to make Hermie's characters. During that time it was common knowledge that the PlayStation's weakness was its 2D background capabilities. So while I was waiting for the characters I decided to concentrate on this area. I was able to come up with 8 layers of backgrounds, 5 more than Sony said was possible. Later I found out that Sony themselves had discovered a way to up the parallax so I went back to the drawing board again and eventually came up with 16 layers. The only drawback is that it's very hard to draw onto these backgrounds.

GF: What is the reason behind the lack of variety in Hermie's *soundtrack?*

TY: I wanted to use a simple melody, for effect. On top of that there are over 70 stages and we couldn't come up with new music for each in the time allotted. We chose ragtime similar to *Super Mario Brothers* and wrote 10 different arrangements.

GF: Was it your goal to have Hermie *pick up where* Mario *left off and cause a similar sensation on the 32-bit platform?*

TY: We kind of had that in mind initially when we were trying to get *Hermie* off the ground but it was rely just a marketing ploy. Personally I love the *Mario* series and have the utmost respect for Mr. Miyamoto. He's one of the ten people I admire most, but at the end of the day Sony has to go out and earn its own stripes.

GF: Are there any plans for a Hermie *sequel?*

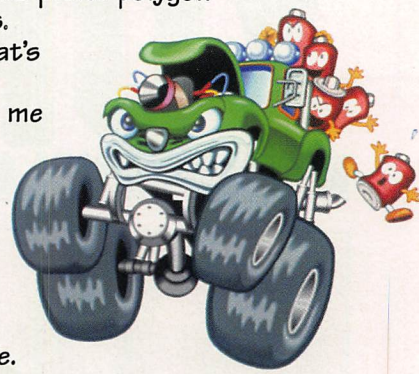
TY: Not at the moment. *Jumping Flash! 2* is taking up all of my time at the moment. It's due for release here this April. The first *JF* didn't sell too well in the US but it was a big hit in Japan and Europe. If *Hermie* sells a million in the states (laughs) I'll start thinking about *Hermie 2*.

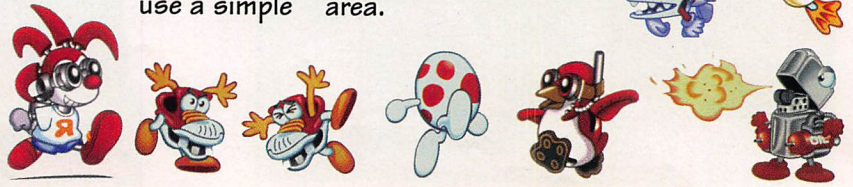
GF: What about the US release of Hermie Hopperhead?

TY: Well, tomorrow SCE's US production manager is going to visit us to talk over possible marketing strategies. There's quite a difference you know, with how they go about it over there. Apparently US game makers have been targeting 18-year-old players who prefer polygon-based games. Hopefully, that's beginning to change. Wish me luck.

GF: Tell us about the excellent opening and closing cartoon animation in Hermie.

YT: I wanted to show people what a 32-bit game system is capable of in this area.





TY: I used traditional animation techniques because I couldn't get the detail I wanted with bit-maps. I wanted *Hermie* to look like an ordinary kid. You know, aside from the game, we aim to make the animations and credits as high quality as possible.

GF: E. Storm has completed Hermie with 98%, found every secret level, and been to every 3D bonus stage. How then do you get the last 2%?

TY: Would you like a memory card with 100%?

GF: We never cheat!

YT: Well, all I can say is look in the third island.

GF: You guys are responsible for the amazing 3D polygon Japan Pro Wrestling as well, aren't you?

YT: Yes. Toukon Retsuden.

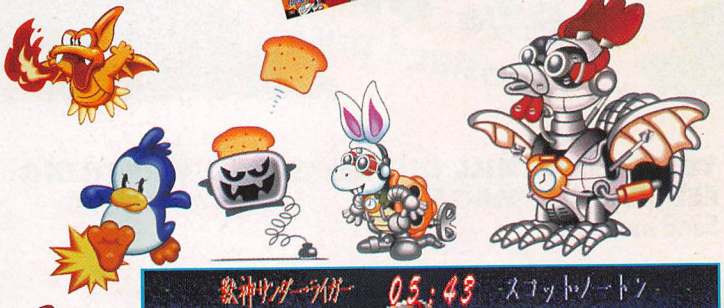
TY: It sold *really* well. I reckon Yuke here is going to make a ton of money on that one.

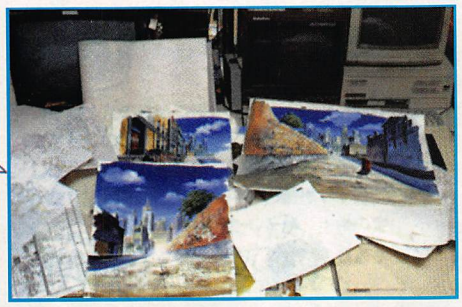
YT: No, not so much...

