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Senator Lieberman thinks you might have a problem.
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April 1997

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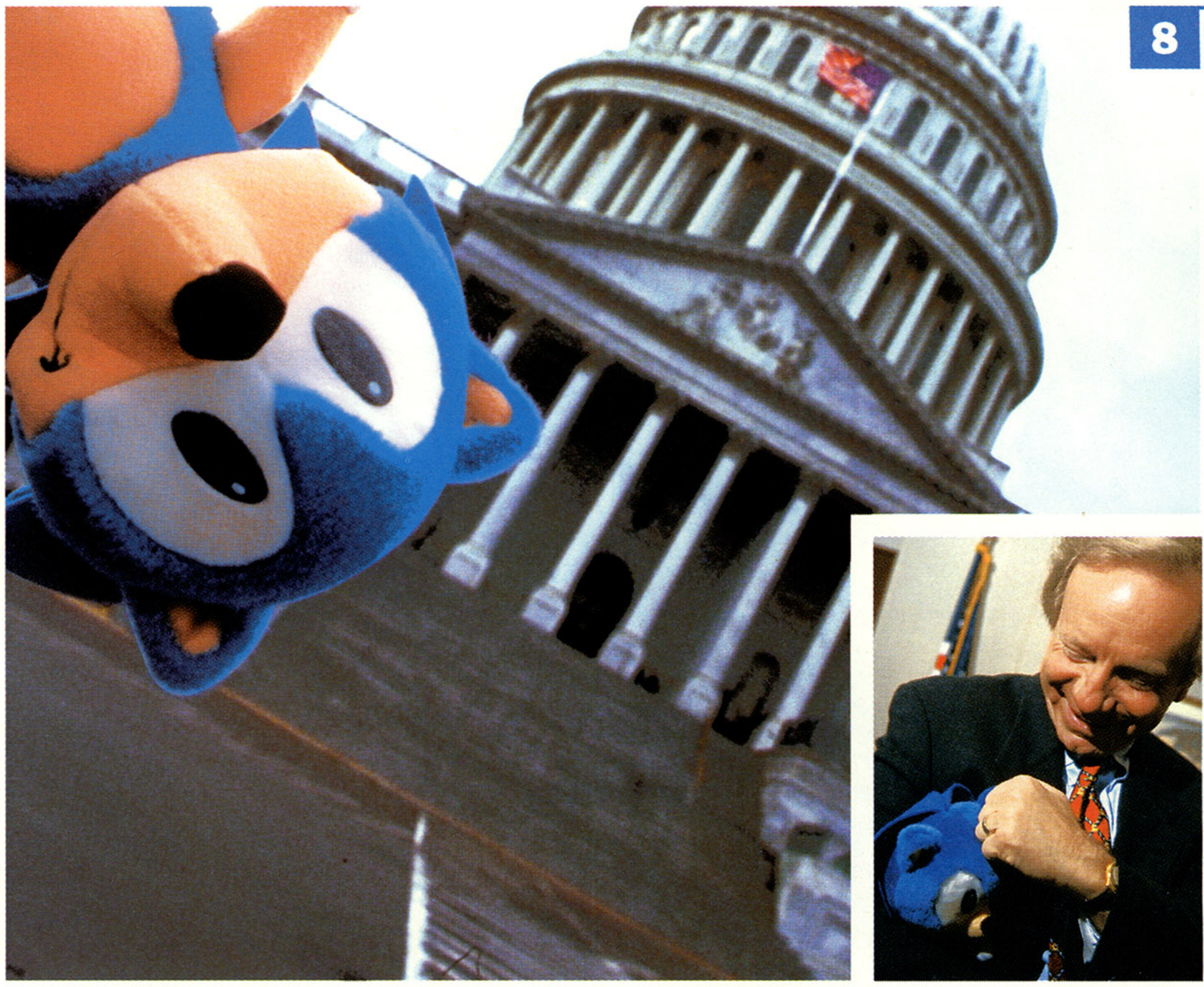

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What is Senator Lieberman's problem with videogames?

Does playing violent videogames make you a more violent person? No one knows for sure. But Senator Joseph Lieberman isn't taking any chances. In this exclusive **NG** interview, he explains why he refers to violent videogames as a "nightmare"

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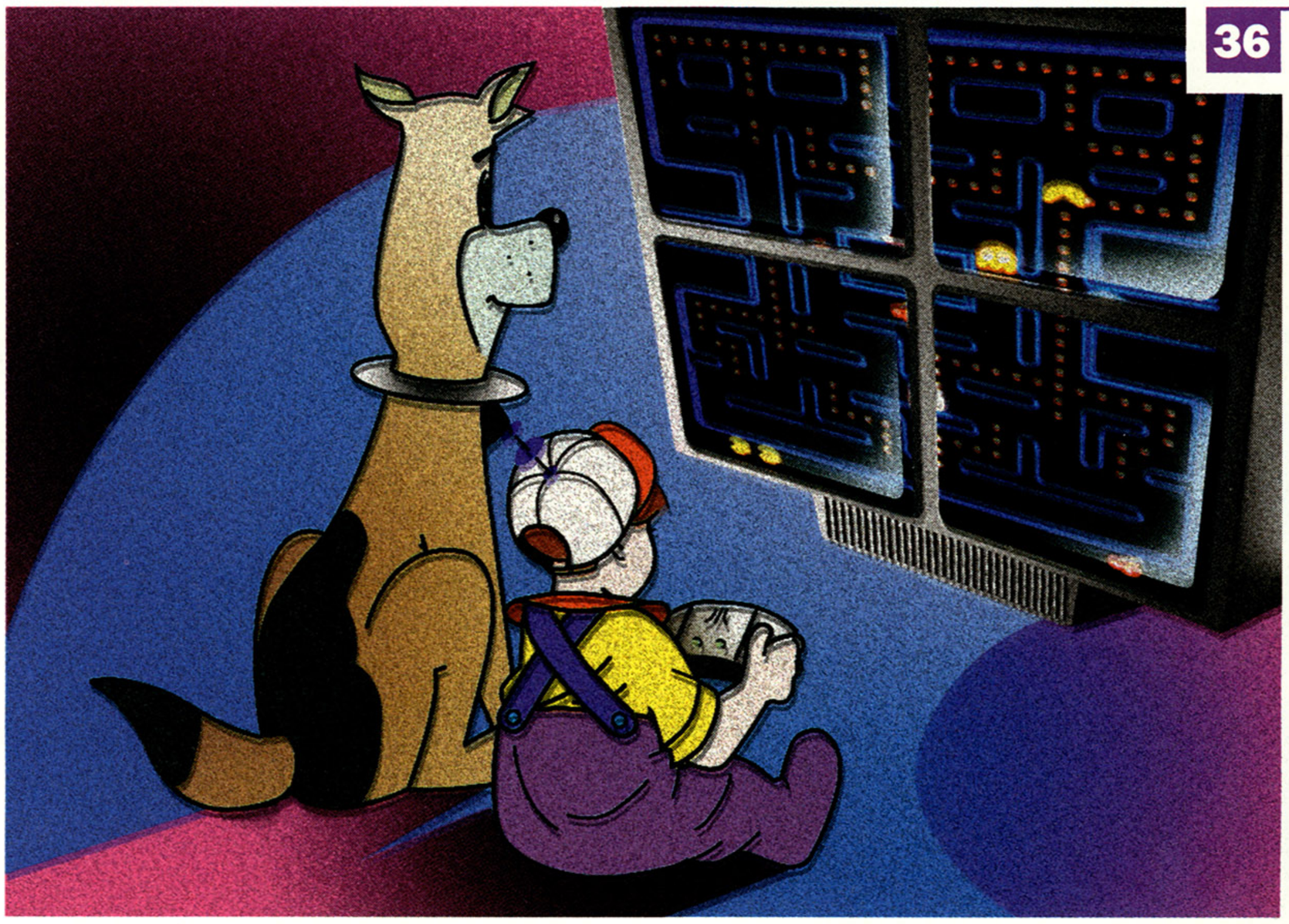
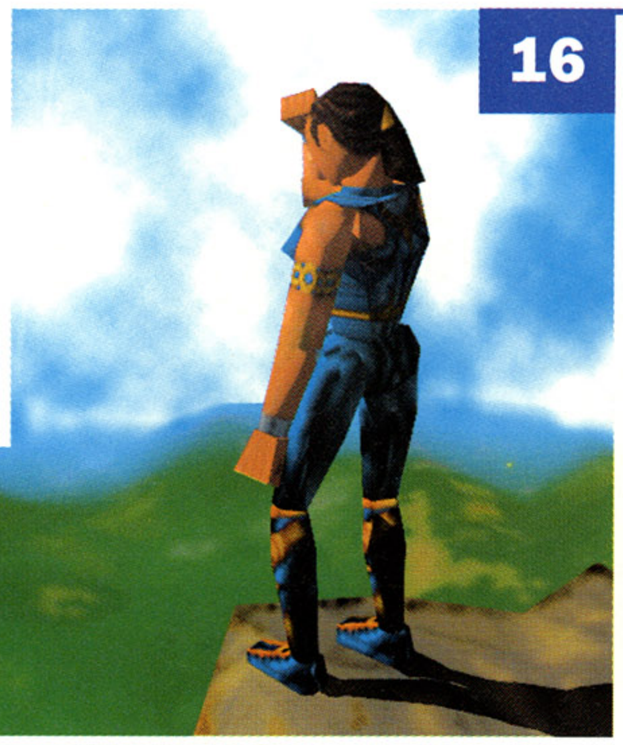


Revival of the Fittest

"Old games are clearly better than new games, right? Oh come on! *Asteroids*, *Defender*, *PacMan*! They had real *gameplay* — not just fancy graphics!" Etc. So are old games better? Or, more realistically, how can 1997's game designers learn from the past?

introducing



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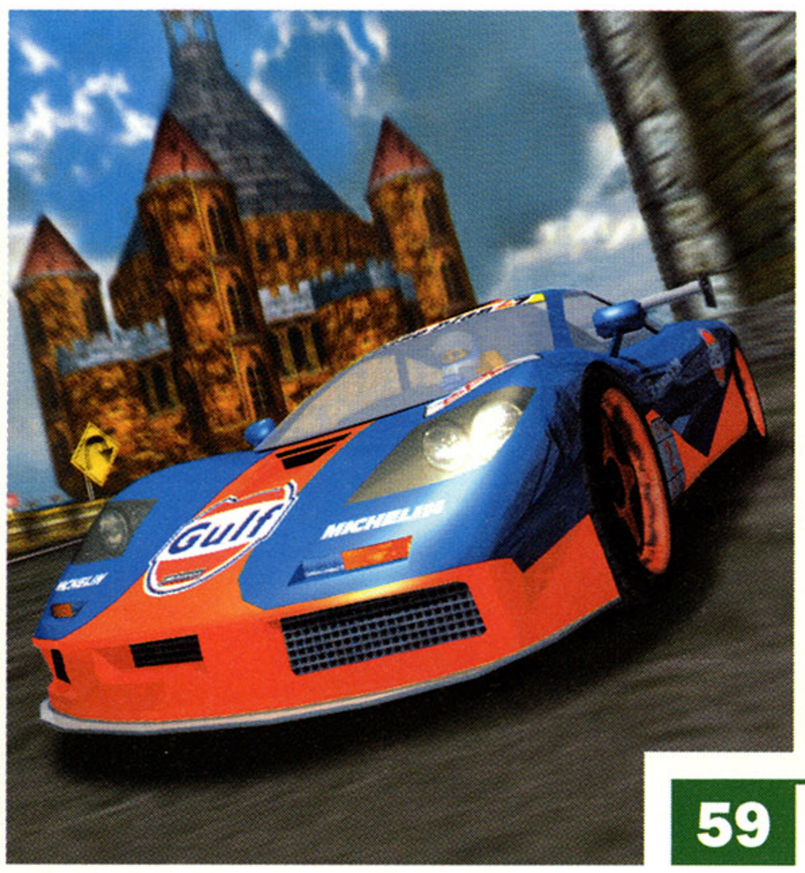

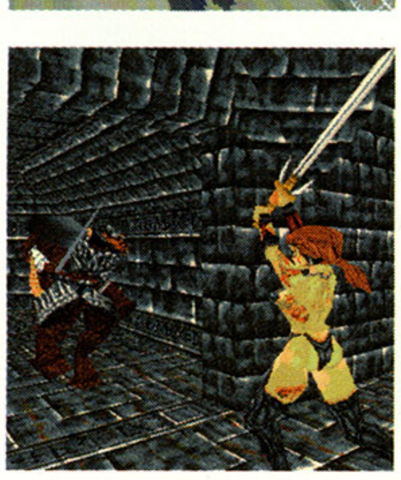

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Finals
We separate the good from the bad and ugly. Reviewed this month: *Turok*, *Soul Blade*, *Nitro Racers*, *Codename Tenka*, *Dragon Force*, *Fighters Megamix*, *DragonHeart: Fire & Steel*, *Diablo*, *Alpine Racer 2*, *Dead or Alive*, *ZPC*, *Bug Too!*, *Titanic*, *Spider*

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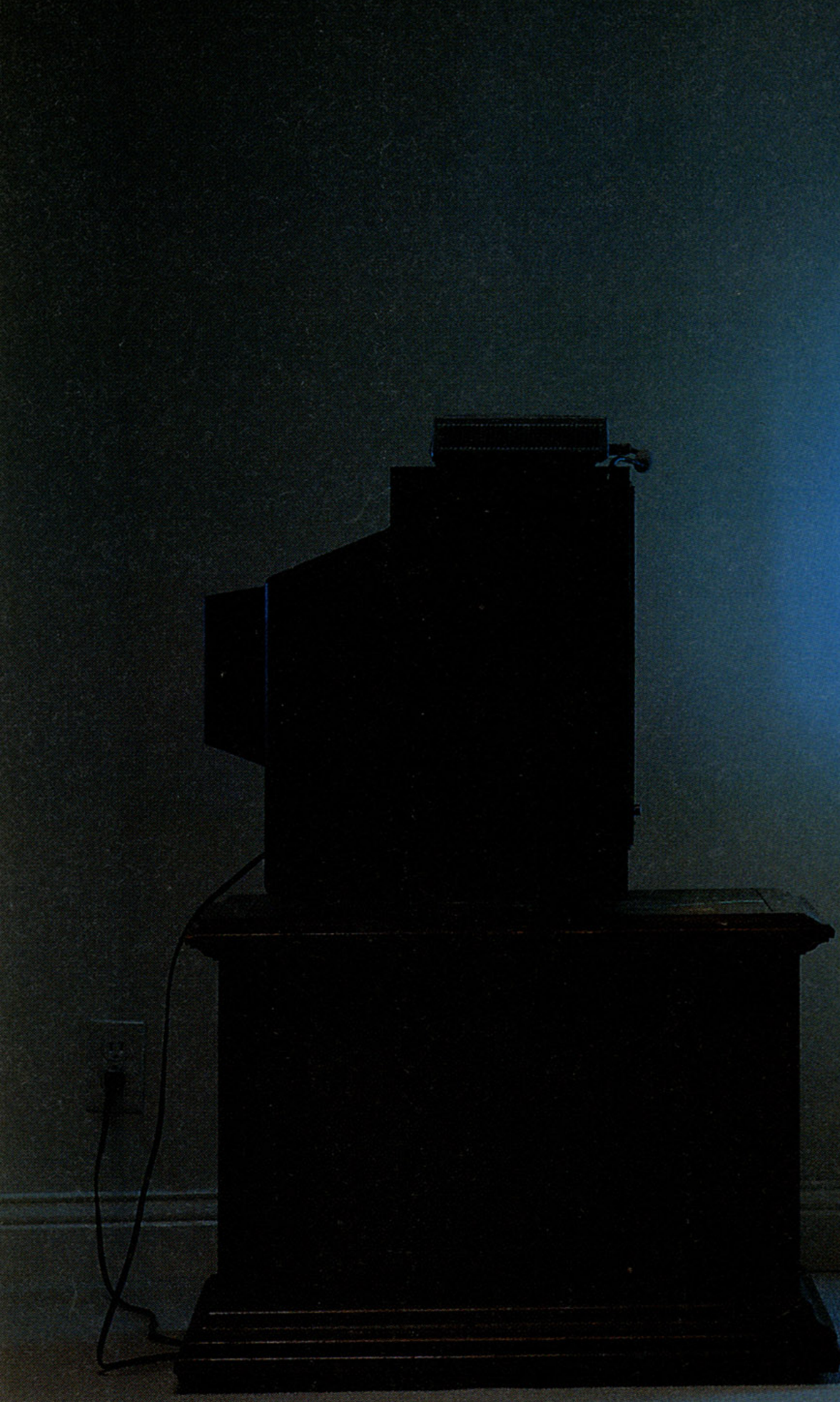

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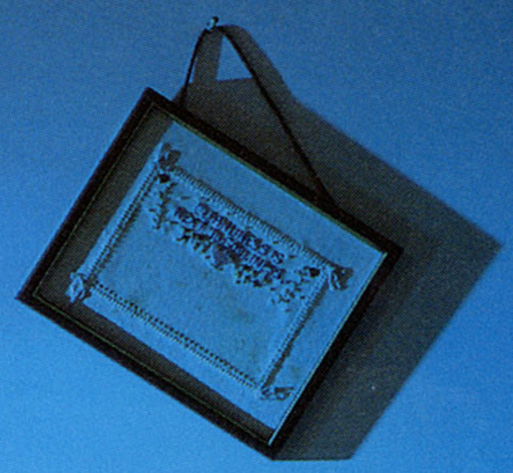

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Next Generation Disc Contents

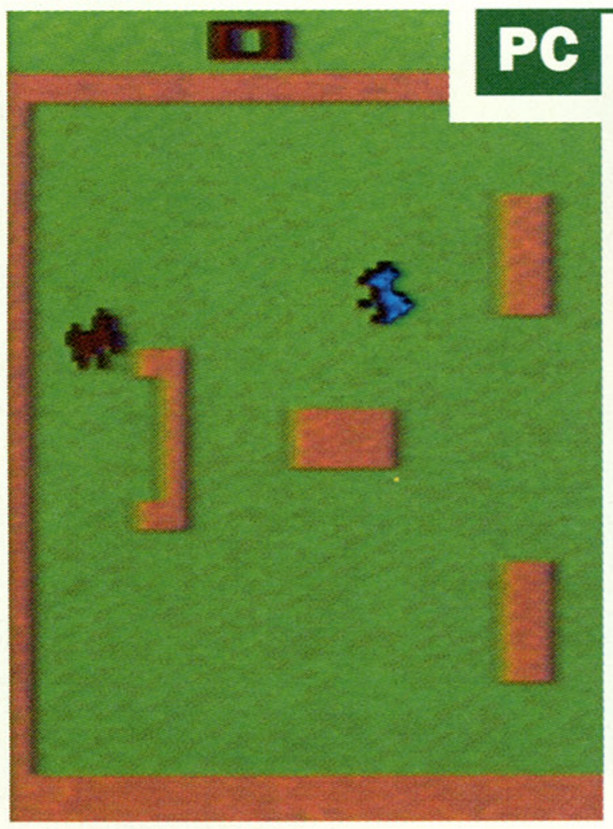
Q. If a word is worth a word and a picture is worth a thousand words, then how much is a 650MB disc crammed with game movies and demos worth? A. Find out for yourself...

So you heard we were making discs, huh? Each month, we publish two editions of **Next Generation** — one has a disc with it, and the other doesn't. If you picked the **Disc Edition**, then everything you see on this page awaits you. If you didn't buy the disc edition, well you still have a chance — next time you can get yourself a disc edition. If you're not getting the CD-ROM edition and would like to, please call (888) 446-2446 to order it.

The Next Generation Disc is compatible with both Mac and PC computer systems, and contains over 600MB of game demos, previews, and movies. Some games are selected by us, and some are provided by our sponsors: if you see green text outlining information about the game before the movie plays, you know it's a game handpicked by our editorial teams.

We hope you enjoy the **Next Generation Disc**, and invite your feedback. E-mail us at ugp_ng_discs@imagine-inc.com. Your feedback is important because it will help us keep the quality of our discs at a high standard — we know that you demand only the best (why else would you be reading this?).

So crack open the disc and enjoy.



PC

N64

PC demos and movies

We've got tons of PC demos and movies for you, including: *Privateer 2*, *Battlesport*, *NetZone*, *Heroes of Might and Magic II*, *Personal Arcade Volume 1*, *SPQR*, *Diablo*

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To many gameplayers, Senator Joseph Lieberman is the Grinch of the videogame world: He appears just before each Christmas, and attempts to steal whatever fun he can from U.S. gamers. But why? What's his point? Does he have any proof? What if he's *right*? Time to find out...

What is Senator Lieberman's problem with videogames?

It's fair to say that Senator Joseph Lieberman (Democrat, Connecticut) hasn't had an easy ride in the videogame press. As a spokesman for those who believe that exposure to violence in the media can be harmful, and should, therefore, be controlled, he's aimed quite a lot of criticism at the videogame industry. Not surprisingly, the videogame industry (**Next Generation** included) has aimed quite a lot of criticism back.

Or rather, it hasn't. In videogaming's defense, and for all Senator Lieberman's huffing and puffing, all that the industry has come up with is a lot of feet shuffling, the occasional half-murmured reference to the supposed benefits of "spatial skills" (whatever they may be), a handful of defensive magazine editorials getting worked up about the First Amendment, and very little else. In essense, the videogame industry has shrugged its shoulders, cobbled together a rating system to keep the Senator happy, and then simply carried on as before.

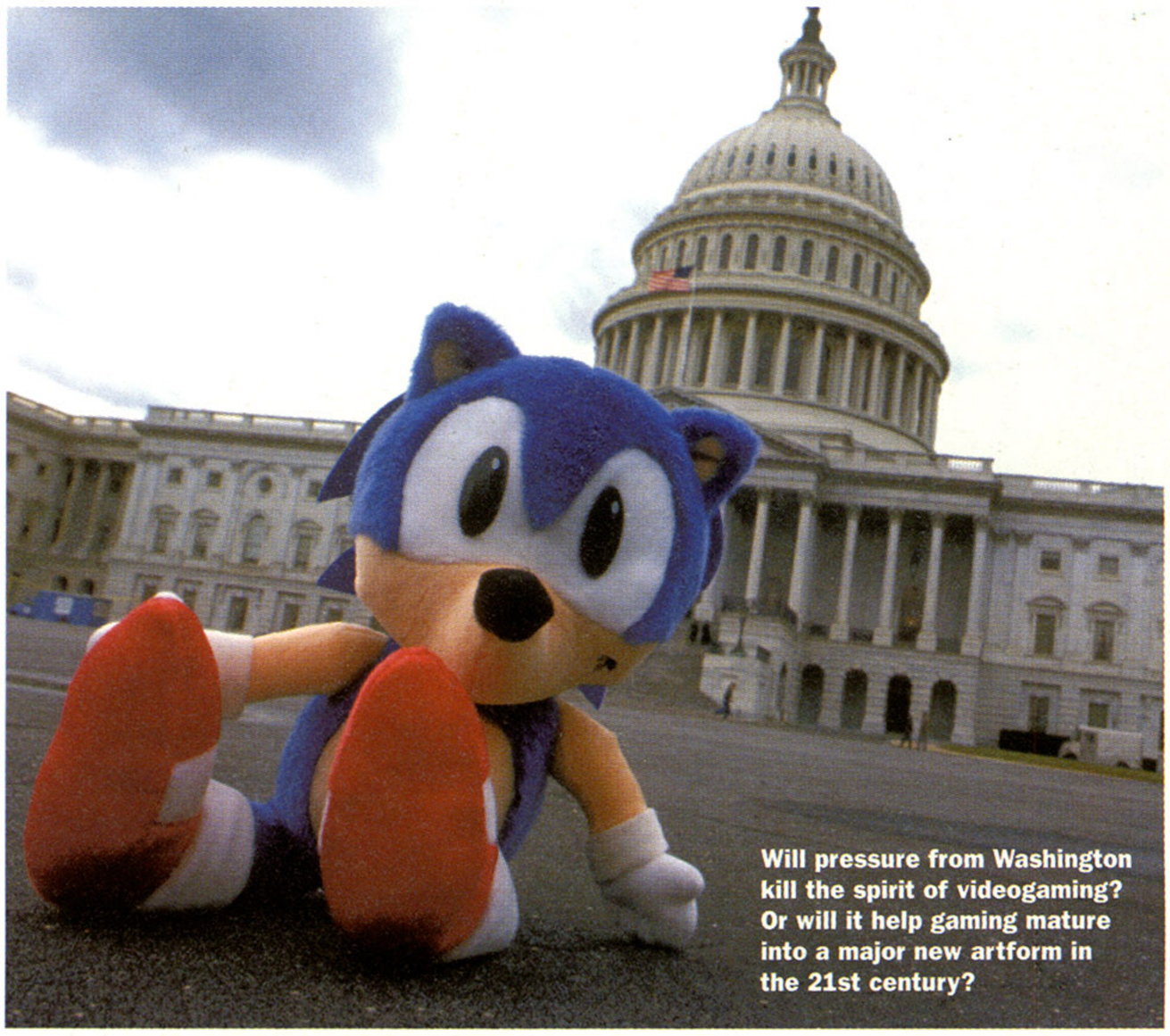
Think of your own experience: You've probably heard of Senator Lieberman, and maybe even read a news story in which he was quoted. But have you, as a gamer, actually sat down and really listened to what he has to say? Have you ever seriously considered that maybe — just maybe — he might have a valid point?

Next Generation hopes that the following interview serves as a catalyst for debate — and we certainly look forward to hearing your thoughts. Ask yourself: Why do so many games involve killing things? Do games need to be violent to be fun? And if indeed life is supposed to be a dance, not a race, why has no one told the game makers? We hope to present other points of view on this controversial subject in future issues. Send all feedback to ngonline@imagine-inc.com marked "Lieberman."

The aim of the game

NG: So what is it that you're trying to do?

Senator Lieberman: Okay. Well, for me this started out not politically, but personally. In fact, it started out more with television than with videogames. I was watching my daughter, who was four years old



Will pressure from Washington kill the spirit of videogaming? Or will it help gaming mature into a major new artform in the 21st century?

"People who play violent videogames will have a tendancy to be more violent, or at least less struck by violence, in real life"

at the time, watching television, and I saw that TV had changed a lot in the kid hours — in terms of the content — from when her siblings had been watching TV.

This was around four years ago. My Chief of Staff and I were talking about this, and he was telling me that he was having an argument with his son, who was then eight or nine, about *Mortal Kombat*. The kid wanted it, but my Chief of Staff didn't want to buy it for him. We watched it, and I thought it was... let's just say I was struck by the violence. I was struck by the graphic nature of the violence, and by the extra dimension of the kids being *involved* in the violence. Kids playing these games are participants, kids watching television are observers.

NG: And this struck you as a key difference between violence on TV and violence in videogames?

Senator Lieberman: Yeah, and the idea that in these videogames, kids are being rewarded for the violence — the better they are at it, the better they do in the game. Anyway, this led me and Senator Kohl [Democrat, Wisconsin] — who was also interested in all this at the same time — to get together and hold the first videogame hearings.

NG: This was in December of 1993, when you described violent videogames as "the nightmare before Christmas." What were you hoping to achieve at this point?

Senator Lieberman: Our goal was — and is — to do two things. Our first goal was to better inform parents, and kids who are concerned about content, what was inside the games — and that's been the function of the ratings system. Our second goal was to appeal to the videogame makers — just as we have appealed to television producers, to rap music producers, to movie producers — to consider the impact of the games on those who are playing them. We'd like these people to draw their own lines, over which they'll not go, as to what they will and will not include in the stuff they produce — hopefully because they're concerned about the impact on the game player's behavior — particularly children.

NG: Your argument — and your requests for the videogame industry to act — assumes that exposure to violence in videogames is somehow harmful.

Senator Lieberman: Right. Underneath all this is the conclusion that people who play violent videogames, particularly children who play violent videogames, probably will have a tendency to be more violent, or at least less struck by violence, in real life. For some people, violence may become more acceptable or even normal for them in day to day life because of their experience with violence in videogames.

So where's the proof?

NG: What research is this belief based on?

Senator Lieberman: There isn't much, but there is some research on the impact of videogames on kids. At one of the hearings that Senator Kohl and I did, there was an expert who came out and mentioned a few studies that have been done ["Affect of the Game Player; Short Term Effects of Highly and Mildly Aggressive Video Games" in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, by C. Anderson and C. Ford, 12(4), pp390-402 (1986) and "The Effects of Video Game Play on Young Children's Aggression, Fantasy, and Pro-Social Behavior" in *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, by S. Silvern and P. Williamson, 8, pp453-462 (1987)], but really the basis of our argument is the hundreds — actually, I guess, maybe over two thousand — studies on the impact of violent movies on children.

In controlled experiments, it has been shown that

when children watch violent movies or violent TV, their behavior is affected. And there's even more anecdotal testimony from parents who tell me that they've watched their kids' behavior be affected by playing videogames.

NG: But many of these reports and experiments simply test for "anxious" or "hostile" behavior immediately after watching violence on TV — and these symptoms are a common result of any activity that causes a rush of adrenaline. A roller coaster ride or a "healthy" game of touch football would probably yield similar results. It's hardly damning evidence against videogames.

But you accept that there probably hasn't been enough specific research completed on the effects of violent videogames, and instead borrow research from other fields. You're confident, then, that the research that exists, when bolstered by the conclusions of studies investigating the effects of violent content on TV and anecdotal evidence from yourself and other parents, is enough evidence against videogames to warrant action?

Senator Lieberman: Yeah, I do — that's right. I mean, just forget the studies for a minute, and look at all the money that's invested in television advertising. It's invested, I assume, because the advertisers, the people who are spending all this money, feel that what people see on television affects their behavior. They've got to believe that they can use TV to make the people watching it have a desire for the product and consume it.

NG: And you think it's safe to take this principle and argue that videogames "advertise" violence?

Senator Lieberman: Well, I think it's logical to develop a feeling about the impact of participation in violent videogames for which the participants are actually rewarded for violence — for interactive experiences in which you win by killing. It's a much more active participation than that experienced by the couch potato watching television.

NG: Sure, but we still don't have any real proof.

Senator Lieberman: I think you've got to remember what it is that we are asking. It wasn't on the basis of this analysis that I was proposing that we make violent videogames illegal. If I was, then one could appropriately ask, "Well, what's your evidence?" and we would have to come up with something more concrete.

But we're not trying to make them illegal. We've basically tried to do two things. First, we're asking for a kind of disclosure, or truth in advertising, to let people know before they buy what's in the package. This is where the ratings on the boxes come from. Second, we want to simply to be advocates for this point of view — as we were when Senator Kohl, Dr. Walsh [Founder and Executive Director of The National Institute on Media and the Family], and I did this press conference last December in which Dr. Walsh released a list of the games that he felt were too

violent. We were there, getting a little bit of attention, saying to the videogame industry, "Hey, take a look at these games here and consider whether or not you want to put stuff like this out."

NG: So aside from such freak instances as Lee Jacobson of DigiFX Interactive criticizing Dr. Walsh's list for not including its *Harvester* game (he claimed it was more violent than any other game on the list!) do you feel that your message to the videogame industry is getting through?

Senator Lieberman: Overall, I feel positively about the way the industry has responded. I'd like to see a few less truly violent videogames, but the ratings have been quite responsibly applied. And of course the retailers have been very helpful, particularly the large ones who have said that they wouldn't carry unrated games.

"Look at the money spent on TV advertising. It's spent because advertisers believe that what people see on TV affects behavior"

NG: You argue that because videogames ask players to participate in the violence — as opposed to simply

observe it — and because successful participation is rewarded and encouraged, that playing a violent videogame is somehow more harmful than watching violent TV. And this may be true.

"Kids playing videogames are participants. Kids watching television are observers"

But on the other hand, the images seen in videogames are far more primitive than those seen on TV. Most of the time, the "victims" of violence in videogames are obviously not real people — usually, they're just like cartoon characters. Doesn't this reduce videogaming's potential harm?

Senator Lieberman: Sure, it lessens it somewhat, but of course the gap between videogames and TV is lessening as technology improves. With each new game, it seems that the experience becomes much more realistic and lifelike.

Basic instincts

NG: But isn't violence part of every human? And won't children always have a propensity to explore it? Kids have always "played" with and been fascinated by violence — be it cowboys and Indians, toy soldiers, watching WWF on TV, or now playing *Mortal Kombat*.

Hopefully, with the right guidance from parents and other adults, children will grow out of this "violence phase." But you'll never be able to get rid of it all together — it's as much a part of growing up as teenage crushes. Surely, if you were to remove all violent videogames, wouldn't children simply explore violence through other avenues?

Senator Lieberman: Well, that's a fair and reasonable question. And sure, violence is part of our nature — Cain killed Abel a long time ago.

But the question is what do we do about it? I mean, do we try to control it? Or do we create a climate in which it is encouraged, in which it is rewarded, in which it is made more acceptable?

NG: So you believe that violent videogames are a part of a bigger problem?

Senator Lieberman: Right, I really view this problem in a cumulative sense. That is, I'm not worried just by the violent videogames that kids are playing, but by the fact that these games exist in the context of an entertainment culture in which movies are violent, television is increasingly violent, and some of the music is horrendously violent. And it is all of this together, I think, that is sending a very bad message to kids.

I'm never going to pin the blame just on videogames. And as we've just said about the inherent nature of humans, a lot of people are violent — and indeed the species is violent by nature — so it's not videogames or the entertainment culture that cause the violence. But my worry is that the accumulation of messages our kids are getting about the acceptability of violence and about the thrill of violence contributes to making our society more violent than it would otherwise be.

NG: Another fundamental question is whether or not videogames, by offering a means for kids to explore violence, provide a harmless outlet for their natural aggression or feed a natural hunger for violent behavior; a hunger that will just grow and grow.

Senator Lieberman: I think my sense, and again it's validated — or at least it's encouraged — by the studies that do exist with television and movie violence, and by the anecdotal evidence from parents and kids, is that the effect of violent videogames has been to feed the hunger and to drive the yearning. Violent videogames drive this violent side of human nature to be larger than it would otherwise be.

NG: But at least while playing videogames, the situation is controlled. When exploring violence through a violent videogame, usually all the following is true: 1) The child is in the safety of his home, with no risk of actual physical injury to himself or to others; 2) His success or failure in the game relies not on physical size or brute strength but on more cerebral factors such as quick thinking and memory; and 3) Playing games can actually offer such benefits as enhanced hand/eye coordination and spatial reasoning.

So, given that kids will always want to experiment with violence, aren't videogames a fairly safe way of facilitating it?

Senator Lieberman: A fascinating argument — and one we used to hear in defense of sexually provocative movies. But I don't think it works that way.

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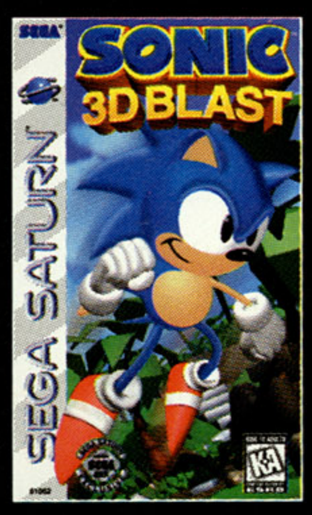

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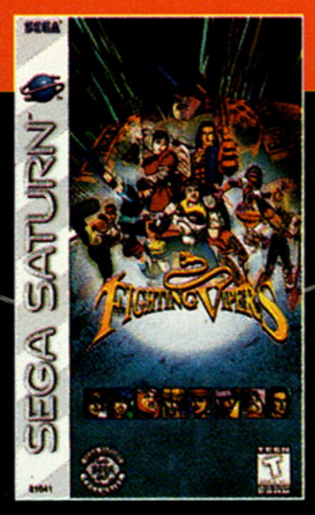

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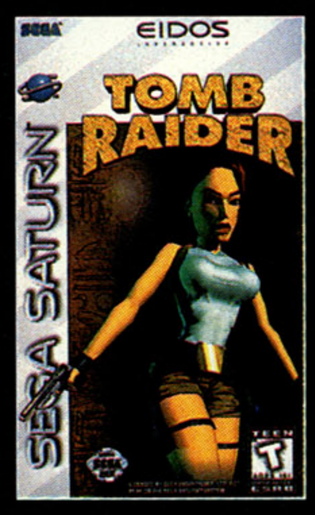

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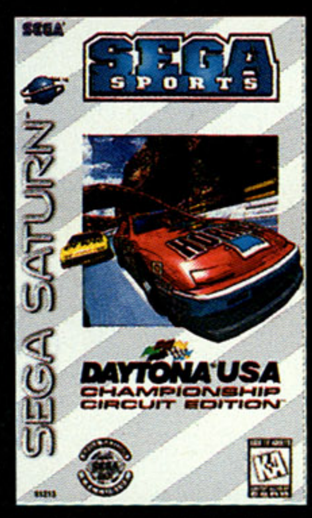

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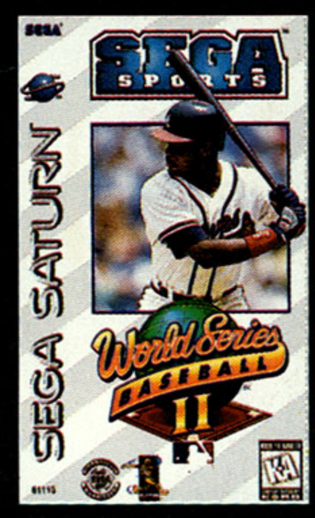

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Who's Winning? Speak to Sega, Nintendo, and Sega and you'll think that 1996 was three different years. So what really happened/**p.16** • **M2:** A hot new 64-bit game from the makers of *Alien versus Predator*/**p.20** • **Joyriding:** Online gaming news/**p.24** • **Movers 'n' Shakers:** Business news/**p.26** • **Arcadia:** Coin-op news and updates/**p.28** • **Plus** more!

Videogame and interactive entertainment news from around the world

Who won the **videogame wars** of 1996?

Nintendo 64 comes out fast, but can't catch PlayStation. Saturn hangs on to fight another year

Yamauchi scorns "silly" Sony games

At a Nintendo press conference, Nintendo chief Hiroshi Yamauchi said that Sony's claim to have taken Nintendo's crown "amounts to nothing." He said that "most of [Sony's] software titles are silly and boring." He also claimed that Sony's grabbing of *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy VII* for PlayStation would have "virtually no impact on Nintendo's business."

Of N64's U.S. success he said that "If production had been available we would have sold another million [N64s] in the U.S." He attributed this partially to *Mario 64* and that "American users welcomed how we have practically brought a Disney character to life in a videogame. Japanese gamers," he explained, "like to be alone in their rooms and play depressing games."

Nintendo's Mr. Yamauchi

Despite the ups and downs of 1996, the year ended strongly for all three major videogame platforms — and all gamers have reason to be extremely optimistic throughout the rest of 1997.

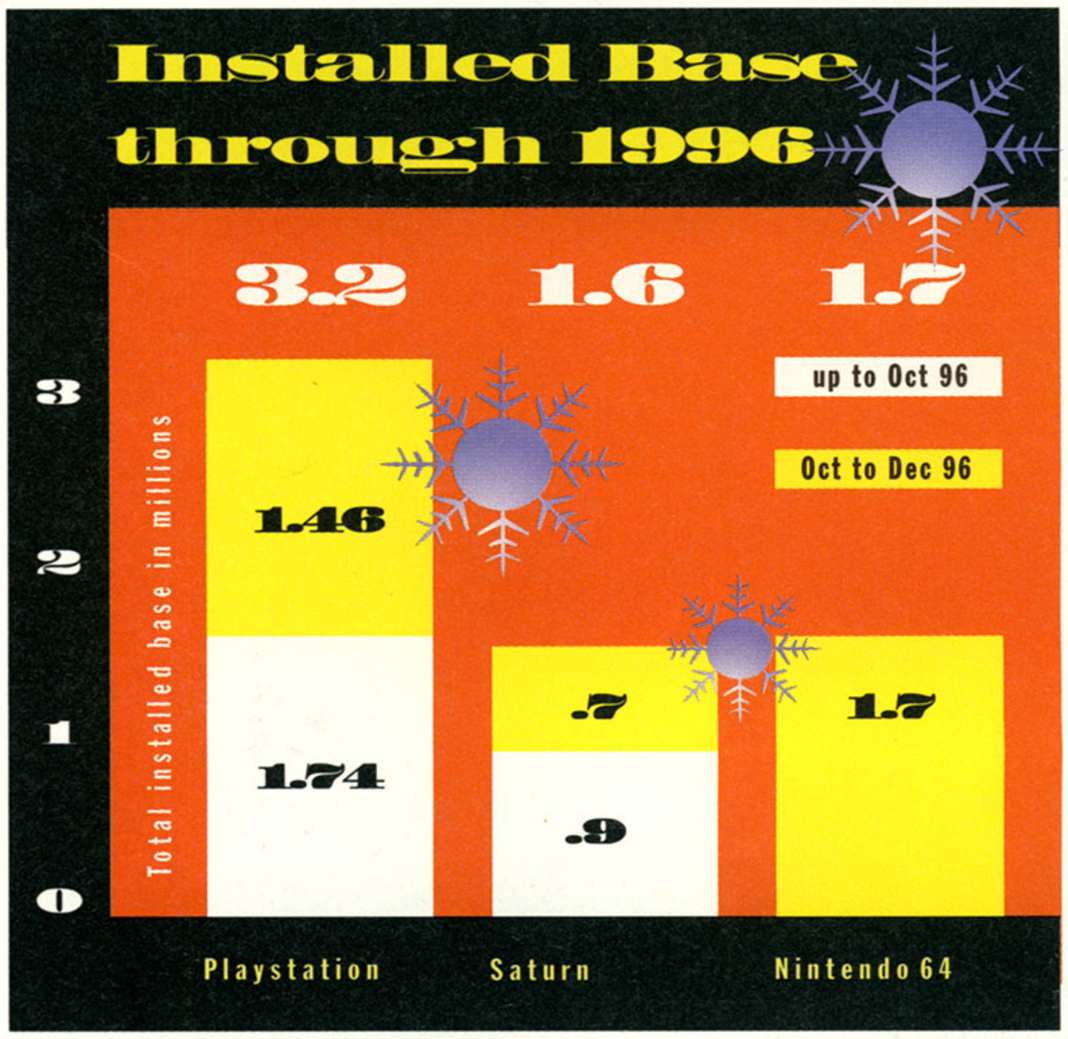
If there were any real surprises it was that enough interest in the market provided strong sales numbers across the board. As expected, it was Nintendo 64 that — coming fast out of the gate, late in the year — made the biggest splash with games such as *Mario 64* and *Shadows of The Empire*. Gamers flocked to the machine in droves, leading many retailers to compare N64 mania with the "Cabbage Patch Kids" craze of the 1980s.

Sony also managed a strong showing during the holiday season, the result of strong momentum built up over the whole year. With important titles such as *Twisted Metal 2*, *Gameday '97*, and *Tomb Raider* releasing just as the holiday sales were heating up, PlayStation was a lock for success.

Taking a totally different (its competitors would say "desperate") route, Sega found its success in a "Three Free" software give-away. Bundling *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtua Cop*, and *Daytona* with each new system, Saturn suddenly seemed like a very good idea to a lot of people.

Contrary to Nintendo's claim at system launch, the holiday season supply of N64s was not limited to a meager 500,000. The extra available units, at least in part due to underwhelming sales in Japan and an alleged ramping up of production output, resulted in an impressive North American installed base of 1.7 million (6 million worldwide) by the end of 1996. The excess units available in the U.S. certainly paid off for Nintendo as shortages were prevalent throughout the country. Nintendo suggests that Nintendo 64 installed base could have reached 2.5 million had it had enough machines to meet the demand. By Christmas Day, N64s were advertised in newspaper classifieds for as much as $800, and software of any kind was difficult to come across. Even titles such as the ill-received *Cruis'n USA* and *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* managed impressive sales numbers as gift-buying parents and new system owners rushed to get the maximum N64 experience.

"It went beyond any of our expectations. We just couldn't have anticipated that we would need so



Many retailers compared Nintendo 64 mania to the "Cabbage Patch Kid" craze of the 1980s

STOP press

Apple contemplating Pippin withdrawal?
The future of the Pippin appears to be in some doubt following major changes at Apple. On the eve of the Apple-technology based Pippin's retail debut, Apple announced a major internal reorganization resulting in both the Pippin and the Newton being put up for sale.

3DO's hardware venture emerges
The 3DO Company has formed a joint venture with Samsung to manufacture hardware and peripherals for PCs and other home consumer electronics products. The two companies have been working together for some months and have now merged development staff as well as intellectual property assets. Samsung has contributed approximately $30 million to the new venture, 3DO has devoted 80 engineers to the project.

Sony: No PlayStation 2 until 1999
Sony has ruled out the possibility of a PlayStation 2 until 1999 at the earliest. Speaking in Tokyo, Sony Corp President Nobuyuki Idei was asked about the introduction of a new PlayStation model. Idei said sales of the current 32-bit model were booming. He added: "We plan to continue selling the 32-bit model for at least another two to three years. Changing models frequently is inconvenient for consumers."

But then, of course, he would say that...

Sega managed to struggle back from the dead with their successful "Three Free" promotion (above). Working with a $50 million budget, Crash Bandicoot made nightly appearances in American homes (left)

many systems," proclaims Perrin Kaplan of Nintendo. Also selling extremely well for Nintendo were the various colored controllers even in the absence of any good multiplayer games. More surprising still were the impressive sales of the memory pack cartridges despite the lack of available games to take advantage of the $19.99 units. In all, if it was branded N64, it sold extremely well.

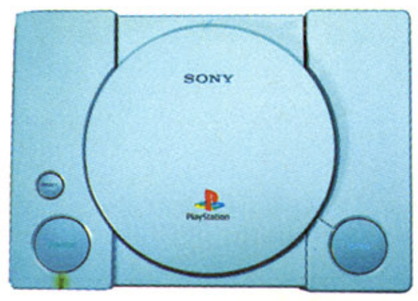
But despite Nintendo's obvious success, Sony still has to be credited with hanging on to the number-one spot as the industry went into 1997. Sony had the most to lose as Nintendo 64 arrived, and yet PlayStation has managed to further establish its position as market leader. According to Vice President of Marketing, Andrew House, "We were the only company that really did not only a great job of getting game systems into people's hands but of delivering great games as well in a large variety of genres."

With a North American installed base of 3.2 million (10 million worldwide), Sony is the undeniable market leader in the next-generation race, and the holiday season of '96 marked the beginning of its run at mass market success with a software to hardware sales ratio of 5 to 1. In December alone, Sony sold over 1 million PlayStations and 3.5 million games, earning the company — for this brief period — more than $12 million a day. PlayStation can't yet match the success of the 16-bit era (at 16-bit's peak there were around 30 million Super NES and Genesis consoles in the U.S.) but PlayStation's success in '96 certainly points to a healthy long-term potential. "Our goals for '96 were relatively high," admits House, "but we far exceeded our own expectations." If there is a system properly poised to break things wide open in '97, it's PlayStation.

If any one company had to perform well in the '96 race for survival's sake, it was Sega. With the success of its "Three Free" software promotion, it seems to have struggled past the critical do-or-die point. According to Sega, more than 500,000 Saturns were sold in December alone — an amazing feat for a system that, although strong, is many gamers' third choice. Boasting a North American installed base of 1.6 million (7 million worldwide), Sega is far off the pace it set with Genesis, but, at least for the moment, maintains a second-place position in the worldwide market behind PlayStation. Speaking of the next-generation race in 1996, Dan Stevens of Sega suggests, "It's difficult to say that anyone ever actually won anything in this market, but Sega gained the most ground." With first-party titles such as *Nights* and *Sonic 3D Blast* both doing well, and third-party mega-hits like *Tomb Raider* offering support, Saturn was

Who is it?

This pink game character has appeared on the Game Boy, NES and Super NES. Though he has the ability to mimic a vacuum cleaner, his new game sees him doing something different



All three videogame systems sold like hot cakes at the end of '96

breaking

It is...
Kirby, the invention of Japanese HAL Laboratory, which is currently collaborating with Nintendo on the distinctive-looking *Kirby's Air Ride* for Nintendo 64

able to create enough of a scene to keep it from being written off entirely. Sega now finds itself in a position where it's still not out of danger, but with an exceptional '97, it could make things interesting again. Certainly the 2.8 million units of third-party Saturn software sold in '96 was key to the health of the machine and continued third-party success in '97 could play an important role in its future.

If there was one true indication of the beginning of the holiday buying season, it was the arrival of the television ad campaigns. The buzz around N64 and limited supplies of the machine already failing to meet the overwhelming demand enabled Nintendo to take advantage of their circumstances by practically opting out of the always amusing advertising wars.

With Sega and Sony popping up in one commercial break after another, the airwaves were conspicuously free of Nintendo's presence. Beyond the launch campaign, one commercial for *WaveRace 64* and a "talking Game Boy" ad in the late Fall, Nintendo never even bothered to launch a holiday-specific campaign.

Advertising strategies of Sega and Sony were in stark contrast to that of Nintendo. Leading the way in overall exposure was Sega with a $50 million campaign promoting its "Three Free" promotion, key titles such as *Fighting Vipers* and *Sonic*, and the NetLink. Although few people bought into the promise of the NetLink (less than 1% of Saturn owners bought one), the promise of three free games brought consumers running. Consequently, Sega's lineup of new titles enjoyed a share of success as well. According to Sega, in fact, Saturn software sales were up over 175% in '96. With last year's advertising focus centered squarely on three key software titles (*VF2*, *Virtua Cop*, and *Sega Rally*), this year was a broader show of support for the system itself. And with what many argue was a less spectacular software lineup than that of last year, Sega's focus on the strength of

Not the incentive to buy Saturn Sega was hoping for, NetLink sold to less than 1% of Saturn owners in 1996

With titles like *Final Fantasy VII* due to release in '97, Sony is set to enjoy even more success in 1997

If any one company had to perform well in the '96 race for survival's sake, it was Sega. Now it seems to have struggled past the "do or die" point

When supplies started running out, the black market price for N64s went through the roof

TRST: The numbers you can trust?

The nearest the videogame industry gets to a widely accepted source of sales numbers is TRST (The Toy Retail Survey Tracking system) from NPD Research.

TRST talks to 17 of the major retail chains in North America and asks how many units of each machine they have sold in any particular period. They then send these numbers to whoever is willing to pay for them. TRST does not extrapolate from the findings — and yet is reluctant to let any of its clients release its raw data (otherwise, who else would pay for them?). Hence, by the time TRST figures reach gamers, they have inevitably been processed by the hardware company in question — and include some marketing spin.

Another problem with TRST is that the 17 retail chains it surveys only amount to 63% of the U.S. market. In order to include all the corner stores and family electronics outlets, you have to take the TRST number and multiply it by 1.58 — and this adds more uncertainty. Nintendo, for example, hasn't used many of this "other 37%" of retailers, and yet often gets the benefit of the 1.58 multiplier.

Still, in the absense of any better system, TRST has the numbers to trust.

the system in general seemed to be the right approach.

Sony, on the other hand, chose to focus its advertising efforts on a combination of key software titles. To kick things off, the holiday season started with support of hits such as *Game Day '97* and *Crash Bandicoot* (over 1,000,000 units sold worldwide) and then branched out into support for lesser known names such as *Jet Moto*, *Tobal No. 1*, and *Face Off '97*. With a total of $50 million devoted to PlayStation's marketing campaign from E3 to Christmas, Sony was able to keep the MTV generation well aware of these and other important titles.

With a commanding lead in the next-generation market going into the holiday season, Sony knew it was time to sell games — and sell they did with surprising success on titles in every genre. PlayStation is the closest thing the next-generation market has to a mass market product and Sony's focus on software underlines its belief that the hardware itself is already on its way to becoming a true mainstream success story.

In all, the holiday season of '96 won't go down in the record books as the greatest year in videogames, but with the excitement Nintendo brought to the mix, this was definitely one of the most positive years in recent history. After years of flat sales and a general public disinterest, videogames are back, and consumers actually seem to care.

Whether due to keen advertising campaigns, attractive promotions, or — hey, why not? — great games, few people in the industry are crying about '96. And that's good news for gamers too. 1997 looks set to be even bigger. ng

In '96, Sony made the most of its $50 million advertsing budget by pushing lesser known titles such as *Jet Moto*

In the studio

From development houses to your house. A Next Generation look behind the scenes...

Impressed by Nintendo 64's conversion of *Doom*, Id Software immediately granted the *Quake* conversion rights to Midway, even requesting that the same *Doom* team be responsible. Although it will be a more complicated port than *Doom*, Midway is determined to release *Quake* 1997.

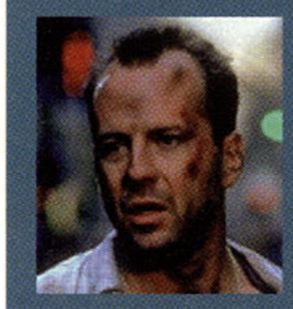
Other N64 first-person shooters coming over from the PC this year include *Hexen* and *Duke Nukem' 3D*, both from GT Interactive. GT will also distribute *Quake 64* in markets outside the U.S.

Crystal Dynamics is working on a PlayStation and PC sequel to its character-platformer *Gex*. The new version will be a roaming 3D adventure in the style of *Mario 64*, wherein the spunky lizard will retain many of his original moves, and will again feature the voice of Dana Gould. Sources inside the company say the similarities end there.

The as-yet untitled "*Gex 2*" will be completed by December, and Crystal is currently negotiating with potential publishers.

Less than a year since the company released its first game, *Pilot Wings 64*, Dallas-based Paradigm Simulations has agreed to develop a PC title for an unnamed publisher.

The company has long been associated exclusively with Nintendo, and currently has four N64 titles in development, one in direct partnership with Nintendo, and three with Video Systems of Kyoto, Japan. It is also rumored that Paradigm will be one of the first companies to release a game compatible with both 64DD and Nintendo's currently unannounced modem for Nintendo 64.

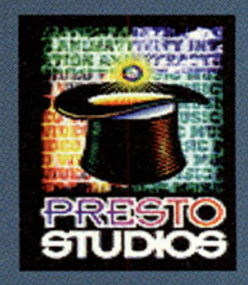


Activision has signed actor Bruce Willis to feature in *Apocalypse*, its upcoming PlayStation 3D action game. Willis, as the player's computer controlled partner, will contribute voice-over, his own motion-captured movements, and will also undergo "cyberscanning," a laser-guided mapping technique used by Activision to bring his facial features to the game. *Apocalypse* was first previewed in *NG25*, and will ship in late September.

SegaSoft plans to shift it's focus away from Saturn development, and instead will focus on PC products and specifically it's upcoming online gaming service tentatively entitled "Heat." As a result of the shift, SegaSoft laid off 19 people in January, roughly 10% of its 150 or so employees. The lay-offs came from departments ranging from administrative to product development. The company will continue console development, but not as its primary focus.

As this issue goes to press, Sega of America is also rumored to be on the brink of dramatic staff cutbacks. It is estimated that 35% of its U.S. staff will be let go — despite Saturn's significant rallying in the marketplace towards the end of last year.

Presto Studios is deep in production with *Journeyman Project 3*, the third graphic adventure in the *Journeyman* series. In this continuation of the time-travel based trilogy, players must track down a rogue agent. The 25 person team is scheduled to complete the project before the end of the year and will be published by Broderbund.



M2: Matsushita's 64-bit console gets games

M2 may be "cooling off" in terms of hype and profile. But NG has learned of at least one M2 game that could rekindle the flames

Following its recent coverage of Matsushita's infamous M2 platform, **Next Generation** has uncovered news of a third-party game to be developed for the system in the U.K. *Power Crystal* is the work of Perceptions, a team of ten people who have spent the past two years developing a state-of-the-art, real-time 3D adventure in the mold of the forthcoming Nintendo 64 game, *Zelda 64*.

All in-game characters in *RPG Power Crystal* will be rendered with polygons. Developer Perceptions plans for an enormous interactive world to explore

***RPG Power Crystal*, with its real-time environment, is one of the first games for M2 developed outside of Japan**

This group of head-hunted developers came together after company C.E.O. Andrew Whittaker finished coding work on the Jaguar game *Alien vs. Predator* for Rebellion, only to be then approached by The 3DO Company. At this time 3DO still held all rights to the M2 hardware and its sale to Matsushita at the end of 1995 has since drawn clouds over the future of the console and all software currently in development. Whittaker remains optimistic, however, telling **Next Generation**: "We believe that M2 is a very strong platform and we believe in supporting new technologies. But we do not have all our eggs in just the one basket and we will continue to support other game machines."

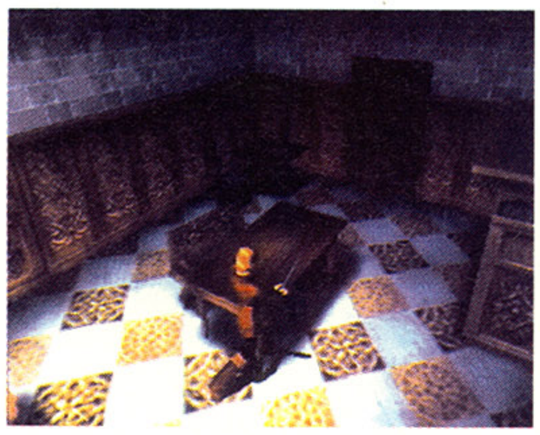
Despite working on underpowered development kits — still based around a single PowerPC 602 instead of the dual configuration planned for the final machine — the Perceptions team is enthusiastic about the hardware. "M2 really is the single finest piece of hardware that we have worked with," continues Whittaker. "Its power will hit the world of

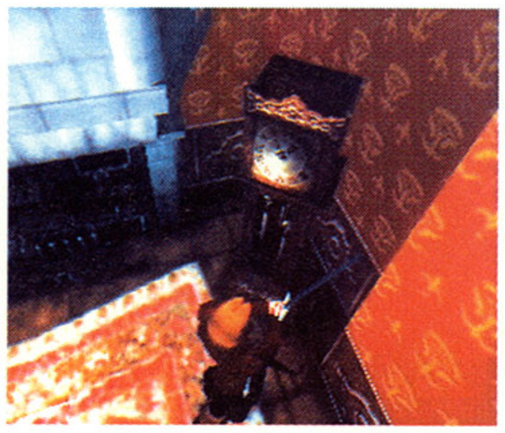
Sega merges with Bandai

In a surprise move, Sega and toy-giant Bandai have announced that they are set to merge later in '97. The two companies will come together in October to form "a formidable force" in the business of entertainment.

News agency Reuters spoke to Yasuo Imanaka, an analyst at Okasan Economic Research Institute: "I don't think the new firm can beat Sony's PlayStation in any way. It's hard to see merit in the merger. Both companies have problems in similar fields." But Masahiro Ono, an analyst at Credit Lyonnais Securities offered: "The merger will provide Sega certain competitiveness in next-generation game machines."

We will wait and see...





Warp's *D2* is an advanced M2 title in development and shows great potential. Despite this, even its creators are unsure what the future holds

"M2 is the single finest piece of hardware that we have worked with. Its power will hit like a tidal wave"

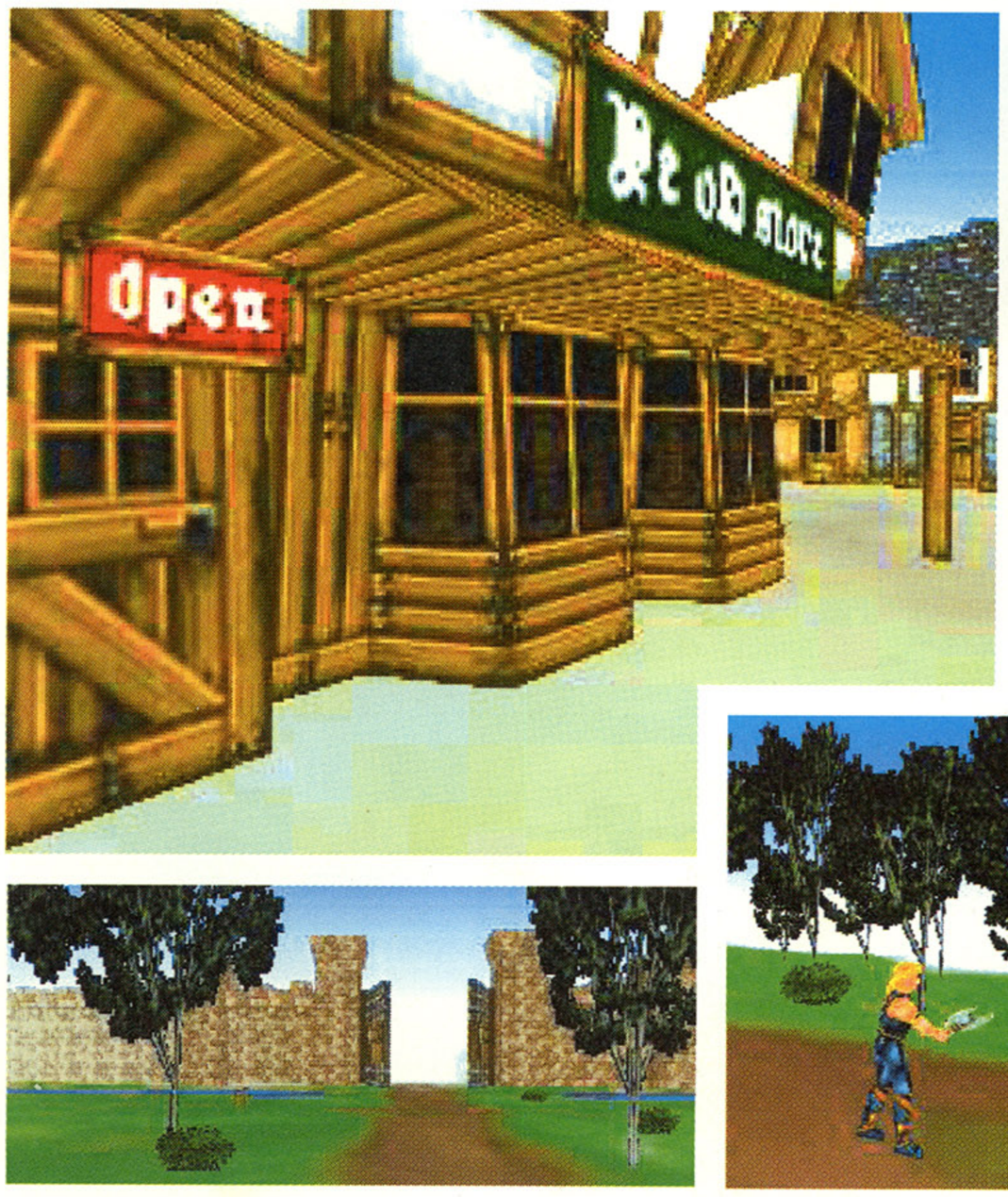
Andrew Whitaker, Cyclone

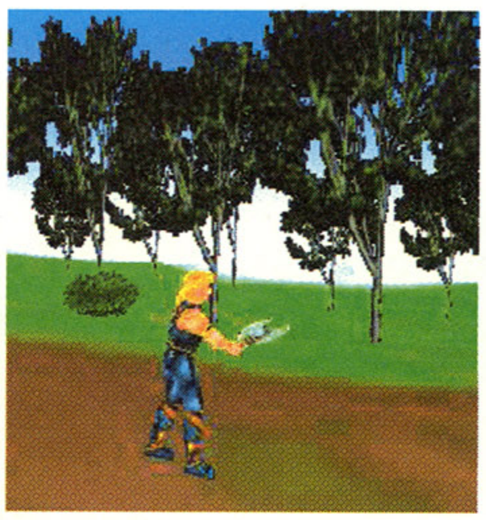
entertainment software like a tidal wave, and to call it a quantum leap forward is such a gross understatement that it does it injustice. Its texture-mapping power and brute processing speed means that we can do so much more than on other systems, and *Power Crystal* is the game we've always wanted to build."

Meanwhile, on the M2 front in Japan, all has gone strangely quiet once more. Following **Next Generation**'s exclusive reports, Matsushita is refusing to talk further about its console plans, but its links with coin-op developers Capcom and Konami are finally starting to bear fruit. On a recent visit to Capcom's Osaka offices, **NG** was shown a prototype fighting game running on Matsuhita's hardware, while it is also known that a Konami M2 fighting game has been spotted on test at an arcade site in Kobe. No screenshots of either are currently available, and it isn't even known if the companies plan to unveil the games at the gigantic AOU show.

Similarly, Japanese third-party development is still largely in the hands of Warp and its D2 project, although **Next Generation** has also learned of one other title — this one from Genki, a team that has worked on several titles for Sony Music Entertainment (*Beltogger 9* being its most recent). The title is rumored to be a shooter in the style of *Panzer Dragoon*, although no official comment has yet been made.

So far, Matsushita's handling of M2 has garnered little confidence from the software development community, and until the company reveals its plans for a consumer launch, it's unlikely that the situation will improve. Until then, we will endeavor to uncover more information and to present an exclusive in-depth look at *Power Crystal*. ng





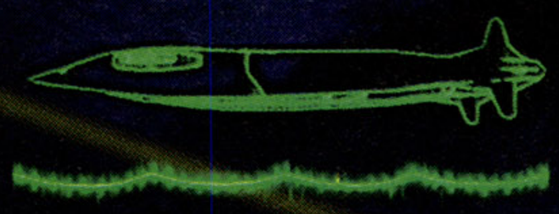
The system's lighting and texturing features will be used to create an exceptional atmosphere, such as in this beautiful village scene, in *RPG Power Crystal*. Its complex landscape is generated at 60fps

Crib sheet

Stuff every gamer should know. This month, a particularly thorny issue:

No. 8 Violence

OK, forget the whole "Does it rot your brain?" debate for a minute, why do so *many* videogames feature violence in the first place?
There are three main reasons. The first is because games have traditionally been aimed at young boys — and young boys like violence.
They *like* violence? They like playing with the idea of violence: Just ask Hulk Hogan.
OK, and the second reason is? The second is because videogaming has developed its own traditions and themes the same as any other medium: There will always be one-on-one fighting games and shoot-'em-ups, and there will always be movies made about incompatible cop parings and "opposite attract" love stories.
So why did they start off violent in the first place? This is actually the third reason — it's because it's easy to do.
Easy? Yes, it's the easiest thing to do. The earliest videogames (and 1997's offerings really aren't that much more advanced) can display simple objects in 2D space: Objects can't change that much — but they can appear and disappear, and this lends itself to being "alive" or "dead"; Players can't have a conversation with the creatures they meet in the game, but they can try to kill them — it's the most basic communication of all.
Sounds like primitive life! Exactly — it is.



HYDROFOIL MODE:

Approx. height above ocean surface: 5'5"

A killer submarine.
A deadly hydrofoil.

SURFACE WEAPONS:

2.75' Shrike homing missiles

2.75' Blowpipe heavy rockets

2.75' F-90 cluster munitions

25mm GAU-90 4 barrels rotary cannon

1" Stiletto salvo rockets

SUB-SURFACE WEAPONS:

2cm multiheterodyne pulse laser

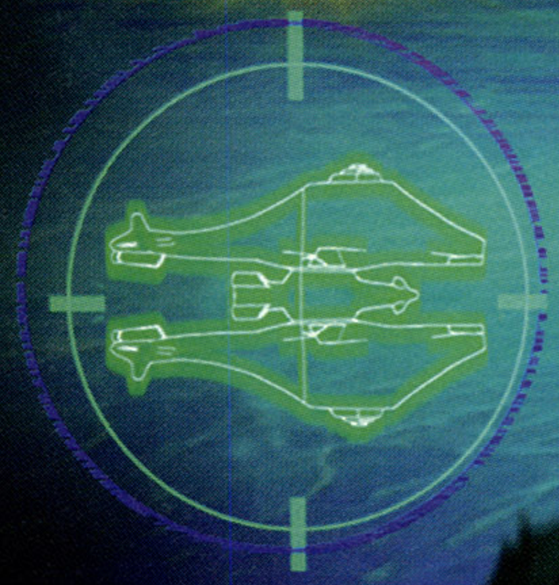
3" EXT Disruptor sonic torpedo

6" Piranha heavy swarm torpedo

6" Mark-60 Thresher torpedo

6" Mark-65 Moray torpedo

6" Mark-68 Barracuda homing torpedo



SUB-SURFACE MODE:

Hull pressure resistant to 1100 meters

nSPACE
RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation
Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

2060 A.D. The Red menace has resurfaced.

The sea boils with submarines and battlecruisers, blood and oil.

The skies are dark with enemy birds.

Tigershark has been deployed.

A fully-loaded subfoil prototype.

Forged for war. Built for speed.

Dead set on destruction.

Underwater. And over it.

Tigershark is hungry.

The feeding frenzy is about to begin.

The ultimate war machine...

COME HELL AND HIGH WATER

TIGERSHARK

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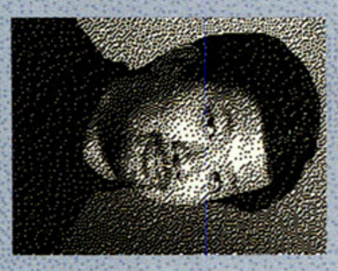
GT Interactive Software

Gaming on the Internet

DIABLO

A look at what's happening in online role-playing games: A special perspective on *Diablo*'s diabolism

by **Bernard Yee**



Bernard Yee has contributed to *USA Today* and writes regularly for *PC Gamer*, *PC Magazine*, and has authored several books on gaming

Everyone's talking about it. *Diablo*, the diabolically addictive RPG-action hybrid that's taking a whole host of people for a ride on the Internet. The press has gone ga-ga over the game, and maybe that's due to the dearth of quality fantasy role-playing games in these parts. But it's more than that. It has to do with what it's like to play online.

Diablo, for those who have been living under a rock, is a fantasy role-playing game using an overhead, isometric view, much like *Crusader: No Regret*. You can choose one of three classes: the brawny, sword slinging warrior, the nimble, arrow-shooting rogue, or the smart, spell-casting sorcerer. No adjustment of stats is allowed until you gain a level.

Diablo randomizes its dungeons, doling out a subset of the game's available and preset quests in special areas of the dungeon until you face *Diablo* on the 16th level of the dungeon. *Diablo* uses a simple formula: keep the next cool thing just around the corner, so you'll be looking to finish that new mini-quest or vanquish that special evil foe — until you realize it's 3 a.m. and you have to go to work in a few hours.

Diablo isn't perfect — it has numerous design constraints. It seems designed first and foremost as a single-player game. Early in the game, you lure monsters through a doorway. That way, they come through one at a time and right into your sword or spell. For instance, the Butcher is pretty dangerous, and the best way to take him on is to run through a door with grates on the wall, shut the door and fire arrows or cast spells through the grate; unlike later nasties, the Butcher isn't smart enough to open the stupid door. As far as I can tell, there is no puzzle in the game that requires more than one player to solve, and that's a pity.

There is some replayability in *Diablo* for sure; after all, your solo character cannot be ported to multiplayer play. No save game in multiplayer, a good thing — if you save, what happens to other players? Die in the dungeon, and you reappear in the town — but most of your stuff is lying where you left it. But there are some annoying things too, like gold; if you run out of places to keep gold in your inventory, that's it — you lose any left on the ground once you exit the multiplayer game session. In the solo game, the universe is persistent; that is, clear out a level, and it stays cleared out.

The game is fun for a simple reason. It plays well in cooperative mode. There are player killers online, but players benignly cooperate too, so the game is fun. *Diablo* takes away some of the skill required to master a game like *Quake*, too; for the uninitiated, showing up in a *Quake* online game almost never means cooperative play, and those *Quake* zealots who have mastered the game slaughter the rest of us. *Diablo* takes away some twitch response, and gives us more to hang our hat on (gray matter) in that you develop your character the way you see fit and acquire items that suit your playing style.

Remember your character can run into unfriendly gamers too; one way to ensure this doesn't overwhelm a newbie: don't be a newbie. When you get onto battle.net or MPath, create a game for yourself only — that way, no one comes in. Clear the first two levels and you'll have a sixth or seventh level character, able to fend for itself. Then run and meet the rest of the world

A hardware nightmare deal with the 56K bps modem. Competing standards are cropping up, and there's some confusion over upgrade policies on "upgradable to 56K" 33.6 modems selling today; you'll have to pay for your USR upgrade unless you can prove you bought it during the free upgrade promo (which lasted less than two months). The jury's still out as to how often you'll get 56K bps throughput; a Hayes spokesperson said beta testers got that speed "90% of the time or more" — yet savvy users will notice that they often don't get true 28K bps connections on lines today. NG's advice: wait till late '97 when the standards have been finalized, or go ISDN if you want speed.

Some users experience cable modems in areas with forward-thinkin' cable companies — and that certainly doesn't include Time Warner Cable. One user told me he downloaded the huge *Diablo* demo in something like seven minutes. That's the wave of the future. ng

Data stream

Worldwide unemployment figure: **8 billion**

3DO Company net income for 2nd quarter of '96: **$6.8 million**

Silicon Graphics 1st quarter operating profit '96: **$18 million**

The maximum continuous time logged by a single *Meridian 59* beta tester: **26 hours**

Number of virtual weddings which have taken place in *Meridian 59* : **20**

Number of weddings which (sadly) have ended in divorce: **2**

Number of (happy) reconciliations following divorces: **1**

U.K.'s position in the world literacy league table '96: **16th**

U.S.A.'s position in the world literacy league table '96: **28th**

According to Jupiter Communications, estimated number of households with Net access by the year 2000: **66 million**

VideoLogic turnover in six months up to September 30, 1996: **$10 million**

Net loss over same period: **$2 million**

Annual losses caused by piracy to European business software developers: **$4.4 billion**

Number of Intel Employees at end of '95: **41,600**

Number hired during '95: **9,000**

Number of active FBI special agents: **10,529**

Number of full time staff at Next Generation: **12**

Longest time served on magazine: **two and a half years**

Shortest time served on magazine: **one and a half days**

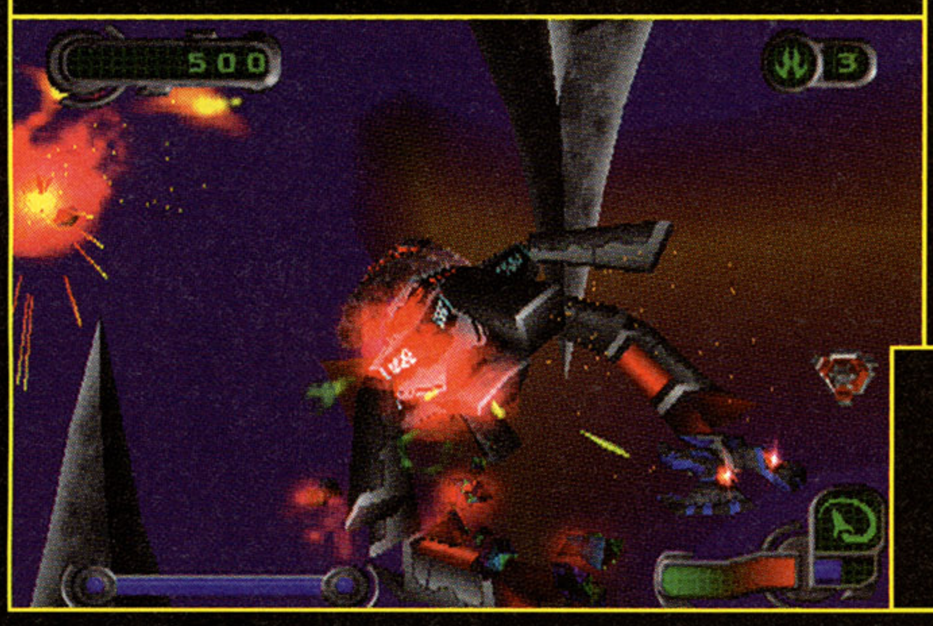
Yesterday, you were a cocky 2-D arcade shooter.

Today, you totally suck.

We hate to break the rude news, but you're about to be humbled. It's the 23rd century. Nano-robots are on the rampage. And you've gotta deep-six hundreds of vicious killing machines and eight virtually indestructible nano-bosses. The good news is you can run. The bad news is, in this 3-D world, you can forget about hiding in corners. At 30 FPS, it's a 32-bit firestorm of nonstop death and destruction. Where the fighting is fast and furious enough to turn you into a certified junkie. With progressively difficult levels and an intense play environment, NanoTek Warrior offers awesome replay value. Which means just maybe, by the turn of the century, you'll be back to your same old cocky self.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment · PlayStation · Kids to Adults ESRB · Tetragon®

www.vie.com



NanoTek Warrior™

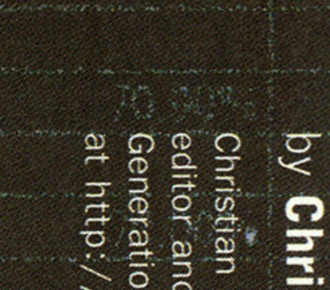
© 1996 Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. NanoTek Warrior is a trademark of Tetragon and Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Inc. Virgin is a registered trademark of Virgin Enterprises, Ltd. Sony, the Sony PlayStation and the PlayStation Logos are all trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Chin up. At least you don't suck at reading mice type.

breaking

Movers & Shakers

The business news that affects the games you play

by **Christian Svensson**



Christian Svensson is the assistant editor and webmaster at Next Generation Online which can be found at http://www.next-generation.com/

SONY UNITES PS-X CONTROL

NEWSLINE: Sony announced the transfer of all North American and European PlayStation-related companies from Sony Corp in New York to Sony Computer Entertainment Interactive in Tokyo. In essence, the transfer gives SCEI in Japan complete control over all areas of strategy for the machine's future. Sony Corp deals with a multitude of interests in the entertainment business including movies and music, while SCEI is wholly dedicated to interactive entertainment.

BOTTOMLINE: For the first time since PlayStation's embryonic days, the global fate of the machine has been placed in the hands of a single division within Sony. It could be suggested that the move reflects the trend within Sony to centralize the management of its videogame interests in Japan, or at least to keep international operations on a tight leash. Certainly, Tokyo has generally exercised more direct control over PlayStation in the U.S. than New York has.

SEGA EXTENDS TRIPLE PACK

NEWSLINE: To nobody's great surprise, Sega decided to continue with its "three-free-games-plus-coupons" Saturn promotion even through the relatively barren months of late winter.

BOTTOMLINE: The promotion was originally slated to end on December 31, 1996 but was extended for the first three months of 1997. Will Saturn then go back to its November 1996 price without any further consumer incentives? Don't bet against a price drop.

ACCLAIM CHANGING WAYS

NEWSLINE: Acclaim — a controversial name in game publishing — outlined its plans for recovery following yet another dismal financial performance. Following losses of over $220 million for 1996, the New York publishing giant lost a further $19 million for the first quarter of 1997.

BOTTOMLINE: "Prudence" is the word at Acclaim these days. That means not only counting paperclips, but also starting a publishing strategy. Games will only be released on appropriate formats. Marketing campaigns will now be measured (as opposed to being measured in millions). And the fabled alchemy of licenses-to-profits has finally been disregarded.

EIDOS EYES EXPANSION

NEWSLINE: Eidos is set to embark on a busy year of development acquisitions in the U.S. The company has already scooped up the rights to hotshot start-up Ion Storm which includes a fair smattering of Id's departed talent.

BOTTOMLINE: This is a company with a great deal of money and, following the success of *Tomb Raider*, no small measure of kudos. Eidos says it's a company that can communicate with the development community and paints a dark picture of those publishing behemoths that snap up talent like so many groceries. Ion Storm, which could pretty much have signed with anyone it chose, was obviously listening.

NINTENDO'S DRAGON CRISIS

NEWSLINE: Enix surprised everyone by announcing that *Dragon Quest 7* would be arriving on PlayStation and not exclusively, as expected, on the Nintendo 64DD. The significance of the announcement is such that two of the three titles that the 64DD was largely designed specifically for are not going to appear on the Nintendo 64 exclusively, or, in one case, at all.

BOTTOMLINE: The *Dragon Quest* games are immense in Japan. Such was the reaction to Enix's announcement that Nintendo's stock took a nasty tumble, and Enix's took an equally dramatic increase. Nintendo issued no comment about the situation but, revealingly, spent the next week leaking hitherto taboo *Zelda 64* and *Mother 3* screenshots to a grateful press.

SENSITIVITY OR CENSORSHIP?

NEWSLINE: The Chinese Government has fined a software company for distributing a World War II battle simulation. Glory Software was forced to pay $60,000 to the city of Tainjin after a court decided that *Governer's Decision* violated a Chinese law banning the celebration of "Japanese militarism against China."

BOTTOMLINE: Sensitivity about World War II and the inevitable evil of censorship continues, though it's not confined to regimes such as communist China. Enlightened Germany still rigiorously enforces a law that bans the glorification of Nazism in entertainment including computer games and war simulations. ng

Beware of these Games!

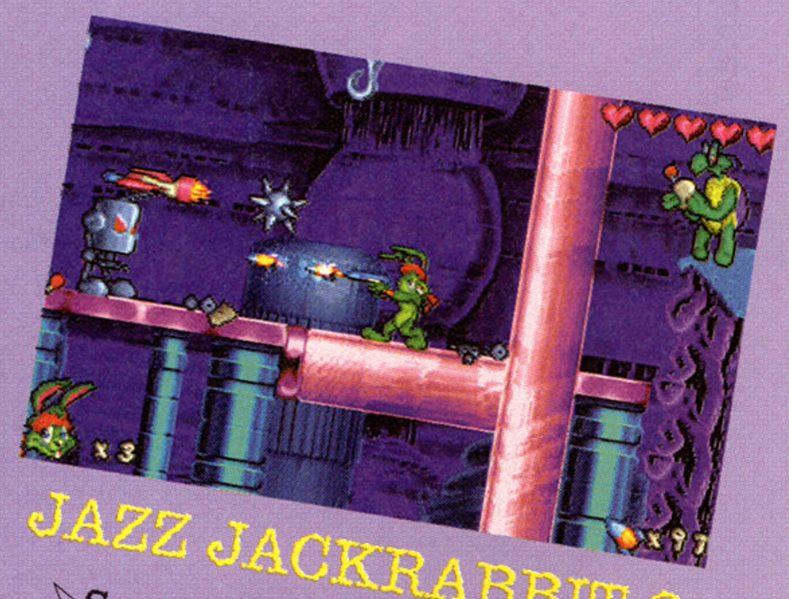
FIRE FIGHT

Call 1-800-972-7434 to order.

- 18 levels of missile-filled mayhem
- Hi-res multi-level parallax graphics
- Rated 90 percent by PC Gamer
- 4-player network/2-player modem support

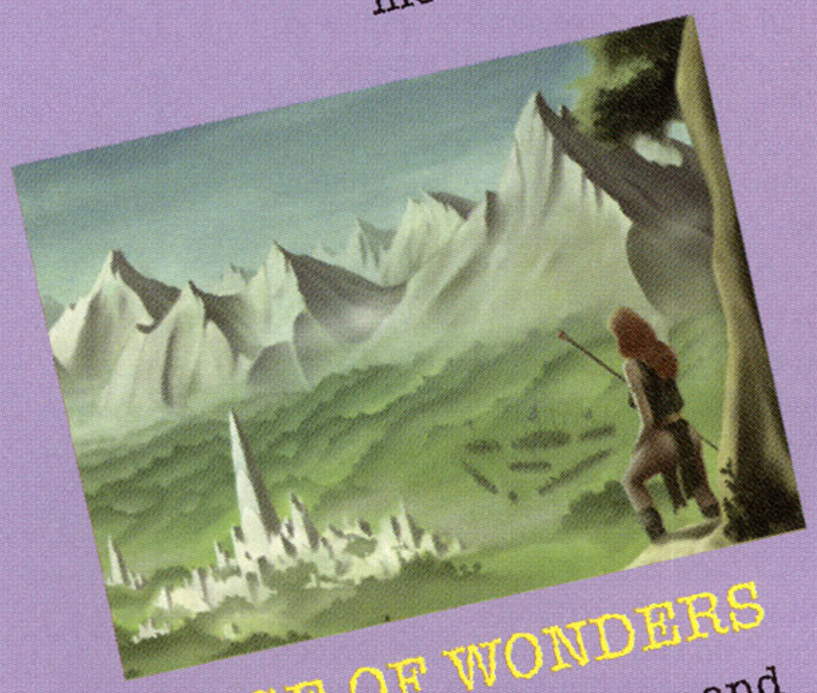
UNREAL

- Fast 640x480 action in 16-bit color
- Stunningly lifelike true 3-D world
- Designed for play on the Internet
- Create your own worlds with UnrealEd



JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2

- Sequel to one of the best PC arcade games ever made
- 2-player split-screen play
- Multi-player network/modem play
- Design your own levels with the Jazz Editor



AGE OF WONDERS

- Captivating strategy and adventure
- Beautiful hand-drawn graphics
- Hundreds of unique animated characters
- Multi-player internet play

7TH LEGION

- Fast paced real-time action/strategy
- Stunning SVGA graphics and rendered cinematics
- Tons of weapons and power-ups
- Multi-player modem, LAN and Internet play

CURLY'S ADVENTURE

- Wacky point & click graphic adventure
- Hilarious spoken dialogue and cinematics
- Over 70 locations to explore
- Hand-drawn 640x480 SVGA graphics

Fellow Canines,

As you know, life is full of petty annoyances: baths, choke collars, the biscuit-on-the-nose trick, etc. But the new Only-for-Pentium®, Only-for-Windows 95™ games from Epic MegaGames are a greater threat to your quality of life than all these things combined.

Once your owner brings these totally absorbing, technologically ground breaking games into your home, you'll find yourself waiting longer for food, walks, attention, you name it. It's treatment not even fit for a cat!

Believe me, I'm not just talking about the typical attention you lose to ordinary computer games here. If you see an Epic game in your house, dig a nice deep hole and bury it immediately. Once your owner starts playing, it will already be too late.

Dobbs

P.S. Do **NOT** let your owners visit www.epicgames.com/newgames

breaking

Arcadia

All the latest arcade and coin-op news

by **Marcus Webb**

Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the leading U.S. trade amusement magazine

Rattle Your **Tin Cup!**

Start practicing your fairway drives and sharpening up your putting skills, gamers. Chicago videogame factory Incredible Technologies will hold its first-ever national championship playoffs on Peter Jacobsen's *Golden Tee 3D Golf* at an industry trade show in Las Vegas. About 1,500 units of this popular, modem-linked skill game are online in sports bars and arcades in over 40 states across the USA.

By spending $5 per entry, you can enter the contest locally. If you're good enough, you might be one of 12 contenders who are flown to Vegas, all expenses paid, to compete against America's top gamers on *Golden Tee 3D Golf* for cash prizes totaling over $30,000. In addition, cash and other prizes will be awarded to 40 regional or state winners and to local winners in every participating location (arcade, bar, pizza place, and so on). In 1996, Incredible Technologies awarded over $100,000 to gamers in over 40 states who competed in local, state, and regional tournaments on this game. Look for contest details on the LED sign atop *Golden Tee 3D Golf* games in your region. By the way, the factory says similar cash prize contests on its next online arcade video, *World Class Bowling*, may start by this spring.

Microsoft **Marches On**

Arcadia's readers know that Microsoft announced a major initiative in the fall of 1996 to bridge the worlds of console, PC, and arcade videos. How? By promoting the use of Windows as a common platform. Since my last column, several big developments have occurred on this front.

First, those amazing computer chip makers at Intel have announced that their powerful new MMX chip will help Microsoft achieve its goals. Intel, creators of the famous Pentium processor, says that MMX will permit drastic improvements in the quality of graphics and sound for both arcade games and home games which are run on PCs. By fall of 1997, Intel believes its MMX chip should enable a Windows-based arcade videogame to perform as well as today's latest hot fighters from Sega, Namco, and Atari. The MMX should also cut in half the time needed to translate an arcade hit to the home market, says Intel.

As this issue went to press, I hadn't received official word, but reliable sources say Microsoft is planning a huge announcement of major news about its videogame plans. Apparently, the software giant hopes to endorse and adopt technical specs for a universal game platform and network as set forth by the National Amusement Network. (NANI). NANI is a joint venture of AMOA, the arcade owners' national trade association, and the brilliant engineers at TVPhone Inc. The Microsoft move, if it goes through as described, would mean the world's largest software company is throwing its considerable weight behind efforts to ensure arcade owners have access to an "open" system. An open system would be an arcade game video network which could run software from any game creator, designer, or publisher who wants to participate. This would stand in dramatic contrast to Sega, Konami, Namco, and other individual arcade videogame factories who might be planning a proprietary system (that is, "if you take my network, you gotta take my games only"). Any such "closed" network will face powerful competition with a more flexible, more appealing business model, it seems.

Microsoft has always said its first priority in all this is to promote wider use of Windows. But now it turns out it also has an intriguing secondary goal: to get into the business of creating and selling videogames. Microsoft has quietly founded a game development unit, and this organization has already hired (among others) the ingenious Russian programmer who invented *Tetris*. He's now hard at work on creating multiplayer successors to the original *Tetris* concept.

New **Games** Coming!

Coming soon to an arcade near you will be a whole new batch of eye-dazzling simulators and hi-tech fighters. Sega GameWorks has applied its Model 3 board (first seen in *Virtua Fighter 3*) for the first time to a sit-down driving simulator. It's called *Super GT* (see page 60). And Konami's got a wild new driver called *GTI Club*.

And by the time you read this, Atari Games will have debuted possibly the most awesome fighting video we've ever seen: look for the word "Mace" in the title. The quality of animation, background lighting, movement, character design, and lifelike interaction between characters, props, and backgrounds can only be called a masterpiece.

Tekken Is 1.5 Times **Faster**

In its ongoing game of techno-leapfrog, Namco's latest jump forward is called System 12. This snazzy platform offers a processing speed 1.5 times faster than Namco's earlier workhorse (System 11). The results can be seen in the first System 12 game, *Tekken 3*: sharp, realistically shaded and lit characters; accurately depicted backgrounds; character fighting moves depicted via "motion capture" techniques; and added moves and combos for characters. This one packs a real wallop! The storyline has our hero from the previous games, Heihachi, staging the "King of the Iron Fist Tournament 3." His plan is to lure his arch-enemy Kazuya out of hiding for a final confrontation to see who gets to rule a giant financial empire. *Tekken 3* again features "Time Release" gameplay, an original Namco innovation first seen in *Tekken 2*. This breakthrough system automatically adds selectable characters to the game over succeeding weeks and months, so you'll find that gameplay stays fresh on your later visits to the arcade.

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Splatterball	Rolemaster: The Bladelands
Virtual Pool	Neverwinter Nights

...many more to come

©1997 ENGAGE games online.
Some games not available
on some services.

GADGET

Peripherals, accessories, gizmos, add-ons, thingies, and stuff

Proview TV Box
Price: $119
Manufacturer: Proview
System: PC

Although Proview, a subsidiary of Essex Monitor Company of Hong Kong, has been one of the smaller distributors of PC monitors in the U.S., it's a major supplier of monitors to Pacific Rim countries and some parts of Europe. Its latest product, the TV Box, is a 181-channel TV tuner that outputs a VGA signal, so users can watch TV through their PC monitors. The unit features a connector for antenna/cable input and RCA jacks for composite video in/out from a VCR or video game console. Compatibility with any user's existing system is ensured, as the unit is an independent device which uses no software, and includes a VGA pass through for connecting to a PC, and 1/8" stereo jacks with line in/out for connecting to a sound card and PC speakers.

Given that 21-inch TV sets are rapidly approaching the norm, watching TV (or playing a console game) on even a 17-inch PC screen may at first seem less than ideal. However, the TV Box does exactly what Proview says it will. Its relative low cost (keeping in mind that you can pick up a 14-inch TV these days for about the same price) and ease of use (it comes with a remote for controlling all functions) make it an attractive space-saving solution for people in dorm rooms, offices, bedrooms, and other small areas that already have a PC but to which users might want to add a TV.

Arcade Shark
Price: $59.99
Manufacturer: Interact
System: Nintendo 64

This month's featured controller comes to us from Interact, makers of fine controllers for all systems. The Arcade Shark is the first arcade-style joystick available for Nintendo 64 and features all the expected buttons for an N64 controller, plus auto-fire, slow motion (which, as always, is really just an auto-fire for the start button), and a memory card slot. The unit comes with one knob, which can be screwed into either the digital or analog pads (which does make us wonder what players will do when they want to play a game that requires both, but we digress). It's as sturdy as we've come to expect from Interact, and if you're a fan of N64 fighting games, you'll probably want one.

Datebook

April

Computer Game Developer's Conference (CGDC) from April 25 to 29 will be at the Santa Clara Convention Center, CA. The expo is from April 27 to 29. It's for supergeeks of all types. Send your name, title, company name, and address to cgdc@mfi.com. Visit the web site at http://www. cgdc.com. To join the Computer Game Developer's Association, call (415) 948-CGDC or fax (415) 948-2744.

Seybold Seminars comes to New York. The Conference will be April 21 to 25; Expo will be April 23 to 25. Seybold New York will take place in the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in Manhattan. For more info, visit Seybold's web site at http://www.seyboldseminars.com/

May

Multimedia 97 Exposition and Forum will take place May 6 to 9 at the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Canada. The show features five major components: Multimedia Communications, Virtual Reality World, VICOM, Showcase On Production, and Electronic Design. For more information, call (905) 660-2491, fax (905) 660-2492, or e-mail moreinfo@multimedia.ca. Visit the official WWW-site at http://multimedia.magic.ca to get show details.

The show for arcade insiders is the **AAMA/AMOA 1997** Washington Conference at the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel, Washington, D.C. For more information, call the AAMA at (847) 290-9088.

June

The one and only **Electronic Entertainment Exposition** (aka **E3**) doesn't take place in Los Angeles but in Atlanta from June 19 through June 21, 1997. Visit http://www.mha.com/e3/ for more information on E3.

The Spring **CES** (Consumer Electronics Show) will be held June 2 to 5 in Atlanta, Georgia.

The **Spring Comdex** will be held June 2 to 5 in Atlanta, Georgia. It promises to be a busy week in Atlanta. Bill Gates is one of the keynote speakers at this Comdex, so you better sign up early. Check out the details at http://www.comdex.com

July

The **Comdex Internet Show** will be at Moscone in San Francisco from July 21 through July 25.