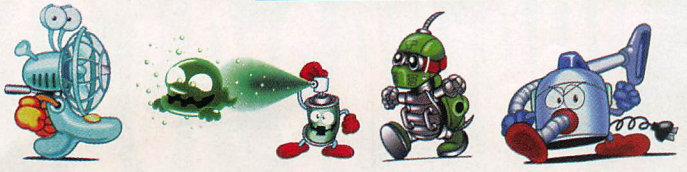
GF: Finally, what are your opinions on the new Square/Sony deal?

TY: More than 2,000,000 PlayStations have been sold in Japan, but that's really not such a big number in the home entertainment market. Square's move has made everyone sit up and take notice and I'm sure it will boost sales dramatically. Sony now has a legendary software franchise equal to that enjoyed by the Super Famicom.

GF: Thank you so much for your time. Good luck with JF2 and all of your future endeavors.







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Street Fighter Alpha: *Saturn vs. PlayStation: Never before has any one issue so dominated the Postmeister mailbag... We received a pile of letters criticizing our recent Saturn* Alpha *review, for giving it lower scores, when most players considered it to be equal to, or better than, the PlayStation version.*
One example:
I have a problem with the totally "anal" reviews of *SF Alpha* for the Saturn. I don't see how 75% of the posters on the internet say that the Saturn version has better animation, crisper graphics, and half the loading time, and is overall just superior to the PlayStation version, yet your reviewers say otherwise. I have played both versions, on the same TV and stereo system, and I totally believe the Saturn version to be superior. Not only are the loading times half as long, but the graphics are a bit sharper on the Saturn version as well. The only plus that the PS version has is the slightly better sound, which is barely noticeable. As far as the super shadows go, the Saturn version is visually superior to the PS, even though the PS is more like the arcade. I don't comprehend how you praise the PS version for the remixed soundtrack (improving on the arcade), yet when Capcom improves upon the arcade with the super shadows in the Sega version, you say that you want it to replicate the arcade perfectly. I can forgive E. Storm's 90% rating for the Saturn *Alpha* simply because he did not give a rating for the Sony *Alpha*, but both K. Lee and Nick Rox were way out of line.
David Michael Zdyrko
Dover, Delaware

Other comments included pointing out that the Saturn version plays much better with the standard controller, that the sprites are slightly bigger, and that some preferred the "echo effect" of the Saturn sound.
We've talked this over extensively, and replayed both versions, and we agree that we owe the readers an apology. With the exception of Nick, who truly does prefer the PlayStation version, we all feel that both versions are equally good, but subtly unique to their respective platforms. This issue has turned into something of a system war, with Saturn owners accusing us of a pro-PlayStation bias, a charge we strongly deny (what other magazine gives you this much Saturn coverage?!). If anything, we've been accused of having a Sega bias. I guess it depends on which issue you're holding. A large reason for the difference in reviews was that E. Storm, who did not Viewpoint the PlayStation one, gave the Saturn version a 90, based on the fact that he considers Alpha *more of an upgrade than a new* Street Fighter. *He would have given the PlayStation version a slightly lower score solely based on the Saturn's flexible controller. Anyway, we want to reiterate that both versions are as perfect as arcade translations get, and we encourage you all to try both to see which of the subtle changes you prefer.*

Dear GameFan,
There has been a lot of focus on bringing the old and recent 2D classics onto the new systems. This is a fantastic idea and I don't doubt all the die-hard game fanatics out there would agree. A couple of friends and I got together and after a much-heated discussion, we came up with a list of games we would love to play, arcade perfect, at home.
CAPCOM - Conversions of their popular CPS games would be great. A compilation CD with *Final Fight*, *Strider*, *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, and *Mercs*. Also, what about *Black Tiger*, *Trojan*, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* and *1943*?
KONAMI - A *Gradius* Trilogy CD with *Gradius*, *Salamander*, and *Vulcan Venture* all on one CD would be absolutely awesome. How about *Mikie*, *Combat School*, *Contra*, *Devil World*, *Legend of Makaj*, *Ajax*, *Aliens*, *Monster Maulers* and the unbelievable *Xexex*?
IREM - Maybe Xing can get a license from Irem to convert *Vigilante*, *Dragon Breed*, *Air Duel*, *R-Type Leo*, *Ninja Spirits*, *Undercover Cops*, *Perfect Soldiers* and *Hammerin' Harry*.
NAMCO - Where are *Nebulas Ray*, *Galaga '88*, *Rolling Thunder*, *Metal Hawk*, and *Outfoxies*?
SEGA - Hands up who would love conversions of *OutRun*, *OutRunners*, *Power Drift*, *Dark Edge*, *Golden Axe: Revenge of Death Adder*, *Galaxy Force 2*, *Thunder Blade* and *Sonic Arcade*?
TOAPLAN (R.I.P.) - Does Taito still have the rights to their games? If they do, then *Truxton*, *Twin Cobra*, *Dogyuun*, *Out Zone*, *Flying Shark*, *Batsugun*, and *Dekirindan* would be awesome at home.

I know that some or most of the games mentioned have appeared on different computers and consoles over the past decade, but they were either crap conversions or short-cut versions of the real thing. Now we finally have the power. Come on people, make our dreams come true.
P.S.: What's happened to the FM Towns Marty? I want to buy one but I don't know where to get one. Is it true that there are conversions of *R-Type*, *Final Fight*, and *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* on the Marty? What are they like? Would it be possible to get a list of the games on the Marty?
Thank you Postmeister,
Hasan Coskun
Melbourne, Australia

Ah, your letter truly made the old drool flow. Mmmm... If I may comment on your mighty complete list:
CAPCOM - Mmm...good stuff. I would just kill for a translation of Willow. *But I'm sure their license on that ran out years ago. One you forgot:* Carrier Airwing *(*US Navy *in Japan). Hey, did you know that there was a* Little Nemo *coin-op that came out in 1990? (1990...Vintage Capcom!) I'd like to get my hands on that.*
KONAMI - The Postmeister hasn't heard of half of those games! Australian exclusives? Well, there's a Gradius Deluxe Pack *(for Saturn and PS) in Japan that has* Gradius 1&2, *plus a new CG intro. Since* Salamander *(*Life Force *here in the states) 2 just came out in the arcades, I wouldn't be surprised to see a* Salamander Deluxe Pack *with both the new sequel and the classic original. The Postmeister wants to play the 1989* Castlevania *coin-op...*
IREM - Vigilante, Dragon Breed, *and* Ninja Spirits *all came out for the PC Engine (*Vigilante *and* Ninja Spirits *also made it to the Turbo here). The good news: Xing is releasing a CD of Irem classics. The bad news: By classic, they mean* Karate Champ. *The Postmeister demands a perfect* R-Type, R-Type II, R-Type Leo, *and* R-Type Gallop, *all on one disc. And he wants it now.*

NAMCO - Galaga '88 *was the boot up game for* Ridge Racer Revolution. *Why didn't* Outfoxies *ever come out for anything!? Either the Saturn or PS could do a 100% perfect translation of that, easy.*

Anyway, sounds like you need a SuperGun. Even though these were, in the Postmeister's opinion, the best years of arcade history, arcade boards for these titles are dirt cheap. Except for some hard-to-find classics like Castlevania *and* Willow, *you could get just about anything on this list for $100 or so in the right stores in Japan. Has anyone even ever heard of a dedicated arcade board store in the U.S.? If you know of one, let me know so I can spread the word! As for the Marty—it's pretty much dead. You can get the hardware for around $200 in Japan, used.* Final Fight *was scratched, but you can get conversions of* R-Type, SSFIIT, *and* Slam Masters. *If you buy one, remember that you'll need 4 megs of memory for* SSFIIT. *Anyway, awesome letter, thanks!*

Dear Postmeister,
I guess I speak for everyone when I say your mag RULES!!! You make everything about video games so clear. I suggest you make a special section in your mag just for RPG's, about 20 pages or so.

Anyway, I desperately need you to answer a few questions. Here we go:
1) Do you have any idea when *Genso Suikoden* will be available in America? What the heck does *Genso Suikoden* mean in English? Also, will you be able to see enemies like in *Chrono Trigger*?
2) What *Final Fantasy* game will Square release for the PlayStation?
3) In your December '95 issue, in the Postmeister section of the mag, you said that Enix' *Mystic Ark* was in the issue. Unless I've gone blind, where is it?
4) I don't hear much about *Warhawk* or *Twisted Metal*, why is that?
5) Why doesn't Namco bring *Tales of Phantasia* to the PlayStation?
6) Is *Resident Evil* worth buying? It looks like a souped-up *Alone in the Dark*!
7) Is there a chance the *Samurai Shodown* RPG could come to the PlayStation?