September

Seybold San Francisco: Seybold's Conference is from Sept 29 to October 3. Seybold Exposition will take place from October 1 to 3. For more info, visit Seybold at http://www.seyboldseminars.com/

SHOW ORGANIZERS: If your show isn't listed here it's because we don't know about it. But we'd like to know about it. Please fax us at (415) 468-4686; e-mail us at ngonline@imagine-inc.com; or write us at DateBook, **Next Generation**, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005

ASCII ENTERTAINMENT

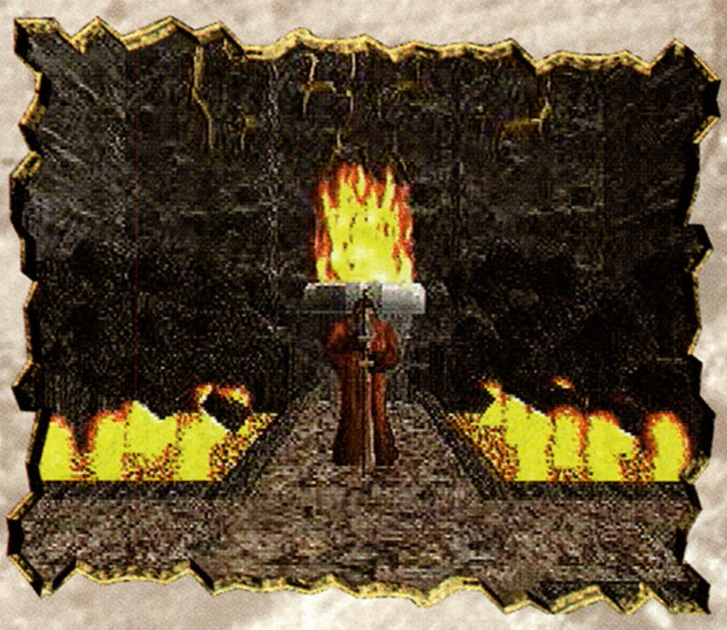
KING'S FIELD II

What it takes to make an epic RPG/Adventure game

Mad Dog McGamer

King's Field II, following on the heels of the wildly successful original, is hands down the best thing to happen to the PlayStation! Every aspect that made the original a hit are back - with reinforcements! ASCII has made an incredible effort to give you the best RPG to find it's way to the home market. Making an encore performance are the artfully designed landscapes and brilliant effects of the first 360°, fully rendered masterpiece, but this time, ASCII has included a host of improvements that will fulfill your every fantasy!

Story line, sound, action and graphics made their way to the top of ASCII's to do list with upgrades ranging from original compositions in beautiful stereo sound to SGI rendered cut sequences!



The blood red skies of Verdite look on as a lone figure ventures out into the grisly scene of carnage and death. Austin Lyle Forester, prince of the bedamned kingdom of Verdite unsheaths the mighty Excellector and prepares his heart and soul for the journey just set before him...

The young prince had listened in horror as Leon spun the tale of the past ten years of chaos and destruction. After Alexander's triumphant return from Melanat with the Moonlight Sword, peace had ensued for five years in the great kingdom as the peasants grew soft...lulled by the prosperity and peace they had enjoyed. But five years later, the sun shone for the last time on Verdite, a great storm was seen on the horizon - a storm with intent of the purest evil. Lightening struck the tower, utterly shattering the Moonlight Sword, and the Holy King, John Alfred Forester fell ill.

When the king recovered, he was a changed man. It was as if the devil himself had taken the throne of Verdite. The reign of terror he ushered in after his recovery had no parallel in all of history. Evil demons of every conjuring imaginable took to the kingdom like a hungering plague, littering the beautiful hills and plains with the terrible carnage only a bloodthirsty God could permit. Alexander had tried in vain to help his former friend, the king, but after finding only the remaining hilt of the great Moonlight Sword, he gave his life to seal the Demon King within the castle walls.

How could Lyle's own father have done such terrible

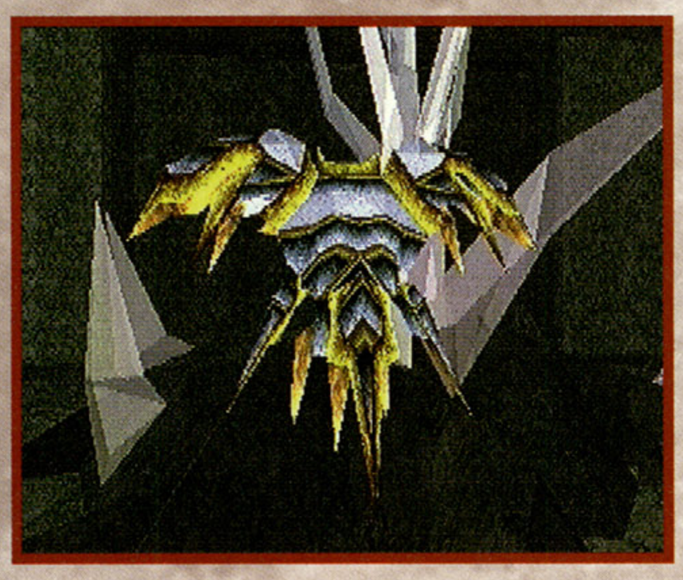
things? Lyle's struggle was brief. The deeds that had transpired over the past ten years would have to be met with the terrible steel of battle, his was the quest for blood...the blood of his own demon father, King John Alfred Forester - UN-Holy King of Verdite!!

This will be your quest in ASCII's sequel to last year's Smash Hit, King's Field.

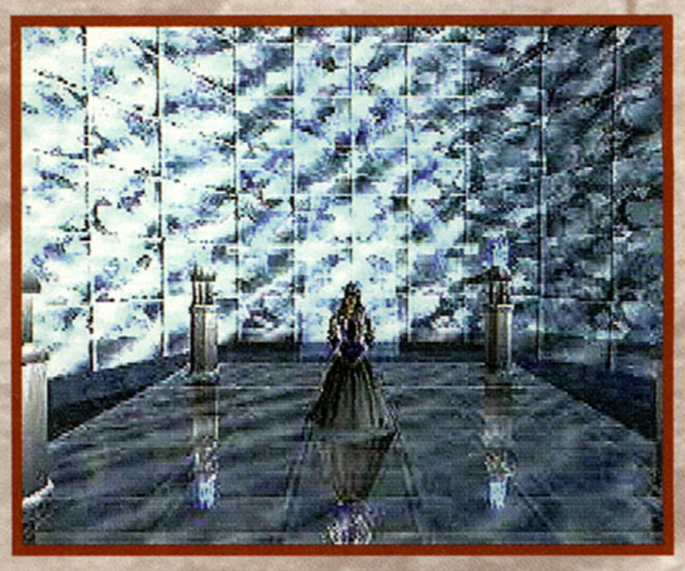
KING'S FIELD II

Advertisement

First on the boards was the Story line. In response to consumer requests, and their own dreams for the sequel, ASCII employed a team of experts in the RPG and writing fields to breath the life into King's Field II that would make it a timeless classic. Austin Leininger, formerly "Sir Garnabus" of GamePro Magazine worked with the rewrite along with ASCII's own Jane Cowley and expert GameMasters David Silviera and Mark Johnson to bring the flare of professional Gamers into the plotline, making King's Field II one of the first RPG's to hit the PlayStation completely written for the American Gamer!



Packs, clans, and families of previously undiscovered monsters ravage Verdite as you battle against them with an improved arsenal of over twenty new weapons along with several old favorites! Over 100 new items await your discovery along with the arrival of well over 50 completely new breeds of monsters. These improvements complement the plot well as you journey through the villages of your kingdom speaking with well developed characters that will suck you into their world within moments! ASCII spent a lot of time on the development of new characters in King's Field II. Humor, depth, personality, and history can be found in every character you encounter. Along with each meeting comes a chance for additional sub-plots - and of course, the acquisition of more items and power - as you involve yourself in the lives of your royal subjects and your kingdom.



Naturally, ASCII took the time to improve on the knowledge, use, and appearance of magical spells as well! Forty different magics in five disciplines can be at your command. All magics are either new, or have been redesigned to look and sound as powerful as the gods who invented them!

Next on ASCII's list was the question of sound. As in the original, King's Field II undertones your quest with the terrible wails and screams of the enemy. Those same battle cries of your flesh-hungry enemies louden as they approach, heightening the sense of reality in the game. In addition to this old favorite is the host of original music, written

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To order by Visa or Mastercard, call 415-780-0166. For the KF II hintline or to charge the guide to your phone bill, call 1-900-288-ASCII (2724). To order by mail, send money order made payable to ASCII Entertainment, P.O. Box 6639, San Mateo, CA 94403. Price is $12.95 plus $2.00 shipping & handling. Not available in stores.

900 line is $0.95 per minute. Callers under 18 must get parental permission to call. Touch tone phone required.

KING'S FIELD II

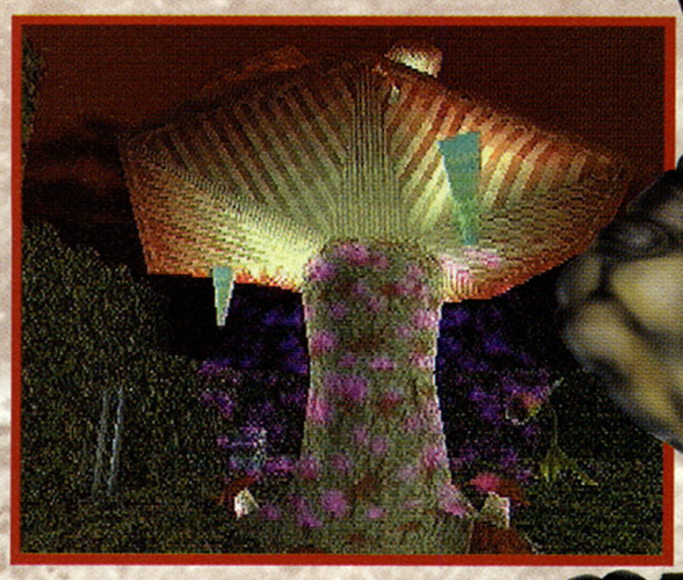
solely for use in King's Field II. The scores of new music are beautifully composed in stereo to complement whatever scene you are faced with, bringing tension and climax along with a beautifully felt ambiance throughout the game.

Of course, what would an RPG be in modern life without action!? ASCII has taken great pains to provide as much wonderfully gory and personally satisfying carnage as possible! Battles rage throughout your quest with new enemies, new magics, and new weapons. Even battles of epic proportions ensue as you take on the Gods themselves! Additionally, ASCII included several cut sequences in full SGI rendering. Key points in the game are perfectly ushered in with these awesome action scenes of graphical prowess.

Along with the enhanced character definition and overall improvements on landscape and character design, what could possibly make this game any better? Well...perhaps a copy of ASCII's King's Field II Strategy Guide! The same talents and energies that created the King's Field II masterpiece came together again to bring you the strategy book - actually written by the same hand that wrote the game itself! Who better to know than he who was the creator?! The book is beautifully designed of high quality paper and crystal clarity.

ASCII offers all of this, wrapped up in a beautifully rendered 3-D world of enhanced polygon graphics with texture mapped surroundings to give a complete package of absolute perfection!

Good Luck to you, mighty warriors, the battle ahead is like none you've ever seen! Choose your weapon wisely and you might even survive!



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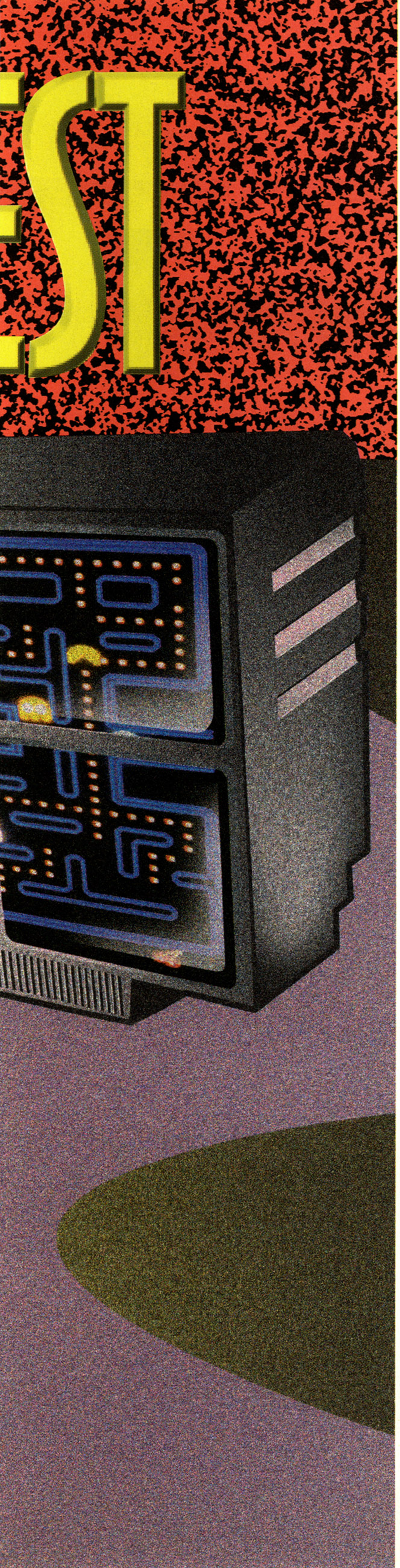


ng special

Those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. In the past 18 months, retro-videogaming has gone from fad to top-selling genre. What's so special about these old games, and what lessons should modern game designers be drawing from them? A **Next Generation** report

Why, in this age of super fast 3D graphics and $199 consoles that pack the power of SGI workstations, are so many gamers turning to classic games from 5, 10, 15, even 20 years ago? The current retrogaming phenomenon began during the uncertain time when 16-bit was clearly dying, but the next generation had yet to establish itself. Little worthwhile software was being released for Genesis or Super NES, and the libraries for 3DO and Jaguar were, well, the libraries for 3DO and Jaguar. Among the movie licenses, FMV extravaganzas, and poor 3D software of the then next-generation systems, gameplay seemed to be the very bottom priority for developers.

Unsatisfied with what was on store shelves, many gamers turned back to games they knew had the only thing that mattered — good gameplay.

Intellivisions and 2600s were dragged out of closets, NESes and Master Systems were rescued from little brothers' rooms. Gamers, while waiting for the revolution that wouldn't be delivered until Saturn and PlayStation hit American shores, played what they knew would deliver a fun, challenging experience, rather than shelling out $60 or $75 for a cart or CD that delivered little more than some bad acting, grainy video, and lackluster gameplay.

Even as PlayStation and Saturn arrived and thrived, however, the popularity of retrogaming has continued to grow. Why? Even given the notion that the power of the next-generation systems has finally enabled true arcade-perfect versions of games on home consoles, why would anyone rather play *Asteroids* or *Pac Man* than *Doom* or *Resident Evil*? Some may say it's just individual taste, but **Next Generation** contends that the question can at least partially be answered. We believe that retrogaming continues to gain popularity for concrete reasons, and lessons can be learned from the classic titles. Presented on the following pages are the reasons for — and lessons that we feel can be drawn from — the resurgence of retrogaming. Also included are boxouts on the various methods for playing classic games today.

Total Exploitation of a Limited World

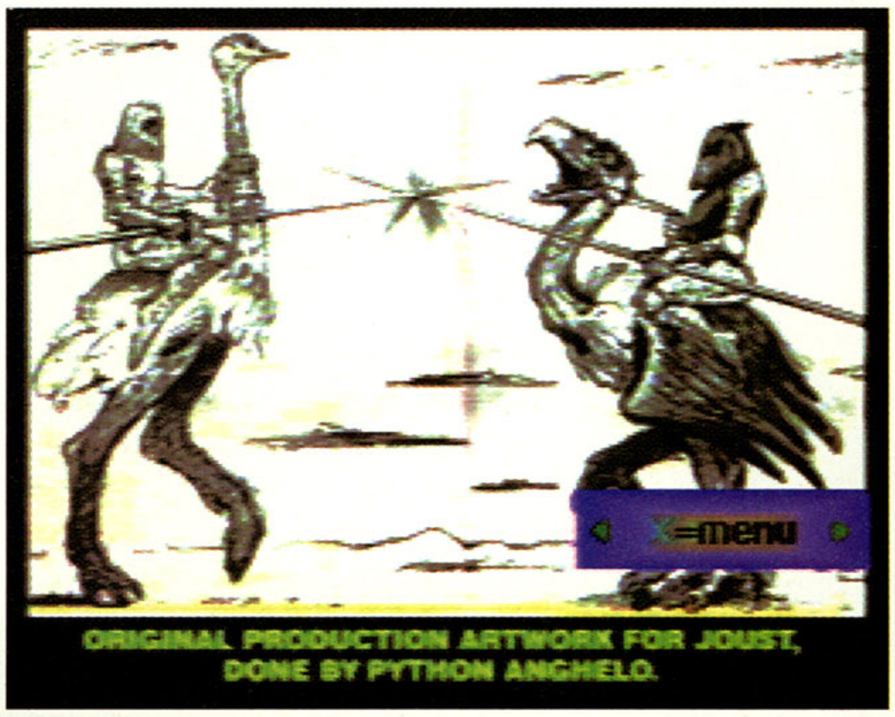
In stark contrast to the games of today, which often consist of huge, explorable, 3D worlds, the games of yesterday were much more limited — to a one dimensional, side-scrolling level or even to a single screen. But the best games then could give the user complete control over everything that happened in that limited space and a good sense of potential power over the game, versus say, the feeling of powerlessness imposed by a track-based shooter. Everything you could conceive of doing could be done in the limited space of a classic game, unlike, say, in a game such as *Pandemonium* in which you can see far more area than you can actually explore and interact with.

The limited environment also gives the designer more freedom to plan exactly how the user will come into contact with adversity, by it enemies or level challenges. A huge explorable area in a modern game might mean that the design can be no more in-depth than "here is a world, here are some enemies." In fact, to get any control at all over the user's interaction with enemies, it seems that freedom is restricted, as in *Nights*.

ng special

To some degree, it may seem like a trade-off — the more freedom you give the user to explore, the less control a designer has about exactly how he or she will face a given enemy or level design item. But classic games, thanks to their exceptionally limited environments, gave users as much freedom as they wanted and let them carefully plan their interaction with adverse conditions. Some good examples are *Tempest*, *Missile Command*, and *Joust*.

In *Joust*, for instance, you could fly anywhere you wanted to — you had full run of the entire game universe, such as it was. At the same time,



ORIGINAL PRODUCTION ARTWORK FOR JOUST, DONE BY PYTHON ANGHELO.

***Joust* is now available for Saturn, PlayStation, PC, Mac, Genesis, and Super NES. Some versions come complete with archival material**

however, players could only interface with ostriches in about seven distinct areas. Thus, the designer, John Newcomer, could take the time to tweak the game to ensure the interaction would be just as he wanted it to be. Contrast this to *Jet Moto*, an otherwise great game that has an extremely irritating "feature" in which it is possible to die in places in such a way that as soon as you restart, you die again. Very frustrating, and purely a result of a world in which, it seems, the user has too much freedom.

The lesson is simple. If you want to make a classic game, offer gamers a small world, in which that have total freedom, and somehow figure out a way to control how the player will interact with adversity.

Easier said than done, but more than a few modern games have done it. Fighting games, for example, do this perfectly, which is one reason, we feel, that they are so popular. Inside the ring, you can do anything you want — except really get away from your opponent. Shooters and 3D exploration games also do this, but it takes a lot of skill, time, and play testing. *Mario 64* and *Tomb Raider* do it very well, as does *Doom*; *Doom*'s success really owes more to level design than to engine prowess. *Tomb Raider*, in particular, combines level design and careful triggering of enemies to ensure that, while they can go anywhere and do anything in the game world (in pretty much any order they want), players are always very clearly marching to the beat of the game designer. That's why *Tomb Raider* will be remembered long after games such as *Bug* — with its frustratingly arbitrary lack of freedom — are forgotten.

Classic games were revolutionary, modern games are evolutionary

Eugene Jarvis, designer of *Defender* and *Robotron*, among others, made the point in his interview in **NG 21**, that one of the reasons classic games seem better than modern ones is that "They were the very first games in that style. *Daytona USA*'s leap from *Pole Position* isn't as large as *Pole Position*'s leap from nothing at all. So even though *Daytona* is a superior game, people aren't as excited by it as when *Pole Position* first appeared."

It's true. Part of the appeal of the first electronic games was their novelty — they represented a totally new form of entertainment. Everything since then has been an incremental improvement, building on what came before, but necessarily less impressive because one of the big pulls of early games — make stuff move around on a TV screen — was already expected. This novelty of new technology is one of the reasons why technologically impressive games often do better than their gameplay seems to warrant. People bought *Night Trap* not because it was a great game, but because it was novel to actually interact with video (using "interact" in the loosest way possible). *Virtua Fighter* certainly got more initial looks because of its 3D capabilities than its gameplay (although its gameplay turned out to be quite impressive!). And this is the same reason why otherwise crappy

***Karate Champ* — it holds great memories for gamers, but would you want to play it instead of *Street Fighter Alpha 2*?**

Here are some some sites to check out for more info on classic games.

Classic Home Video Games Museum
http://www.cs.unc.edu/~brownde/museum/

Eddie's 2600 page
http://www.unc.edu/~beiles/atari.html

Digital Press
http://members.aol.com/digitpress/index.htm

Arcade Nostalgia
http://ubd3.vdospk.com/nostalgia/

Williams Arcade Game Info
http://www.ionet.net/~sriddle/willy.shtml

Cinematronics Home Page
http://home.concentric.net/~Zonn/

Atari Vector Game Page
http://magenta.com/~jess/atari/vector/html/vector.html

Next Generation would like to acknowlege the graphic contribution some of these sites made to this article

Namco's *Xevious* is available as part of a classic pack. The company will also be bringing out this year an updated version

games that say "MMX enhanced" will probably sell pretty well in 1998.

Remember the first videogame or computer game you ever saw? We will all fondly remember the leap from nothing we each experienced upon seeing our first video or computer game. *Tomb Raider* running on the 3Dfx board looks fantastic, but not as much better as *Pong* was over board games. The lesson here is that we're rapidly reaching an era of diminishing returns in terms of game technology. Each new leap of technology takes us less and less further.

The lesson for game designers seems clear. We are nearing the point where, for the time being, we're done in terms of technology. The focus needs to change, then, from exploiting new technology for its own sake to refining the art of game design itself.

As much as **Next Generation** hates to admit it, this is one place where the game industry can take a lesson from Hollywood, or at least the evolution of the moving picture. Some of the first popular moving pictures were those simple photographic flip-books you still see at places like Disneyland. People paid a penny to see something as simple as people walking on the beach. Why? Because it was just cool to see moving pictures.

Technology advanced to the silent movie, and people went to see them to watch a story unfold— the technological advance enabled a new experience. Finally, movies got sound and then color. Since then, frankly, movies have not advanced technologically much at all. Special effects have come a long way, sure, but movies are basically the same now as they were when *Gone with the Wind* hit theaters, fifty years ago.

How do they stack up today?

Retrogames are great in and of themselves, but just how do they stack up against the games of today? Obviously, there are certain classics that stand out (like *Elite* or *M.U.L.E.*), but how do the bulk of games in a genre compare?

Fighting Games

Anyone who tells you *Kung-Fu Master* or *Karateka* is better than *Street Fighter Alpha 2* or *Virtua Fighter 3* has clearly been blinded by nostalgia. Old fighting games were great in their day, but they simply cannot compare to the depth of today's top titles.

Shooters

A case can be made that the classic shooter peaked on the Genesis or TurboGrafx, but titles like *Nanotech Warrior* demonstrate that there is still great potential for the genre on modern systems, even if the demand isn't there. Still, playing *Demon Attack* on the 2600 is a lot of fun. And when one considers that *Doom* and its progeny can be considered spiritual descendants of the classic shooters, the genre has really come quite far.

Adventure Games

This is the one case where games have actually gotten worse. Despite their graphics, *Myst*- or *Phantasmagoria*-like games cannot come close to the challenge presented by old Sierra games, which themselves pale next to the still older, text-only, Infocom titles. Adventure games are about problem solving, not FMV and brain-teasers, which is why Activision still makes money off the Infocom titles and why most *Myst* clones have lost money.

It's hard to believe the fighting genre wasn't still-born, when one sees early examples (top)

Atari 5200 *Pole Position* looked good for its time, but it can't compare to *Rage Racer*

RPGs

Games like *Wizardry* and *Ultima II* are seminal. Despite the PC RPG market being in something of a drought, titles like *Ultima IX* are taking the genre to new places, as will the seemingly inevitable move of RPGs to the multiplayer online environment. On the console side, *Final Fantasy VII* looks to take the genre into the next generation as well, and *Zelda 64* is highly anticipated. Although fewer titles may be coming out, gamers are getting something almost certainly better.

Strategy Wargames

Traditional strategy and wargamers may not agree, but the vast majority of gamers are much more happy with real-time combat and resource management than they were with the hex-map days of old. *Hex* games are still coming, from smaller companies, but the popularity of *Warcraft* and *C&C* has taken this genre into the mainstream for the first time.

Simulations

***Oregon Trail* vs. *Sim City 2000*. Need we say more? The advances in simulations have been dramatic and obvious.**

Racing/Sports

There is something pure about watching the Xs and Os in *Atari Football*, but it can't compare to the real feeling given by *GameDay '97*. The situation is similar in other sports — every year, the games keep getting better and better and more and more realistic. Old sports games may still be fun, but only as two-player contests, and even *Pong* is still fun with two players. We love *Pole Position* and *Turbo*, but they cannot match the feeling given in the arcade by *Indy 500* or even in the home by *Sega Rally*. Sega still clearly dominates racing games, which do nothing but get more realistic every year.

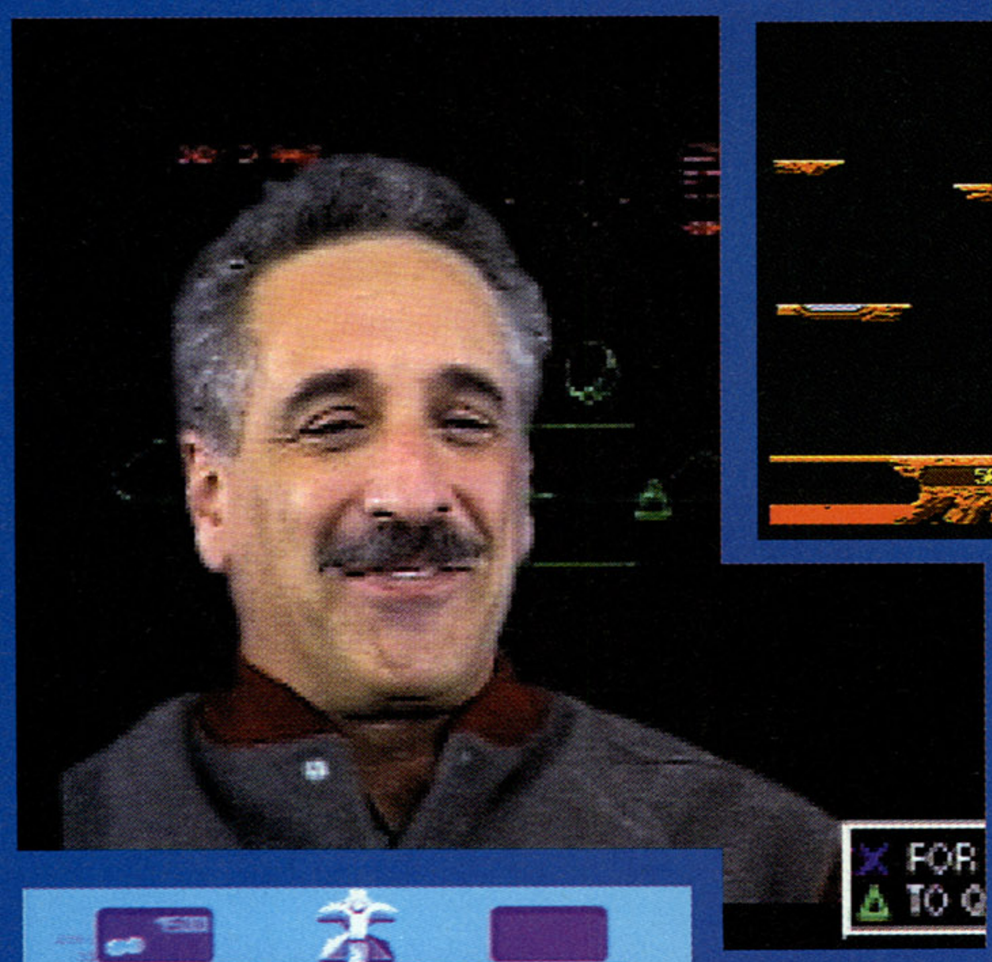
Classic Game Collections

he easiest way to get into playing classic games is on a console system. A number of companies, most notably Williams/Midway and Namco have used the power of the next-generation systems (notably PlayStation) to release classic packs featuring a collection of old arcade games.

By writing emulators of the relatively simple 8-bit arcade processors for the more powerful 32-bit machines, the companies can run the actual arcade code on the system — finally true "arcade-perfect" translations are available on consoles. Well, almost, anyway.

Because many arcade monitors display a few extra lines than standard NTSC TVs, making sure that classic games are TV-safe sometimes requires some altering of the video signal, as does playing a game designed for an upright monitor on a standard, horizontally configured TV. Both Namco and Midway offer options that enable users — at their own risk — to play vertical games in their original orientation, but they may find practical problems trying to turn large TVs on their sides.

Although many lesser games from smaller companies have been released in Japan — the Irem



Interviews with programmers (*BattleZone* creator Ed Rotberg is pictured above) are an excellent bonus to the Midway classic games — hearing the creators tell stories and talk shop adds real texture to the products

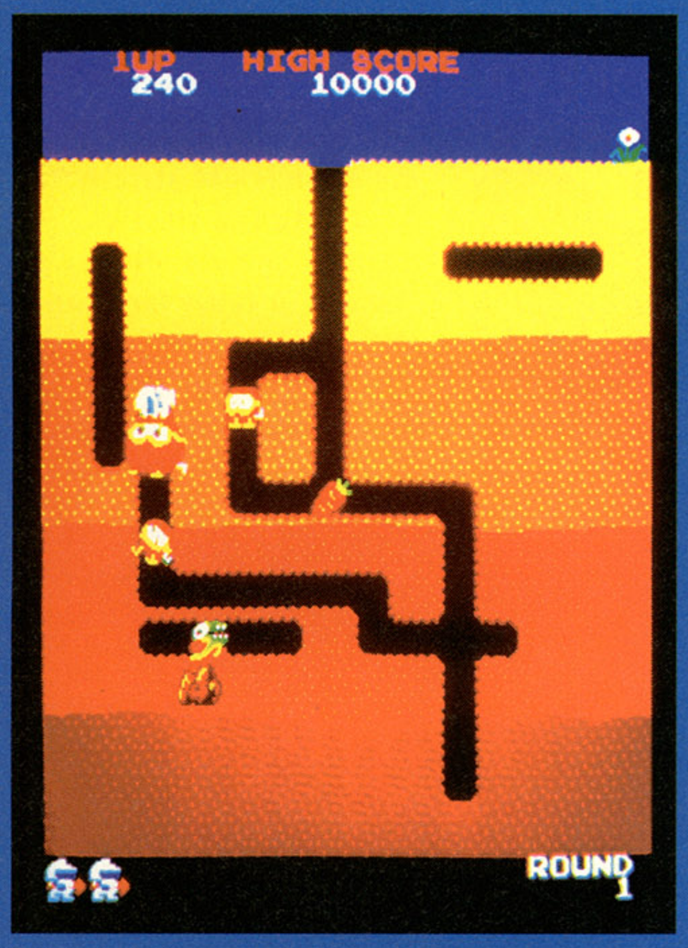
Classics comes to mind— in the U.S., only Namco and Williams/Midway have yet released classic packs for consoles.

Midway's two classic packs, developed by Digital Eclipse, feature the best of the early Williams (*Defender*, *Joust*, *Defender II*, *Sinistar*, *Bubbles*, *Robotron*) and Atari (*Asteroids*, *Battlezone*, *Tempest*, *Missile Command*, *Centipede*, and *Super BreakOut*) games.

Namco on the other hand, has released on its five-disc collection both its hits and, well, misses, including games that never even made it to the United States. With a couple worthwhile games, Namco compilations are great for nostalgia freaks and completists, but are probably not for everyone.

Discs from both companies come with extensive background material on the games. The Midway titles tend to focus on interviews with the developers, while Namco's provide a 3D virtual museum and archive material like sell sheets.

For systems other than the PlayStation, you'll either need to buy Japanese titles — Sega has released a few classics like *Afterburner* and *Outrun* in Japan —or a PC. Microsoft's arcade packs for Windows feature old Namco and Atari games (but none that aren't available for PlayStation). GT has also released a disc for Windows



It's weird, it's fun, and it's finally available again on PlayStation, thanks to Namco. But not all titles have this staying power

featuring the Williams's classics.

Some PC-game packs have been released — notably the Id Anthology by GT, Infocom Masterpieces by Activision, and a complete collection of the Roberta Williams adventures from Sierra (some of which you run on an Apple II emulator).

Also on PC, Activision released three volumes of emulated 2600 titles, and a disc with 15 classic Commodore 64 titles, although these are now out of print. Also out of print, but still available from a few sources, are Microsoft's *Arcade* and *Return of Arcade*, which feature a selection of popular Atari and Namco arcade titles (respectively) for Windows and Windows 95.

One thing consoles don't have (today) is trackballs, which makes controlling PlayStation *Centipede* a skitch tougher than the original

What has changed, however, is the art of movie making — movies have gotten far more sophisticated without any real technological advances in how movies work as a means of communication. The designers who, in coming years can look at technology not as an end, but as a tool for expression of interactive experiences — be they shooters or adventure games — will be the ones who create the games that will be regarded as classics in the next 20 years. These titles may not usurp the classics, but they will take a place next to them. *Birth of a Nation* (despite it's evil plot) will always be regarded as a landmark in film history, but that doesn't mean that films from *The Searchers* to *Star Wars* to *Miller's Crossing* won't also be regarded as classic. In the same way, *Defender* will have a permanent place in videogame history, but so, probably, will *Mario 64*.

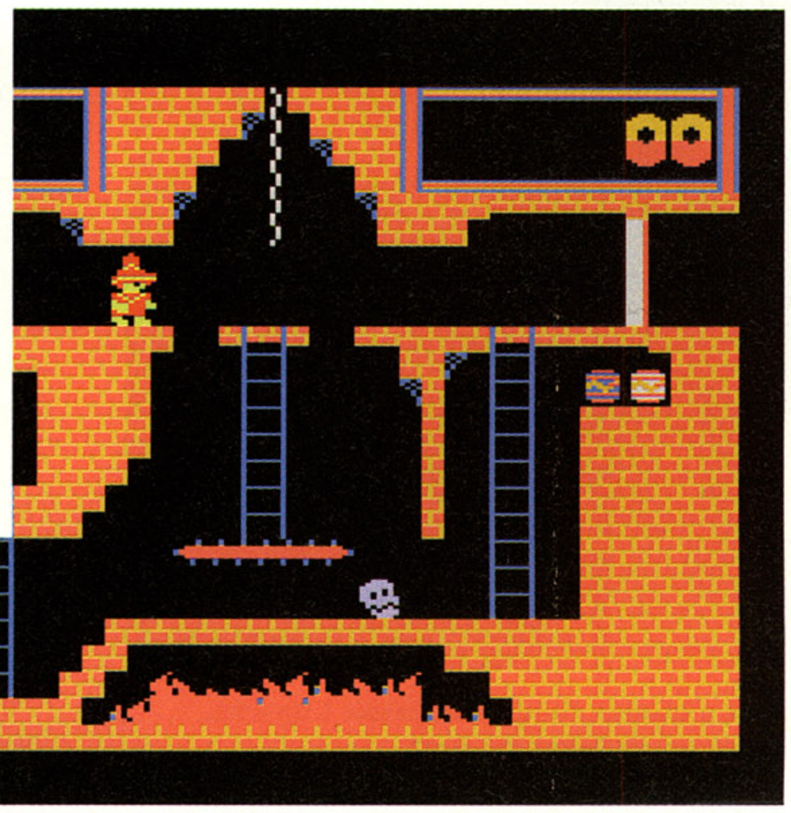
Classic games were more original

Games today tend to fall into a few major categories: It's either a shooting game, a driving game, a fighting game, a puzzle game, a sim, or an adventure/RPG Contrast this to the arcades of the early '80s: It's a lead-a-frog-across-a-freeway-and-a-river game, it's a fly-around-on-an-ostrich game, it's a pop-a-balloon-with-an-arrow game, it's a dig-through-the-ground-and-blow-up-dragons game, it's a jump-around-on-a-pseudo-3D-pyramid-and-change-the-tiles-different-colors game, it's a roll-a-marble-through-a-maze game, it's a . . . Well, you get the idea.

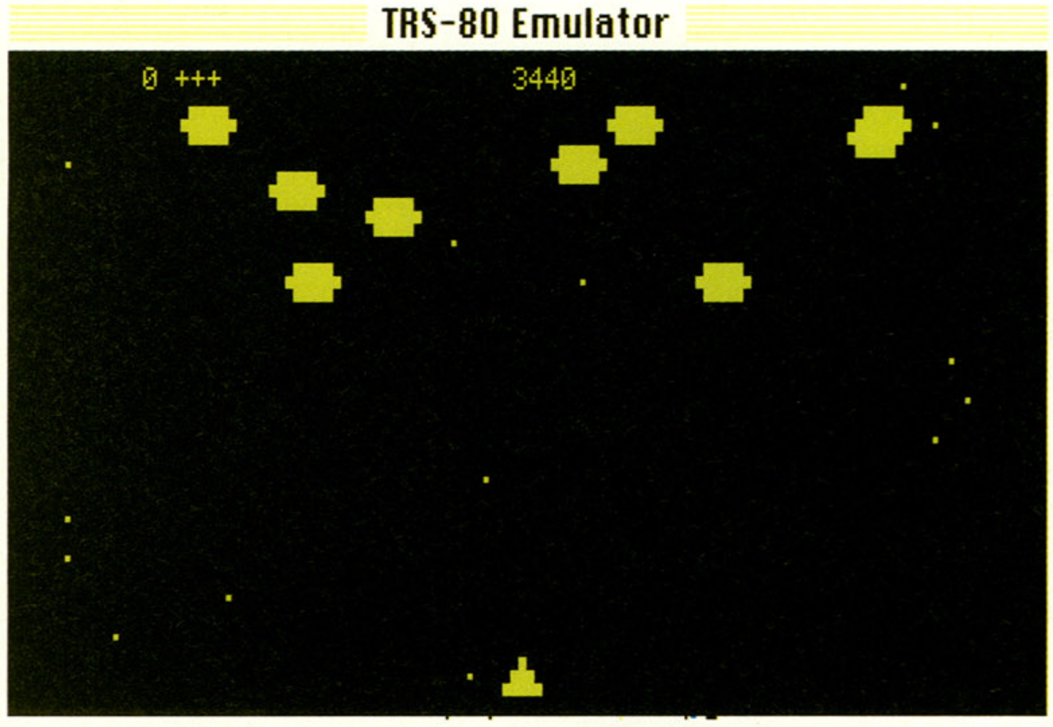
It's true: Classic games were more original. If you want to play a great driving game, you don't turn to the classics — you play *Sega Rally*. But if you want gameplay that isn't standard, you don't have much choice but to turn to the products of the past. There are a couple of reasons for this. In most classic games, the art and story were basically just conceits — the gameplay was so simple you might have been moving a frog across a river, but you could have just as easily substituted Mario for the frog, some rivets for the cars, and moving girders for the logs, and had a passable level of *Donkey Kong*. Today, with the more complicated gameplay provided by scrolling screens and 3D, it's more difficult to make a game seem unique — you can substitute a hummingbird for a spaceship, but it's still a shooter.

Likewise, if you put a frog in Mario's place in *Mario 64*, even if you made Mario move by hopping, it wouldn't seem too different. Where classics have the edge, though, is that they were exploiting new, never-before-seen gameplay mechanisms. There was no preconceived expectation of the way a game should work, which is simply not the case today.

Take *Nanotek Warrior*, a new shooter from Virgin. Although it is quite clearly an original concept (it's a fly-around-the-outside-of-a-tube-shooting-stuff game), nearly everyone who sees it says, "Oh, it looks like *Tempest*" or, "Oh, it's like *Space Harrior*," simply because it is forward scrolling. Few people in the past said that *Donkey Kong* and *Frogger* were the same type of game because they were both "go-



Like many other classic titles, *Montezumas Revenge* has spawned a sequel, the 3D, light-sourced *Montezuma's Return*, from the original developers



The original TRS-80 didn't even have graphics, but that didn't stop Yves Lempereur from writing games for it. Years later, when he wanted to play some of them, he wrote an emulator for the Mac and released it, with several disk images of his games, to the public

from-the-bottom-of-the-screen-to-the-top" games.

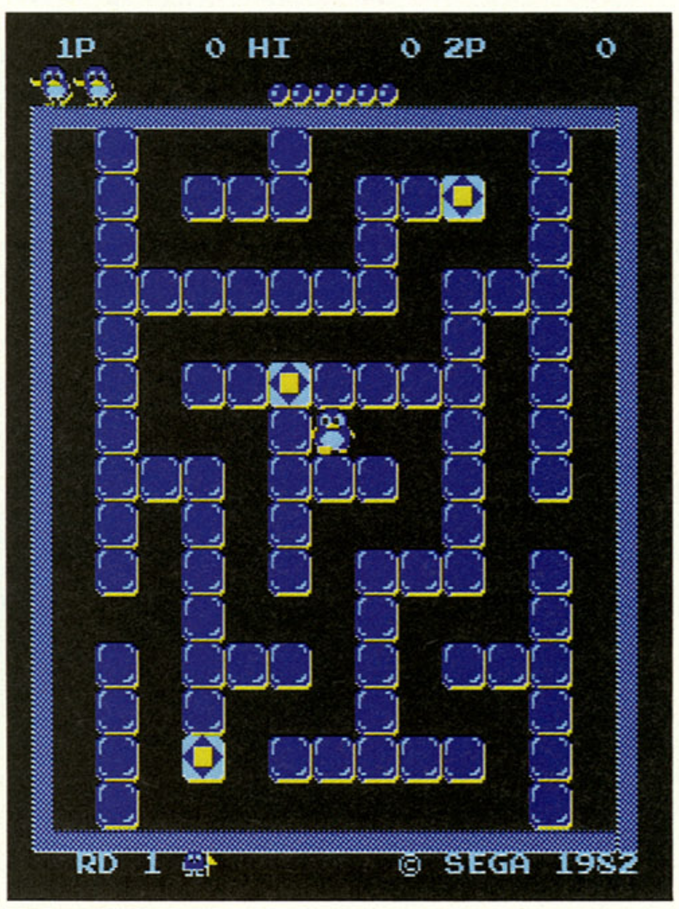
Because nearly every currently conceived gameplay concept has been tried, it is much harder for a designer to come up with something that will have people saying, "Damn! That's original!" *Mario 64* is perhaps the first original game view in years — and it's not too much different from *Doom*, except in camera placement. Unfortunately, market pressures have caused a real drop in innovation and experimentation from the "good old days."

In the '80s, few people knew what was going to be popular, so there wasn't much reason not to try totally new and different things. Sadly, with games now costing in the millions to produce, and with so few returning a profit, publishers are much more conservative in what they're willing to release. This has led to stagnation and a bandwagon approach. Is *Tomb Raider* hot? Expect to see a million clones, the same way every PC game publisher is currently readying its *Command & Conquer* or *Warcraft* killer right now. But don't expect anyone to spend the budget developing *Bubbles 64* or *Elite III*.

Lesson: U.S. Gold ceased to be an independent company by releasing crappy "me too" games. But when it, through Core, took a risk, it came up with *Tomb Raider* (too late to save the company, which is now part of Eidos Interactive). Again and again in this industry, we see that resting on one's laurels and playing it "safe" with product releases is a sure way to failure. Game companies can't afford to be innovative? Bullshit. Game companies that want to succeed can't afford not to be innovative.

Stagnation of the industry doesn't last, because there is always someone who will take the risk and come up with something great and new. But, quite frankly, the current pattern of a single innovation followed by 18 or 24 months of imitation is getting tiresome. And the high cost of creating software today means that, for an outsider, coming up with the next great thing "in the garage" is getting harder and harder.

However, there may be a light at the end of the tunnel. Sony's Yaroze program enables console programming for under $1,000 (see **NG25** for the complete story). This is exactly the kind of thing the industry needs to keep a healthy pace of innovation. Also, hopefully, instead of just



Sega's classic *Pengo* is a classic title with nearly no modern equivilent

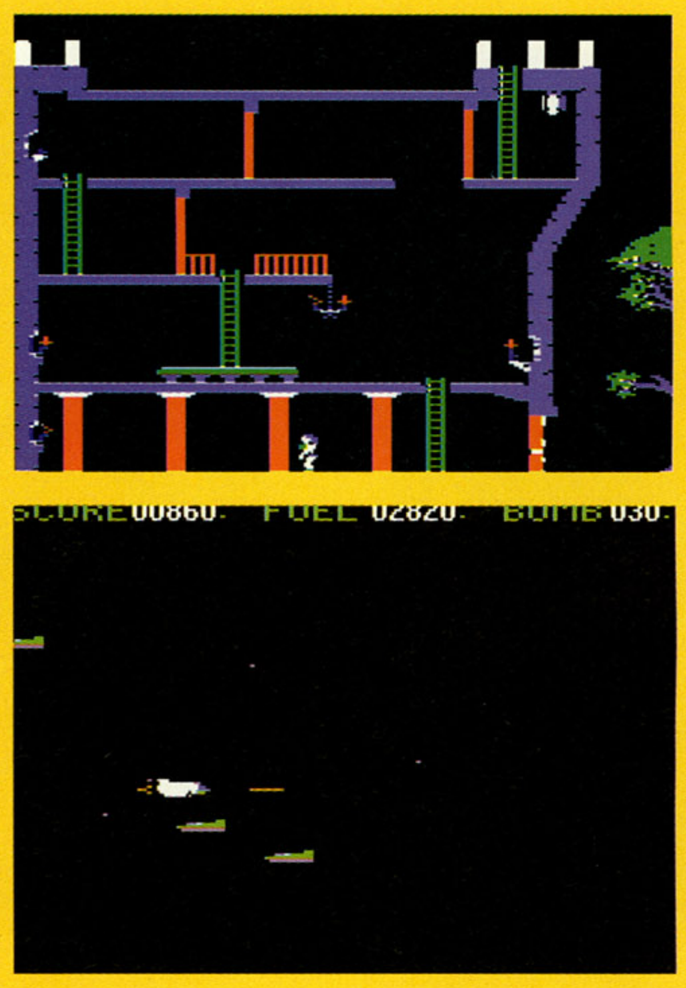
Emulations

mulation is not strictly limited to the classic "packs" sold by Midway or Namco. A fairly large and thriving Mac and PC emulation scene exists on the Internet. Unlike with official classic packs, though, the legality of unlicensed emulators is a little thornier.

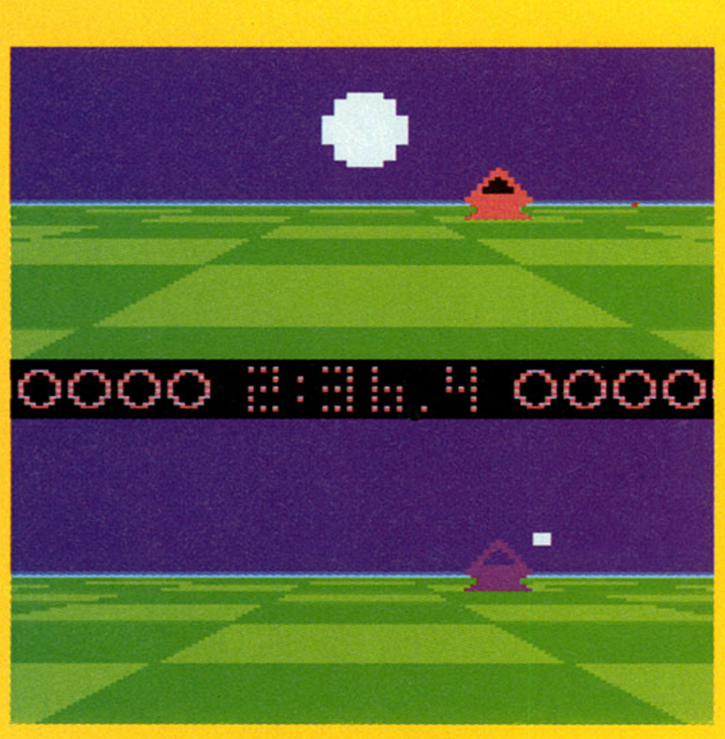
There is no problem, of course, with writing a program that emulates hardware — part of the definition of a universal computer is that it can emulate any other computer — but a problem arises when hardware needs special proprietary ROMs to function. For instance, one could write an emulator for most hardware that runs *Asteroids* (fairly easily, actually) and distribute it freely, but the code for the game, stored on a software ROM, is still copyrighted by Atari — distributing it is illegal.

When using an emulator for a classic microcomputer like the Apple IIe, the problem is compounded — not only are some of the ROMs in the machine still copyrighted by Apple, but most of the software one can run on the Apple II is still copyrighted. None of this, of course, has stopped the ROMs for numerous arcade games and microcomputers, and thousands of software disk images of old game and utility disks, from appearing in several well-known FTP and web sites across the Internet.

The copyright issues are actually not so cut and dried, either, because while running



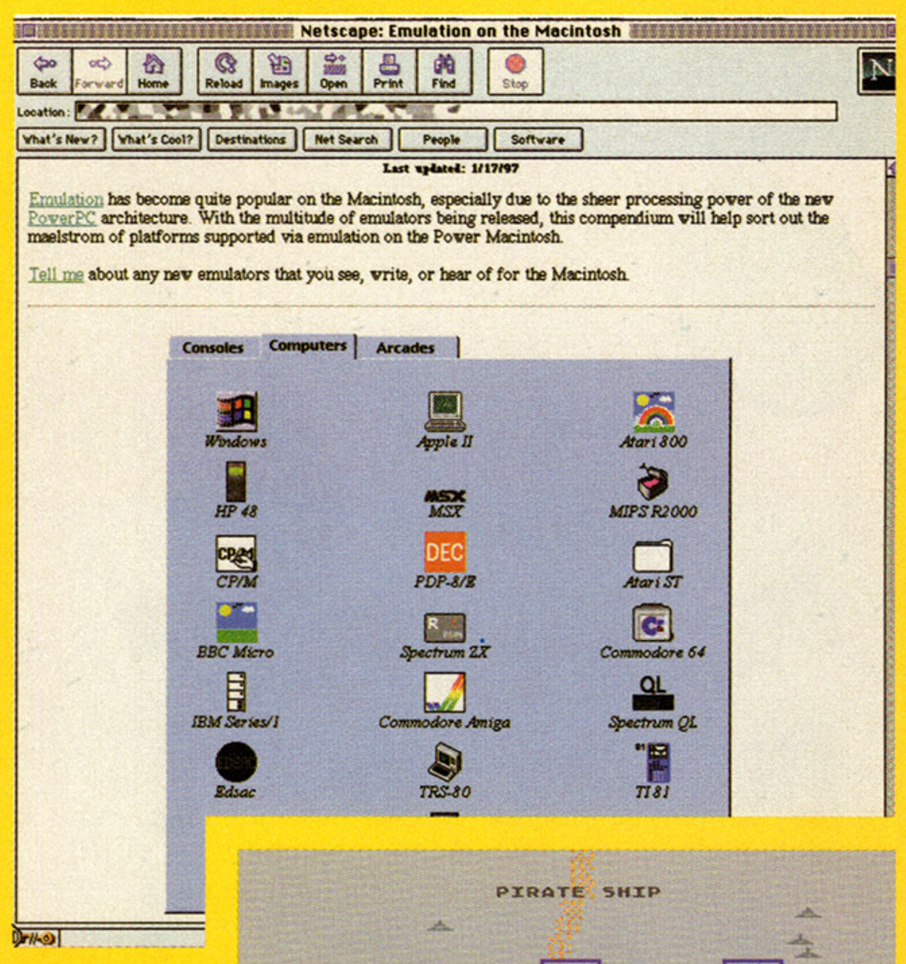
Disk images of *Conan* and *Star Blazer* for Apple II are readily available, complete with original pirate splash-screens



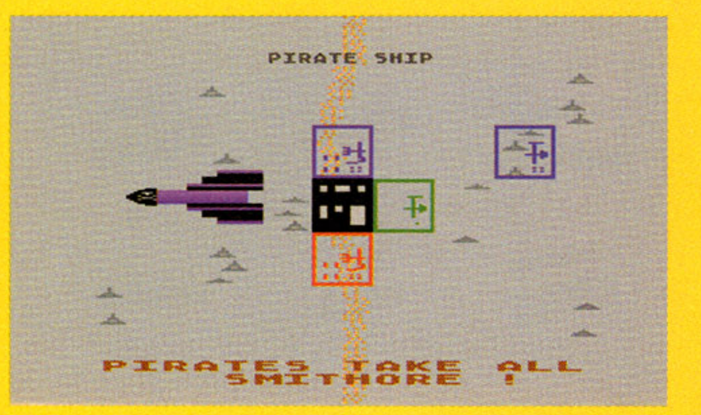
LucasArts' *Ball Blazer* will soon be rereleased for PlayStation, but if you can't wait, find a disk image to use with an emulator online

There are a number of sites devoted to emulation on the web. The one pictured on the right is Mac specific. Don't let the icons fool you — you won't find an illegal Windows emulator here, just a link that talks about Insignia's *SoftWindows*.

Many of the emulators, like those for Edvac and the PDP-8 have significant historic value. A PDP-8 at the Massachussetts Institute of Technology was the computer on which Steve Russell wrote *SpaceWar!*, the first true computer game. We haven't found a version for our emulator, but we're still looking. If you've got one, send e-mail to: ngonline@imagine-inc.com



M.U.L.E. is still a great game, no matter which emulated version of it you play



***Lords of Conquest* on an emulated Apple IIe might be illegal, since neither Electronic Arts nor Apple are currently marketing either product, it's likely that the damages that they could recover would be negligible.**

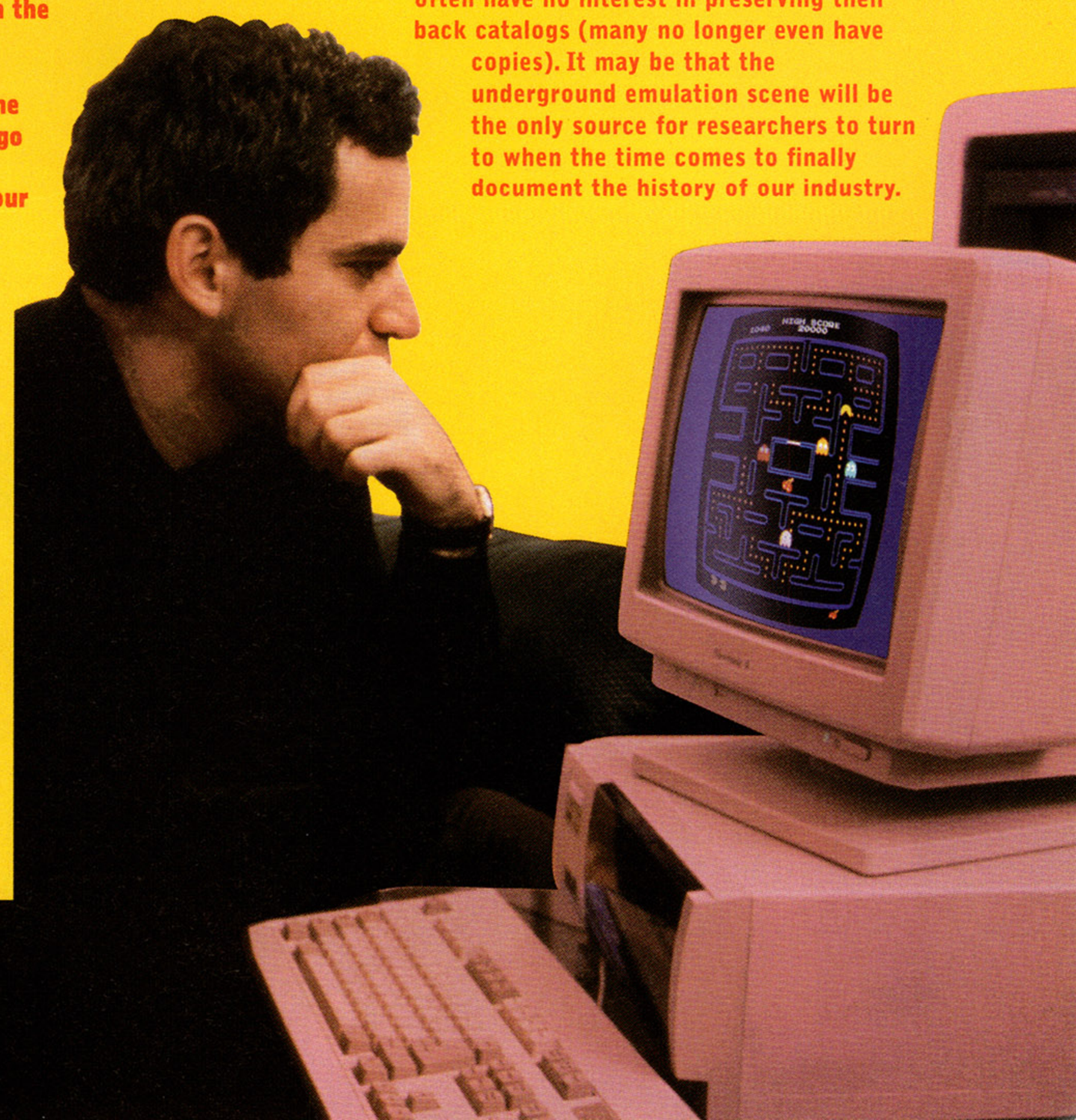
The situation would be quite different if Activision decided to crack down on people trading old copies of Infocom games, which are still being sold, Williams went after people who had ROM images of *Defender* available on a site, and Nintendo wanted to shut down the people providing GameBoy and Super NES ROM images online. Most maintainers of emulator web pages realize this, and while you might find a link to Commodore 64 software, or the ROMs for a TRS-80, you aren't going to find a link to a great Super NES or GameBoy archive on any legitimate site.

We can't imagine why anyone would *want* to play Super NES or GameBoy games on a PC, since most people have a Super NES or GameBoy that can play the games better anyway, but with microcomputer games, it's a different story.

Considering that the lure of nostalgia is strong (and that not many classic microcomputer players had any respect for copyrights, as evidenced by the number of pirate splash screens on cracked disk images found online), we don't expect that potential legal issues will stop many fans from playing microcomputer classics on (potentially illegal) emulators any time soon.

With the ability to play everything from Colecovision to TRS-80 to Apple II to Commodore 64, and (most importantly) to play games that may have been out of print for years (like *Spy's Demise* on the Apple II, or *M.U.L.E.* on the C64), the underground emulation scene isn't going to go away any time soon. And in our opinion, it shouldn't — it's keeping alive an important part of videogame history that otherwise would be vanishing as 5.25 inch disks slowly decay in closets and garages. Many of the companies that produced these games are no longer in business, and the ones that are often have no interest in preserving their back catalogs (many no longer even have copies). It may be that the underground emulation scene will be the only source for researchers to turn to when the time comes to finally document the history of our industry.

Nostalgic for the old coding days? Maybe there's something pure about writing a game in BASIC, we must admit



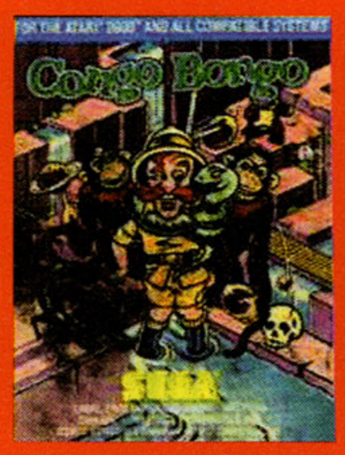
The Real Thing

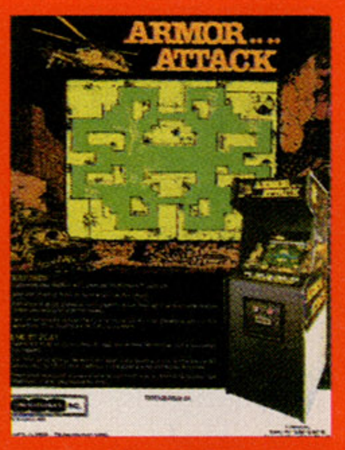
lassic packs on consoles or PC are a great way to play classic games. So are "independent" emulators on PC and Mac. But ultimately, the best way to experience classic gaming is with the real thing. An Atari 2600 game running under Windows 95 and played with a Microsoft SideWinder simply cannot compare to the experience of jamming a dusty cart into a dusty, wood-grained 2600, picking up that inimitable Atari joystick, and flipping a metal switch to play.

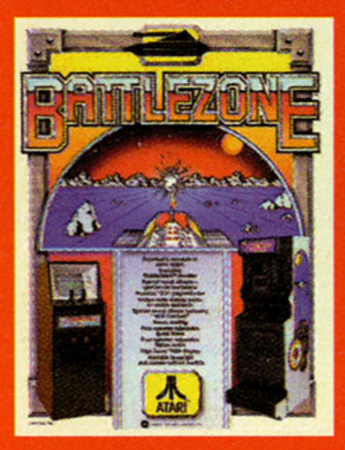
Thanks to the solid state nature of the early consoles and their games, playing classic console games is only as hard as finding them. Although a wicked collector market is out there snapping up carts constantly (and seemingly more concerned with label variations on *Combat* than actually playing the games), anyone with the patience to comb through a few flea markets, troll some newsgroups like rec.games.video.classic, or do a pretty simple search on the web can find nearly any classic game they want, in at least OK condition, ready to play. With a modicum of effort and less than $100, one Next Generation editor was able (even in the picked-over SF Bay area) to acquire a 7800, a 2600, an Odyssey2, and about 100 games. Obviously the rarer the system or game, the harder it is to find, and the more you can expect to pay — but even most rarities go for less than they did at retail (which is fitting, when you play most of them and realize how awful they are).

There is even some new software coming out for old systems like the 2600 and Lynx, thanks to dedicated individuals and companies like TeleGames.

Although it's illegal, there are a number of multi-game carts and pirated games floating around — so be aware that if you see the Holy Grail of 2600 collection, *Chase the Chuck Wagon*, for $20, you're probably buying a pirated cart, which has no collector

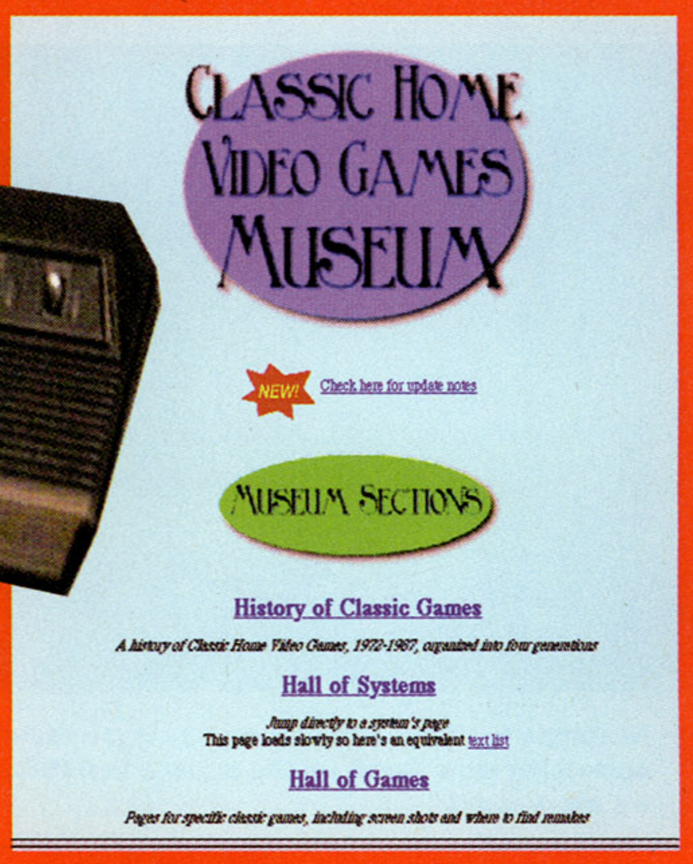






Half the fun of collecting classic games comes from the ephemera; the sell-sheets and manuals from arcade games are a common collectable. Some of the art, from the 70s and 80s, is truly amazing

Eugene Jarvis, creator of *Defender*, *Cruisin' World*, and others, still plays his and Larry DeMar's Vid Kids creation *Robotron* every day, although last we heard, he hadn't cracked a million yet



Through a host of dedicated web sites and newsgroups, collectors trade stories of great aquisitions and display (and sometimes sell) their classic wares

Having a stand-up arcade game in your kitchen adds immesurably to the decor, if not your floor space

value, but probably plays the same.

This month, on the Next Generation Disc, we have a number of movies of classic games. This will be a continuing feature on The Disc, so be sure to check it out for new views of classics you may have forgotten — such as BC's *Quest for Tires* — every month.

The collecting scene is easy to get into. First look through your closet, then start hitting flea markets. You may never end up with a garage full of *Combat* carts, like some of the more hardcore collectors, but it's not too hard to amass a respectable collection. And the feeling of owning a real piece of videogame history is rewarding.

No one collects the Fairchild Channel F to play the games (trust us), but it's still quite popular in collector circles

copying the games of innovators, some developers will start to copy the idea of innovation itself, but don't count on it.

Classic games are more fun

Here's a quick one. Classic games are still, some of them, tons of fun. Why? Because instead of just focusing on graphics, early designers, who, given the limited nature of early hardware, could do the graphics for a game in a day, spent months tweaking the play. Thus, some of the earliest games still maintain some of the best gameplay.

The lesson is that no developer ever says, "We did the gameplay in a hour," but anyone who plays a lot of games knows that it must be nearly the case in a lot of situations. Developers, we speak for every gamer in the universe when we say, "Stop it. If you want your game to be good, the play matters more than the graphics. And that doesn't mean telling everyone who will listen that the programmers love games, they play games all the time. It means playing your own game, *before* you release it, and tweaking the play until it's actually fun. If it has to slip a few months, we'll wait. If the gameplay still sucks then, can it."

If companies want long term success, they need to stop focusing on short term, quarter-end results (the cause of most prematurely shipped games), and start focusing on gameplay. You do not need to ship in Q4 to have a hit game. *Resident Evil* shipped in June and it is the #1-selling PlayStation game worldwide. When you ship in Q4, you compete with everyone. When you ship in July, the store shelves are yours for the taking.

Nostalgia

Let's face it, the biggest reason people are getting into retrogaming is clearly little more than nostalgia. As the first generation of people to grow up with videogames enters its mid 20s and early 30s, playing old games is a nice way to revisit one's youth.

Most kids' first experiences with videogames coincide with those first tentative steps from childhood to adolescence — the first bike rides to the drug store, or arcade, and the first real fights with one's parents — in short, the first stirrings of independence. It's a turbulent yet exciting time to be alive, and videogames, since the late seventies, have been an integral part of that for many people. It's finally something that you know more about than your parents, and, like any subculture, games have their own jargon that is largely impenetrable to the

Console/PC convergence is nothing new, as this ancient magazine report about a PC peripheral for the 2600 makes clear

uninitiated. Parents have nearly always been, when it comes to games, permanently uninitiated.

Unlike neighborhoods or friends, videogames don't change and can be a powerful memory trigger. It's no wonder then, that when many people see classic games, especially people who no longer play games on a regular basis, their excitement is partially at seeing the game, to be sure, but a large part of it is in seeing something that dramatically brings them back to a fondly remembered part of their youth. Few people can talk about a classic game without, in the same conversation, telling you exactly where and when the first saw it and played it — "Oh wow, *Tempest*. Cool! I remember this, I always used to play this with Raymond Rowe at the Space Station. Let me play it!"

Lesson: Developers, you have an important role in the socialization of young people. Live up to it! It's fine for memories to be tied to a true classic like *Missile Command*, but who'll want to admit, in ten years, all the good times they remember having playing *Michael Jordan: Chaos in the Windy City*? Sure, adults can make intelligent choices for themselves (not many people over 16 bought *Batman Forever*), but a lot of kids can't.

What do you think? Is retrogaming hip or hype? We've set up a retrogaming forum on *Next Generation Online* (http://www.next-generation.com) for you to discuss the issue. We hope to see you there.

ng

MANIFESTO OF THE NEW 3D REALITY

A movement is brewing. And with its birth, the PowerVR architecture begins the awesome struggle against conventional 3D; and against the techno-bourgeoisie who attempt to enslave the gamer masses. These ~~manipulative~~ technologists are turning their machines of propaganda against GAMERS, desperately trying to make them believe that their 3D performance is good enough.

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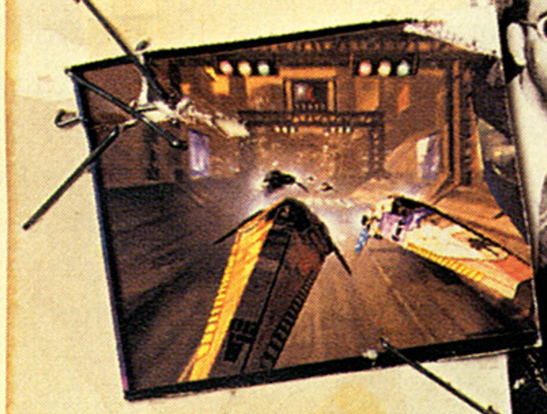

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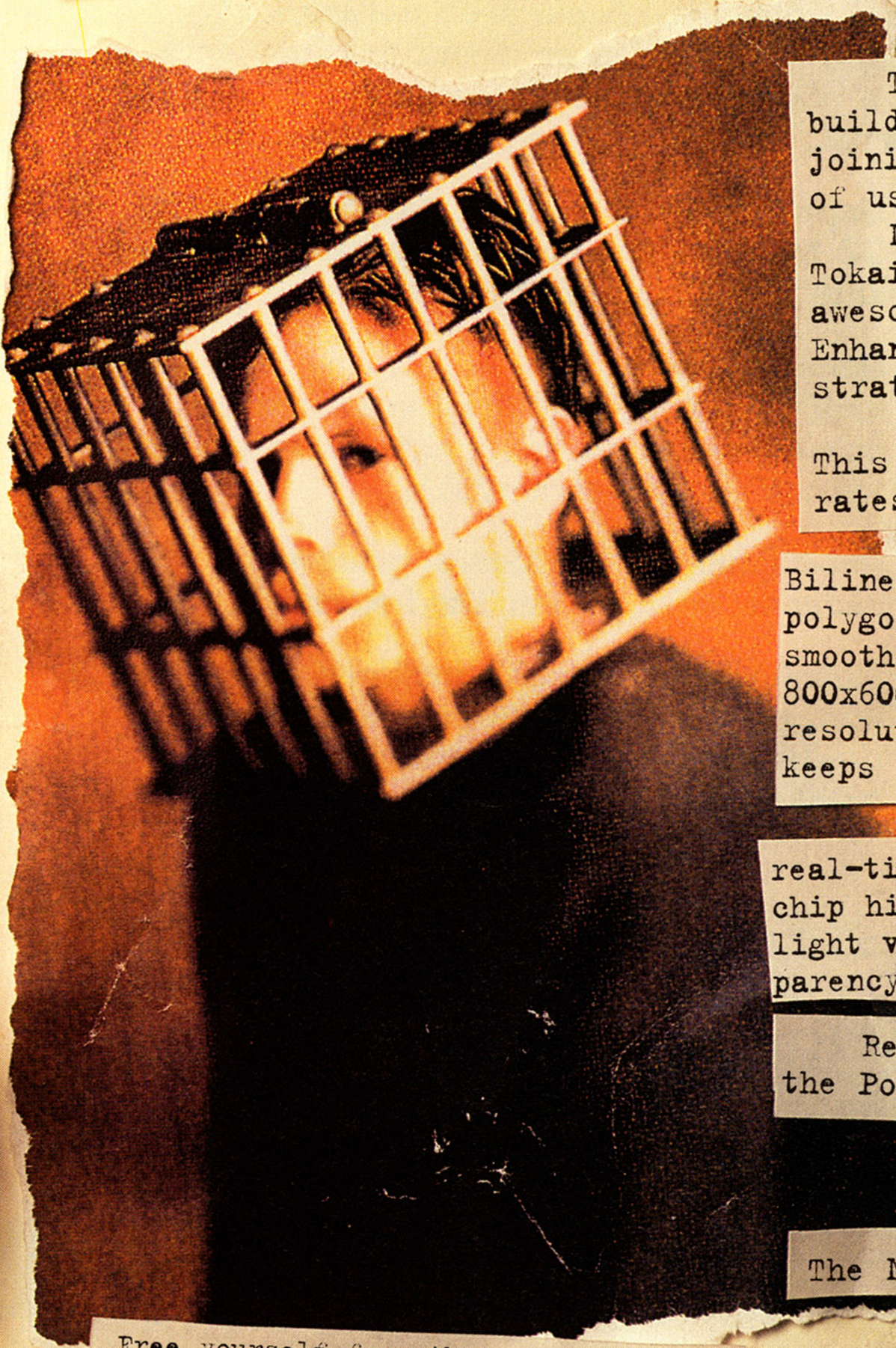

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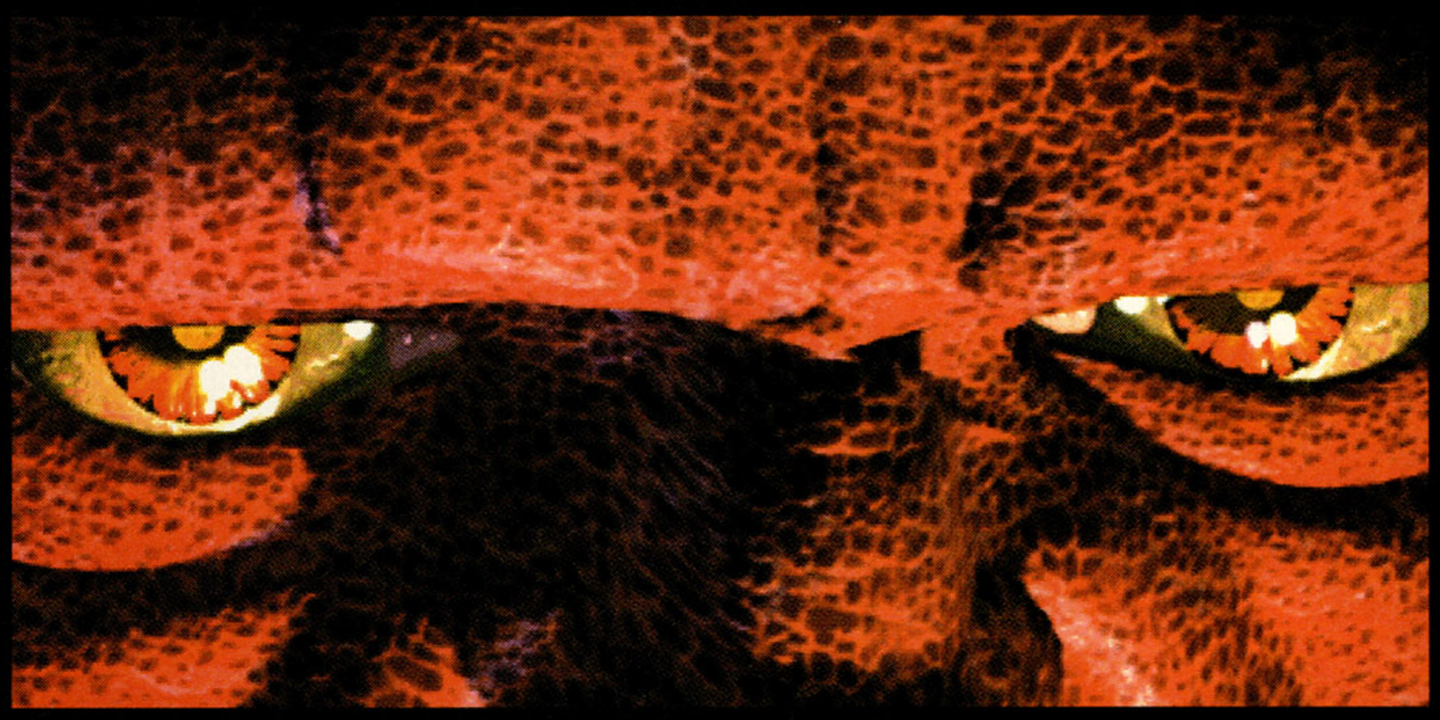
A game artist's work is never done? Perhaps. But there comes a time to unveil the canvas (or should that be computer screen?) for all the world to see. **Next Generation** thinks that time is now. All the art shown over the following pages is set to appear in a videogame due for release this year

gallery

The mouse is mightier than the sword



***Ultima IX*, the latest installment of Origin's classic RPG series, features characters with amazingly realistic facial expressions — all realized via computer animation**

Battle scenes and Lord British dream sequence created by Bob Frye. Lord British characterization and design by Dennis Lubet. All images modeled, animated, and rendered using *Lightwave* and *3D Studio*. Original character design by Richard Garriot

Turok's dinosaur frightens with its real-looking incisors

Honey (or Candy) seems equipped for any situation (left). Other scenes show Honey sans gadgets (or clothes) and would make Hugh Hefner and Larry Flint proud

Mechs (below) hail from *Mech Warrior 2*

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter shows spectacularly lush graphics and may very well be the prettiest game for Nintendo 64. It was developed by Acclaim

Fighting Vipers has the cute, the bad, and the ugly. Cute Honey and other *Fighting Vipers* are the product of AM2's creative team

Mech Warrior 2 looks good, in part due to the lighting effects used

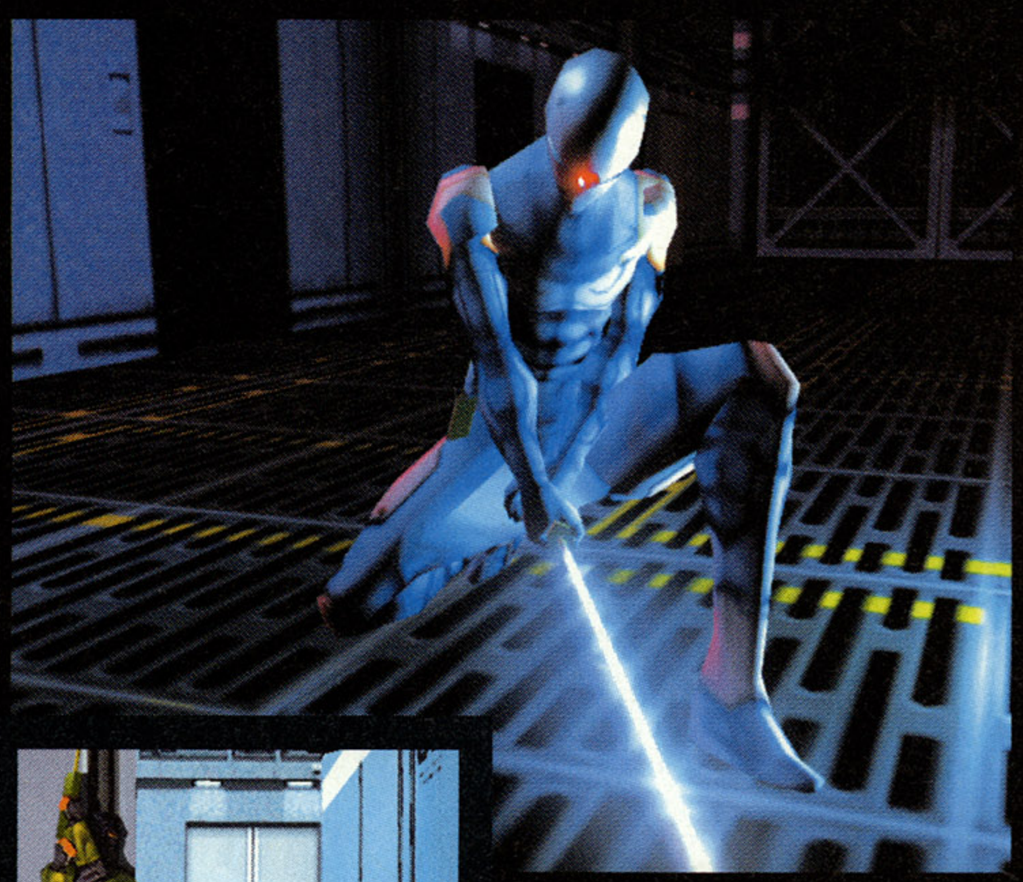
viewing

Here a mix of game characters: Cervantes De Leon and Hwang Sung Kyung (the two sword wielders to the left) are from *Soul Blade* and the man with the pistol (middle and right) is from *Metal Gear*. Mario and his friends (or foes) from *Super Mario Kart 64* (below) are beautifully rendered — even Mario's mustache looks waxy and real. Shigeru Miyamoto's reputation as console gaming's master has been cemented by this game

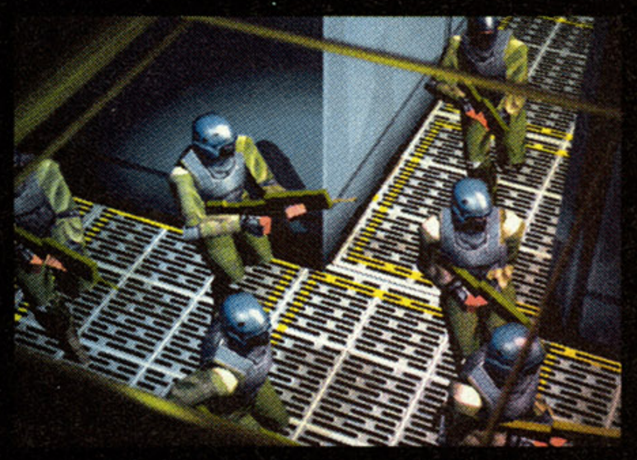
The polygon characters in *Soul Blade* move smoothly, and animated elements (such as waving flags) add to the backgrounds

Metal Gear includes the white-haired gentleman below

Nintendo and Miyamoto made the fun in *Super Mario Kart 64*



The cyborg (above) named Ninja and guards (left) are from *Metal Gear*, a Japanese strategy RPG



These sequences will provide in-game cut scenes that will illustrate much of the action. *Metal Gear* is being developed by Konami's KCEJ team in Japan

Next Generation OnLine, http://www.next-generation.com/

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- Saturn Conventer

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- Mario Kart R
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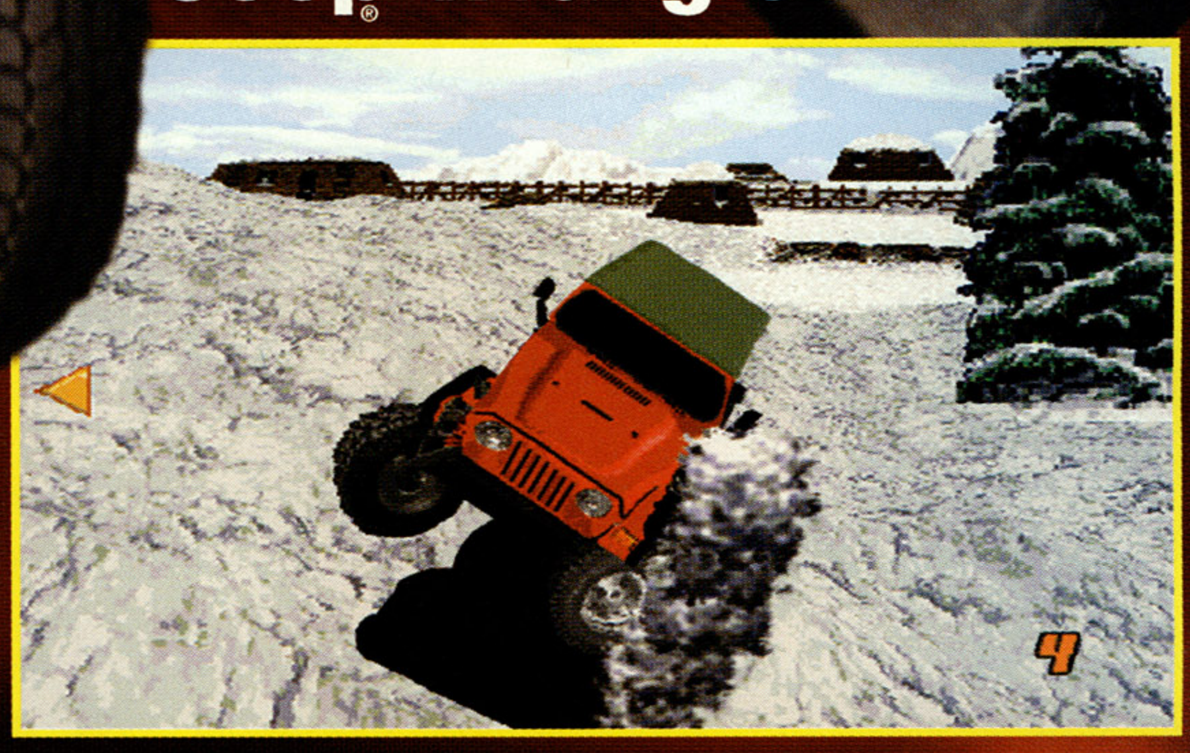

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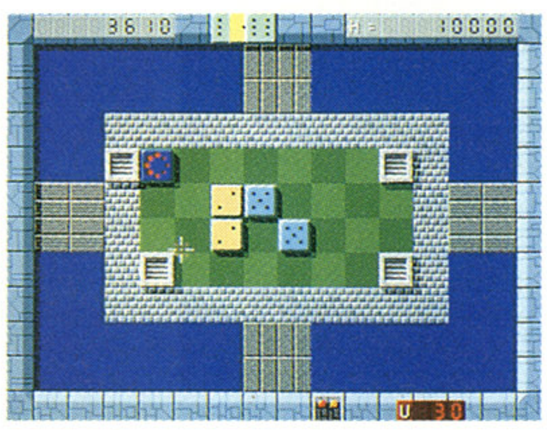
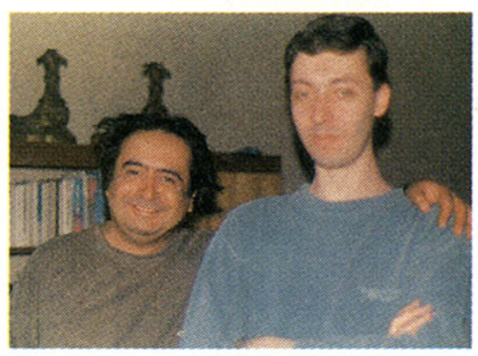
GRAND PRIZE winner from Chile

Grand Prize US$200,000

Winning Entry:
"ESTRUCTURA," a puzzle game
submitted by THE CRISIS GROUP (Chile)



The winners say... "ESTRUCTURA was our first PC game. It took us about six months to finish the assembly program and the graphics, including one month to master the x86 assembler and another month to design the graphics. We didn't hope to win anything. When we received word that we had won the Grand Prize, we couldn't believe it. We had to call our families and friends, just to hear that it wasn't a dream. It's not just the money, although that's important. What's even more important is that we are making an effort in the right direction. Now, we can work with more conviction, because doors in this industry will open more easily, we hope..."



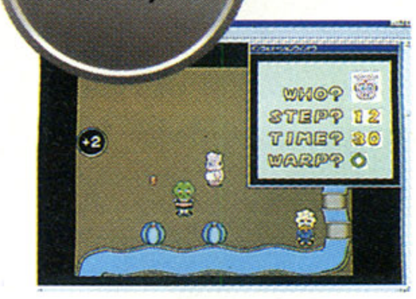
First Prize US$50,000

Winning Entry:
"FOOTBALL LAB," a soccer simulation game
submitted by Ryutaro Kanno (Japan)

The winner says... "It started with a very simple idea. I like soccer, so why not create a game about soccer? The game I came up with is the result of trial and error. To create something new took a lot of time. I had to take all the ideas I had in my head, and put them into the form of a program. In the future, I want to make the best possible use of ideas and skills that others have praised."

First Prize US$50,000

Winning Entry:
"COSMICAL ANIMALS," a network game
submitted by Tomokazu Ito and Akihiko Oohashi (Japan)



One of the winners says... "When I was told that I had won one of the first prizes, I almost fainted. I had a sense of achievement that my efforts had finally paid off. The underlying concept of this game is that anyone can play, regardless of the language spoken. I hope players all over the world will be able to enjoy my game soon. Now I spend days feverishly trying to come up with an upgraded version of the game."

Second Prizes: US$10,000

- "HORSE'S POWER," a network game by Steak House Bone Fracture (Japan)
- "BRAINY BALL," an action puzzle by K-D Lab Group (Russia)
- "g3," a party game by Takeo Matsuura (Japan)
- "MULTIPLEXER," an action game by Takayasu Natori (Japan)
- "Throne of Mars," a simulation game by Symbolic Data Studios (USA)
- "Final Coaster," a 3D game by Takashi Tajimi (Japan)
- "REIKO," an action game by Sanwari-san Team (Japan)
- "PENTAGON," a simulation game by Conde Entertainment Software (Argentina)
- "MOVLOCK," an action puzzle game by Akiyoshi Nishiyama (Japan)
- "Effrenata Licentia 3D," an adventure game by Amit Barman (USA)

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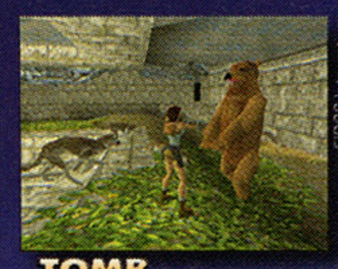

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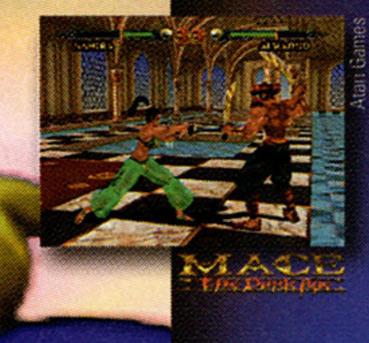
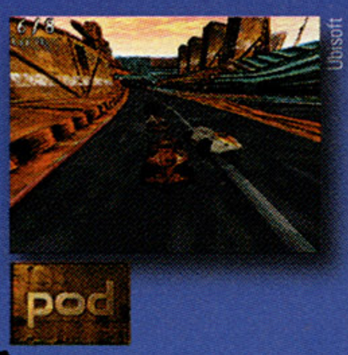


Atari Games

Sierra On-Line

Virgin Interactive



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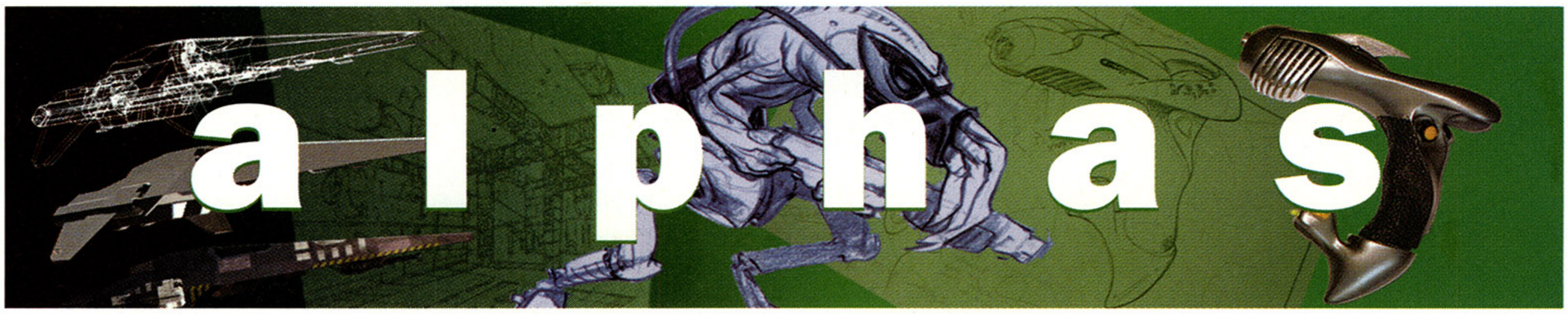

Game previews from the bottom of our hearts

AM2 stunned the world with its Model 3 arcade board, bringing unparalleled realism to the arcade. But *Super GT* is more than just a Model 3 version of *Daytona USA*; it could be the best racing game ever. AM2 isn't the only one pushing the envelope. **Next Generation** profiles two design houses, one old, one relatively new: DMA Design and Cyclone Studios, respectively. Also, take a look at two highly anticipated arcade sequels, *Street Fighter 3* and *Tekken 3*, and a smattering of new Nintendo 64 titles.

60 Super GT ARCADE

AM2's latest racing game runs on the same Model 3 hardware as *Virtua Fighter 3*. Is it any good? Get real...

67 Mission Impossible N64

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No that's not a typo. Capcom finally learns what comes after "2." The only question remaining is was it worth the wait?

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Seta's second N64 title has flash to go with its substance. It could be the most demanding chopper sim ever on a console

80 Meat Puppet PC CD-ROM

Kronos is touting its latest action title as the *Crusader* killer — and for the hundreth time no, it's not about a band

86 Cyclone Studios MULTI

This small design house built *BattleSport*, arguably the best game the 3DO system ever had. So what's it up to now?

92 Star Fox 64 NINTENDO 64

Nintendo continues updating Super NES titles for N64, and its original 3D game finally gets the technology it deserved

94 Deathtrap Dungeon MULTI

Eidos's latest 3D action title is based on the *Fighting Fantasy* book series, and not only carries the novels' depth, but looks great too

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Next Generation visits the designers of the classic *Lemmings* and finds them hard at work, mostly on Nintendo 64

106 Moto Racer PC CD-ROM

Delphine and BMG try to up the ante on motorcycle racing games, offering both off-road and street-bike racing in one package

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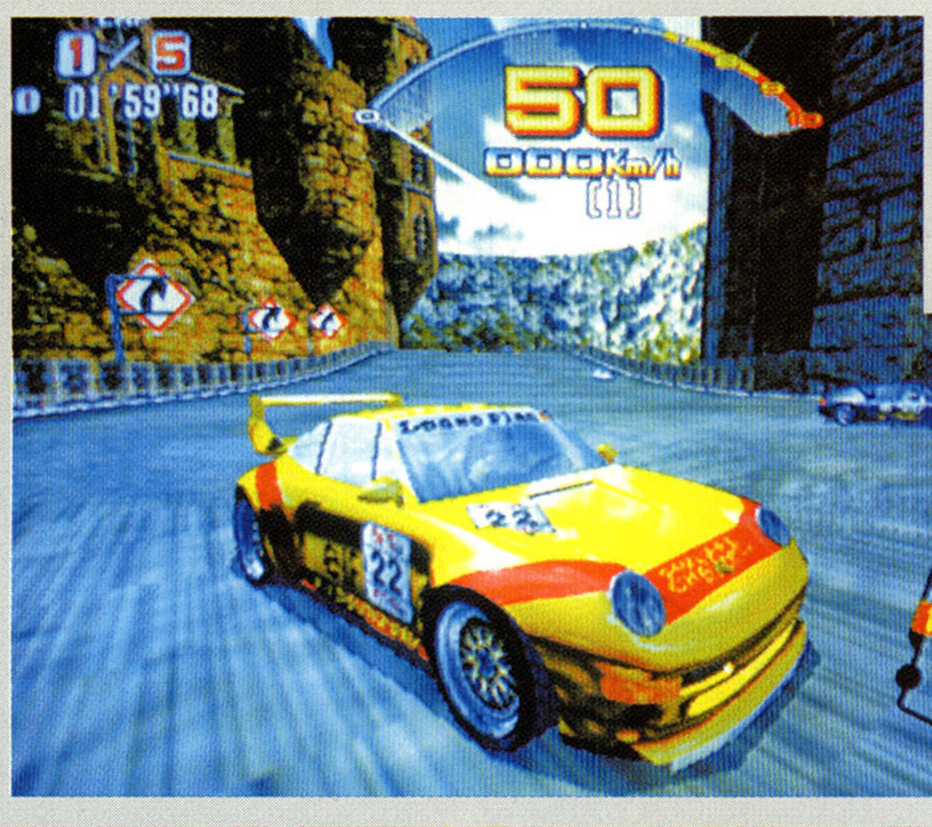
Origin's latest space combat sim features what *Wing Commander* and *Privateer* should have had: multiplayer options

Next Generation OnLine, http://www.next-generation.com/

Super GT

AM2 is the best arcade developer in the world, and its current ambition is to create the definitive driving game. The result? *Super GT* and a new standard in racing realism



***Super GT* has realistic models of four racing vehicles: the Ferrari F40, Dodge Viper, Porsche Turbo, and the Maclaren F1**

Format:	**Arcade**
Publisher:	**Sega**
Developer:	**AM2**
Release Date:	**Out Now**
Origin:	**Japan**

There's nothing like internal rivalry to help fuel the creative fires. Sega's elite AM2 division, responsible for both *Daytona USA* and the *Virtua Fighter* series, is currently leading its peer AM Annex in the dash to create the next generation of racing games based on the powerful Model 3 arcade board. Tetsuya Mizuguchi's AM Annex division, creators of the recent *Sega Touring Car Championship*, is currently working on a Model 3-powered follow-up to coin-op classic, *Sega Rally*. But it will be AM2's incredible looking *Super GT* that will be first out of the pits, expected to appear in Japanese arcades soon.