I also have a few comments about polygon fighting games. I think we have our fill of generic *Virtua Fighter-Toshinden* games. We went through this with *Street Fighter* and *Doom*. Every gaming company tries to make the perfect polygon fighter. Please stop the destruction of the classics and come up with something original. Thank you for your time.
Brian Jones
Alpena, Michigan

1) Konami says no. Working Designs says no. Come on Sony, it's a billion times better than Beyond the Beyond*! What do you say? No? Maybe Atlus? Someone? Please? Anyway, Genso means "fantasy," and Suikoden is a very, very archaic word for "story." Pretty generic, but it has a nice ring to it. You can't see the enemies coming, no.*
2) You should know the answer to this one by now.
3) Whoops! After the Postmeister had been sent to press, that page was cut. Quick Postmeister Mystic Ark *review: great music, great theme (it's like playing* Alice in Wonderland*) and cool battles. It gets a bit tedious, but overall quite good. It's never coming here, tho, and Japanese is absolutely required. Bummer.*
4) Seriously? I hear about them all the time.
5) I wish they would!
6) A souped up Alone in the Dark*!?! The Postmeister has KILLED people for saying*

less than that! You must buy it.
7) It's possible. But while we're on the topic—IMPORTANT UPDATE! We've had many, MANY letters about Samurai Shodown III *in the last month or so, and I just wanted to announce that it is now coming for both the PlayStation AND Saturn. You'll probably also read this elsewhere in the mag, but the Postmeister had to make sure you know. Why? Because the Postmeister cares.*

Dear Postmeister,
First of all, I want to thank you guys for bein' #1 in import coverage! Nobody gets the news like you guys! I also have some statements to all those developers out there that are so friggin' messed up!

GIRLS PLAY GAMES TOO: I am a female gamer who was interested in buying a PlayStation. But after seeing those obnoxious ads about Sophia, I am utterly insulted that Sony, the reputable makers of my CD boom-box could let Steve get away with this! I guess it never occurred to him that girls and adults play video games. Also, the games that Steve brought (and didn't bring) to the US. "Um, if a group of teenage boys don't like it, um, duh, nobody else will like it!"

SQUARE & SoM2: I e-mailed Square of America (SquareS@aol.com) once, and they told me something along the lines of this: "Japan is the one who decides which games come over to the US. If America was to decide, we'd have brought everything they made over here. We got many letters concerning which games will come over and we may bring: *Front Mission: Gun Hazard*, *Bahamut Lagoon*, and *Romancing SaGa 3* under the title of *Final Fantasy IV*. I am not absolutely sure that we will bring out these titles, but for sure we cannot bring the original *Front Mission*."

BOX ART: Why oh why is American box art, especially Sega's, just so, so bad? To me, box art is very important and if a buyer finds the packaging ugly, he or she may pass up the game and miss an incredible gaming experience. Take *FF3*. A great game, but take a good hard look at *FFVI's* box art. It was one of Yoshitaka Amano's incredible lithographs on the cover. Not some I-was-trying-to-copy-Amano-but-failed-miserably-Moogle on a sword with an off-purple BG. I do commend Square a ton for using Akira Toriyama's art when they did the box of *Chrono Trigger*. Good move guys, keep that up! Then there is the often-used example, *Astal*. Sega of Japan searches extensively for a professional artist that will make the product look like something to die for. SOA searches for the janitor that did that cover art to save some dough real quick at the last minute. Worst of all, Sony is falling into that trap!
Christa Hamano-Morse
Berkeley, California

Wow! Printing letters like this is the reason that 99% of the professionals in the video game industry hate the Postmeister. But hey, how can I refuse? The Postmeister is officially in love...
Er, um, anyway. Sorry I had to edit your letter so severely, but we have to make room for a couple of other letters. Let me take this opportunity to update you all on some of these most-frequently broached Postmeister issues:

WOMEN IN GAMES - Hey, I know what you mean! Here at GameFan, we get nearly five letters from women each year! Yes... ER, wow, that's not many, is it?... Seriously, do these companies have a point? ARE there any women gamers out there? Write in!

As for Sony's game selection process, they may be coming around (Steve Race is

long departed)! Sony's experimenting a bit with what will sell here, and will be releasing a ton of "niche" games this summer, from Beyond the Beyond *(RPG) to* Carnage Heart *(Strategy) to* Aquanaut's Holiday *(Exploration/Learning).*

SQUARE - Well, sounds like all hope is officially lost for Front Mission. *Still, when we went to Square LA, it seems there may be hope for some of these games on Windows '95. Slim hope, but we'll cling to whatever we can get.*

BOX ART - This is something that Sega's really tired of hearing about, to the extent that they're considering a restraining order against me... Still, we've talked to them time and time again, and their response is that their market research indicates that the vast majority of gamers simply does not care about box art. I get the feeling that if they received anywhere near the amount of letters about this that I do, they'd change their minds. So from now on, direct your letters to Sega themselves!