Toshihiro Nagoshi and his team started work on the project 12 months ago, and *Super GT* was due to be the first Model 3 game to showcase the new board, ahead of even *Virtua Fighter 3*. Market forces (not least, the phenomenal success of *VF2*) conspired against them, and only now has the project seen the light of day. When the team was initially announced, it was

Model 3 is at least three times as powerful as *Daytona USA*'s Model 2 and adds Gouraud shading

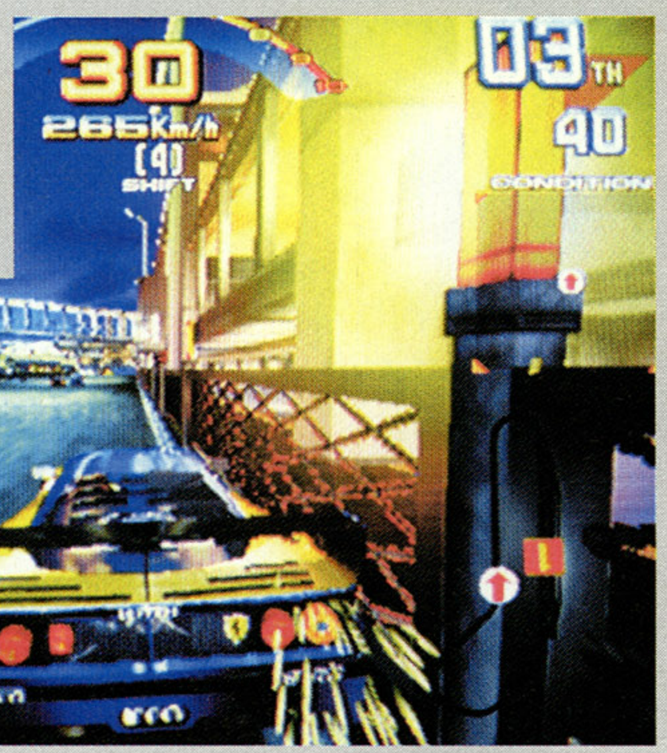
assumed that what has turned out to be *Super GT* was originally intended to be *Daytona 2*. Nagoshi-san is keen to clear the air: "*Super GT* is not *Daytona 2*. The development team is the same, and so many believed that we would automatically be doing the sequel to *Daytona*. We wanted to change the team in order to ensure a different kind of game, but we never did. In the end, we need not have worried, because we've succeeded in producing something with a completely different look."

That new look owes much to the advanced capabilities of the Model 3 technology, which boasts two Lockheed Martin R3D/Pro-1000 custom graphics chips, each capable of rendering over 750,000 polygons per second. Consequently, Model 3 is at least three times as powerful as Model 2 and adds Gouraud shading, giving the graphics a smoother, less angular appearance. "I

Designed by AM4, the *Super GT* cabinet uses advanced hydraulics

Project director, Toshihiro Nagoshi was determined to create a racing game for the next generation

ng alphas



Impressive graphics come in the form of hyper realistic car models and effects such as real-time sparks and skid marks

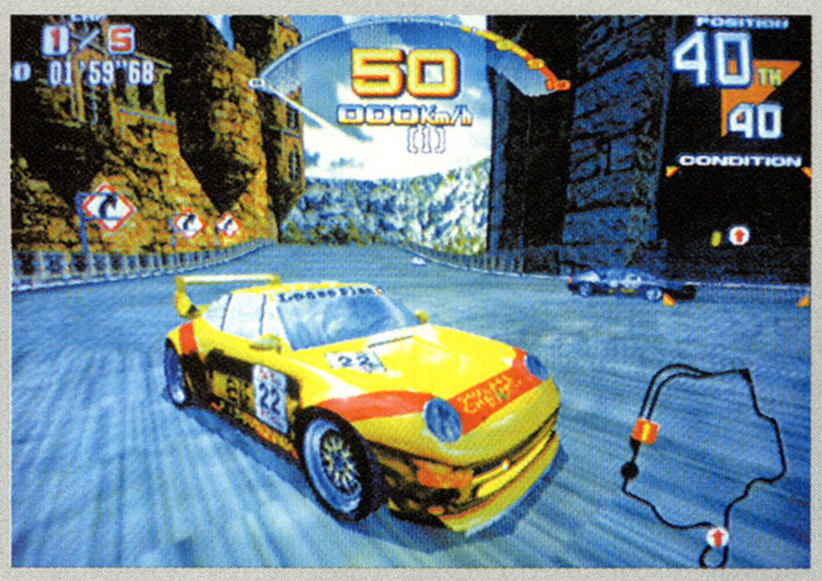
can't tell you how many polygons we've used for each of the cars," says Nagoshi-san, "but suffice it to say that if we made, say, the Ferrari from *Super GT* on the Model 1 board (used for *Virtua Racing*), we would use about half the entire capacity of the board. If we displayed two *Super GT* cars, we'd have no more polygons left."

A bit of math reveals a startling transformation: the *Super GT* car models consist of roughly 3,000 polygons each (Sega's Model 1 board was capable of 180,000 polygons per second), which is well over three times the number used for the cars in the original *Daytona USA*. Reflections roll across windshield and sunlight glints off the paint job. The wheels on the cars are almost perfectly round, and the glass in the windows is fully transparent, revealing the drivers within.

The hardware is important, but equally important is the software — what is behind the polygons

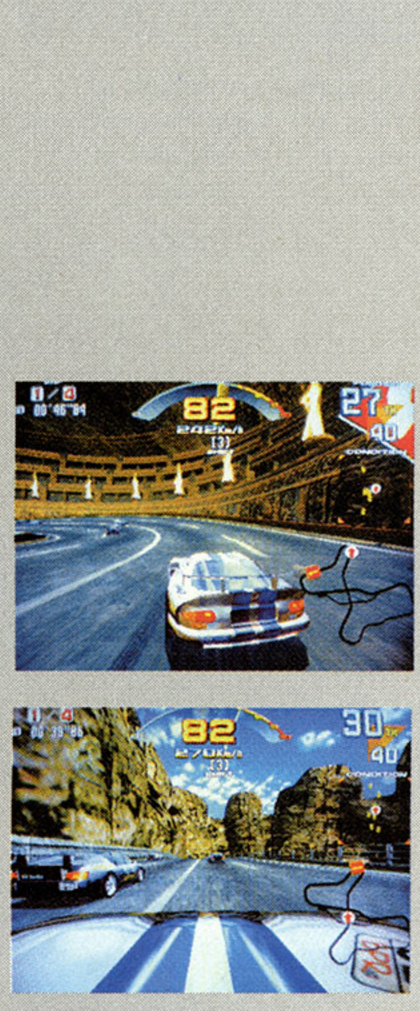
The hardware advantages of the board are plain to see, but new software developments incorporating tricks gleaned from the creation of *VF3* have also played a significant role in the final, astonishingly fast, appearance of *Super GT*. With as many as 40 cars on the track, the team has had to improve the 3D engine that powers the game. Nagoshi-san believes experience is the key: "There are about three times more cars on the track than *Daytona*. The hardware is, of course, important, but equally important is the software — what is behind the polygons. For example, in order to avoid drawing excess geometry, we have streamlined our software. Sega's programmers acquired a lot of know-how with the

Toshihiro Nagoshi studied film in school, and his eye for detail has not been wasted at Sega which he describes as "much more fun than movies"



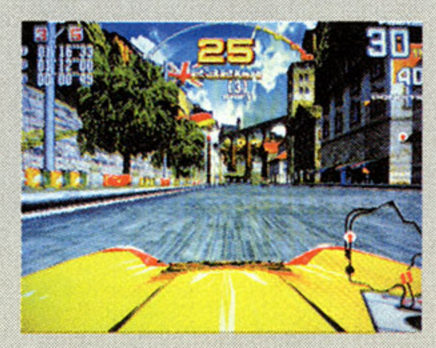
previous CG boards. I believe that software is as important as hardware for the speed of the game."

Super GT is different from *Daytona* in almost every respect. Nagoshi-san is keen to stress that, from the outset, his vision for the first Model 3 racing game was a global one, inspired by the supercars of the world, such as the Ferrari F40, the Maclaren F1, and the Dodge Viper. "*Daytona* was based on an American sport, with American cars. I wanted to make a game that would be accepted worldwide," explains Nagoshi-san. "I needed some cars, therefore, that everyone would know: Porsche, Ferrarri, and so on, but it was hard work. I went to Italy to the Ferrari factory in Modena to see the real cars and to deal directly with the manufacturers, but that didn't work out as well as I had expected. Getting the approval of such huge manufacturers was difficult."



One would guess that Sega's considerable financial resources clinched the deal. Whatever went on behind the scenes, the end more than justifies the means. *Daytona*'s cars all handled the same way, and with *Super GT*, Sega is putting the emphasis on the driving experience, not just the race. Again, moving away from the confines of *Daytona* was an important issue. "I didn't want *Super GT* to be a circuit game, because they are visually boring."

"I wanted to make a game that was visually attractive. We needed to make some courses that would have character and be easily identified by the public — to avoid over-complicating things. For example, we decided to make a course influenced by the *Indiana Jones* movies — something that can be identified immediately by the player, with relatively simple imagery. Simple ideas associated with the high-end Model 3 board are the basics of *Super GT*."

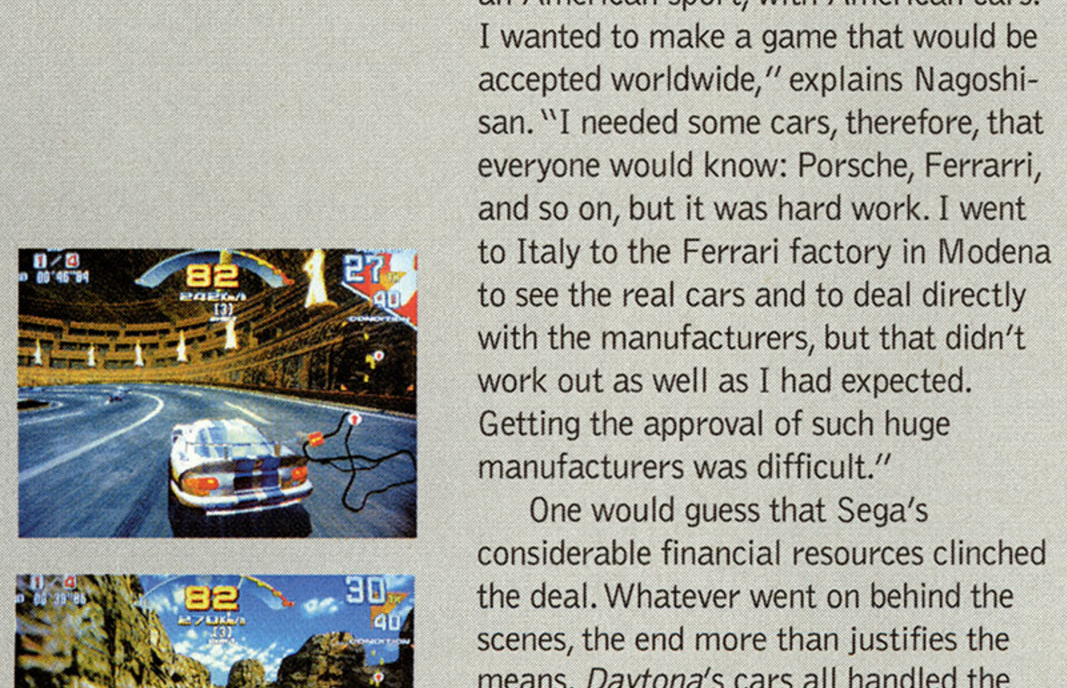


Each car model is made up of an estimated 3,000 polygons — three times that of *Daytona USA*

Simple is not a word you'd immediately associate with such an advanced piece of programming, but Nagoshi-san is keen to ensure that the technical marvels afforded by the Model 3 board do not overcome his basic principle: to create an accessible game. "The feeling of actually driving is very strong," he insists. "I didn't want to make a difficult racing game. It may sound strange, but I'm very bad at playing games. I used to spend a lot of money in arcades, just to see the end-game sequences and I know how bad players can feel if the game is too hard, too early. So when I came to design *Super GT*, I tried to make a game that could be enjoyed by beginners."

Daytona was based on an American sport. I wanted to make a game that would be accepted worldwide

Experienced gamers shouldn't lose out, however, if AM2's previous efforts are anything to go by. *Virtua Fighter* was instantly accessible, requiring only a few moves to progress through the initial stages, but weeks of constant playing to



The scenery in *Super GT* is meant ot have a more worldy feel than most racing games — one track was actually inspired by the *Indiana Jones* series

ng alphas

***Super GT* features four very different courses which range from beginner to expert**

master. *Super GT*, for all its initial simplicity, will no doubt turn out to be as rich a driving experience as the original *Daytona USA*, which many regarded as superior to *Ridge Racer* thanks to its extended learning curve. *Super GT* features four different courses: two beginner (day and night), one intermediate, and an expert course. Realistic handling will be crucial to the game's success and for that Yu Suzuki helped out. "When I joined Sega, Yu Suzuki had made some outstanding racing games," says Nagoshi-san. "He made the *Virtua Fighter* series a success, but he still prefers making racing games. We are different, our interests and views are different, but I got some advice from Yu Suzuki on the drift handling. For *Daytona*, the handling was a bit heavy. With *Super GT*, when you turn, the handling becomes steadily heavier, but does so smoothly. When entering a drift, the tail will slide slowly and you'll feel the power of the engine. He also recommended that I do some sampling on the Fuji freeway, which I did. He's very supportive."

When entering a drift, the tail will slide slowly and you'll feel the power of the engine

Supportive, but not actually on the *Super GT* team, which will come as a surprise to many. It's too early to speculate, but Suzuki may well be in the advanced stages of creating *Daytona 2*, again for the Model 3 board. Nagoshi-san is tight-lipped about that, eager to focus attention instead on the innovative cabinet design, courtesy of Sega's AM4 division. The hydraulics give the seat a life of its own, recreating the feel of power-sliding around corners, vibrating when the car hits the curb (or a competitor), and incorporating a bass-speaker system to simulate the feeling of sitting right on top of a 300bhp engine. At the moment, there are only plans for two-player and four-player link-ups — such is the cost of combining such an advanced cabinet with the expensive Model 3 board. The code is there, however, and it would be possible to link eight cabinets, but the cost of such a system would make it a rare sight indeed in all but the major theme parks.

By now, Toshihiro Nagoshi and his team could have started work on its next project, perhaps helping Yu Suzuki with *Daytona 2* or designing characters for the next incarnation of *Virtua Fighter*, as Nagoshi-san did with the original. Such is the spirit of co-operation at AM2. Nagoshi-san may well oversee the Saturn conversion of *Super GT* (which is likely to use the Saturn upgrade cartridge planned for *VF3*). There are limits, though. When asked who his team regards as their biggest competitor, he replies, smiling, "AM Annex."

It is perhaps a testament to Sega's coin-op supremacy that the only competition the teams worry about comes from each other — a friendly rivalry that has kept AM2 at the pinnacle of coin-op design since it made its first leap ahead of the competition with the seminal *Out Run* in 1986.

With *Super GT*, the team has raised the bar once again, stealing a march not only on its in-house peers, but arch rivals Namco, which may find itself in the unenviable position of runner-up in the race for the next generation of driving games.

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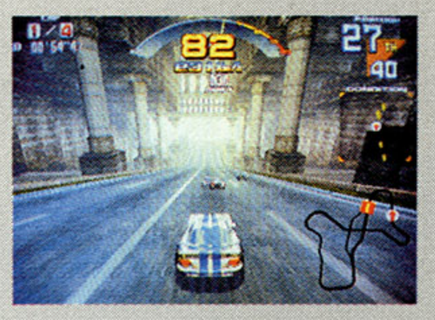

***Super GT* features four distinct camera angles from which to view your car**

The various driving challenges in each of the four courses combined with 39 competing cars give *Super GT* an extended learning curve

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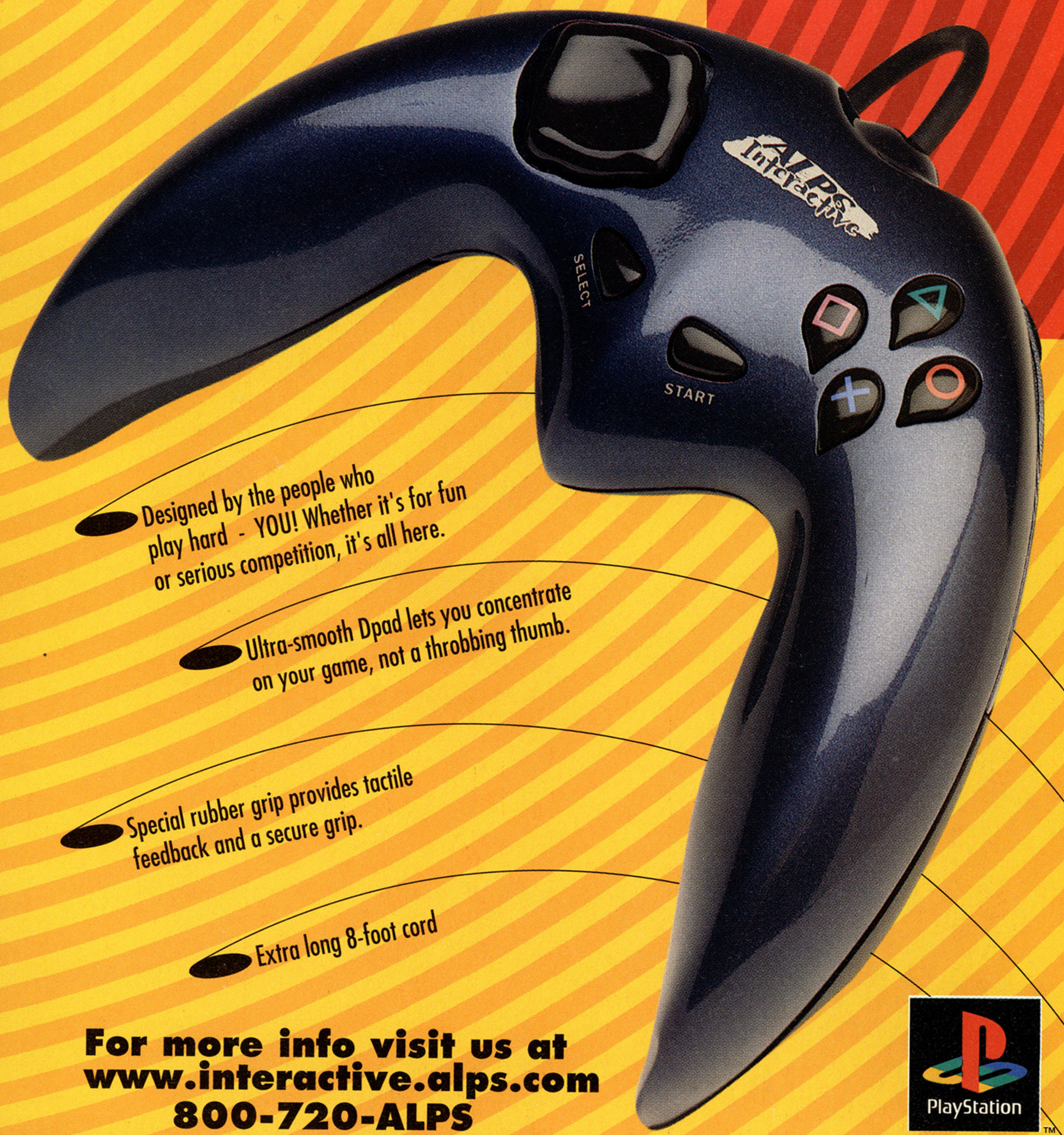

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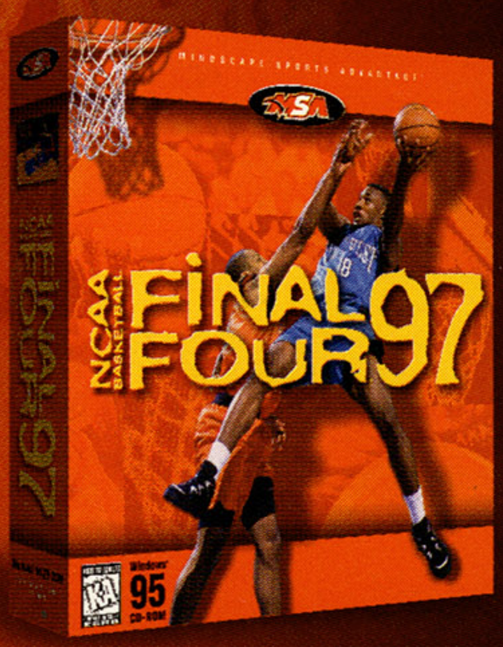

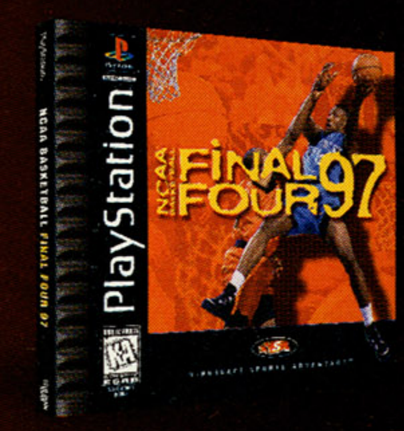

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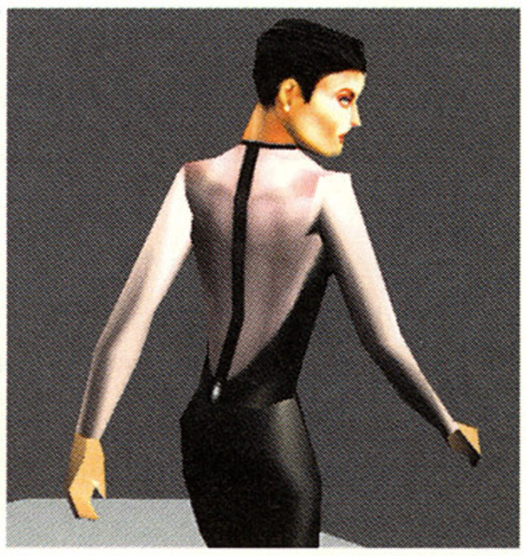
Mission: Impossible

A **Next Generation** exclusive showcasing Ocean's much-coveted, spy-based adventure



The lighting effects are probably more intense than those in any other Nintendo 64 game. Check out the goggles. Ethan (left) is the game's main character (it's a shame his thumbs seem to be put on wrong). The characters all have smoothly rendered faces and are realistically shaded. It appears as if this strong female heroine is on your side (right)

Format:	**N64/64DD**
Publisher:	**Ocean**
Developer:	**Ocean**
Release Date:	**Summer**
Origin:	**U.S.**

Ethan, the central character, must achieve several goals — break into a room to steal files, impersonate a European government official, blow up a bridge, and so on — in six semi-related missions.

Ethan is shown in the background walking. This main lobby was used to practice and tune much of Ethan's walking patterns and rhythms

The Ocean team hopes to have a 64DD multiplayer version available this fall

The year 1997 is important for Nintendo. The company itself is trying to fill vast genre gaps with sequels to 16-bit Nintendo games. For the console to be as successful as it's been touted, third-party teams must create great games. The "Dream Team" squeezed out a paltry and mediocre handful of games in 1996, with several titles slipping down the release list at the last minute and impressing few.

Thus, Ocean's *Mission: Impossible* is an important game for Nintendo 64. The Ocean team has already said that it hopes to release a 64DD multiplayer version this fall after the cart version arrives this summer. And the game purports to make use of a new AI language to produce social interaction in a way gamers haven't seen before. It's clear that it's far from the simple *Doom* clone that was initially suspected.

Mission: Impossible is an arcade-based adventure modeled on plot elements of the TV show, as re-created by the Tom Cruise summer box office hit. Ocean's sister company, Infogrames, created the AI language that the game uses. *Mission Impossible* places gamers in social situations, such as high-powered dinner parties, in which every nonplayer character has individualized motives and reactions.

Several unusual weapons and tools are at the player's disposal: explosive gum, photographic glasses, darts, and silencers. Possibly the oddest device is the Mask Maker, which enables players to impersonate others: Nab an official, knock him or her unconscious, and then leave the room with a new face. Here, Nintendo 64's power is put to use morphing the realistic, textured faces. Elsewhere, fantastic lighting effects, realistic environments, and flexible, over-the-shoulder camera angles (similar to those found in *Tomb Raider* and *Super Mario 64*) round out the game.

No one outside of Nintendo is sure what the company plans to do with 64 DD over the coming months. But in the absence of any concrete news from Nintendo itself, gamers will have to rely on sneak peaks of games such as *Impossible Mission* to get a clue as to what the first batch of games may look like.

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The environments are huge, realistic, and full of the possibility of adventure. These shots are wonderfully detailed. The level of detail in the environments is simply awesome. It's possible players can walk down onto the tracks. Just watch out for that third rail...

Street Fighter III

In the age of 3D fighting games, is there still room for the classic 2D gameplay of the *Street Fighter* series?

Format: **Arcade**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **Capcom Japan**
Release Date: **May**
Origin: **Japan**

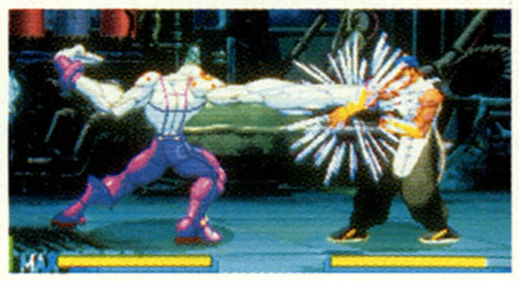
Alex receives dental assistance from Yun, brother of Yang. Backgrounds are clearer and more detailed than ever, and in some cases interactive, offering garbage cans and and other objects to smash

Capcom's *Street Fighter* strategy for the future is becoming clear. Or at least, clearer. With *Street Fighter III* arriving in beautifully animated 2D form, and the less than convincing *Street Fighter EX* appearing in 3D, the Japanese company seems intent on ruling the 2D roost. Its feet are firmly planted in the past, while timid steps into the 3D future are being taken.

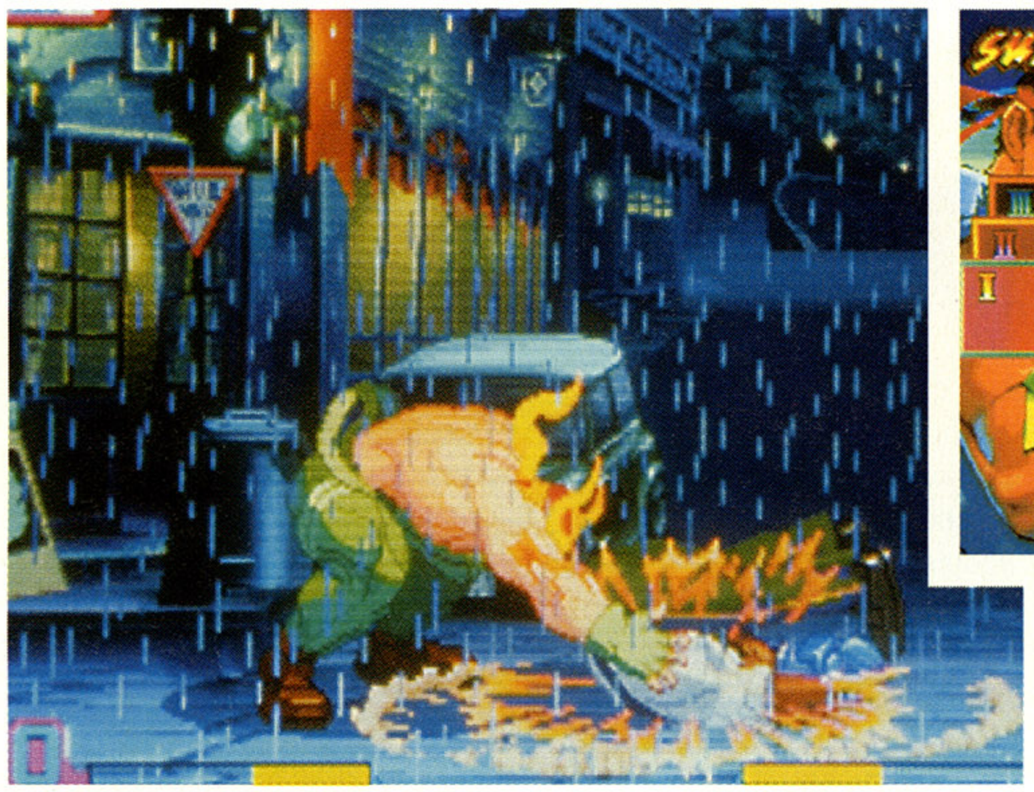
For its core audience, *SFIII* is a revelation, bringing the art of 2D videogame animation to incredible new heights. Capcom's CPS III CD-ROM-based system is rich in RAM (about 80MB) and enables high frame rates, rich colors and sound, and smooth snappy control. The designers plucked the obvious star pupils, Ken and Ryu, from the *SFII* series and created nine new characters to add to the mix. Certain sequences of animation — the fireballs from Ken and Ryu — are remarkably more fluid than ever before. In fact, Ryu's fireball sequence takes 14 frames of animation, and the attention to detail is unbeliveable. Even smoother animation is possible, and Capcom developers will hopefully milk the CPSIII in future *Street Fighters* as they did the CPSII with *Street Fighter Alpha II*.

Ken and Ryu were picked from the *SFII* series and new characters were added to the mix

New features — being able to choose any of three sets of Super Arts Moves and an offensive block — add to the depth of gameplay, but



New Ibuki gets a spinning kick from Ryu in a psychedelic background (left). Necro attacks Yun, whose offensive block may be a problem (middle). Capcom sifted through characters in its versions of *Street Fighter*. While Ken and Ryu are the only ones left (for now anyway), both are in prime form (right)



The cast of *SFIII* on display, with the choices of Super Art Moves listed in Japanese. Three Super Art Moves are selectable before each bout, a new wrinkle in the *SF* concept that may or may not fly in the long run

Alex is somewhat akin to Zangief, but slightly faster and slightly cooler (top). The post-bout animation is far more detailed than pre-game animation

time will tell whether they're solid fighting features or simple shifts in the constantly changing *SF* puzzle. The Custom Combo is gone, although the Super Combo remains and this time has two levels of power.

The real trick to learning *SFIII*'s complexities lies, however, in learning the strengths and weaknesses of the new characters. Alex, a heavy hitter with throws like Zangief's; Dudley, a heavyweight boxer from Britain; and Necro, an elastic Frankenstein creation originating from Russia, are somewhat familiar, yet fresh, new characters. Ibuki takes over the role of the scantily dressed Japanese female previously filled by Chun Li and Sakura, although Ibuki's a little more punked out.

Yun and Yang, brothers from Hong Kong who practice Kung Fu, and Sean, who grew up in Brazil but who wishes to learn under Ken's tutelage, are a little more removed from the standard Capcom cookie-cutter. The last two new characters, Oro, a 140-year-old, one-armed hermit, and Elenea, a long-legged, African woman who fights capoeira style, are grotesque and exotic, respectively. Each member of the new roster has a unique style that will take players time to learn, and the learning curve for each is a gradual uphill slope.

Yes, *SFIII* is beautiful, but for all practical purposes, it's more of the same from Capcom — a safe, smart, profitable 2D product. Taking a microscope to the evolutionary line of *Street Fighter*s from its very genesis to present state, one would see that the series has painted itself into a proverbial corner — the graphics in this latest installment are so sharp, and the control is so precise, it begs the question: what's left to do in 2D?

Street Fighter II has arguably seen its best days with *Street Fighter Turbo Extreme*, *Street Fighter Alpha*, and *Alpha 2*, and everything after is merely embellishment. However, no better 2D fighting than that found in the *Street Fighter* series exists, period. Attempting to redesign the game in 3D just won't do the trick, at least not without fundamentally changing the nature of its gameplay. *SFEX* has proven as much (at least so far), and in the final analysis we've come to love *SF*'s perfectly honed 2D fighting, stylish animation, and unique characters.

Capcom has clearly decided to continue developing in both 2D and 3D, keeping its hard-earned 2D loyalists and slowly winning devotees of 3D brawlers away from competitors. In the end, Capcom has once again done what it seems to do best, annoying detractors and pleasing faithful fans by moving forward just enough to create a "new" game, while seeming to stand still. It's an art all its own, and few, if any, are better at it.

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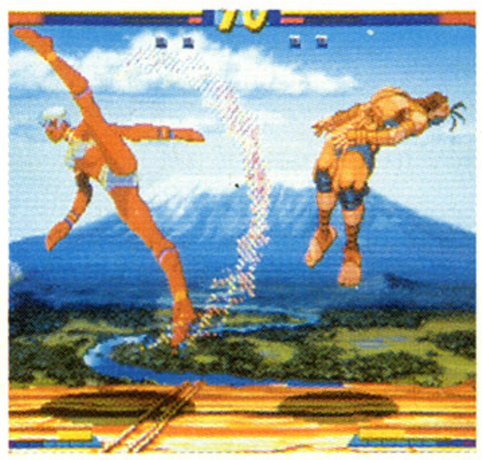
The real trick to learning *SFIII*'s complexities is in learning the strengths and weaknesses of the new characters



Odd little musical notes appear on the ground after special hits by Elena, the long-legged, capoeira fighter displays (and she shows plenty of skin, too). The Super Combo replaces *SF Alpha*'s Custom (right)

An interview with Noritaka Funamizu

Street Fighter III has arrived at last. Now **Next Generation** talks with Capcom's General Producer Noritaka Funamizu to find out why Capcom seems to have an aversion to the number "three."

NG: *Street Fighter III* is still a 2D game. Obviously, the trend over the last few years has been to move to polygon-based 3D — why the decision to stick with 2D?

Noritaka Funamizu: At Capcom, we feel that 3D is not really suitable for the head-to-head fighting of beat-'em-up games. And, to be frank with you, we concentrate a great deal on the quality of the graphics, and we don't really have the techniques here to display very high quality graphics in 3D.

NG: You mean in terms of hardware?

NF: No, we don't have people with the right skills, yet. But we do have techniques to display some of the best pictures in 2D.

NG: Given the success of the *Virtua Fighter* series, will gamers now expect 3D, whether or not it's better? Do you think a 2D game will be regarded as old-fashioned?

NF: We don't think 2D is becoming old-fashioned. Even though others use 3D, even though they use motion-capture to give what they say are more realistic moves, we don't really know if that's what you'd call realism or not. We think 2D can display what people think of as movement in a game, not as in normal everyday life. We can do movements within the game in 2D that are cool, although not possible in 3D.

NG: *Resident Evil* was 3D and a big success. Did that surprise you?

NF: We weren't really surprised because the producers are always trying to create massive hits. But it didn't have to be in 3D, we just decided to portray the scenario in that way. It wasn't successful just because we used 3D.

NG: Can you tell us about *SFIII* characters?

NF: There are 10 characters in the game and all are new, except for Ryu and Ken.

NG: Why the decision to leave out so many characters established in *Street Fighter II*?

NF: If we want to return to those popular characters, we can put them in the *Street Fighter Alpha* series.

NG: *Street Fighter II* introduced lots of new gameplay features which were then copied by everybody. What did you think about that?

NF: We think that even though everyone else copied it, they didn't actually copy it well. They only copied moves. They haven't copied the actual concept, and that's something we think about daily. We want people to play the game and think, "This is different."

NG: What is the secret behind *Street Fighter II*'s great success, and how have you applied it to making *Street Fighter III*?

NF: The main reason for its success is that we sought to create a game that could be played human against human, not only human against the computer. And I think that it was probably the first game in which you get the right response to what you actually do — it moved exactly how you wanted it to.

NG: Why does Capcom produce mainly fighting games?

"There are 10 characters in *SFIII* and all are new, except for Ryu and Ken"

NF: To create a new game we need a lot of development resources, and fighting games are probably the easiest way to earn a lot of money. Since we have created many fighting games, we know how to make them well and can teach our employees how to do them better than anyone. Those are the two main reasons.

NG: Over the last few years, as you've been developing all the different *Street Fighter II* games, have you been saving the best new ideas for *Street Fighter III* or have you implemented them as you've gone along?

NF: After we released the *Street Fighter II* series we weren't sure what *Street Fighter III* would be like. By releasing *Street Fighter Alpha* and *Street Fighter Alpha II*, we gradually figured out what *Street Fighter III* should be like. It was quite hard to create a game with new functions that wouldn't confuse people.

NG: So do you think *Street Fighter III* will be as big as *Street Fighter II*?

NF: It's not going to be as big as *Street Fighter II*. The game market had real power at that time. It's flat now.

NG: Why wait so long to release *SF III*?

NF: Two reasons. First, we could only recently release the CPS3 system. Second, the graphic designers needed time to study the actual functions of what CPS3 could do.

NG: So this will be a big leap forward?

NF: Yes.

NG: How much more advanced is it?

NF: CPS2 was 16-bit; CPS3 is 32-bit. With CPS2 we could only display 16 colors per cell, but now it's possible to display 256 colors. And CPS3 has a compression chip, so we can compress the actual data.

NG: Why do you need to compress the data? Surely with arcade games you can have as many ROMs as you want?

NF: In order to cut the price. The more ROMs we use, the more expensive it's going to be.

NG: Are there any plans to use CPS3 for games such as a new *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*, or any other classic Capcom series?

NF: It comes down to whether they could make money.

NG: Because those games are not as popular?

NF: Those types of action games take a long time to make and aren't popular in Japan, so we end up losing money on them. But in the next two or three years, we will try to develop those games, even though they're a large investment.

NG: Capcom has state-of-the-art 2D technology, but it is moving slowly into 3D, thinking specifically about *Star Gladiators* and *Street Fighter EX*. Would you like to take the lead in 3D and compete with Model 3?

NF: We will try to be at the same level, but we won't try to beat Namco and Sega because we really don't need to. Since we have the best technology for 2D games, getting second prize for 3D is good enough.

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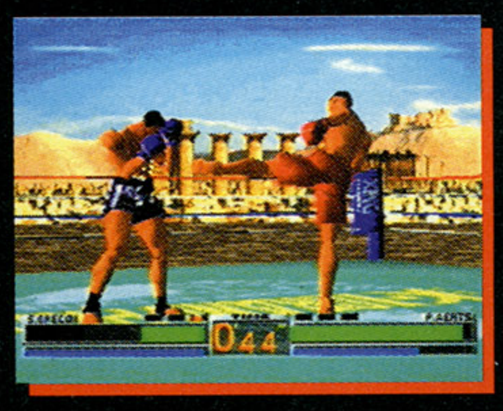

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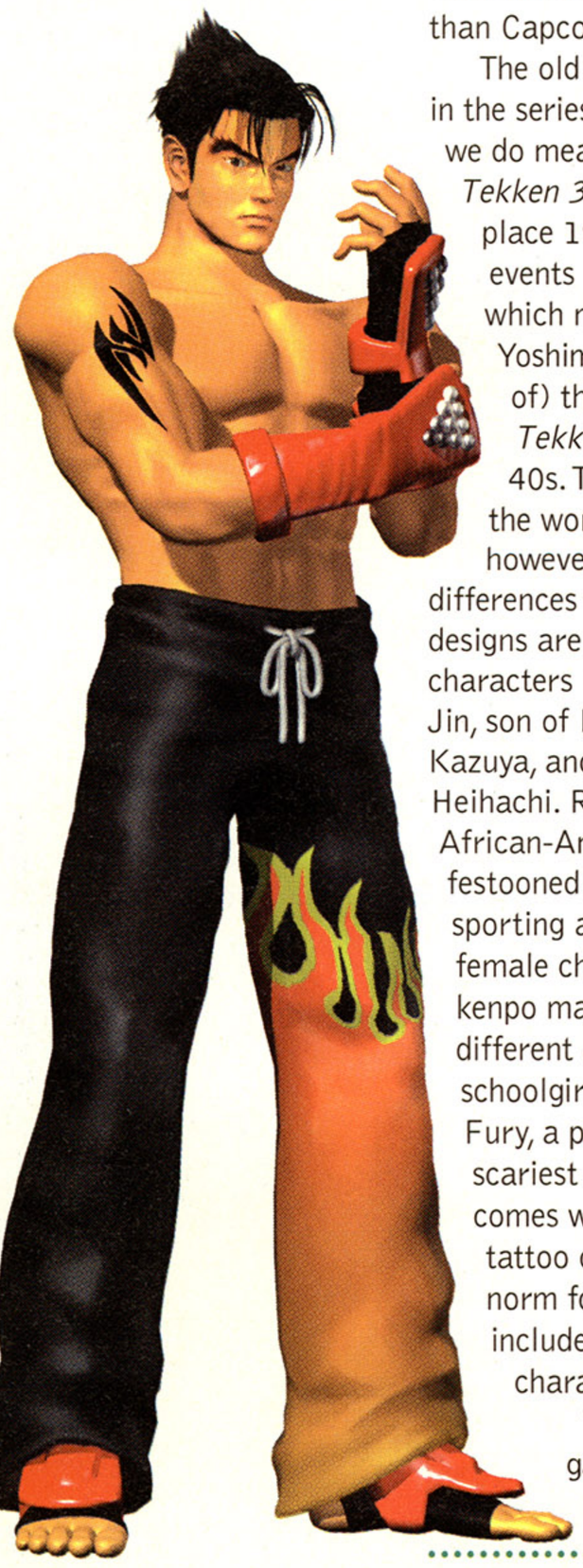
Tekken 3

Namco's latest could be its best yet — but does that make it too good for PlayStation?

Namco boasts that Tekken 3's System 12 board is 50% more powerful than *Tekken 2*'s System 11

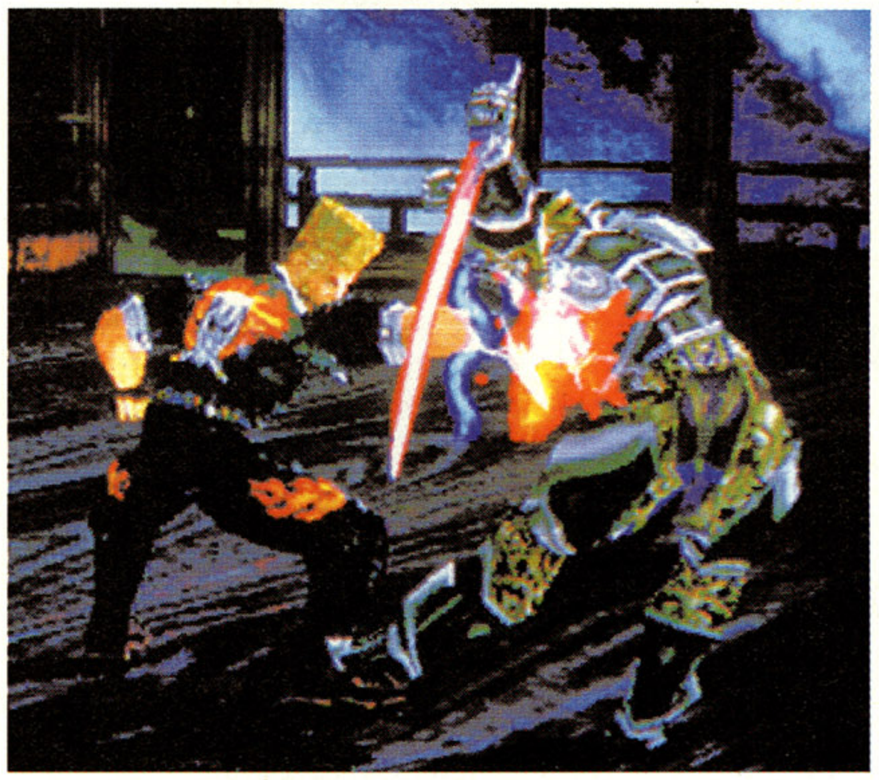


Format:	**Arcade**
Publisher:	**Namco**
Developer:	**Namco**
Release Date:	**Summer**
Origin:	**Japan**

Introduced to the public a scant three months before AOU, Japan's largest arcade show, Namco's *Tekken 3* may not outshine rival AM2's *Virtua Fighter 3*, but it does show Namco figured out what number comes after "2" faster than Capcom.

The old major characters in the series will return, and we do mean "old" — *Tekken 3* supposedly takes place 19 years after the events of *Tekken 2*, which means Jack, Lau, Yoshimitsu, and (most of) the rest of the *Tekken* clan are in their 40s. This seems to be the worst kind of conceit, however, as the differences in character designs are minimal. New characters include Kazama Jin, son of Kazama Jun and Kazuya, and grandson of Heihachi. Rally Jackson is an African-American brawler, festooned with dreadlocks and sporting a pierced eyebrow. Two new female characters, Julia Chang and kenpo master Lin Xiaoyu, conform to different and equally depressing "cute schoolgirl" stereotypes, while Brian Fury, a playable boss who's easily the scariest looking of the new batch, comes with a scarred face and a tattoo on his neck. Also, as is the norm for the series, *Tekken 3* will include a number of hidden characters and playable bosses.

Tekken 3 is also the first game in the series to fully incorporate 3D movement. Tapping the joystick twice up or down causes characters to move into and out of the plane of combat. Of course, this means new styles of control are introduced. Clearly, *Tekken* fans will have to learn at least a few new tricks.



***Tekken 3* introduces several new characters and brings back most of the old ones. But looking over these designs, it's tough to believe that the old characters are all supposed to be in their 40s**

Although it had been speculated that *Tekken 3* would run on Namco's hyper-powerful System 33 arcade board and compete directly against *VF3*, it seems the technology isn't ready yet. Instead, the game is running on Namco's System 12 board, the technological successor to *Tekken 2*'s System 11 (duh), which Namco

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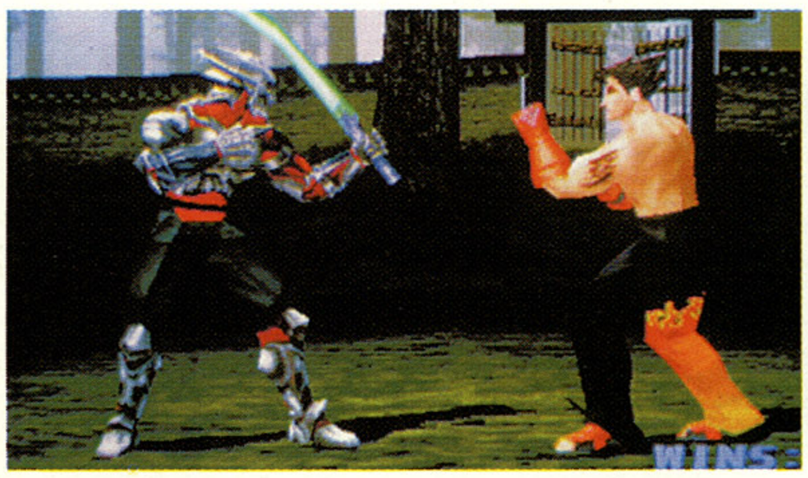
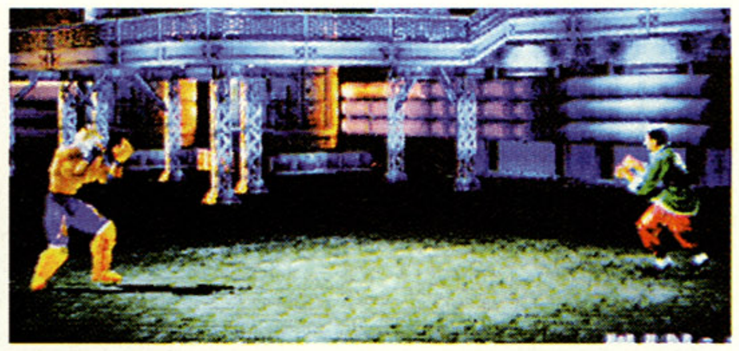




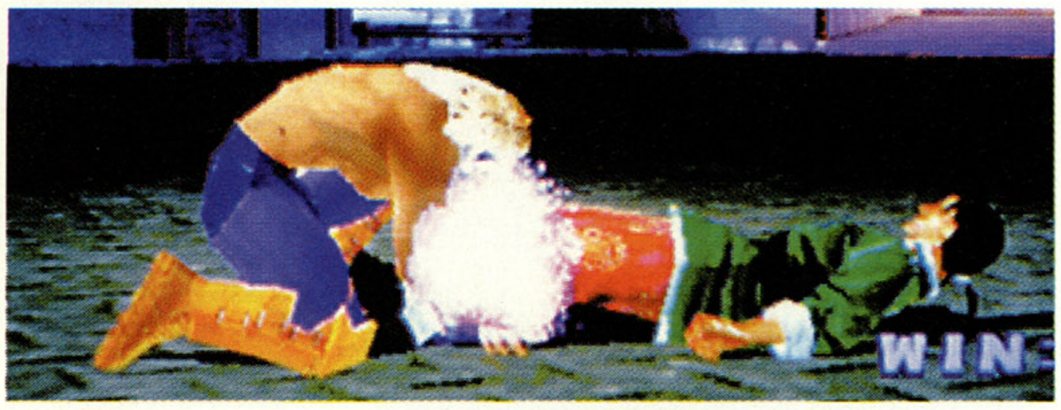
Thanks to Namco's System 12 arcade board, the characters are larger and look much smoother than in previous *Tekken* games

boasts is 50% more powerful. It certainly shows in the game: *Tekken 3*'s characters are larger, sport a noticeably higher polygon count, show finer textures, and benefit from impressive lighting effects. Each character's hands now have individual fingers, which open and close with different moves. A lot of attention has been paid to details of clothing, and each character's outfit can move and ripple quite realistically.

The game's backgrounds have ditched the large 2D bitmaps of previous games and have been built in 3D from polygon models. The new board also enables the dust kicked up by character's feet, and the energy effects following blows, to have a more "realistic" look than the nebulous blobs seen in previous *Tekken* titles.

The most exciting new technology being applied, however, is Namco's "Envelope Processing" technique. Each character's joints are covered by surface "envelopes" which smooth the areas that bend and flex, eliminating the kinks and oddly meeting polygon surfaces that plague hierarchical character models. While Namco is keeping the secrets of how this technique works under wraps, it is rumored that spline-patches (objects which are modeled using mathematical projections, rather than using polygons) are at the heart of the process.

Note how all the game's backgrounds are now built from polygons in 3D. While this makes the game look better, players and characters still can't interact with the background in any way



One of *Tekken 3*'s best new features however is raw speed — each character snaps out moves with nearly the same rapid delivery as any 2D, sprite-based brawler. The pace and of the combat has to be seen to be believed

Even though not quite up to System 33's projected standards, the System 12 board is much more advanced than the PlayStation-friendly System 11. It seems that with *Tekken 3* Namco faces a dilemma similar to the one AM2 is currently facing with porting *Virtua Fighter 3* to Saturn: the console is too underpowered to handle an arcade-perfect conversion. This is an especially acute problem with *Tekken*, since its PlayStation versions are not only as good as, but in many respects better than, the arcade originals.

Each character's joints are covered by surface "envelopes" which smooth areas that bend and flex

Namco is allegedly looking into the feasibility of a solution path similar to AM2's: release a hardware add-on to boost PlayStation's capabilities. At press time, this was merely rumor, but this technical hurdle does pose a very real problem.

Conversion aside, Namco has created a worthy successor to its signature fighting series and has given devotees a great reason to celebrate.

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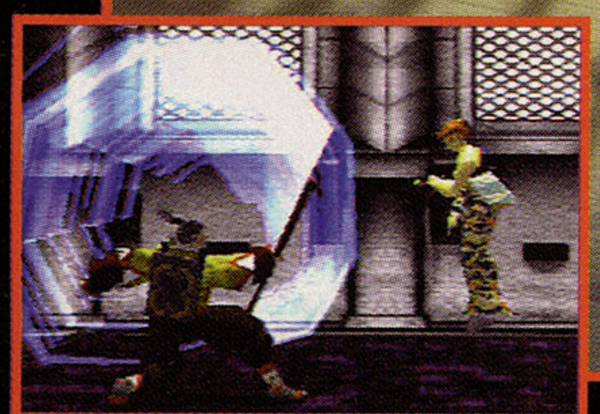

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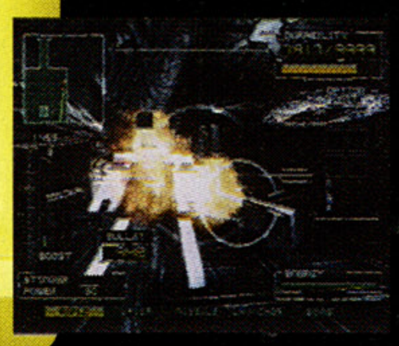

KIDS TO ADULTS
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Genki

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COMING SOON TO PLAYSTATION

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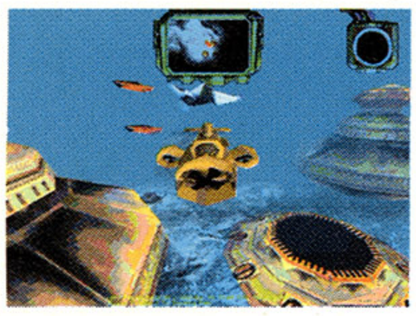
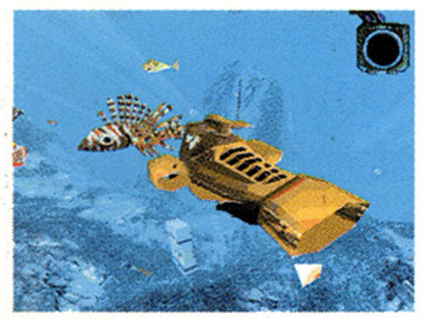
Sub Culture

As Criterion dives beneath the waves, its new PC title is set to sink *and* swim...

Various sea creatures inhabit *Sub Culture*. Many are harmless; others must be fought or avoided. Amazingly enough, players really feel submerged here

Format:	**PC**
Publisher:	**VIE**
Developer:	**Criterion Studios**
Release Date:	**Fall**
Origin:	**U.K.**





The game isn't only about combat. Smooth maneuvering is part of it, too

Sub Culture is the big ticket for Criterion, a company perhaps more famous for its 3D engine, RenderWare, than for its games. There's a sense of urgency surrounding this release. From what **Next Generation** has seen of the game, that urgency would be best spent on promoting the title, as the graphics and gameplay seem to be developing well.

Like Bullfrog's forthcoming *Creation* title and Blue Byte's recently released *Archimedean Dynasty*, *Sub Culture* is set beneath the waves.

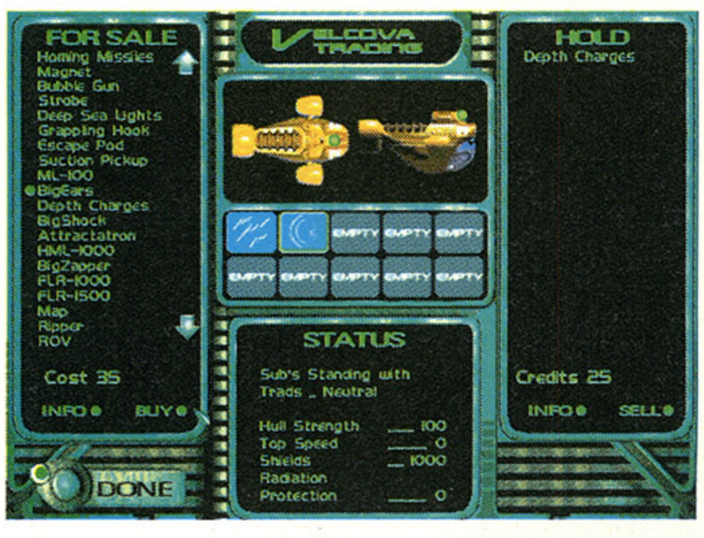
Split into two sections, the game features a sizable 3D terrain for the player to explore using a tiny one-man sub. Players must undertake rescue, reconnaissance, and trading missions for one, or both, of two warring factions — the "Techs" and the "Trads." There's a fairly obvious environmental subtext as well, with Criterion subtly chastizing those who pollute the seas.

The mercenary plot has much in common with the 8-bit classic, *Elite*, giving players as much or as little freedom as they require. A plot does rears its head every now and again, however, in the form of specific missions and the ongoing tensions between the two tribes. The player who does too many favors for the "Techs," will receive a frosty (not to mention violent) reception on entering "Trad" territory next time around. Keeping an eye on loyalties will be a crucial part of the game if the lone sub is to make it through to the second stage.

Keeping an eye on loyalties will be a crucial part of the game if one sub is to make it through to the second stage

The bulk of *Sub Culture* takes place in a beautifully rendered ocean, but once all business has been concluded there, the player moves into the claustrophobic world of a human sewer system where two new tribes and a fiendish current system await.

The player and the tribes are part of a miniature civilization. The hero's sub is dwarfed by the native sea creatures, which consist of crabs, poisonous jellyfish, and a dozen varieties of fish, turtles, and mutant eels. All are fully textured 3D polygon models that move and behave in a convincing way — so convincing, in fact, that many wasted hours are likely to be spent simply swimming around with them.



The 3Dfx version is silky smooth and packed with lots of detail

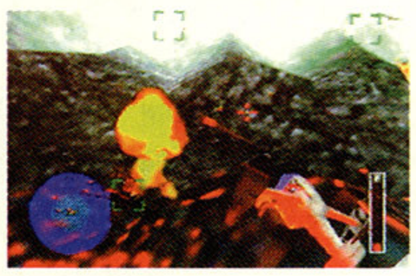
The game's sound gives the sub depth, night and day cycles give the world a living feel, and currents conspire to create one of the most convincing game environments in a long time. *Sub Culture* could cement a reputation for Criterion in game design to match its existing reputation for technology.

ng

Wild Choppers

Seta announces its second N64 title, which could be the most demanding chopper sim ever released for a console

Format: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Seta**
Developer: **Seta**
Release Date: **Summer**
Origin: **Japan**



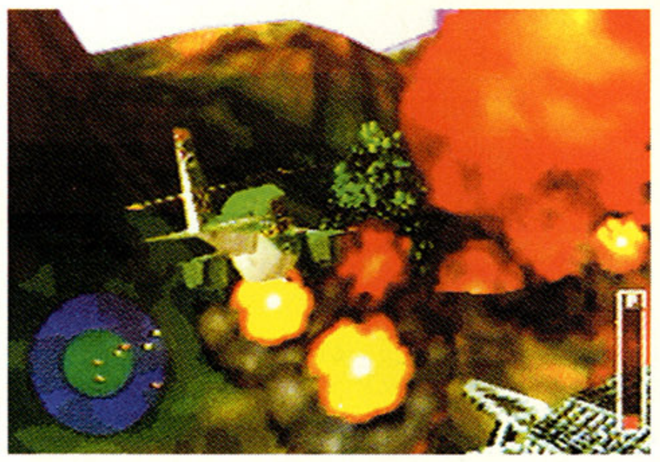
In both its look and its general goals, *Wild Choppers* bears more than a mild resemblancce to EA's *Strike* series

Japanese developer Seta is one of the most Nintendo-friendly companies on the planet, pumping out titles for Super NES all through the early '90s. Now, moving into the 64-bit age, the company has two titles in the works, the racing game *Rev Limit* (NG23) and this attack chopper sim.

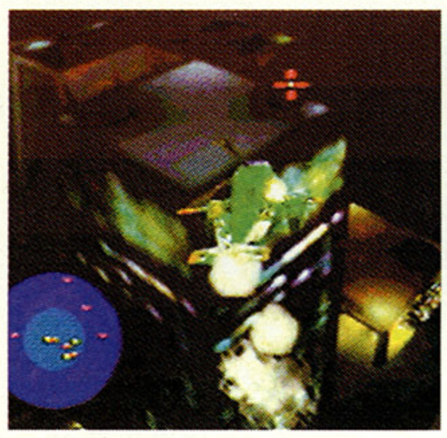
And it is more of a sim than an arcade experience. The game is controlled using both Nintnedo 64's analog stick and the directional pad (plus the z-button for firing, of course). This scheme enables extremely precise and nimble control, and players will certainly find they need it — a Seta spokesperson at the last Shoshinkai show estimated two or three hours of practice would be needed to master the basics of flight.

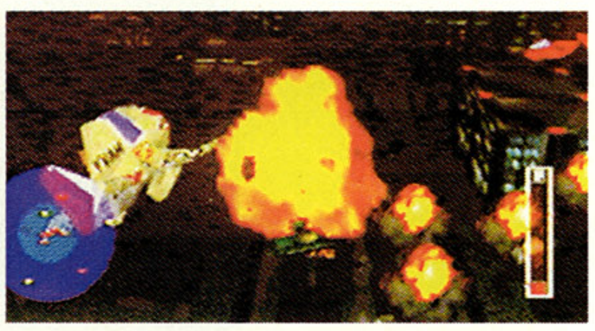
Gameplay itself appears to be equally challenging. The game has three missions, each divided into three stages, with the usual set of goals for a chopper game: destroy radars, rescue hostages, and so on. In both look and structure, the game seems suspiciously close to a more realistic take on EA's *Strike* series. However, a major difference is the time limit in each stage and the ammunition limit. Players will have to find ways to make every shot count, and this gives the game a depth of strategy Nintendo 64 could certainly use.

Of course, *Wild Choppers* faces competition from Kemco's *Blade and Barrel* (NG22), which emphasizes action and mass destruction over realistic physics and precise military tactics. It will be interesting to see, over the coming months, toward which style of gameplay the buying public gravitates.



With its promise of fiery action and hard-core simulation of helicopter flight dynamics, *Wild Choppers* could find itself with a willing audience, but one too limited to give it mainstream success. Time will surely tell





While these screens are not final, they aren't far from it. Fast but quite demanding, *Wild Choppers* may or may not find a mass audience, but from what we can see it certainly deserves at least a small following

In both look and structure, the game seems suspiciously close to a more realistic take on EA's *Strike* series

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ng alphas

Meat Puppet

Kronos puts Origin's *Crusader* on ice, with its own hip, new, and unwilling assassin

Unlike other games with isometric viewpoints, *Meat Puppet* has an architecture that rises elaborately upward and adds dangerous new heights to the gameplay

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Playmates**
Developer:	**Kronos**
Release Date:	**June**
Origin:	**U.S.**

With extreme violence and an isometric, third-person perspective, *Meat Puppet* immediately begs comparison to Origin's *Crusader*

David Sears, producer and co-designer of *Meat Puppet*, and his Kronos team are a bit annoyed. They're tired of their new game being confused with the post-punk band Meat Puppets. They spent the better part of 18 months sweating out Kronos's second game (its first was *Criticom*), lost their lead programmer five months into the project, and then added two new programmers who had never worked on games before. In spite of these considerable obstacles, however, the team has conceived an extremely promising, atmospheric, and interesting title — and one that has absolutely nothing to do with mosh pits or mohawks.

"It's a cross between *La Femme Nikita* and *Blade Runner*," says Sears about the *Meat Puppet* storyline. The main character, Lotos, could be the crass sister of Aeon Flux, except that she never wanted to be an assassin — she's been forced into the job by the powers that be in the industrialized 21st century country of Distopia.

With its extreme levels of violence and isometric, third-person perspective, *Meat Puppet* immediately begs a comparison to Origin's *Crusader* series. Yet Sears is quick to cite examples that set it apart. "We have a pretty deep backstory," he says. "Graphically, it's true color, with very smooth scrolling. We have a lot of additional character mechanics, including jumping, and smarter opponents."

Unlike *Crusader*,

Meat Puppet has a playfield that doesn't just scroll horizontally, but also rises vertically, adding an element of varying height to a degree normally not found in this type of shooter. Suddenly there are dangerous ledges to beware of, and carefully

Lotos is swarmed by evil knife-weilding toddlers (top left). Mutant incubation tanks add an evil presence to the game (bottom right), but they can be destroyed

executed jumps become an integral part of the action, giving the game kind of a platform feel.

"Content-wise," says quick-speaking art director and co-designer Max Chapman, "we really pulled out the stops to ensure there's a wide array of characters and a lot of in-depth character design." Lotos herself has two different outfits, and each of the seven bosses, called ambassadors, and 29 other characters are imbued with a kind of deliberate vulgarity that goes beyond general monstrosity — they come across as truly evil. In the sewer area, lanky zombies chomping on corpses throw their food at you. In the Eugenics clinic, wobbly-legged toddler clones, looking like malignant Cabbage Patch dolls, attack Lotos with carving knives.

"Our characters are not just costume changes," Sears reiterates, "they're all unique models, with all unique animations. There's really no shared animation data between them."

"Every frame we put on in high-resolution," adds programmer Dan Candela, "contains five times more data than any frame in *Crusader*. Our AI framework is amazing, we can configure NPCs with text scripts, and there are 600 different objects. Of those, about 280 are smart objects, which do more than just explode. *Crusader* has eight characters and a lot of objects, but the objects all seem to be dumb objects."

This highly interactive environment increases the immersive quality of the game immensely. Just about anything that looks like it might be a potential target can be blasted. Various statues and other extraneous decor can be damaged or destroyed, and Lotos can open things like lockers in search of supplies. But the interactivity goes beyond simple blasting away. "There's something called a 'feeder' in the Eugenics Complex," Candela explains. "This device comes out of a wall and has little nipples," he says enthusiastically. "If you hit the button to activate the feeder, all the toddlers will stop attacking you and go to the feeder.

Meanwhile, the nurses are trying to turn off the feeder by hitting the button again. If they do that, then the toddlers will begin to attack you again," he says

"Our characters are not just costume changes, they are all unique models, with all unique animations "

David Sears, Producer

Lotos's weapons include a flame-thrower, nerve gas, grenades, and the ever-necessary machine gun. They help this tough woman kick ass

ng alphas

With a mouse-driven gunsight, players can scroll ahead and snipe opponents from a screen or two away — a necessary strategy in the face of numerous enemies

"For three months, we were going to make the meanest, evilest, sci-fi action game ever. After three months, we cracked"

David Sears. Producer

smiling at the resulting, cartoon-like scenario, in which the toddlers are manipulated back and forth while the player struggles to keep the switch on.

"We started off very seriously," Sears says in retrospect. "For three months, we were going to make the meanest, evilest, most serious, sci-fi action game ever — as grim as *Blade Runner*. After three months, we cracked. We couldn't take any more, at which point we began making everything funny," he grins. "This curious method gave us the early art direction, which is very sinister. But the shtick, which runs throughout, came after we had laid out the reality of the world."

Sears and Chapman began their game development careers at Virgin and are wryly cynical in regards to their former organization. "We were working on what was essentially *Tomb Raider*," Sears says, "but due to mismanagement, and failure to assign a producer to our project, we were never able to finish. A lot of our project's money ended up going into *Toonstruck* ," he gives a cool chuckle, "I told them not to do it. They should've listened."

Highly stylized CG cut scenes introduce the menacing bosses, who range from a sewer mutant to mechanically enhanced despots

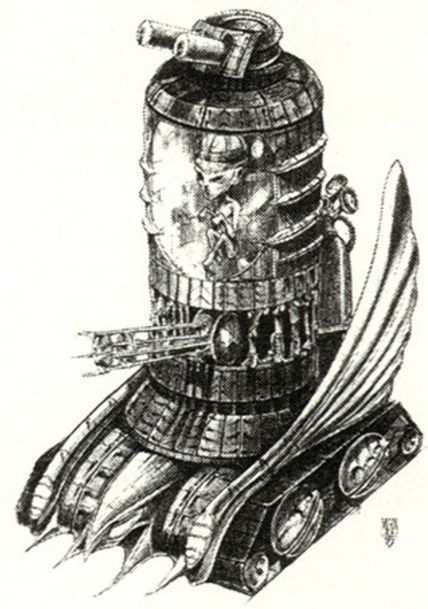
The team thinks a P100 with 16MB, a double-speed CD-ROM drive, a 16-bit sound card, and 1MB video card will "suffice" as system requirements. The game runs in 16-bit color and can run in 800x600 resolution, and the programmers put a lot of work into creating routines which enable them to enhance the graphics without sacrificing memory. "Even though we are DirectX based," says programmer Luigi Warren, "we wrote our own low-level routines for blitting both sprites and tiles," he says proudly. "We can now manipulate palettes on a frame-by-frame basis, which we couldn't do if we were making use of DirectX to Direct Draw."

As the game is closing in on beta status, the audio is coming together with ambient effects and a superb techno/industrial soundtrack that would work in any hip sci-fi film. With no aspirations to work on console versions, Sears and his team are already negotiating a sequel with Playmates.

"What's not highly popularized," Sears confesses, "is that Lotos is a prostitute. But that can only be vaguely gathered from the introduction. It's dealt with more in the sequel where she..."

Chapman blurts, "kills her pimp."

"But one game at a time," Sears says, who's not worried about the glut of female protagonists entering the market. "She's surprised she survives at all which makes her different — she's a real nasty survivor. And I think people will like that. It's time for nasty people to do well in the world." ng



The original intent, of being a strictly serious game, can be seen in early sketches

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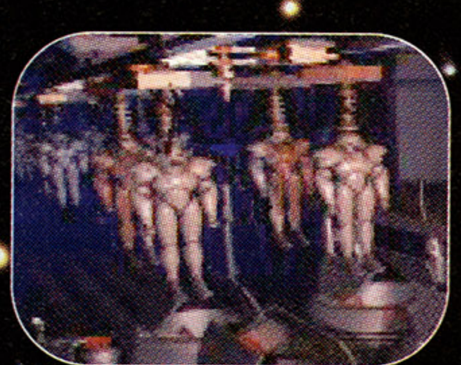

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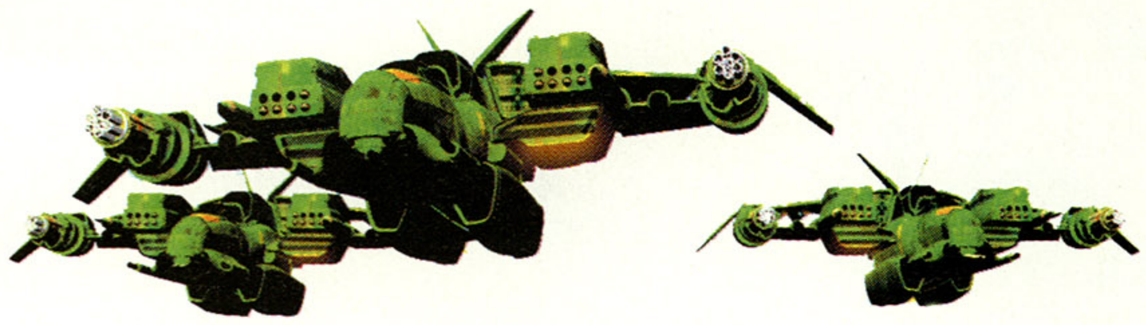
Cyclone Studios



A development studio begun in an apartment produced 3DO's best game. Never heard of Cyclone? It could be gaming's best kept secret

The Cyclone team huddles for warmth around their co-founder Helmut Kobler (he's the bald gentleman in the middle)

"We were like, 'This is easy! We get a good programmer and we'll go to infinity!'"

Helmut Kobler, Co-founder

Company policy requires a short nap after the noon milk and cookies

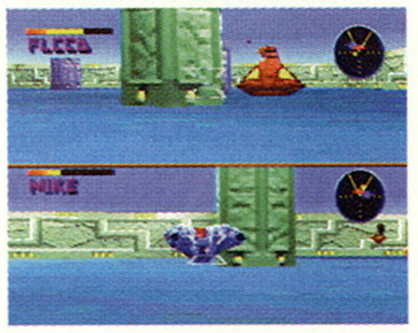
"I'd been playing games for years," says Helmut Kobler, co-founder of Cyclone Studios, "I had an Atari 800, graduated to the Atari ST, went to the Macintosh. In college I started playing PC games — just wasted a tremendous amount of time in college playing games with a guy named Ron Little."

Kobler's interest in games eventually led to him landing a job as a marketing writer for 3DO. Kobler continues, "I spent the next 14 months learning about marketing and multimedia, but obviously my real interest was in games. Ron left college about a year after I did, and we started discussing what it would be like to design a game, then just talked ourselves into believing it was possible. So in December '93, we left our jobs, and I used all my money to buy a development system and Mac hardware, and we set up shop."

Kobler worked on the game design in his apartment in Palo Alto, while Little worked on coding the game from his apartment in east Oakland. "We worked for six months that way," Kobler recalls, "and developed the basic prototype for *Captain Quazar*. We didn't know what to expect, but we went to 3DO with the prototype, character designs, and scripts for all the cinematics. Luckily enough, they decided to fund it, and that's what gave us our start."

More important was what happened next: "We got so excited that I went out with another friend to start another game. We were like, 'Hey, this is easy! We get a good programmer and a good script, and we'll go to infinity!' So we hired two new programmers right out of UC Berkeley, and began work on what became *BattleSport*."

Easily one of the best games ever produced for the 3DO, *BattleSport* (NG 14) lets players pilot armored hovercraft around an arena, fending off opponents and trying to shoot a glowing ball into the arena's goal. Somewhat ill-fated in terms of reaching the gaming public at large, the game still sold well enough to show a profit and let the 3DO system go



Cyclone's past: the excellent *BattleSport* (top) and *Captain Quazar*

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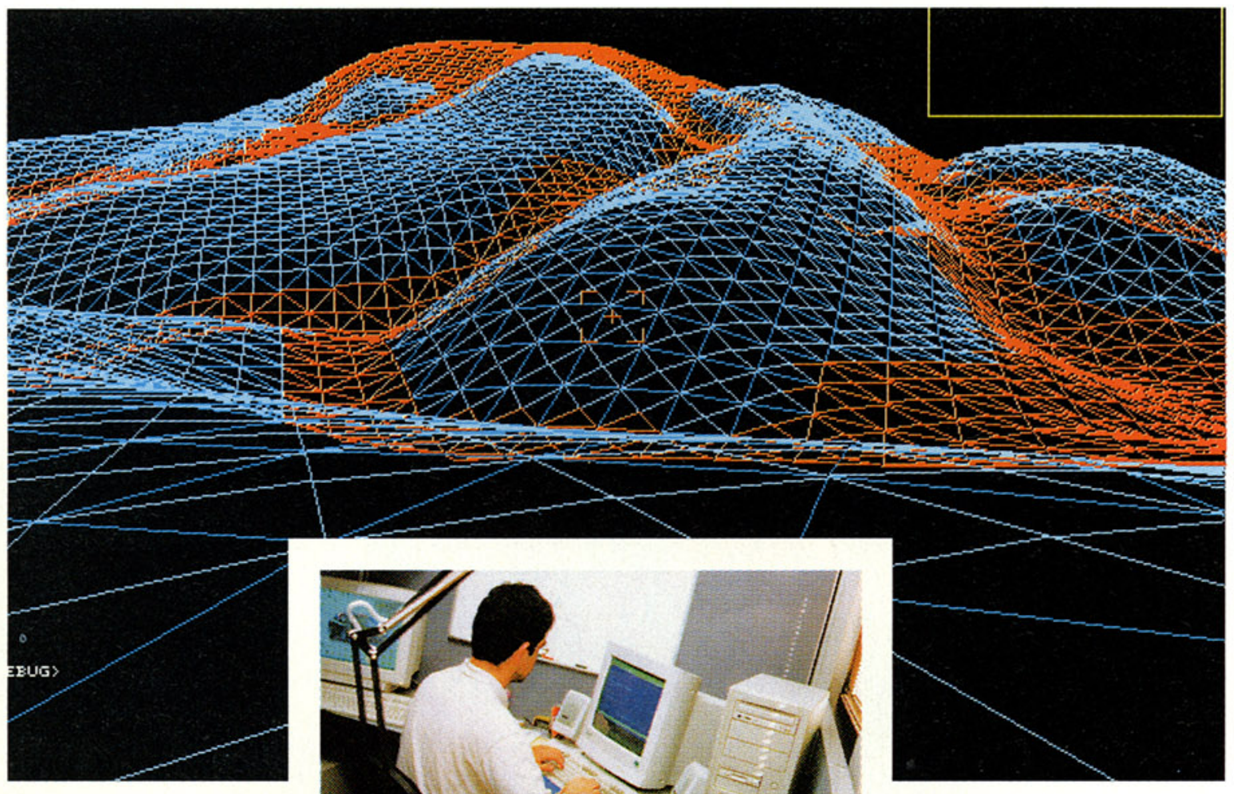
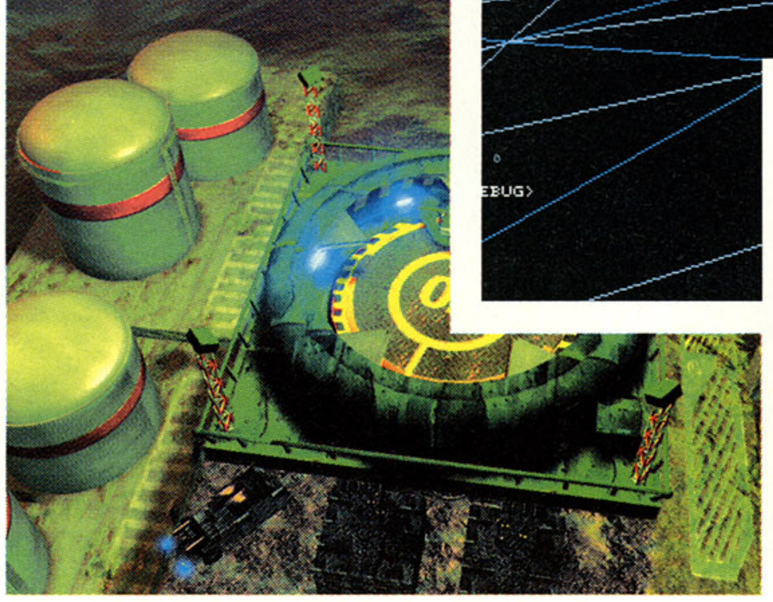




Cyclone is fully caffeinated and hard at work on *Uprising*, a 3D game which blends elements of *Command & Conquer* with a real-time tank sim

BattleSport looked more solid and played faster in its split-screen mode than Namco's *Cybersled* for PlayStation

out with a bang — *BattleSport* looked more solid and played faster in its two-player, split-screen mode than its contemporary rival, Namco's *Cybersled* for PlayStation.

Whatever the fate of their first two titles however, Kobler, Little, and the rest learned important lessons from the process. "We always try to get the prototype running as soon as possible and get it to a fun state," Kobler explains, "which is different from the way most companies do things, adding stuff in these weird layers, where you won't get something playable until maybe four months before it ships. Also, when we started, we had no money, so we hired college students to do all the programming, and that worked: we got guys who were intelligent, with solid computer science backgrounds — they were passionate, not jaded through years in the industry with a half-dozen canceled projects. So from then on we hired people right out of school, trained them ourselves, and the results have been excellent."

Still quite early in development and slated for an early '98 release, *Requiem* is a first-person action-adventure with backstory right out of Milton. "I don't know if you went to Sunday school or not," jokes Evan Margolin, Cyclone's director of development and a thoroughly animated individual who underscores points by standing up and acting them out. "We're not using that story literally, but the angels who were cast out of Heaven have set about trying to desecrate Creation. You actually play one of the chosen, faithful angels — and not one of those fairy-tale angels either, kind of fluffy sitting on a cloud with wings, but the real medieval, bad-ass, harbinger-of-righteous-destruction angels. The kind who turn cities to dust

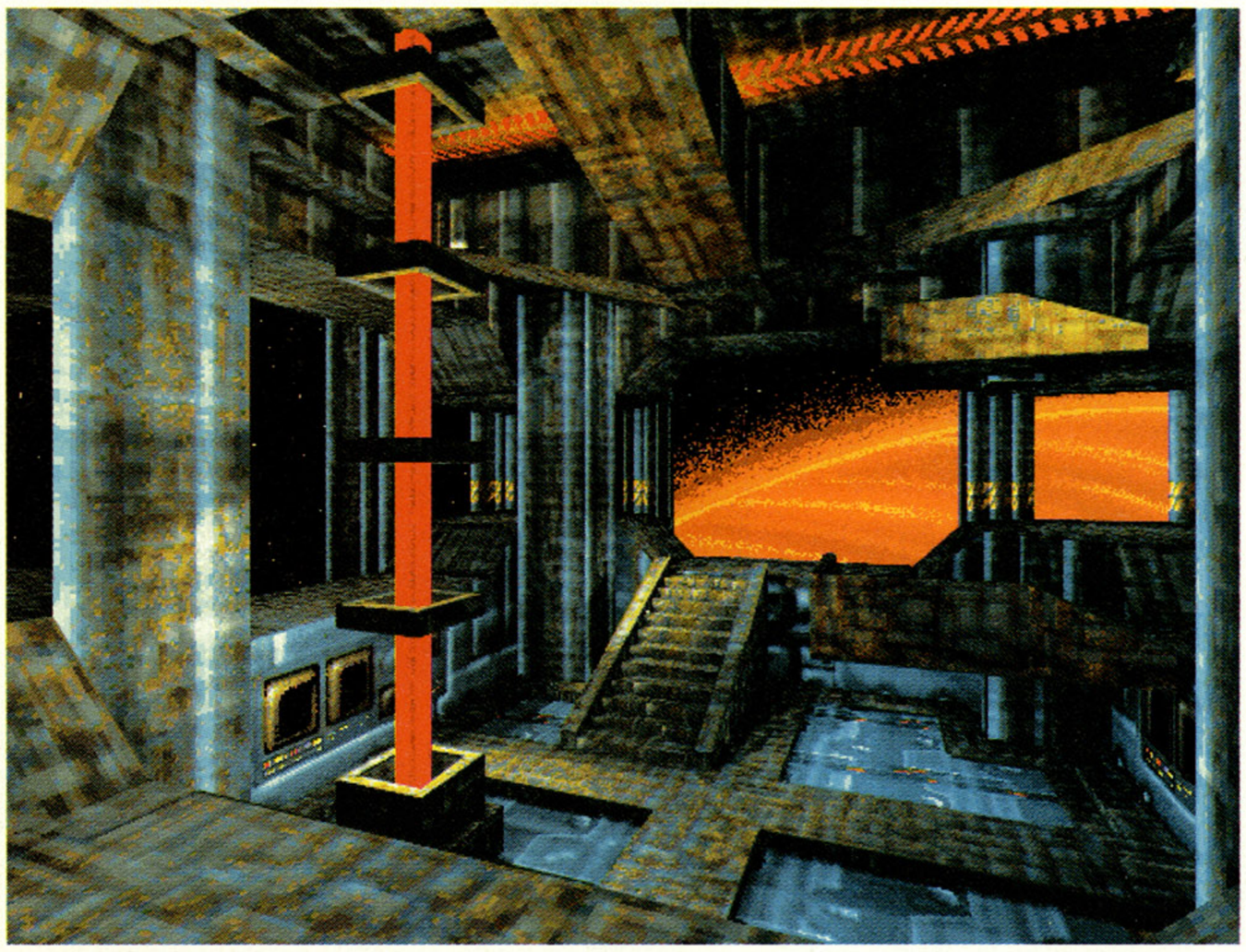
CYCLONE

Checking out The Big Room from the office balcony in San Mateo, CA

Cyclone was formally bought by 3DO in November of last year. "I was getting a little overwhelmed by the process of running a company," Kobler admits. Currently, the company employs some thirty-five programmers, artists, and designers, and has three games in the works: two PC CD-ROM titles, *Uprising* and *Requiem*, and somewhere along the line, an update to *BattleSport* (naturally).

Members of the *Requiem* team explain to Evan Margolin (seated, but ready to spring to action) how devoted they are to the project

ng alphas



Cyclone's *Requiem* blends RPG elements with sophisticated mission goals, heavenly powers, and a semi-divine backstory — this ain't just another *Doom*-clone dungeon crawl

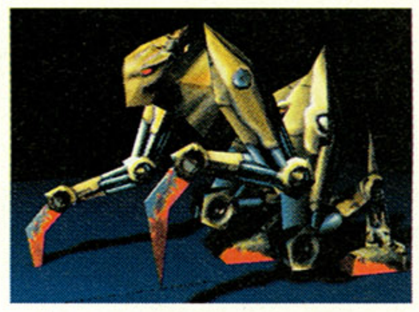
and call down fire."

The game will have three different, self-contained "episodes," set in different periods of history, as players try to keep the fallen angels from opening doors to the realm of Chaos. While the RPG elements are not as involved as in *Daggerfall*, for example, the game will definitely emphasize brains as much as brawn. "We're making the mission objectives in these episodes reasonably storyline based, so it's not the 'find the key, open the door' kind of thing you'd be used to in first-person," Margolin stresses. "So we have people do things like escort this person from here to there, or assassinate someone — things that require a whole different host of skills. It's going to be a scary, gritty, ominous, but realistic world, where things and people react to you in a way you'd expect."

"I can see a *Requiem* deathmatch now — everybody running around trying to possess everyone else!"

Evan Margolin, Director of Development

Players can access a number of angelic powers that they'll gain as the game progresses; powers include things like invisibility and flight. Most interesting is the power to possess other creatures for brief periods, since other creatures see the world differently, with different color palettes, for example. "I can see a deathmatch now," Margolin chuckles with obvious glee, "everybody running around trying to possess everybody else."

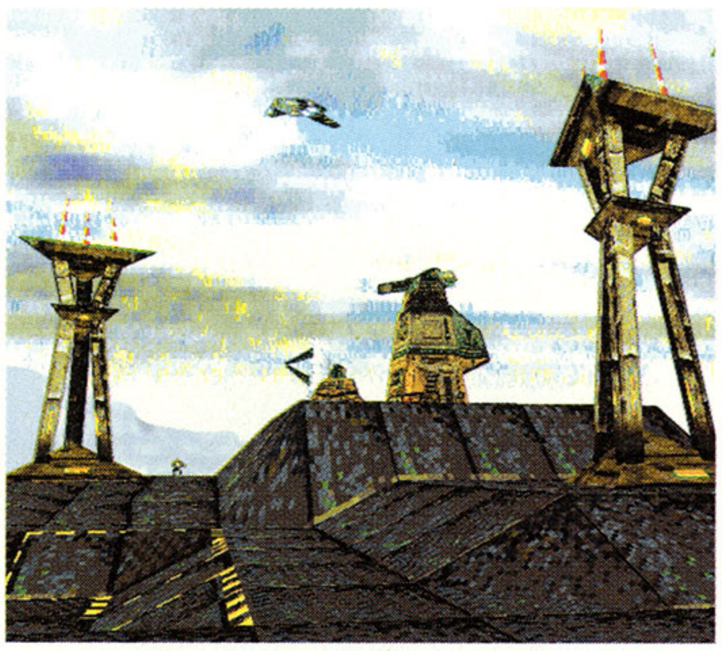


If nothing else, *Requiem* boasts some unique character designs

Cyclone's other PC title, a war sim called *Uprising*, is due out late this year. It has a real-time strategy element, but the game is different from *Command & Conquer* clones: *Uprising* puts the player on the battlefield in real-time 3D, as the pilot of a high-tech tank called a "Wraith." The game uses Cyclone's proprietary TerraTech engine, a real-time 3D terrain rendering engine that supports Gouraud shading, perspective-correct texturing, z-buffering, and six-degrees of freedom.

It's also pretty damn fast. "Oh yeah," boasts Jon Cortelyou, *Uprising*'s gameplay and AI engineer, "it's a fully functioning 3D engine that can handle

***Uprising* is real-time strategy as seen from the battlefield. Equipped with the biggest tank, players attack enemy installations directly, then have troops teleported in**



The key to appreciating *Uprising* is in realizing how impressive its real-time 3D engine really is, and how fast and furious this makes the gameplay

terrain, polygon objects, and sprites. That was are goal, with the key being keeping a fast frame rate — right now it runs anywhere from 30 to 60 frames per second. We've been emphasizing very fast z-buffering in the terrain world, because with a dynamic environment like this, you can't control what's going to be in your field of view at any given time."

The environment is

decidedly dynamic. Similar to Virgin's *Z*, the game revolves around taking and holding "Citadels," points of power on which players can build facilities to create tanks, soldiers, bombers, and attack aircraft. Around each Citadel, players can also construct defensive emplacements such as gun turrets and anti-aircraft batteries. Players then drive the Wraith to an enemy Citadel, and can call up troops and tanks to be teleported in with the touch of a button — all from the first-person perspective of the Wraith's cockpit.

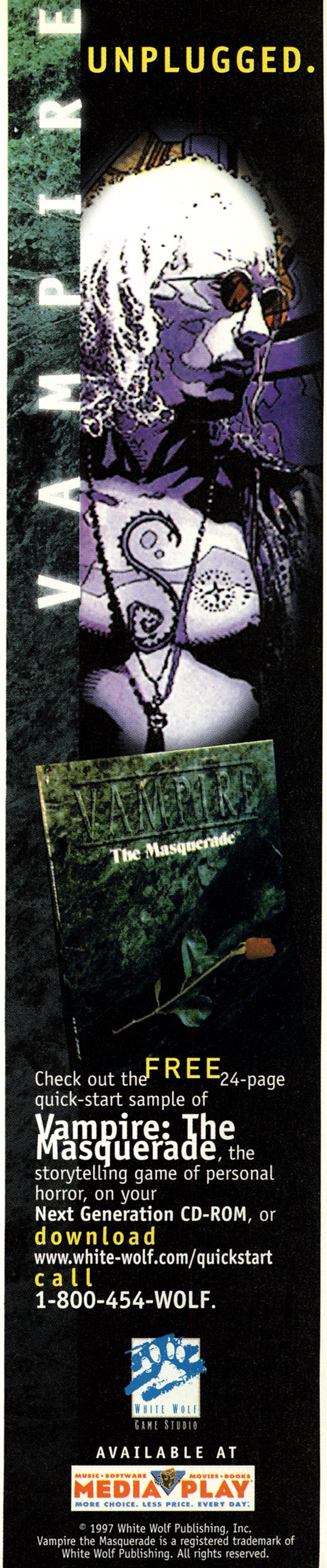
"Instead of being a godlike commander floating over the map, you're really engaged by the sounds of battle happening around you," Helmut Kobler explains, his enthusiasm for the project showing. "Rockets go whizzing by, and bombers are dropping out of the sky. If you drive away from your soldiers, they start yelling, 'Commander don't leave us!' It's like being on the battlefield the way wars used to be fought, when generals were right out there."

Although

the total number of levels in the game has yet to be worked out, level creation is a streamlined process, thanks to Cyclone's highly flexible map editor. Running on Windows 95, the editor enables point-by-point modification of ground elevation — a b-spline auto-smoothing feature makes hills and valleys friendly enough for a tank to drive over. Textures of a variety of sizes can then be "painted" onto the surface, and there's even a button on the taskbar for combining a given set of textures into a random pattern for added realism. "I was only here for three days, and I had built my first level," says Daryl Alison, assistant director and lead level layout artist. The editor is so simple to use that, following the current trend, Cyclone plans to include the level editor with the game so players can build their own.

Many issues of game balance have to be tested and the engine is still far from optimized. But the early prototype of *Uprising* shown to Next Generation was fast, challenging, and totally absorbing. With strikingly original concepts and character designs for *Requiem*, Cyclone is firmly on the leading edge of modern game design: its young, enthusiastic, and powerfully creative. If you haven't heard of them yet, you surely will. ng

***Uprising*'s battle are fought over a variety of easily constructed terrains**



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DOS / PC CD-ROM

GT Interactive Software

Star Fox 64

Will *Star Fox 64* satisfy Nintendo 64 owners' hunger for first-rate software?

N64's Z-buffering makes this giant walking robot a convincing one

Format:	**Nintendo 64**
Publisher:	**Nintendo**
Developer:	**Nintendo**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**Japan**

Star Fox 64 is the first title to use Nintendo's innovative Jolting Pack peripheral

Developed in conjunction with U.K.-based software company Argonaut, Nintendo's original *Star Fox* title proved an entertaining, if nonetheless short-lived, 3D shoot 'em up.

That game laid the foundations for this 64-bit version, although its development has been undertaken solely by NCL's in-house team under the ever scrutinous eye of Shigeru Miyamoto.

Star Fox 64's storyline concerns the emperor Andross, the villain from the first game, who has launched another attack on Cornelius, the planet inhabited by Fox McCloud, the player's character. Fox and three space warriors are the *Star Fox* team.

The cut scenes, animated by the N64 in real time, are remarkably cinematic, neatly setting the atmosphere. An early scene shows the crew dashing down a corridor as they head for their spacecraft, while a later sequence is almost *Star Wars*-like in its construction as the game camera revolves around a hulking space station. Because the game runs from silicon instead of a CD, there's zero load time, seamlessly blending cut scnes and gameplay.

The graphics are equally astonishing, with extravagant textures, remarkable reflection routines, and the sheer scale of some of the game's components, all vying for the player's attention.

In gameplay terms, *Star Fox 64* follows its predecessor's template closely, with similar play mechanics for the most part, shifting furthest away during the sections in which control is handed over to a land-based, tank-type vehicle. Rather than being merely a 64-bit *Battle Zone*, though, this section expands upon the left-right-back-forward-fire formula, enabling players to side-step enemy attacks by flipping their tanks over — in the same way the craft in the space-based sections can be rolled.

Star Fox 64 is the first title to use Nintendo's innovative Jolting Pack peripheral. It brings the battery-powered device to life when the player's craft takes a hit from enemy fire. The initial sensation of the N64 joypad vibration is strange, but effective.