Dear GameFan,
I was hoping you could answer a few questions for me. I own a Sony PlayStation and was wondering if you have any information on the following items (for the PlayStation—of course!)
1. Are *Cyber Cycles* and *Time Crisis* from Namco scheduled for release?
2. Is it possible that *Darius Gaiden* or *Shinobi Legions* will be released on the Sony, and is there any chance of Sega making games for the PlayStation, since Sony has so graciously begun doing so for the Saturn (*Warhawk*, *Wipeout*, etc.)?
3. Is Konami bringing their new arcade shooter *Salamander 2* to the PlayStation?
4. Are any of the old SNES games such as *Mega Man*, *Ghouls and Ghosts*, *Ninja Gaiden*, *Actraiser*, or *R-Type* going to be brought to the 32-bit or 64-bit systems?
5. Are *Motor Toon 1* or *2* ever going to be brought out domestically?
6. Finally, are there any sequels schedules for *Warhawk*, *Twisted Metal*, *Rayman*, or *Loaded*?
7. Is SNK going to port *Pulstar* over to the PS?
Thanks for your time,
Best Regards,
Forrest Dunton
Los Angeles, California

1. Not yet, unfortunately.
2. Shinobi *- definitely not. This game was made by Sega of Japan, (though released here by Vic Tokai) and they have no intention of making PlayStation games.* Darius Gaiden *seems unlikely, as Taito has been making games exclusively for the Saturn. And Sony isn't making anything for the Saturn—certain Sony third parties (namely SingleTrac and Psygnosis) are porting their games over to Sega's system, that's all.*
3. It seems likely, but no official word yet.
4. Mega Man-X 3 *is coming out for all of the 32-bit systems, but we haven't heard anything yet about the others.*
5. Motor Toon 2 *will be coming here, hurrah!*
6. Yes, Yes, Yes, and Yes. We actually have shots of Rayman 2 *somewhere in this issue, and should have shots of* Reloaded *(*Loaded 2*) fairly soon.* Twisted Metal 2 *and* Warhawk 2 *are in the works!*
7. This isn't an SNK game, it's actually by Aicom. So far, they've announced nothing about releasing it for other systems (although we have heard that they're at work on Pulstar 2*).*

Dear Postmeister,
Please do not overlook my letter because I have a lot of comments and questions that I want you to hear and answer. For the record, no, I do not like Sony, Sega, 3DO or Atari—I'm a Nintendo fan. I already own a Virtual Boy and plan to buy an Ultra 64 as soon as it comes out.
1) What'll happen to the Saturn once the Saturn 2 comes out? I do not believe that Sega will continue to fully support the Saturn once the Saturn 2 comes. The Saturn will basically meet the same fate as the 32X. I mean, come on, Sega doesn't exactly have the best track record when it comes to fully supporting its systems.
2) If Model 3 turns out to be a super powerful board then how will the Saturn be able to produce good translations? It seems that when Sega makes arcade games they don't keep in mind the Saturn's limitations.
3) I am not convinced the M2 is more powerful than the N64. The only ones that are saying the M2 is more powerful than the N64 area M2's designers, the same designers who barely have any info on the system. What about a developer that's making games for both systems? They would be able to tell you which is more powerful, right? Know anyone that could give you that info?
4) To the best of your knowledge, how does Lockheed's Real 3D 100 chipset compare to the Ultra 64's reality immersion graphics processor?
5) I'm a little confused if the N64's CPU is actually based on the R4300 and not the R4200. Then does that mean it has a 150mhz clock speed? And what about its polygon processing? 1,000,000 textures per second! Wow! Is that information accurate? If it is then wow! Then the most powerful architecture will be between Ultra 64 and the Model 3 board.
6) In YOUR honest opinion, which company do you think will be the superior in '96? I think it'll be Nintendo. Especially in Japan where Nintendo has always ruled!
7) Will SNK develop for the Ultra 64?
William Barnes
Stewart, GA