Nintendo has also included a split-screen, multiplayer battle mode in which up to four players battle to the death. Even here the level of graphical detail is surprisingly high, reinforcing NCL's reputation as current masters of its 64-bit technology (the split-screen modes in third-party title *Blade and Barrel* seem shoddy by comparison).

While still incomplete, *Star Fox 64* is already standing by to be one of 1997's biggest games. ng

Encounters with the massive boss characters in *Star Fox 64* are visually strong and are packed with all kinds of weaponry

In a memorable cut scene, the *Star Fox* team gears up (bottom) for action

Smooth flying (bottom) often gives way to unexpected smash hits

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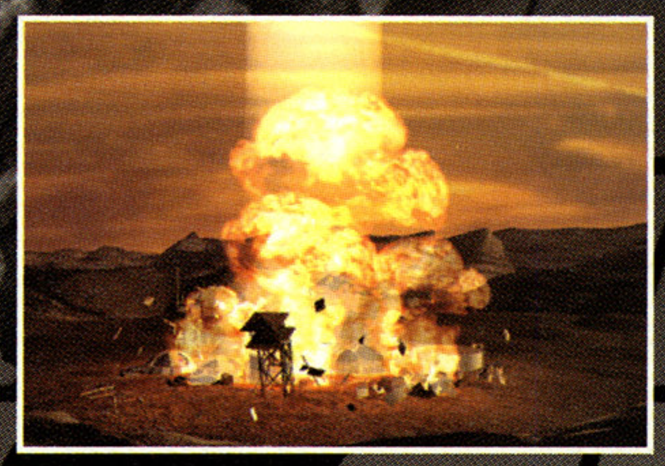

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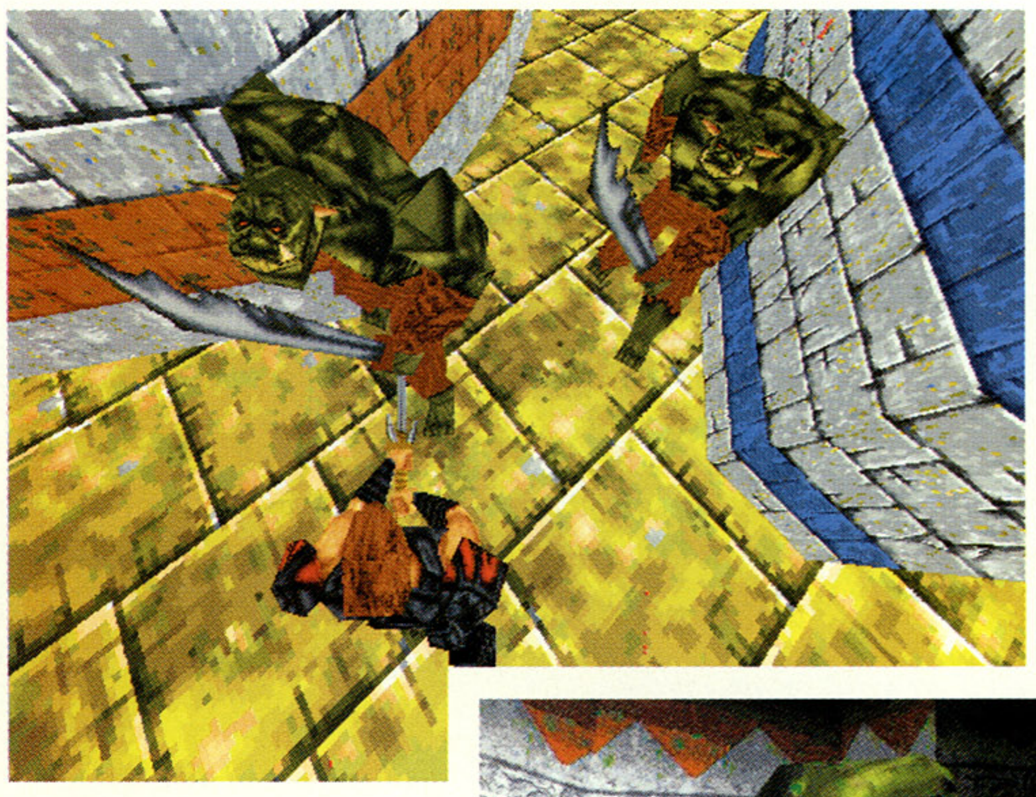
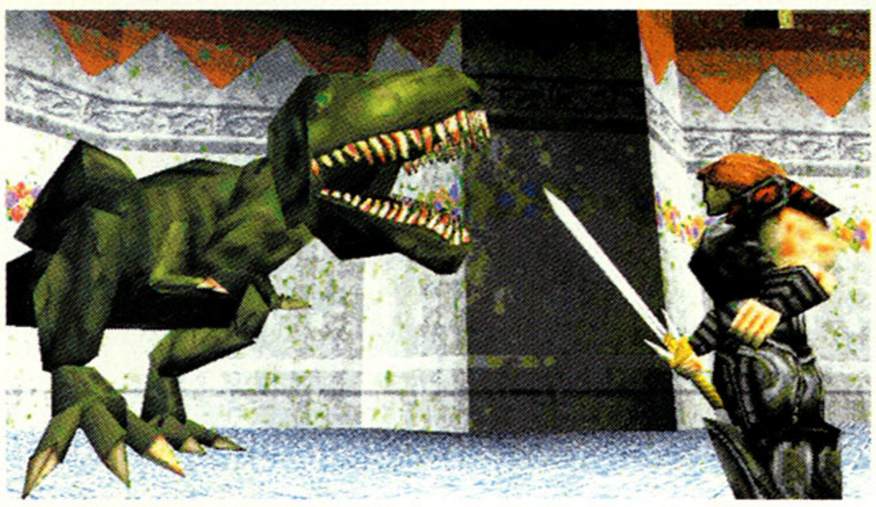
Deathtrap Dungeon

Eidos follows *Tomb Raider* with a hack-and-slash adventure based on *Fighting Fantasy*





The monsters range from tiny goblins to huge, 500-polygon dragons. The environments are also huge; their vast scale dwarfs the playable characters in the game

The game will support Direct 3D, which should offer those with a 3Dfx card a 30fps SVGA experience

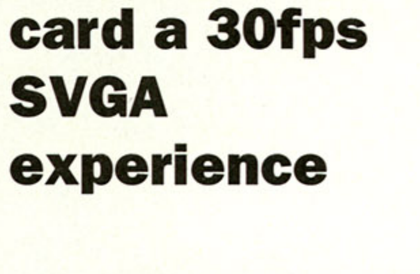
When Ian Livingstone created the *Fighting Fantasy* books in 1982, Penguin was understandably nervous about the strange game/novel hybrids. It printed only 5,000 copies of the first book, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, which promptly sold out, as did the next 5,000, and the next. As the books caught on in every playground in the land, Penguin realized that it had a hit on its hands. An incredible 59 sequels and 14 million copies later, Ian Livingstone is working with Eidos on a computer game version of *Deathtrap Dungeon*.

Based on the third *Fighting Fantasy* book, the game fuses the third-person 3D of *Tomb Raider* with hack-and-slash combat, key searches, and weapon power-ups. It also boasts some of the biggest levels yet seen in a PC title, with monsters of startling complexity and cavernous rooms that dwarf *Quake*'s.

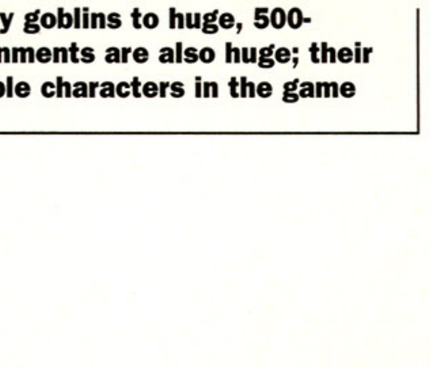
There are, for example, a number of dragons that must be slain in the end-game. Constructed from 500 textured polygons, each circling, attacking, flying, and fire-breathing beast is superbly animated. Needless to say, only one will be flying around the screen at any one time to protect the frame rate, which the development team hopes to keep between 16fps and 20fps on a low-end Pentium in standard VGA. The game will support Direct 3D, which should offer those with a 3Dfx or other card a 30fps SVGA experience.

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Eidos**
Developer:	**Eidos**
Release Date:	**April**
Origin:	**U.K.**

Atmosphere will be crucial, and Livingstone has been heavily involved in the dungeon design, working closely with Richard Halliwell of Games Workshop to give each of the 16 levels its own unique style. One level, for example, has Doric columns, fountains, and gorgons on the walls, while others are bizarre Victorian tunnels populated by "steam-punk" robots. Next Generation has even spotted a shotgun

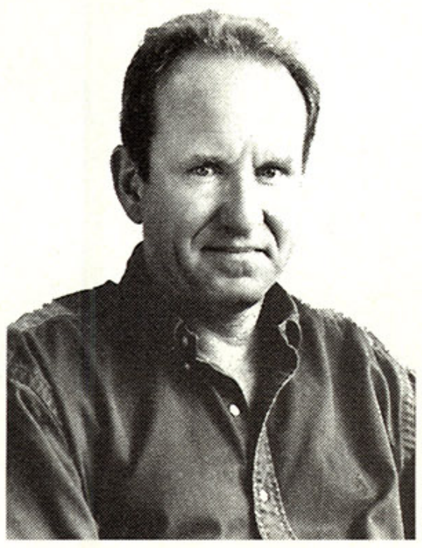


Many battles will involve only one monster, but they vary considerably



***Deathtrap Dungeon* delivers dungeons dank enough to scare the bravest warriors**

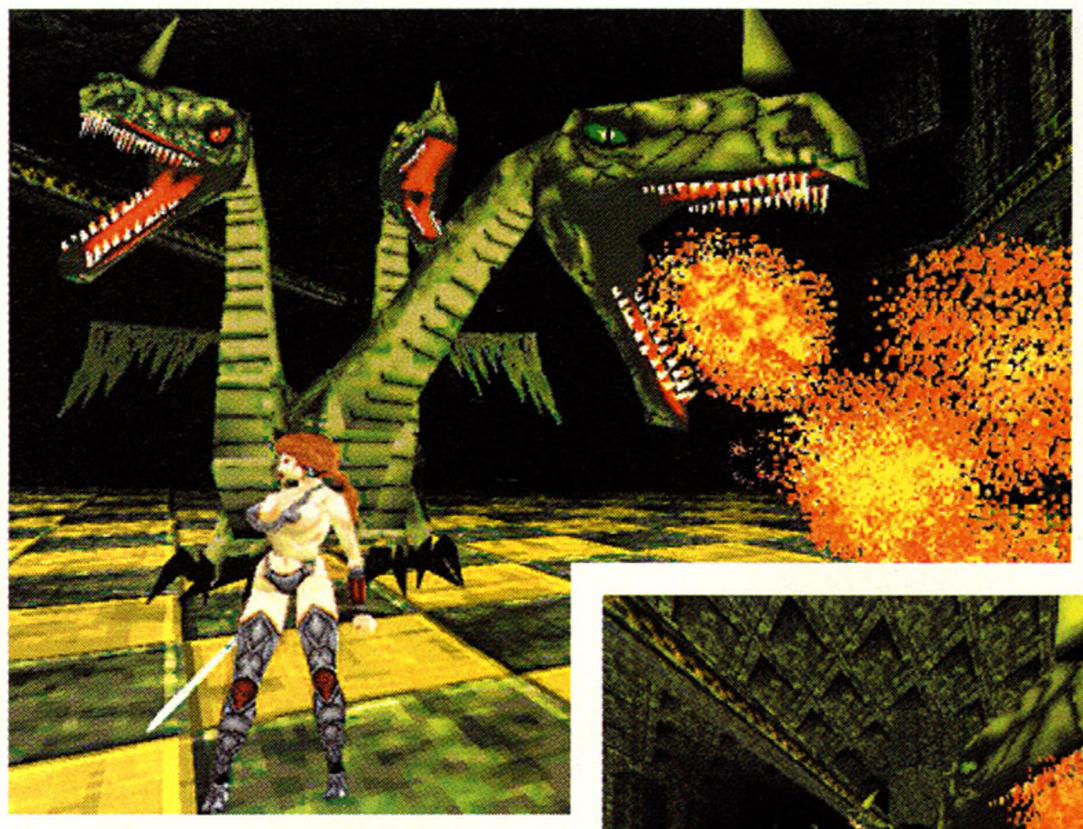
Ian Livingstone

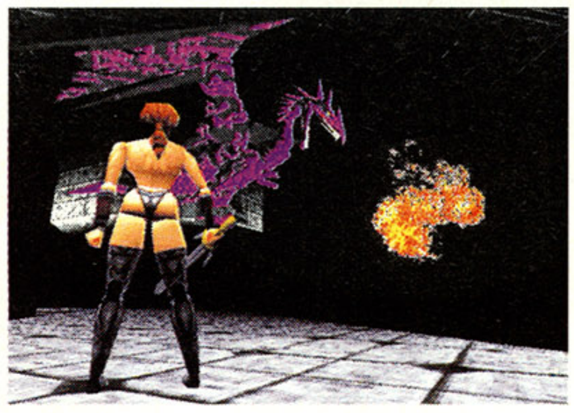


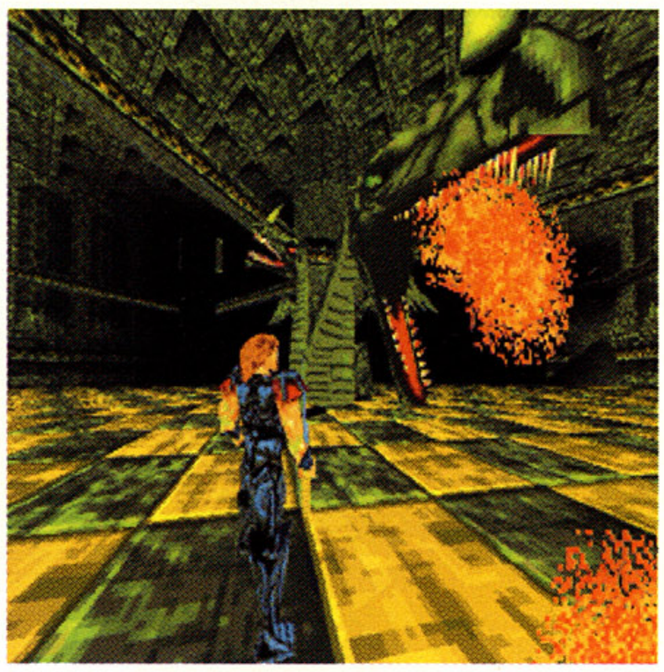
"After the success of Games Workshop, I retired, got bored, and invested in Domark to fund their cartridge development. I got in at just the wrong time — it was all going flat. I was never a big computer game person. I still love board games and role-playing games. I like the interaction of face-to-face gaming.

My whole life, I'm sad to say, is games. I certainly put a lot of effort into *Deathtrap*. I was very involved in the design document. I got a few of the Games Workshop guys in to help with that too. I'd say, 'I want this kind of engine, or that kind, or this art style and those monsters.' I can't program, unfortunately. I'm not a very big fan of adventure games where you've got to do six random events to move forward. I like logical puzzles."

Good swordsmanship is the answer to many sticky situations







Three-headed fire-breathing dragons and flying purple people-eaters are just some of the creatures that stand between you and your ultimate goal

Ian Livingstone is keen to produce a game that remains true to the spirit of the books

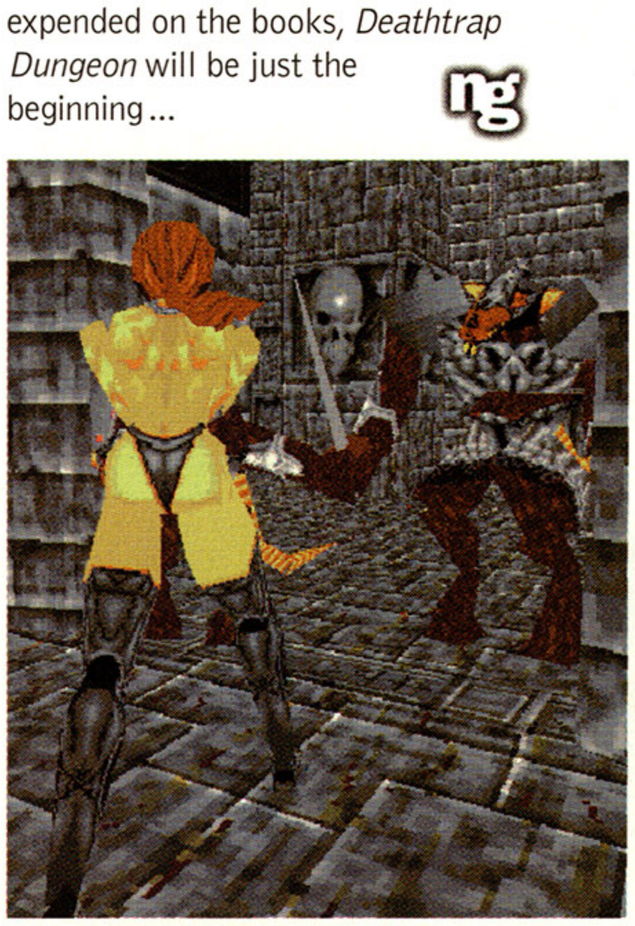
— a significant departure from the novel, which drew the line at crossbows.

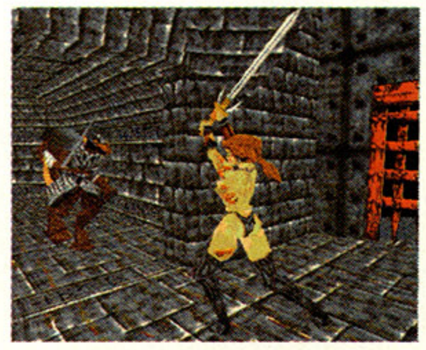
Like many PC developers, Eidos is building accelerated graphics features into its software. *Deathtrap Dungeon*'s real-time lighting and transparencies are impressive and produce bleak tunnels with eerie, flickering candles and strange, floating beads of light that cast animated shadows onto walls.

Ian Livingstone is keen to produce an accessible game that remains true to the books' spirit, which relied on a mix of puzzles and quick combat. Thus, gameplay is weighted in favor of battle and has more in common with Scavenger's proposed *Into the Shadows* than the dungeon quests of *Eye of the Beholder* or *Ultima Underworld*. The player's character has a number of basic moves, as well as spells with which to dispatch the myriad monsters he or she encounters. NG hopes the puzzles will be satisfying enough, as most seem to be the find-the-key variety, with the ultimate solution to many of the levels requiring only swordsmanship. It would be a pity if this impressive gathering of programming and design pedigree produced nothing more than a roving beat 'em up.

Eidos is keen to emphasize that Core, its key developer, is not in competition with the Eidos internal development team, but NG did detect a healthy competitive atmosphere in the firm's dungeon-like studios. The 3D engine certainly looks very similar to the one seen in *Tomb Raider*, but both titles have been developed in isolation and would have been released in tandem had Eidos not insisted on a number of last-minute improvements.

If Ian Livingstone can bring even half of the energy to the game that he expended on the books, *Deathtrap Dungeon* will be just the beginning ...





Players can choose a muscular male or a svelte female warrior

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APRIL EVENTS

All events start at 6:00 pm (PST)

TUE 1 — **WIN A DAY AT ULTRA GAME PLAYERS ONLINE**

We'll ship you to ***Ultra Game Players Online*** offices for the day of your gaming life. Try out the latest console games, talk to the editors and best of all: Get your name in print - well, online, anyway. We'll let you describe your day at the office and post it up with the rest of our news on the day of your visit.

WED 2 — **WIN A YAROZE**

Yaroze Contest. Win a Yaroze unit from SCEA with ***PSXPower***. Sony promises to evaluate the winner's completed game. (Note: all contestants must have prior programming experience.)

THUR 3 — **NEXT GENERATION Q&A**

The editors of Next Generation magazine and ***Next Generation Online*** answer your burning videogame questions.

FRI 4 — **AN N64.COM SPECIAL**

An exclusive feature on the Nintendo analog joystick with ***N64.com***. How are companies developing for it, and incorporating its benefits into gameplay?

MON 7 — **INSIDE THE MIND OF GAMERS**

Sonic Psychology. A study on gaming as both blessing and curse by ***SaturnWorld***.

TUE 8 — **DOWNLOAD DEMENTIA DAY**

Get five new demos and five new Quicktimes of the hottest new games from ***Next Generation Online.***

WED 9 — **NINTENDO UNDER FIRE**

N64.Com talks with executives at Nintendo of America about the lack of first and third-party software, and asks the hard questions: Where are the really good games? Why are they taking so long? What are you doing about it?

THUR 10 — **ULTRA GAME PLAYERS GOES RETRO**

A look back at the classics that helped shape the industry. From Galaxian and Gyruss to Pac-Man and Popeye. Our huge feature opens the lid on a Pandora's Box of ancient entertainment - with Quicktime movies to help you shed a tear or two for the olden days.

FRI 11 — **IN THE PALACE WITH ACTIVISION**

Developers from Activision's Apocalypse and MechWarrior 2 will be in ***PSXPower's Palace*** chat room to answer your questions.

MON 14 — **SATURN SPORTS DAY**

Saturn Sports Games are investigated by ***SaturnWorld***. The definitive guide to sports games, from basketball to Blast Chamber.

TUE 15 — **SINGLETRAC SNEAK PEAK**

SingleTrac, formerly part of Sony Interactive, have started their own publishing company, and have given PSXPower exclusive movies of their new game. See them here first.

NEXT GENERATION ONLINE

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Every day, one of the five sites in the Imagine Games Network hosts a special event. These include interviews, chat forums, downloads and extra features. ***And they're all absolutely free.***

All you have to do is check the times and the dates of the events, and make sure you're there to enjoy them. You'll find the urls of all the sites at the bottom of this page.

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WED 16 — **BIG PRIZE TRIVIA CONTEST**

Next Generation Online is offering more than $5,000 in prizes in a gaming trivia contest of epic proportions

THUR 17 — **N64.COM TALKS PERIPHERALS**

A comparative review of ***Nintendo 64*** third-party peripherals. The MadCatz True Analog Steering Wheel, Datel products, etc. Which is best for your Nintendo 64?

FRI 18 — **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO M2**

Ultra Game Players Online goes undercover to explore the missing link of the video games world, the Matsushita M2. Where is it? What is it? And most importantly, will it ever come out?

MON 21 — **INSIDE SONY**

Next Generation Online speaks to Sony's senior executives about future plans, and third party support for PlayStation.

Tue 22 — **CHAT WITH THE EDITORS**

Come to the Palace to meet all the editors of the ***Imagine Games Network*** game sites.

WED 23 — **SATURN FILM FESTIVAL**

Join ***SaturnWorld*** and experience the art of FMV intros with downloadable Quicktimes of your favorite Saturn games in the Hooked on Sonics section

THUR 24 — **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PSXPOWER**

We show you what it's like to spend a day with ***PSXPower***. Plus, loads of downloadable movies and pictures.

FRI 25 — **NOW YOU'RE REALLY READY**

N64.Com hosts a full, comprehensive strategy guide and walkthrough of each level in Acclaim's Turok: Dinosaur Hunter.

MON 28 — **BORN IN THE USA**

Why are Japanese, European and American video games all so dramatically different. ***Ultra Game Player*** Online's investigation sheds some light on American game player trends, Japanese psychology and the know-how of European gaming wizards.

TUE 29 — **YAROZE QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

SCEA's R & D department will be online in ***PSXPower's Palace*** chat room to answer all of your Yaroze questions.

WED 30 — **TALES OF THE SATURN**

The History of the Saturn with ***SaturnWorld***. Get the behind the scenes story of the Saturn, from the last days of the 16-bit era to the dawn of Virtua Fighter 3.

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Gamespotting

Choose a life. Choose a job. Choose a career.
Choose to be different. Choose to be DMA.

Three years of hell sold 20 million copies of *Lemmings* across 21 formats

The buses and taxis are a different color, but Scotland mostly looks like any other part of the British Isles. No skagged-up Rentons or Spuds, no kilts or tartan. Even the music from Edinburgh airport to Dundee sounds ordinary even though it's Scottish— Simple Minds' "Don't You Forget About Me." Even Dundee Technology Park, home of DMA Design, is dull — an antiseptic collection of low glass buildings and inoffensive shrubbery. Things don't look very inspiring. DMA Design: the team responsible for *Lemmings* and then what?

"Don't ask anybody at DMA what their favorite game is," bellows Brian Baglow, DMA's writer and PR man. "Is it *Lemmings*?" "No, it fucking is not!" Next Generation is in the office of David Jones, the frank and friendly head of DMA Design who expresses himself a little differently from Brian. "We needed a break for a while after *Lemmings*.

The DMA team from left: Tom Kane, Jamie Bryan, Mark Rein, Andrew Innes, David Jones, and Keith Hamilton

Three years of hell." But those three years sold 20 million copies of the groundbreaking puzzle game across 21 formats, including the original Amiga version, the C64, the Genesis, and even such obscure platforms as the Sam Coupé and FM Towns.

The revenue from *Lemmings* has funded some major expansion here,

***Body Harvest* features gigantic android insects**

Body Harvest

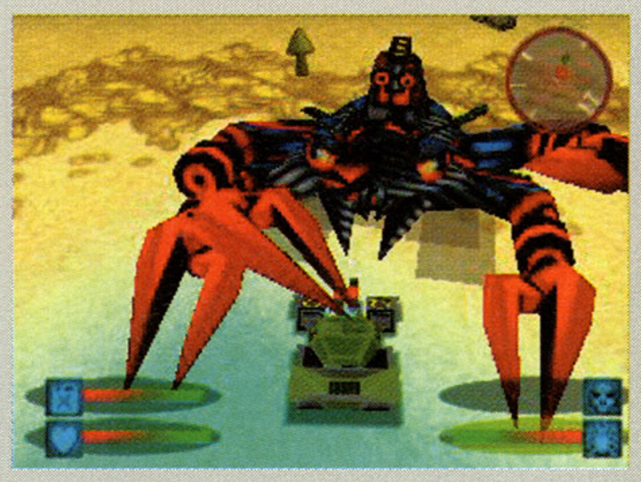
The premise behind DMA's opening Nintendo 64 title is more reminiscent of a sci-fi horror flick than a Nintendo game. The human race is nothing but food, planted on Earth by an alien race thousands of years ago. Now the cosmic farmers are back, arriving at different points in history to reap what they've sown. By 2050 AD, when the game begins, there's hardly anyone left to devour.

What follows is part third-person shoot 'em up, part manic driving game and part combat strategy. The player, a futuristic freedom fighter, beams into several time zones, kills the aliens, destroys their power generators, and beams out. If too many humans get killed before the mission is over, the aliens send in a mutant to track down and terminate the player. From here on, survival is tough, to say the least.

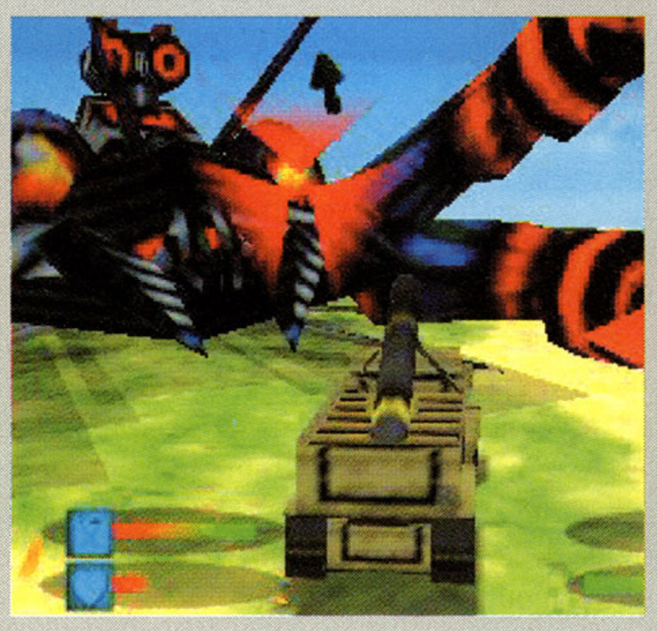
Predictably, the visuals are just astounding. Alien beings vary from huge flying wasp creatures to robotic crustaceans, and all are highly complex and beautifully designed. Backgrounds too have an SGI-like level of clarity and lush smoothness. No wonder DMA chose to bypass 32-bit technology.

And then there's the gameplay. One of the most interesting elements is that you can get in and drive any vehicle you come across. Tanks, planes, fire engines, and ice-cream vans litter the (totally explorable) landscape, and they all have their own specialist uses, with the possible exception of the ice-cream van.

Body Harvest, then, looks quirky, intelligent, and exciting. If it delivers what it promises, it should easily end all that "only Nintendo can make Nintendo 64 games" speculation. It also provides an interesting contrast to Miyamoto's brand of harmless, cutesy fun.



A strict hierarchy exists among the diverse alien creatures in *Body Harvest*. Learn their behaviors to gain the upper hand



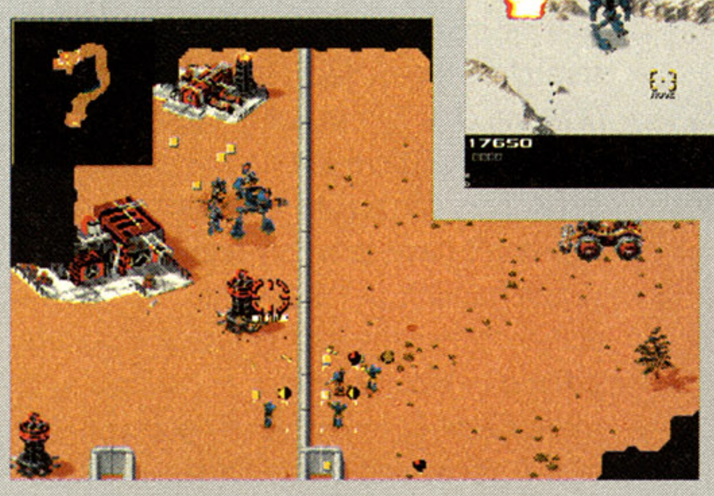
7th Legion

Command & Conquer seems to have replaced *Doom* as the PC game everybody wants to clone. *7th Legion*, developed by Australian-based Vision Software and published by Epic, is the latest attempt.

Yes, this is essentially another futuristic action-strategy game that enables the player to guide whole armies into battle with opposing forces.

At least here the designers have tried to add a few new touches. Stealth weapons, infantry rank advancement, and the ability to ride creatures into conflict all pop up, as do LAN, Internet, and modem options.

DMA's partner has created possibly the best *Doom* clone with *Unreal* (see NG26), so *7th Legion* may offer more than most *C&C* wannabes.



Like other *C&C* clones, *7th Legion* has crisp 640x480 hi-res graphics. The robot warriors are particularly impressive

ng alphas

***Tanktics* offers funny scenarios such as this**

even in the parking lot, where no fewer than nine new cars sport DMA number plates. The company has also taken over two buildings adjacent to DMA's head office. One holds the development teams; the other houses DMA Music, with seven full-time, in-house musicians, and DMA's own motion-capture studio.

DMA may be the software house that *Lemmings* built, but that's all in the past now. There's a buzz of excitement around the place, with everyone eager to show off what they've achieved. "I'm sorry," jokes David, "but we've got no fighting games and no driving games. Well, one. But it's a bit special." When the team closed the book on *Lemmings* over two years ago, DMA initially focused on 3DO. "That probably wasted about six months," admits David. "We bought the development kits and started looking at titles, but luckily Nintendo approached us to do some work on the Ultra 64, as it was then."

According to John White, project leader on *Body Harvest*, Nintendo 64 is a dream to work on

According to John White, project leader on *Body Harvest*, DMA's first Nintendo 64 title, the Nintendo machine is a dream to work on. "We started on the emulation system on the Onyx and then moved onto Nintendo 64 itself. I was quite surprised that it turned out to be a good deal faster than the £100,000 [$160,000] Onyx." On a nearby Silicon Graphics Indy, someone expertly plays the latest build of *Body Harvest* for **Next Generation**'s benefit. It's set in Greece in 1916, and the player's character leaps into a WWI tank and starts firing at an insectoid alien hovering overhead.

"We put all these ideas down and had to throw a load of them out," White reveals. "But at Shoshinkai last year we saw what Nintendo was doing and started chucking stuff back in. We keep thinking, 'This is going to fall down,' but it doesn't." The onscreen hero takes to the skies in a WWI triplane.

"The development system is pretty straightforward. It's just so nice and powerful," he adds. "It's been really well designed and we haven't even scratched the surface. It's scary. The drawing chip is a masterpiece of engineering. There are no hassles for developers compared to other systems. You don't have to worry about clipping. It just handles it." Someone demonstrates the vast array of weapons offered in *Body Harvest* — handguns, rifles, bazookas — when he gets run over from behind by one of the innocent villagers he's defending. The team bursts into laughter.

"It's been odd working with Nintendo," says White. "Psygnosis (the publisher of *Lemmings* and DMA's previous partner) let us get on with what we were doing and didn't care as long as we got it out the door. But we'll send something to Nintendo, and they go over with a fine-toothed comb. We get notes like: 'Mr Miyamoto has some points about the gameplay.'" The Greek level climaxes, and a spectacular sea monster made up of about 1,000 polygons appears.

DMA's relationship with Nintendo may be going smoothly, but playing with the biggest boys in videogames is not without its problems — some major, some minor. Nintendo instructed DMA to make the graphics in *Body Harvest* "less European," and the gameplay has changed seriously no less than four times — "mostly at the behest of Nintendo," admits White. But the DMA boys don't seem to view Nintendo as an ominous older sibling, more a wise, if firm, parent. "We've had some cracking translation difficulties," laughs John. Things like: 'We'd like the graphics to be more materialistic.' 'What do you mean, more materialistic?' 'More materialistic.' 'Uh... okay, then.' So we kept changing everything until they were happy."

Like all games at DMA, *Body Harvest* is a refreshingly unconventional title that doesn't exactly fit a generic template. "Dave wants everything to be groundbreaking," says Baglow with pride and, perhaps, a touch of weariness — evidence of the constant efforts to refine and reinvent games here. "There's a lot of internal competition here to make the best game," states Keith Hamilton, project

Members of the DMA team discuss all aspects of the game throughout the development process. Here, two DMAers have a laugh

Grand Theft Auto

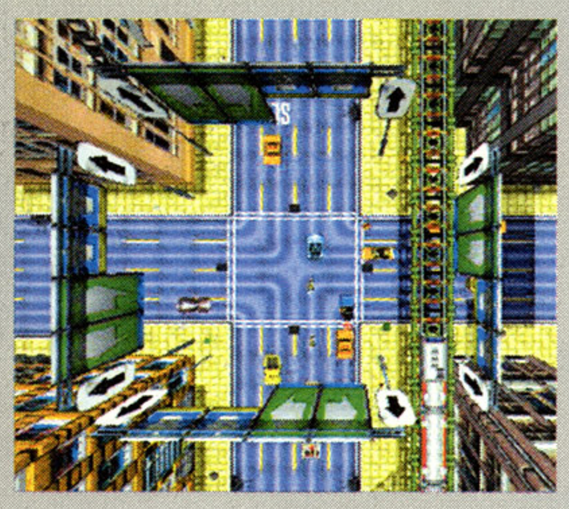
With videogame violence once again becoming a contentious issue, DMA could well face a rough (joy)ride when *GTA* is released.

Never has the phrase "moral vacuum" fitted a game so well. Here, all the player has to do is steal cars and cause bloody havoc throughout three U.S. cities. The point? To rise through the ranks of a mafioso crime syndicate.

Like *Body Harvest*, the action is mission-based: the crime boss hands out jobs (assassinate a certain person, steal a certain vehicle, and so on), and players decide whether or not to follow orders.

Apart from that, gameplay is completely open. Players can drive wherever they like, crashing into other vehicles and running over innocent pedestrians. Eventually, the police turn up (in New York, players have to send quite a few bystanders to the morgue for this to happen), but they can also be squished for extra points.

The game is awash with features: 35 different vehicles to steal, 1,500 miles of road to explore, dozens of secrets to find, and a four-player LAN option. The only thing you don't get is the chance to be a cop. Apparently, the designers toyed with the idea but found it boring. "We dropped it like a live grenade," says Baglow. A highly appropriate phrase.



Steal vehicles and kill pedestrians: *Grand Theft Auto* is a moral worry bomb waiting to explode

Tanktics

To accompany *7th Legion*, DMA has its own battle strategy game in development. *Tanktics* takes the basic *C&C* premise — player's armed forces against computer's armed forces — and, characteristically for this company, subverts the genre into something much more unusual.

This is exactly how unusual: the player controls a hovering crane with a huge magnet attached to it via a long rope. In the middle of each map a pod spews out tank parts (there are dozens of these maps, split into four diverse eras: stone age, medieval, present day, and future). The player then uses the magnet to collect parts and put them together. The resulting tank then trundles off and into battle.

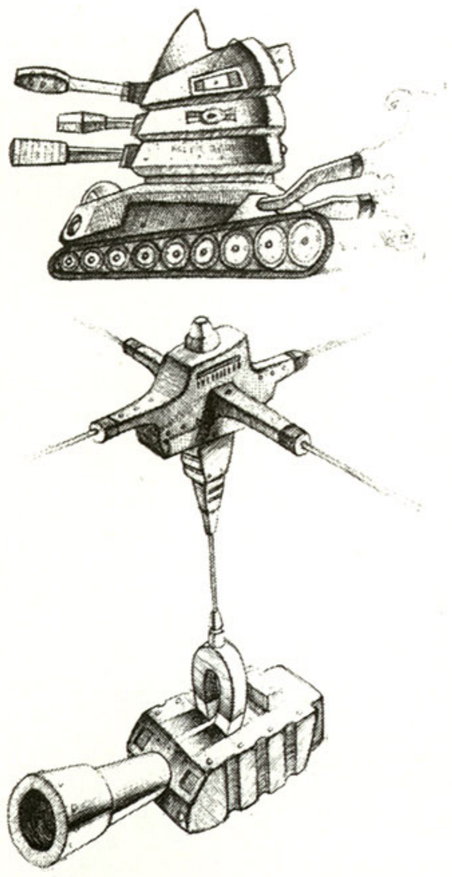
Although comparable to *C&C*, *Tanktics* represents an eccentric twist on the battle simulation theme

It is, of course, slightly more complicated than that. The type of tank you make varies depending on what parts you use, and there are loads of map features (acid lakes, molten lava, and so on) which play a part as well.

The crisp, attractive graphics are actually rendered in real time, and the game apparently uses some visual tricks never before attempted on the PC. Heat haze and vapor trails from fire-based weapons certainly sound quite impressive.

Tanktics could very well represent the next generation of battle strategy sims.

ng alphas



Early *Tanktics* sketches hint at the final product's polish

Jones isn't a fan of multiformat publishing for the sake of it, probably a legacy of the years the company spent cranking out *Lemmings* conversions

In *BH*, you can drive any vehicle you come across

leader on DMA's other near-complete title, PC driving game *Grand Theft Auto*.

"*GTA* was harder than we thought," admits Keith. "We're rewriting the handling of the cars at the moment. We've got the time as we're changing the graphics to 24-bit."

"The good thing about *GTA*," chimes in Ian Johnson, programmer on the game, "is that you don't have to go down a predetermined path. And there's nothing as fun as spinning a car over your friend's head six times."

The crowded unit which houses the *GTA* team feels something like a school hall. The high-ceilinged room is partitioned into noisy little work areas and is also home to DMA's other Nintendo 64 title, *Silicon Valley*, and its quirky PC strategy game, *Tanktics*.

There's no sign here of any other systems, though. The absence of Saturn or PlayStation development is in marked contrast to most U.K. developers and, like everything at DMA, stems from David Jones's vision of the market.

"If I had my way," says Jones, "I would only do PC and Nintendo 64. I enjoy PC games more than other formats, probably because I'm 30 years old. Nintendo 64 is still great, but I like more strategic-type games so I much prefer to sit down in front of a PC."

Jones isn't a fan of multiformat publishing for the sake of it, probably from the years DMA spent cranking out *Lemmings* conversions. "It's very hard to explain to publishers that sometimes games just don't go across all formats well," he offers. "We are actually doing some games on PlayStation, where we feel the games will translate well, but that's not always the case with our games." Some of DMA's staffers, no doubt spoiled by Nintendo 64, are more blunt about the other formats. "I like PlayStation," confides one, "but Saturn has had its day."

Jones's interest in the PC is behind the most recent changes at DMA Design — an alliance with shareware developer Epic Megagames. The reasoning behind the deal seems odd. Why would the successful, innovative DMA team up with Epic, a company whose track record is full of the sort of competent, unambitious genre clones that the Scots deliberately shy away from? The reason is *Unreal*, a still-unfinished *Quake*-like game created by Epic's Tim Sweeney. "I'd seen some screenshots on the Web and was quite excited about it," enthuses Jones. "I pestered GT, saying, 'I'm not leaving till you show me this game.' "

Mark Rein, VP of marketing for Epic Megagames, is revealing the dynamic lighting effects of the *Unreal* engine. "Oh, this is cool," he gushes. "We can create rooms where light reflects off water onto the walls or if you're in a courtyard, you can see where the moonlight falls. Neat, huh?"

It's soon apparent that Rein starts sentences with, "Oh, this is really cool," and finishes with a slightly smug, "Neat, huh?" His manner is a bit of a jolt next to the self-effacing Scots of DMA. In spite of Rein's hard sell, *Unreal*'s quality speaks for itself, too, as seen in the cover story in NG26.

The power and versatility of the *Unreal* engine are evident, even from this brief gameplay-less demo, and it makes the DMA/Epic deal seem a much more sensible proposition than when it first appeared. "It's not a business thing," says Jones, "it's more a thing to do with games. Epic is much stronger with the new technology on PC than we are, but we're obviously much stronger on consoles. These guys have a technology they want to exploit but don't have the resources. We have a lot of resources, especially when we finish these games — we'll have plenty of people."

It's getting late. Even in the dark, Dundee Technology Park still looks dull and ordinary. Thankfully, there's nothing ordinary about DMA Design. "We've not done too badly in the past," Jones says modestly. "We've had a quiet period, we have games coming out now that I hope will do well." Next Generation's photographer gets one last shot, of David posing next to the fluffy Lemming on a tricycle in the foyer. It's the only sighting of a Lemming all day. "Maybe sometime in the future, we'll visit it again," he muses, "but I want a big break from it."

DMA has moved on, but its roster of new titles mirror the experimentation and innovation that made *Lemmings* a phenomenon. "I think the combined resources of Epic and DMA will be a major player," offers Jones. "Great games is what it's all about." In *Body Harvest* and *Grand Theft Auto*, his team appears to have a couple more.

ng

Your mission in *BH* is to kill scary monsters and bugs

An interview with David Jones

He may hail from what most Brits would regard as the back of beyond, but David Jones is truly a world-class figure in the videogame industry. He is, after all, the man who gave us *Lemmings*. He's also a relaxed and affable man, although now he seems a bit uncomfortable. "I don't like this room much," he says of the DMA boardroom. "It's too corporate..."

NG: Why do you think Nintendo chose to approach DMA Design?

David Jones: I'd always sort of kept in touch with them over about a year and a half because initially we did some video compression on the Super NES, just in case they were doing a CD-ROM drive. Nintendo quite liked it, and I think just made a habit of visiting us. They seemed to like what we were doing with games.

NG: It seems there's something else, though. Your games do have a certain adventurous, childlike quality about them. They are much like Shigeru Miyamoto's games, in which you can try different things out.

DJ: Yeah, possibly. We've never really done a run-of-the-mill game; that's never really been our forte. We've always been quite risky in the game styles we try to work on. I think Nintendo maybe likes that.

NG: And how has DMA Design's relationship with Nintendo gone?

DJ: It's fine. It's hard. It's a very hard relationship because their quality is so high, that it's so hard to match the quality of the products they do. And they really want you to focus on making Nintendo products. It's very hard to write games that you're not writing for yourself, which is traditionally what I've done. I write a game because I want to play it. It's a big, big difference when you try and write a game for somebody else. It's really, really hard to do. So, it has its problems.

NG: How does the relationship work in practical terms, on a day-to-day basis?

DJ: They pretty much let us get on with it. They send us evaluations, they come up with quite a lot of changes every time we send them something. They say to us, "If you want to succeed in the Japanese market, we suggest you do A, B, C, D, E...", y'know, so we go and do that. And basically, we just have to listen to them because we're not as good as they are. Nobody in the world is as good as they are, so we'd be daft to try and say, "We think you're wrong." So we just have to work with them, and we implement everything that they ask for.

NG: How do you see Nintendo 64 taking off?

DJ: Oh, I think it'll be massive. I mean, just look at the first three titles. They're such fun. They're way above anything else that's out there. I know there's concern about the price of the games, maybe the disc drive will fix that, but I think it's just a brilliant machine. It's got a great controller — when I first started talking to Nintendo, one of the things I was really pushing for was to make the machine's controller different.

Nobody else had done that; they'd just stuck with the same old up, down, left, right and a few fire buttons. And I was pretty adamant on that because one of the reasons *Lemmings* didn't translate particularly well to consoles was because you couldn't play it with a joypad. You needed a mouse or some sort of analog input. So the analog stick in itself gives Nintendo 64 a huge advantage. And the hardware is really powerful; things just look great on it.

NG: You don't think it'll have any trouble because it's coming to the market a year and a half or two years later than PlayStation and Saturn?

DJ: No, not with the quality of games they're doing just now. The pricing's already proved aggressive — $200 in the U.S.; that'll come down and down. I think with great games, it's like what happened with the Amiga in Europe, that came later, the Super NES came later, it didn't stop them dominating. They were better machines, and the software was nicer. It's gonna be big.

NG: The PC is your other big format. What do you think of the 3D cards available? Will they beat the consoles at their own game?

DJ: I think they're great. They may not keep up with the software, that's the only downside. But I think eventually hardware will be the way to go. Look at the PC. It would have needed a Pentium processor running at something like 400Mhz to match Nintendo 64. I'm a little disappointed that some of them do not have that sort of power — if Nintendo can do it for $200 a machine, then surely someone can make a card that can do it as well. As long as it's pretty transparent to the user, as PCs are a bit of a nightmare to get games running on, and they keep coming up with hotter and hotter chipsets, then I think they're going to be a success.

NG: What about your two new PC games, *Grand Theft Auto* and *Tanktics*? What do you feel you've achieved with them?