1) The same thing'll happen to the Saturn when the Saturn 2 comes out that'll happen to the PlayStation when the PlayStation 2 comes out, and to the Nintendo64 when the Nintendo... I don't know...128 comes out. While the majority of a company throws their support behind the current standard, every hardware company has people working on the next generation of technology. The Saturn 2 won't be out any time soon and the Saturn already has a much stronger base worldwide than the SegaCD and 32X ever had combined.
2) Rumor has it that Sega will be making a Saturn upgrade cartridge (utilizing the chip you mentioned in question 4) to make translating VFIII *a possibility.*
3) We've talked to a couple of developers about this (we can't list names here, of course) and there seems to be a definite consensus: the M2 is a very powerful system, one that's definitely in the N64's league (it's too early to tell which, if either, is more powerful). They like that it's CD and not cartridge-based, but everyone we talked to complained that the development tools that had been released so far were absolute garbage. This is definitely something Matsushita needs to get working on.
4) It seems to be a bit less powerful; whereas the N64 is capable of doing about 1,000,000 polygons in non-real world tests, the Lockheed Real 3D 100 (one of the chips in Sega's Model 3 board) stats put it (as far as we know) at around 750,000. Of course, you'd have to put both of them on some sort of application to truly compare.
5) The N64's CPU is a version of the R4300 that runs at 93.75mhz. About its polygon processing—this is a tricky topic. The system can technically do 1,000,000 polygons (at 30 fps, half that at 60), but these statistics do not reflect what the system will be able to do in the context of an actual game. As programmers gain experience with the system, they'll be able to utilize more and more of this power, and eventually maybe come close to reaching that, but you definitely won't see performance anywhere near that in the early releases.
6) You mean which one will be on top? Hmmm... in the U.S., probably Sony. But if Sega can release a $199 system... Hmm. Nintendo only has 3 months in all of '96 to catch up to over a year of work on both of their parts, after all. Internationally is tough... Sony has Final Fantasy, *Sega has* Virtua Fighter, *Nintendo has* Mario *and* Zelda... *I guess the deciding factor will be who gets* Dragon Quest.
7) Who knows? They're not a licensee as of right now.
(ding!) Ah, you know what the bell means—our time here is up. See ya soon!

Write to me or I'll run for President!
The PoSTmeister
5137 Clareton Dr. Suite 210
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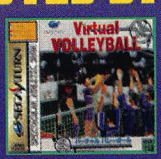

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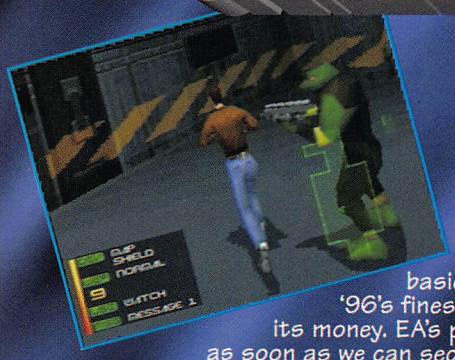
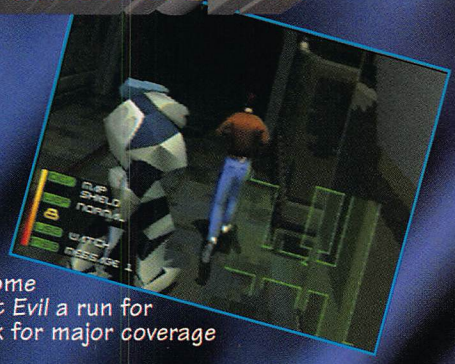
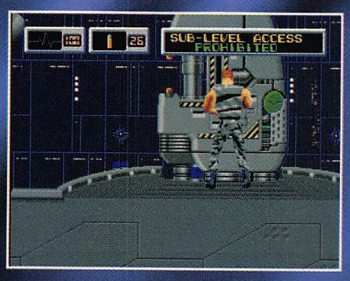


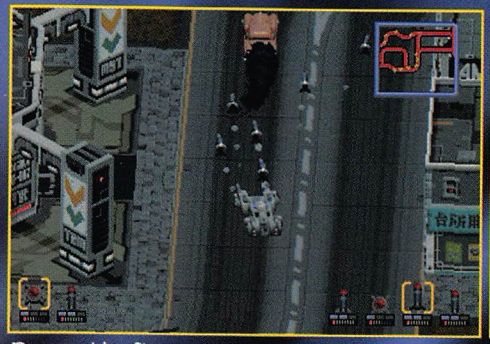


Finally! One of 95's most amazing games has found its way to the PlayStation via Delphine Software and Electronic Arts. *FTB* uses an amazing 3D engine, features texture mapped, gourad shaded characters and basically just kicks butt. This game could easily become '96's finest 3D adventure, giving even the mighty *Resident Evil* a run for its money. EA's planning to release *Fade to Black* this June. Look for major coverage as soon as we can secure a disc.

X-PERTS

Here's a peek at Sega's ambitious SGI rendered Genesis title, *X-Perts*. Though still under development, *XP* holds much potential. You control 3 characters at once, intermittently throughout vast missions using elevators and communication devices to keep tabs on each team member. A variety of fighting moves are available for each character as well a concealed projectile. *X-Perts* will be released under the Deep Water label (due to its graphic carnage) this Summer.





Domark's first Saturn title, *Crimewave*, places you in a once peaceful city that's on the brink of an all out urban war. Sounds like fun! Utilizing Domark's 3D isometric viewing system *CW* features 8 lethal vehicles from sports cars to 4x4's, 8 battle zones, and a vast array of destructive weaponry. The vehicles are all pre-rendered and the cities, texture mapped poly's. Both 1 player and split screen options are available as well. Look for more coverage on *Crimewave* in the June GF.

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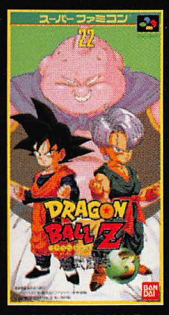

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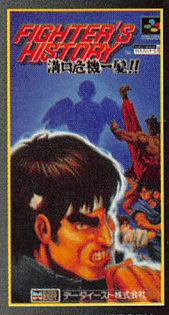

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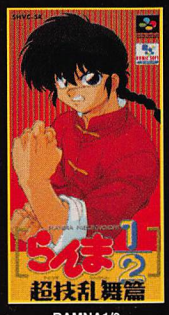

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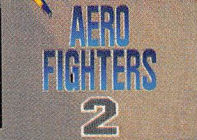

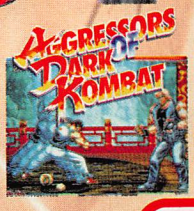

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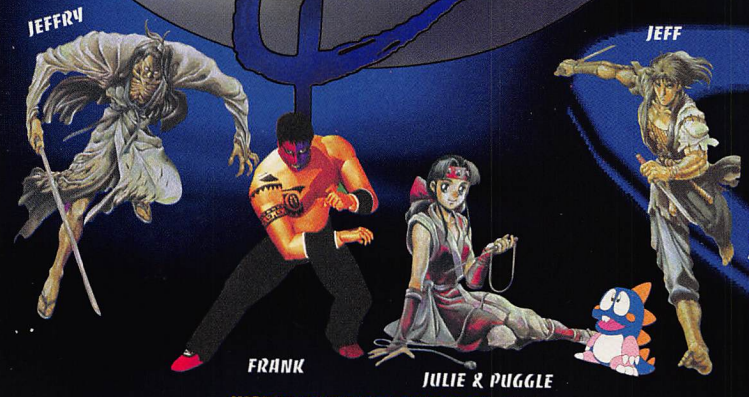

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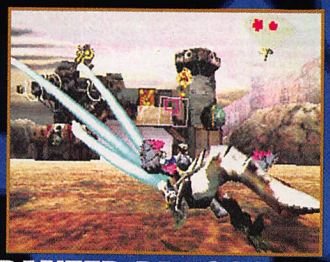

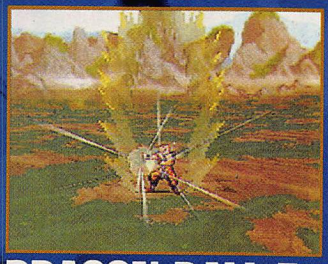

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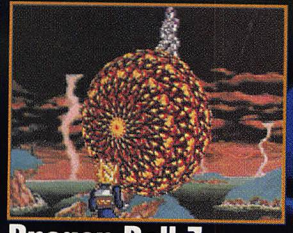

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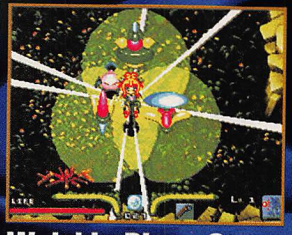

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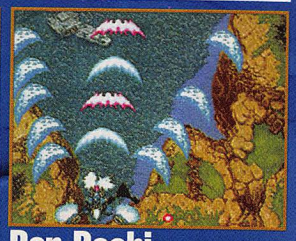

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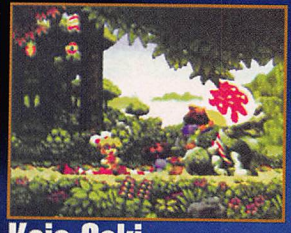

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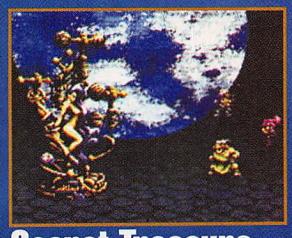

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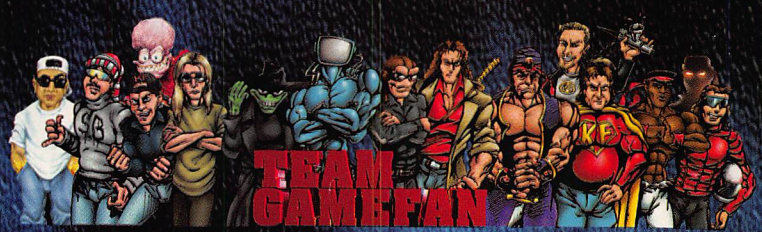

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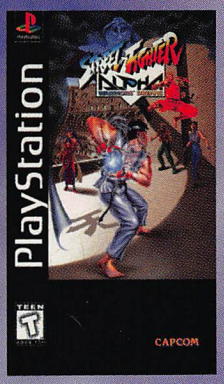

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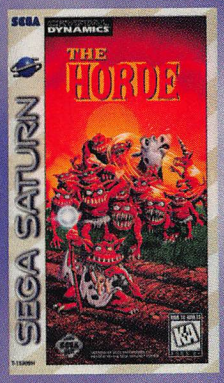

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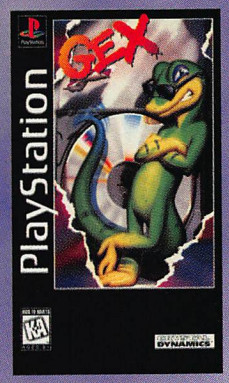

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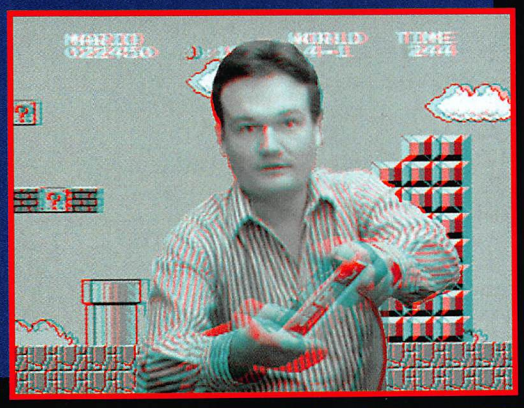

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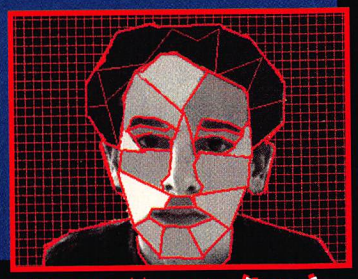

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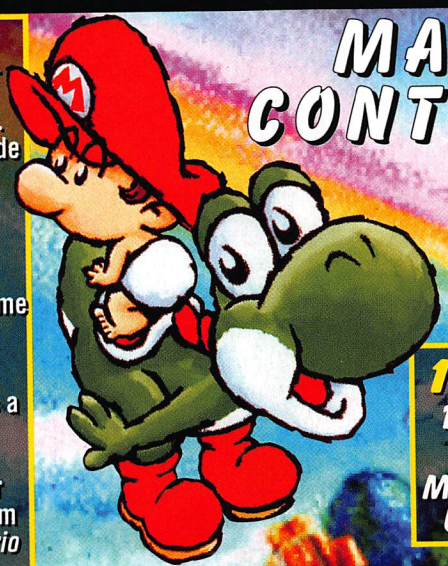
MARIO TRIVIA CONTEST WINNERS

1. Mario is recognized by more American children than Mickey Mouse. But the *Super Mario Brothers* games were not the first appearance of Mario. What was the 1981 big ape video arcade game that Mario first appeared in as Jumpman? ***(DONKEY KONG)***
2. Nintendo's new *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island* features the friendly dinosaur, Yoshi. What was the first game Yoshi appeared in? ***(SUPER MARIO WORLD)***
3. *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island* is a side-scrolling game featuring baby Mario and his pal dinosaur, Yoshi. Including this game and the games for the first Nintendo Entertainment System released in 1985, how many total *Mario* games are in the series? ***(5 - SUPER MARIO BRO'S. 1 THROUGH 3 AND SUPER MARIO WORLD 1 & 2)***
4. In the SNES video game *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*, Yoshi and baby Mario travel down drain pipes to hidden levels. With that said, what is Mario's occupation? ***(PLUMBER)***
5. Nintendo's new *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island* takes place on Yoshi's Island, but what city lays claim as the proud home of Mario? ***(BROOKLYN)***



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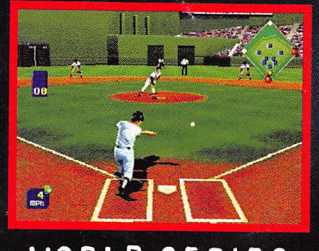

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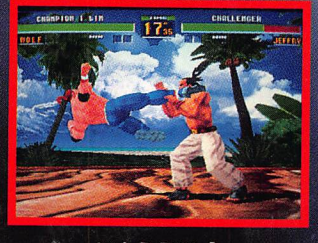

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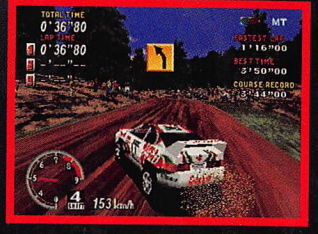

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