DJ: I think that they're two very, very different games. We're a bit concerned about *GTA* in the U.S. because of the overhead nature of it. The U.S. is much more into 3D. Everything has to be in 3D, and we're a bit disappointed by that because we know it plays great and is a fun game. Games like *Micro Machines*, I mean, they're so much fun, and I feel actually sorry for them if they get dismissed out of hand. I don't think we'll have any problems with Europe, but we are a

"We've never really done a run-of-the-mill game. We've always been quite risky in the game styles we try to work on. I think Nintendo likes that"

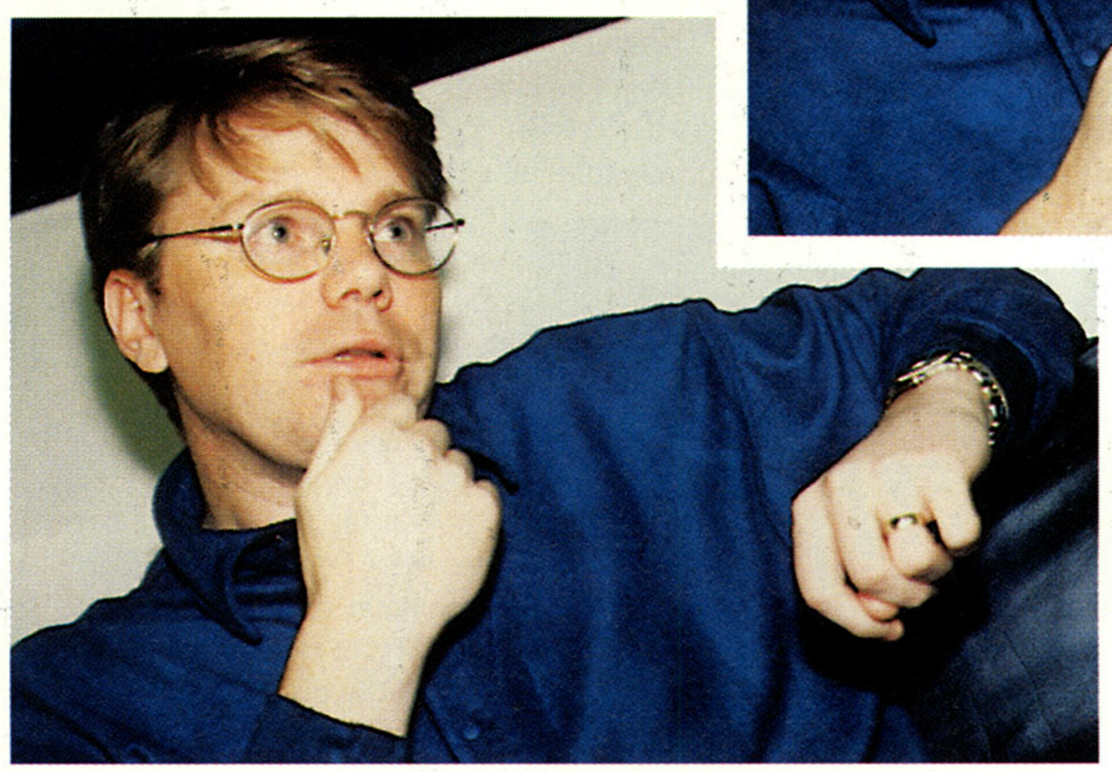
ng alphas

little worried about how the U.S. will take to the game.

Tanktics, once again, is quite a bit different and that in itself will make people take a look at the game and say, "At least, somebody's doing something different now." It is a bit of a new slant on strategy-type games, so we're fairly sure we'll do pretty well with that one too.

NG: Given the air of moral righteousness rapidly sweeping across Europe and the U.S. at the moment, are you anticipating any sort of public outrage at the violence in *GTA*?

DJ: Probably, but then we actually made headlines in the deep south of America with *Lemmings*. We were told we were inciting devil worship. First, they referred to Psygnosis because of its logo — it was this sort of Satanistic logo — and second, we had this level called "666," where you had three sixes on the screen. And there was a



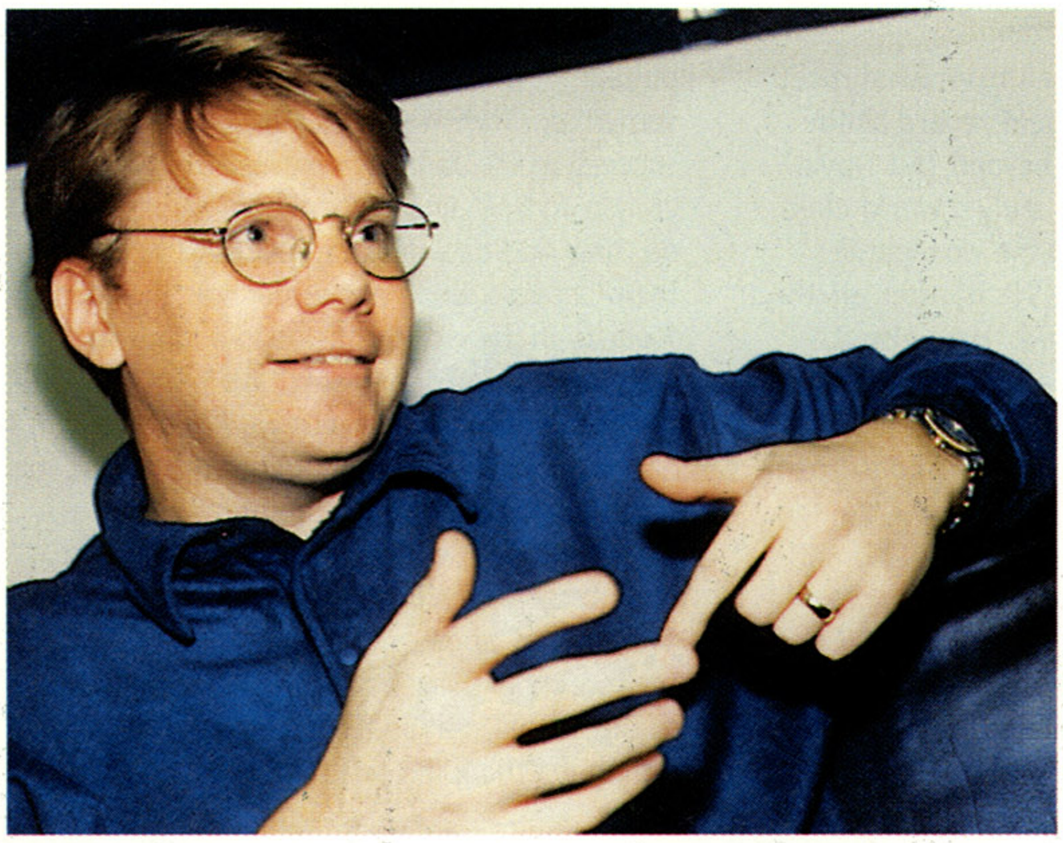
pig's head with flames coming out, which they said was symbolic of the devil as well. It made television for inciting children to worship the devil. It doesn't matter what you do, there will always be somebody out there who gets offended.

GTA... [laughs heartily] might offend a few more people than *Lemmings* did, but it's no worse than most films, really. Violence happens all the time on films, you watch it on TV all the time. *GTA*'s pretty cartoony, it's done with humor, so we'll see how it goes.

NG: All four games you've shown (*Body Harvest*, *Silicon Valley*, *Tanktics*, and *Grand Theft Auto*) seem to offer a great amount of freedom to the player. Is that important to you?

DJ: Oh yes. I hate linear gameplay. To me, the ultimate game would take real-world physics, model them perfectly, give them an open environment, let them go, then just play around with the laws of physics. That's what games are. I just love games that are pretty open-ended; you can try things, you can go wherever you want. Going back to *Lemmings* there were many, many ways to solve the puzzles... I just hate games where it's A-B-C. We always try to make games as open-ended as possible.

NG: Also, the games you have in development at the moment are very brave, in that they're not sticking to any standard genre. That's a definite part of the company philosophy, isn't it?



"Don't ask me questions about who's going to win the platform wars or where the business is going to be in three years. If you do good games, they'll always sell well"

DJ: Yeah. We have a little formula every time someone here has an idea for a game. One of the first questions is, "What's different about it?" There are so many games out there now. We could probably be a very good company if we were to do driving games. I think we'd be an extremely well-known company and could probably do them in half the time we're doing games. But it's not what we're about.

We're taking risks, really. We put a lot into these products. We'll see how the market reacts, but I think people like games that are different even if they're not perfect. But I think people really respect that our games are different, so that's what we're hoping for.

NG: And you're still independent. Your games are published by BMG Interactive and GT Interactive. Is that important to you?

DJ: I haven't really thought about it that much, to be honest. It doesn't matter if we were owned by somebody or if we were as we are, we'd still just write games.

NG: So you're not afraid of the sort of golden shackles that some other developers have been trying hard to shake off recently?

DJ: Obviously, I have been reading about a few people who do feel that they made the wrong decision. That surprises me, y'know, because I would have thought that any company that invests a lot of money in a small company would let it alone, let it get on with what it was doing because that's why they invested in them. It's hard to tell unless you're there and know the exact story.

It must be pretty enticing if someone comes along and says, "We'll take all your financial worries away. You just concentrate on the games." It must sound great to them. But there seems to be a problem with a lot of the ones that have gone that way. It's strange; it's a shame.

NG: Someone around DMA said earlier on that you're a great optimist. So you must be enthusiastic about the future of videogames?

DJ: Games will always be here. Obviously, there are quiet times in this business like anything else, but they're not going to go away. As long as you don't try to second-guess what system's going to be the winner and concentrate on doing good games. Don't ask me a question about who's going to win the platform wars or where the business is going to be in three years, all that sort of rubbish, because nobody knows and it doesn't matter. If you do good games, they'll always sell well.

What I like is that people are not daft anymore. They really look at games deeply now before they buy them. I think that's what's caused people problems. There was a time when you could sell anything in this business. Anything. That was more disappointing — when the business was bigger it was because of that. Times are hard now, making people focus more on quality and innovation which is great.

I'm not bothered. It's the people writing bad games who are bothered. ng

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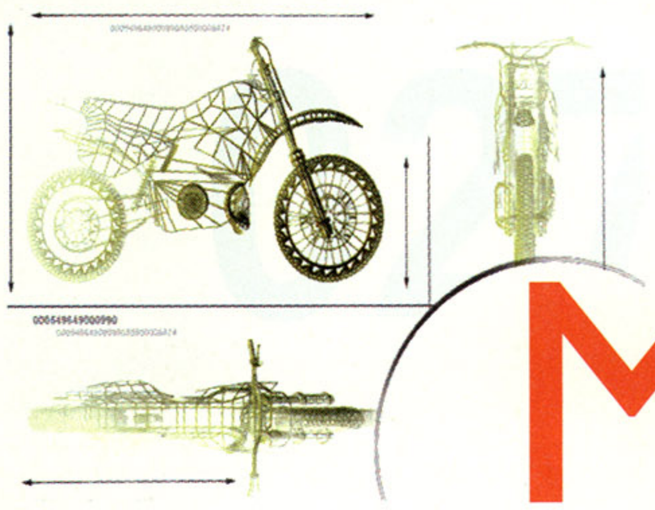
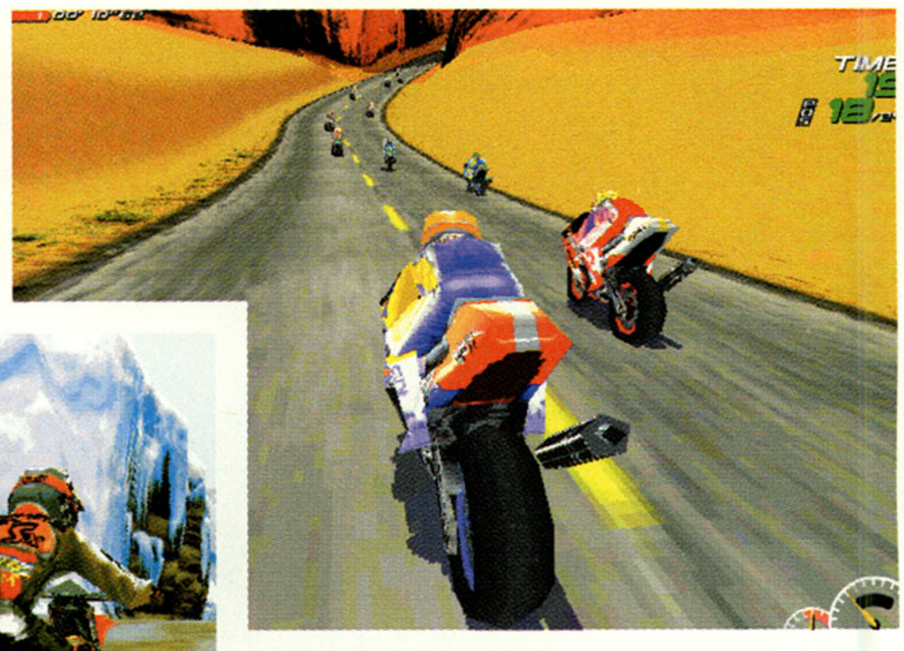
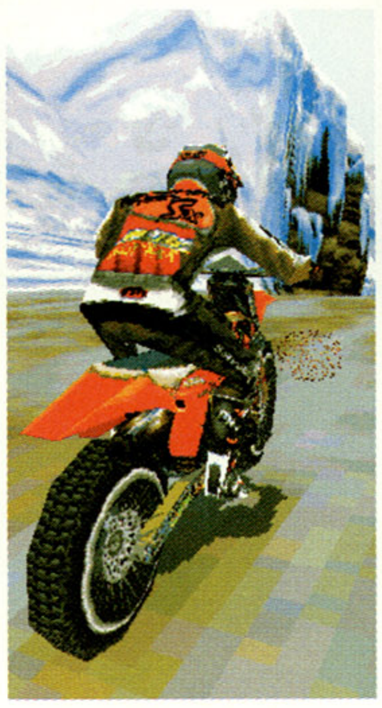


Moto Racer

No *Shaq-Fu*, Delphine's latest game brings arcade-style motorcycle racing to the PC





In a one-player game, the player can race against as many as 23 CPU opponents

On the street or on off-road courses, the arcade gameplay remains constant

Console and PC motorcycle racing has never truly matched even the old arcade standouts like *Hang-On*, but BMG hopes to bring some arcade speed to the PC with *Moto Racer*, a game that offers both street racing and motocross action.

Nearly complete, *Moto Racer* offers solid 3D graphics without sacrificing smooth gameplay. Players choose from nine peculiar courses, including a gently sloping run on the Great Wall of China.

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**BMG**
Developer:	**Delphine**
Release Date:	**May**
Origin:	**France**

Players can choose from nine courses, including a gently sloping run on the Great Wall of China

Depending on the course, players race on either a motocross bike or a street bike. Similar to *Ridge Racer*, *Moto Racer* has eight different motorcycle configurations to choose from for each type of bike, enabling players to vary such features as maximum speed, acceleration, grip, and brakes.

The difference in handling between the two bikes and the style of racing required to beat their respective courses makes *Moto Racer* a two-games-in-one package. On the motocross tracks, players powerslide through corners, catch big air over the bumps, and can execute tricks like the ever-so-cool "tabletop." The street courses are faster and play more traditionally, while the bikes have a heavier feel.

Moto Racer will support Net and LAN play, enabling four-player games over the Internet and possibly eight-player games over a LAN. A native Win95 game, the hardware requirements are a modest P90 with 16MB RAM. *Moto Racer* will also support several 3D accelerator cards, including the Rendition and 3Dfx chipsets. The game normally runs at about 20 to 25 fps, and BMG producers believe the cards will boost this by another five to ten frames per second.

With a few features yet to be implemented, including an overhead map and music soundtrack (which, unlike Japanese racing games, contains solid guitar tracks without the tinny monotonous backbeat), *Moto Racer* continues the current trend of titles that blur the traditional line between PC and console games. ng

The motocross bike has been modeled after the Kawasaki KTM 360 SX, and the street bike is based on the Kawasaki Ninja 9ZXR

Large objects like this covered bridge don't pop in, but appear gradually

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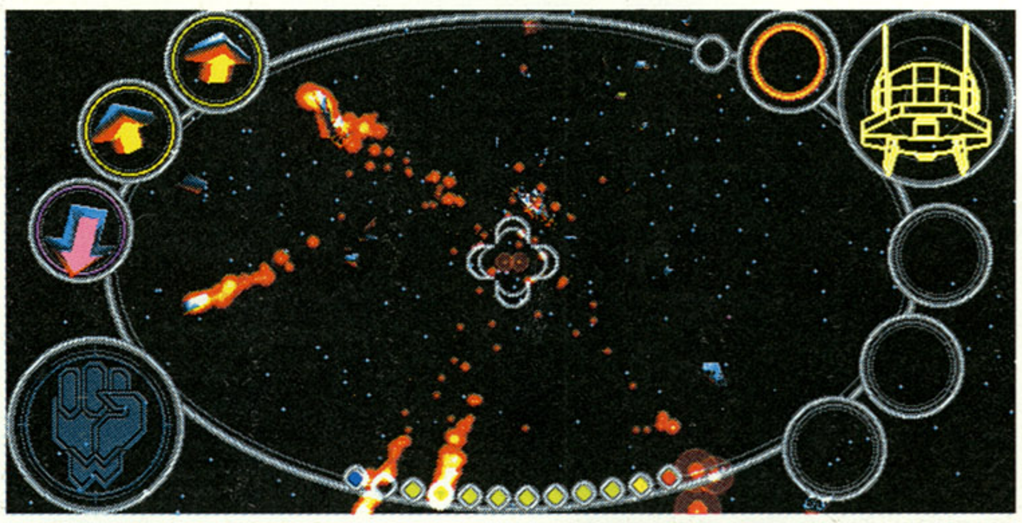
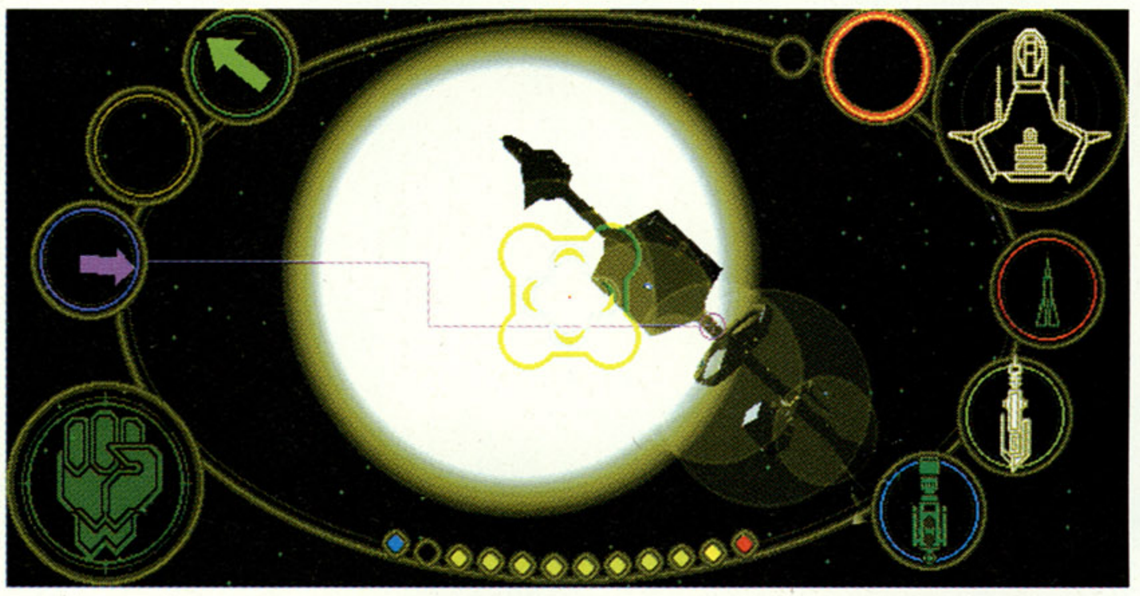
VANDAL-HEARTS

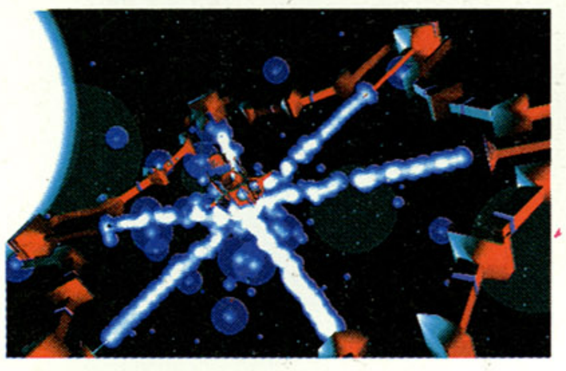
Darklight Conflict

No stranger to space combat sims, Origin pegs its sights on a series with multiplayer support





It doesn't look like *Wing Commander* or *Privateer*, and it doesn't play like it either



Format:	**PC, Saturn, PS-X**
Publisher:	**Origin**
Developer:	**Rage**
Release Date:	**May**
Origin:	**U.K.**

Notice how the cockpit has a distinctly alien flavor — get used to it, because you ain't flying with Earthling monkey-boys anymore, pal

Set in a nebulous future, the player gets to fly alongside the alien Repton clans

With the debut of its groundbreaking *Wing Commander* series in 1991, Origin raised the bar on the space flight combat sim. Successive generations and spin-offs, *Armada* and the *Privateer* series, have refined the form to an art. However, with the exception of a few limited options in *Armada*, something has been missing: multiplayer support.

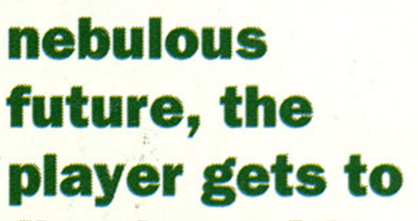
Now Origin, along with British developer Rage Software Limited, is finally getting with the program and joining the '90s by adding Internet and LAN options to its next space combat sim, *Darklight Conflict*. Set in a nebulous future, the player gets the opportunity to fly alongside the alien Repton clans — after having first undergone some genetic engineering to enable survival in the Repton's environment. The mission is actually a cover for gathering intelligence on these strange alien warrior clans.

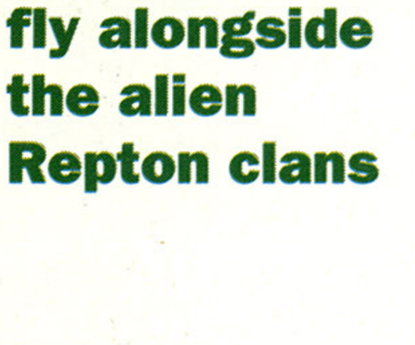
The game offers numerous fighter types, customizable with any of fifteen different weapons, options like cloaking devices, and the usual Origin feature of wingmen flying alongside. The game boasts a state-of-the-art, real-time 3D graphics engine, running in high-res SVGA.

Players get to fly over 50 single-player missions, but the real excitement is its multiplayer ability. At least four, and perhaps as many as eight, players will be able to compete in either straight-up deathmatches or cooperative games in which teams of players can fly against each other directly or play a variant of Capture the Flag. The slightly more impish can try their collective hands at a variant of Tag, in which the player who is "it" becomes the target of other players and some computer-controlled drones.

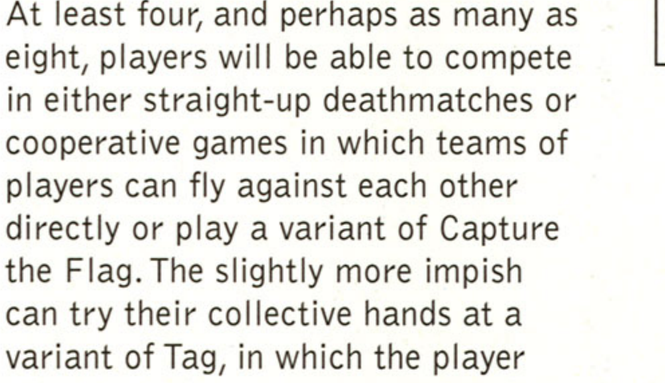
Given that a multiplayer option was the only notable omission from the otherwise excellent *Privateer 2*, Origin's addition of multiplay in its next game is a welcome sign for the future.

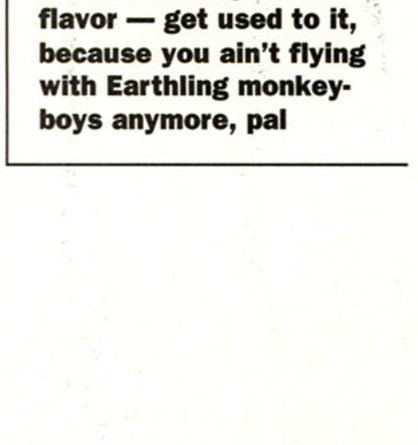
ng





All this and multiplayer support too — cool, but it's definitely about time





The well-paced battles have all the hard-hitting action you'd expect in a space combat sim from Origin, the folks who all but invented them

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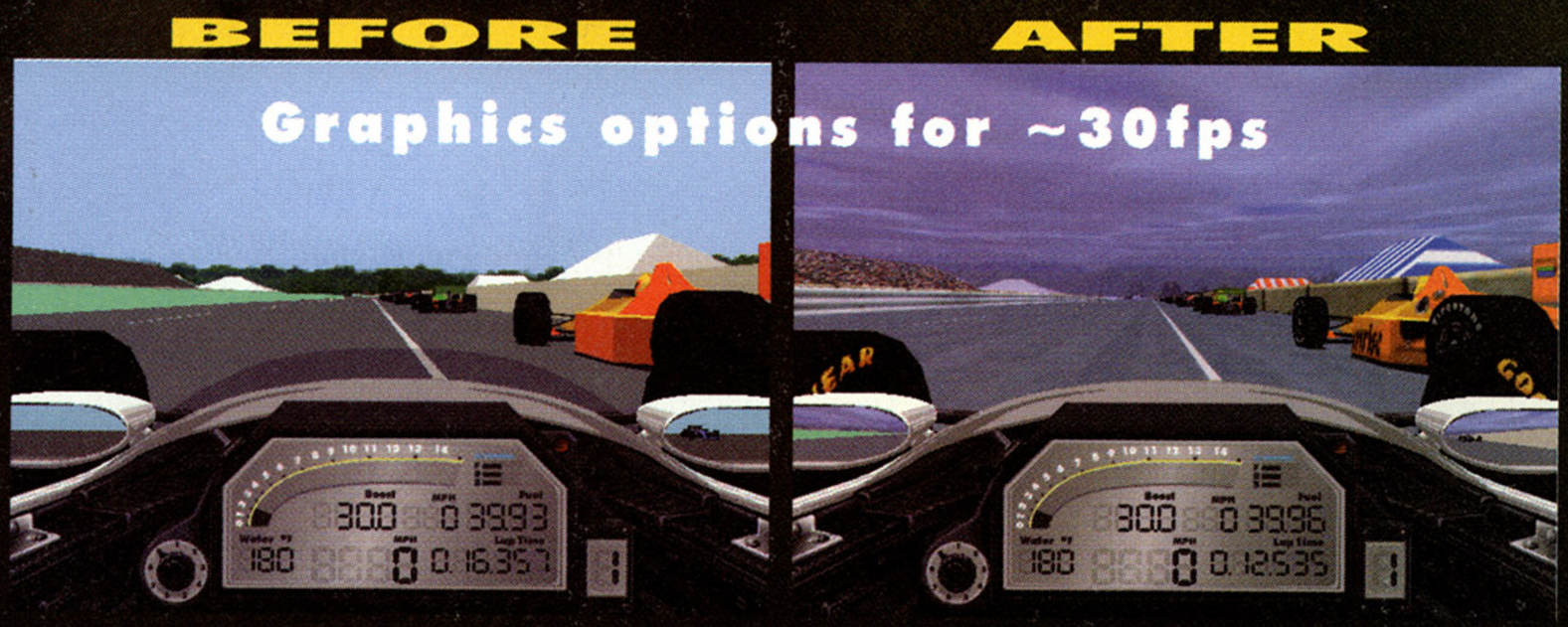

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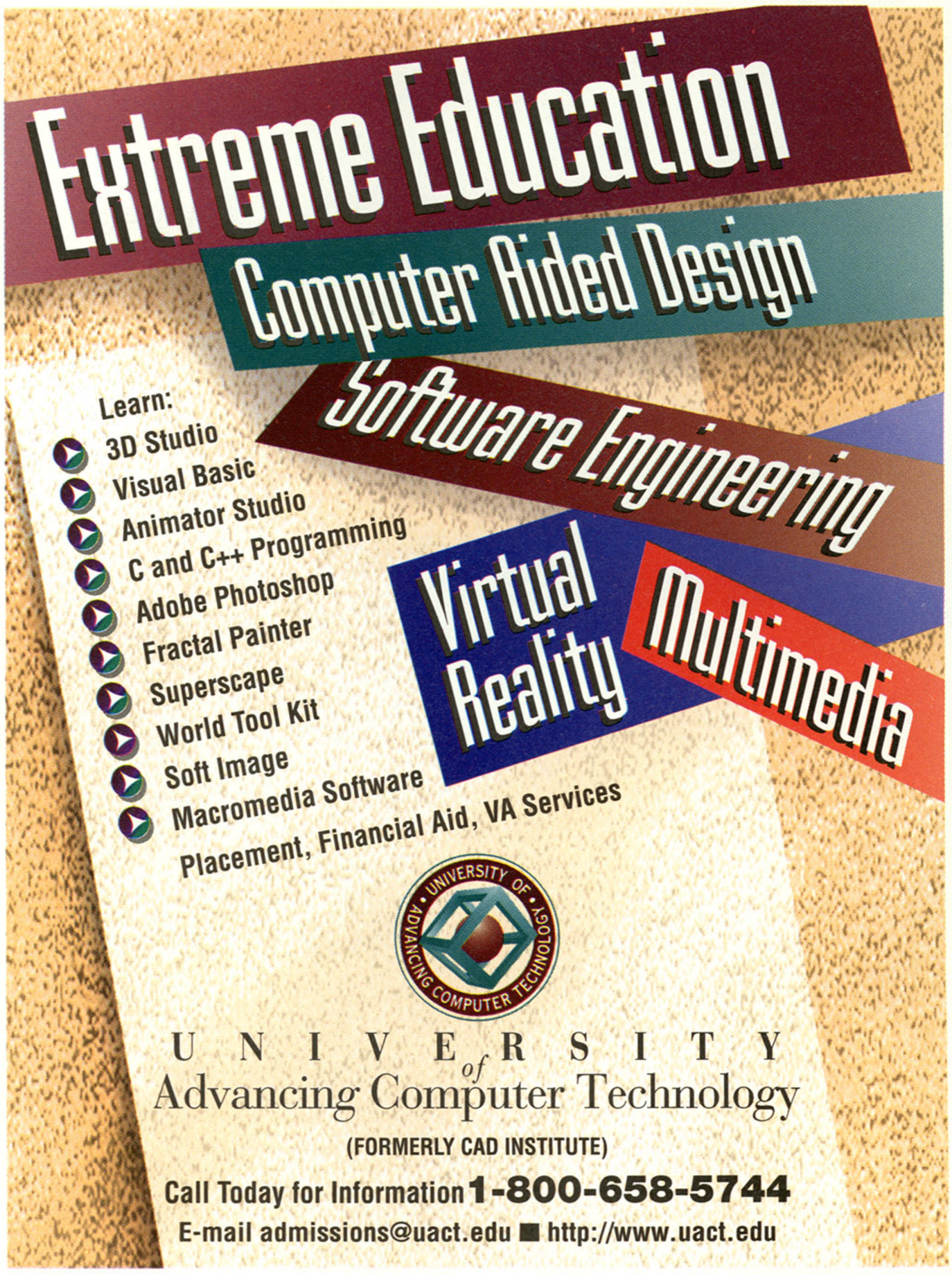

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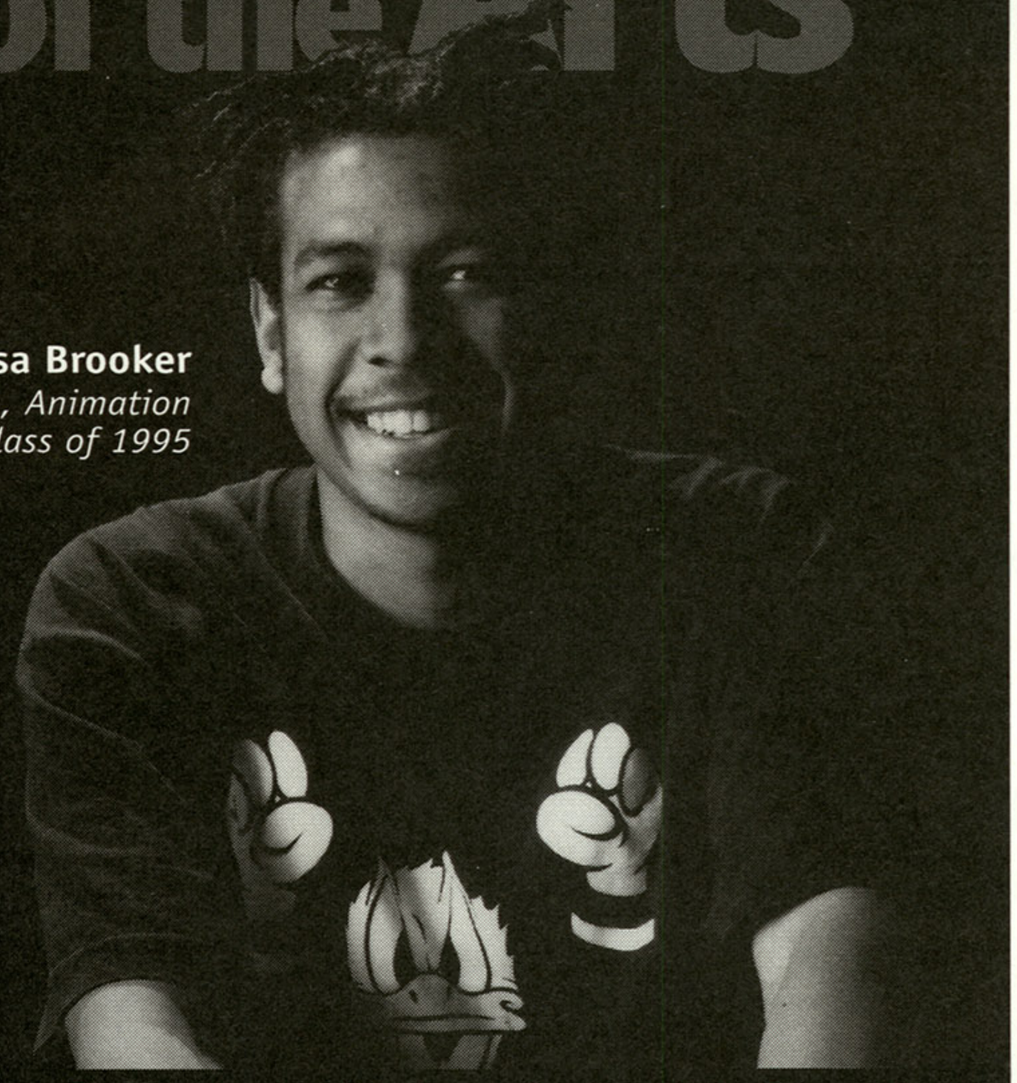

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★finals

We rate the games that make the whole world play

116 Nintendo 64
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135 Genesis
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135 Virtual Boy

The mad scientists at the **Next Generation** game laboratory review and rate the new game releases each and every month. Our opinion as to each game's merits is expounded in the text, but for a rough guide to a game's worth (or lack of it) refer to the following ratings.

★★★★★ Revolutionary
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

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

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

★★ Average
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ Bad
Crucially flawed in design or application.

Nintendo 64

Nintendo 64

TYRANNOSAURUS EFFECTS

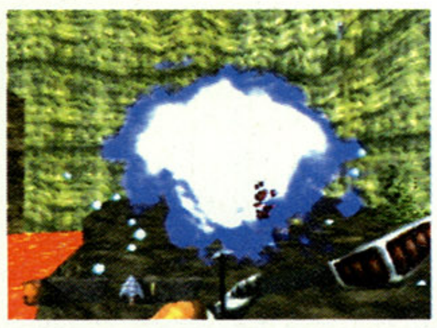
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana

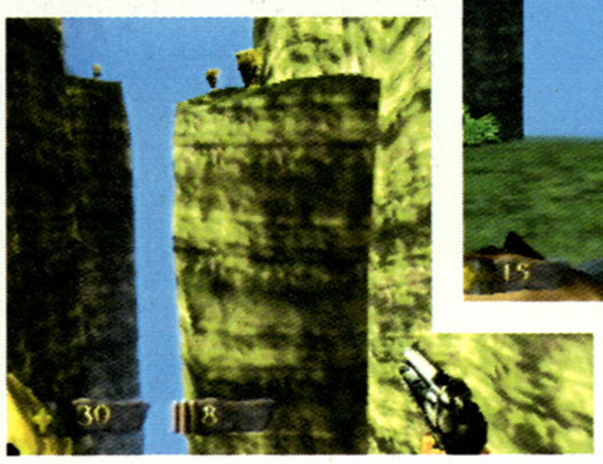
Probably the system's prettiest game to date (yes, even prettier than *Mario*), the long awaited *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* paints a slightly bloodier picture for the squeaky clean N64. While the game maintains that now famous anti-aliased look, the cheery color schemes and cute character animations so prevalent to the system are conspicuously missing. Deep jungle settings, explosive weaponry, and grizzly death animations take the place of cuteness, proving that N64 can handle such games easily and with style.

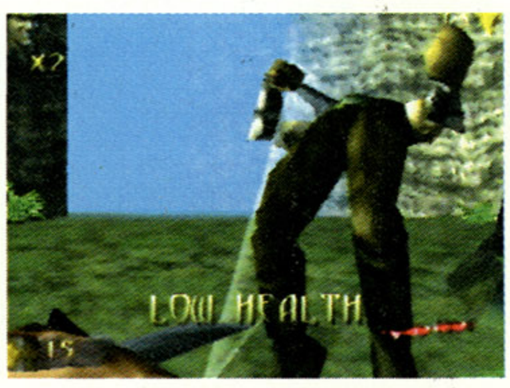
Even with its graphic violence, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* is a pretty Nintendo 64 game. The fully polygonal enemies sell the 3D nature of the game

Offering a bit more freedom than most first-person shooters, *Turok* doesn't confine the player to a series of long hallways. Instead, it enables the player to venture outside in the wide open expanses of a prehistoric landscape in which giant polygonal dinosaurs and well-armed soldiers lie in wait. Sadly and despite the automap feature, the limited texture palette makes this as disorienting as any maze of hallways — every jungle and temple looks like every other. And there's so much fog even the outdoor areas feel claustrophobic.

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter is based on the comic series, featuring a Native American warrior in prehistoric times with an arsenal of high-powered, futuristic weapons. If the premise sounds a little confusing, just try the control. Instead of using the analog stick for movement (as in *Mario*), *Turok* uses the four camera buttons on the controller for moving within the 3D space while reserving the analog stick for looking around and aiming. At first confusing and even a bit frustrating, the controller configuration eventually proves itself to be a good choice, but the option of re-configuring the controller would have been nice (earlier beta versions of the game used the analog stick for movement — theoretically, including this option would not have presented any technical hurdle).







Platform challenges frustrate due to the first-person perspective

A number of familiar platform challenges await *Turok*, but jumping from platform to platform is mostly ill-suited to a first-person game. Without seeing the character on screen, these obstacles often prove to be excessively difficult and unwelcome, especially since the game's save points are depressingly far apart. On the other end of the gameplay scale, the shooting action, with its dramatic selection of weapons, and varied terrains, is top notch.

For a system that has not yet proven itself with realistic action, *Turok* is a potentially positive sign of things to come. The game looks good from start to finish, boasts some pretty spectacular special effects, and at times even manages to create that uneasy but enjoyable feeling of impending doom. Unfortunately, for die-hard action fans, there are still too many holes in the gameplay to warrant any kind of victory dance.

Rating: ★★★

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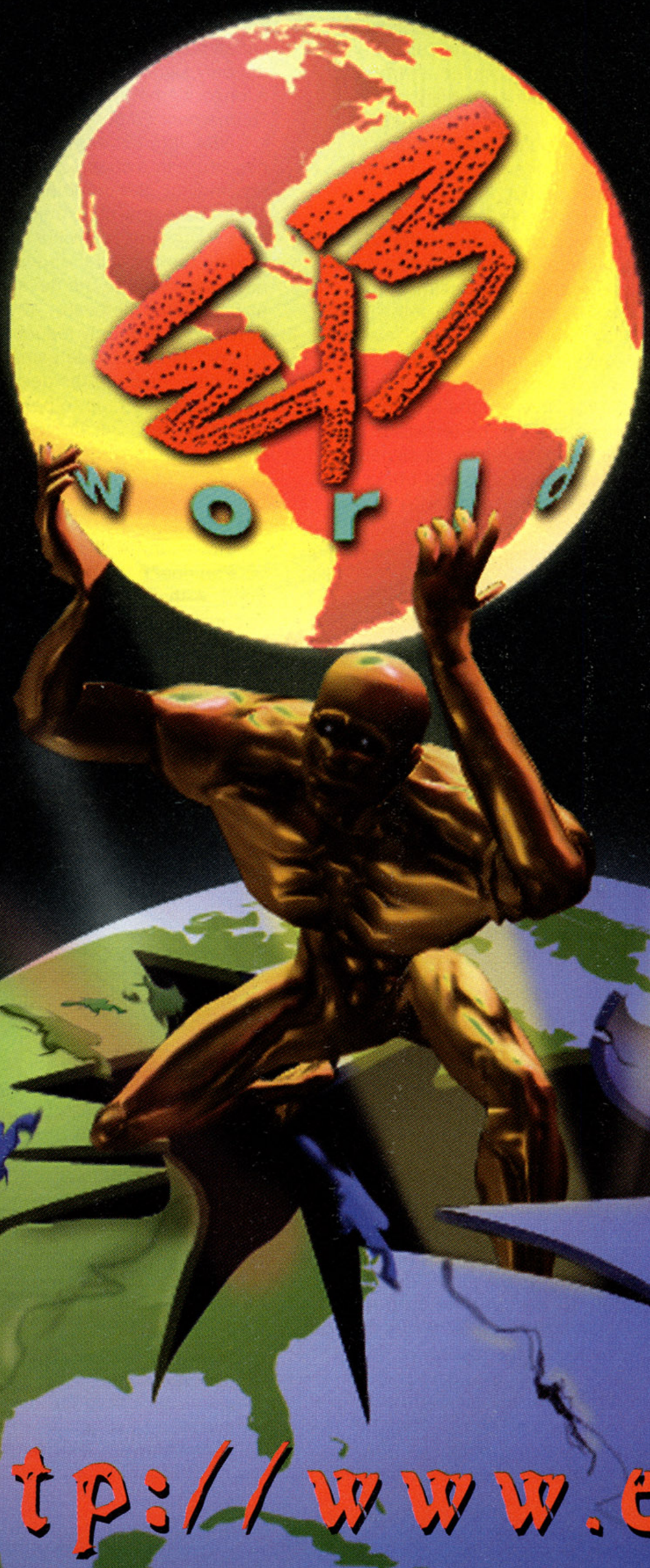

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PlayStation

Codename Tenka
Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Psygnosis

Psygnosis again breaks new visual ground on PlayStation with *Tenka*, as this *Doom*-style shooter is the first on PlayStation to feature not only 3D environments, but fully polygonal 3D enemies as well.

As the title character Tenka, players must blast their way out of a colony where mutants are being manufactured. The gameplay is

The environments in *Tenka* are too dark at times and many of the levels wind up looking the same. Variety is the spice of life, and this game ain't too spicy

pretty straightforward, with run, jump, and crouch buttons and a gun which can be aimed up and down. With fairly simplistic puzzles that keep things moving, *Tenka*'s 28 levels expand little on *Doom*'s basic "find the key" gameplay. Players must also constantly find ammo and can increase their firepower with the likes of missiles and lasers. However, new add-on weapons are scarce and can be found on average only every third level — a little too slim for firepower-crazed *Doom* fans.

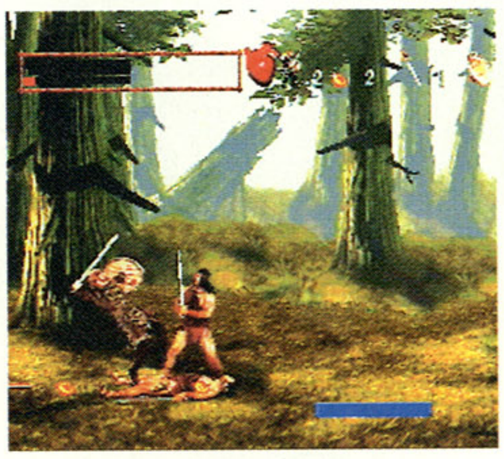
Tenka offers solid visuals, with exceptional, atmospheric light-sourcing, and an extremely cool laser gunsight. Although the game includes some suitably gruesome enemies, many are laughable, slow-moving, stupid-looking robots. Like *Alien Trilogy*'s, *Tenka*'s environments are dark and grim but too dark at times, and the levels are plagued with somewhat repetitive architecture and aren't nearly as compelling as those found in, say, *Disruptor*.

The audio, on the other hand, is nearly spotless, with edgy music and high-quality weaponry and ambient sound effects. However, the scatterbrained voice-over dialogue (are we ever going to get to stop saying this?) is really terrible. Occasionally intense, *Tenka*'s gameplay is solid but never frantically drives the player forward the way the best first-person shooters do. Like another Psygnosis first-effort, *Destruction Derby*, *Tenka* is fine in concept but missing some fine-tuning. Hopefully, like *Destruction Derby*, it will acquire this in its sequels.
Rating: ★★★

DragonHeart: Fire & Steel
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Funcom

This is without a doubt the perfect example of why Acclaim lost $190 million in 1996 and shatters in one blow any good karma built up from *Alien Trilogy*. It's the perfect combination of bad decisions — a miserable movie license snapped up only because it's a movie license and then ignored completely in the design of the game (except as decoration), coupled with slapped-together gameplay elements. Acclaim wisely avoided sending evaluation copies to the press until the game was released, assuring it had at least a month or two on the shelves before the negative waves hit — perhaps the company's only good decision.

Now, this may come as a bit of a surprise, but *DragonHeart* is a side-scrolling action game, using big, blocky, digitized sprites. The idea is to defeat seven dragons which were obviously not good enough for the movie, plus several



***DragonHeart*'s miserable control makes the simplest tasks difficult**

generic knights. The background graphics are decent, but the characters and dragons suffer from some of the worst animation yet. Everything moves so stiffly, including the hero you're forced to control, that it leaves the player understanding why chivalry is dead. This leads into the game's other major problem, the dreadful control, which is beyond frustrating and pushes into the realm of pure insult, making you wish you had put anything — another game, a music CD, a fish sandwich, anything — other than this disc into the console.

Different sections let you call on Draco's fiery breath and even ride on his back, but none of the game's elements can compare with even the worst of the last generation of 16-bit, side-scrolling action games (most of which, by the way, were also made by Acclaim).

We can only hope that *DragonHeart* truly is the last one.
Rating: ★

The Divide: Enemies Within
Publisher: Viacom New Media
Developer: Radical Entertainment

On the surface, *The Divide: Enemies Within* has a number of promising elements for an action/adventure game. Players explore a 3D environment in an armored mech called a terragator — a promising, if unoriginal premise. However, a number of small but significant problems make this game difficult to get excited about.

Despite its polygon-based graphics and texture-mapped 3D environments, *The Divide*'s dark, grainy graphics are similar to those in many middle-of-the-road PlayStation titles. The pixelated explosions in particular are awful, with no hint of the transparency effects of which the system is capable. Even the terragator itself seems to have been designed so the developers wouldn't have to concern themselves with smooth character animation.

Lackluster gameplay ultimately undermines the promising elements of *The Divide: Enemies Within*

Gameplay centers around finding the terragator's lost parts, finding weapons, destroying enemies, and navigating the environment using the same platform game skills players learned in the 16-bit days. The rule of thumb seems to be to keep firing and keep moving, with the only real obstacle being the occasional enemy bosses. Navigating the environments is probably the most challenging aspect of *The Divide*, but only because the control system makes moving in a diagonal direction more of a chore than it should be. The camera angle is adjustable, but there are still numerous occasions when the view is less than optimal.

Overall, *The Divide: Enemies Within* plays just well enough to avoid being insulting, but leaves the distinct impression it was thrown together using a recipe from some "How to Make a Videogame" book. It's uninspired and lacking.
Rating: ★★

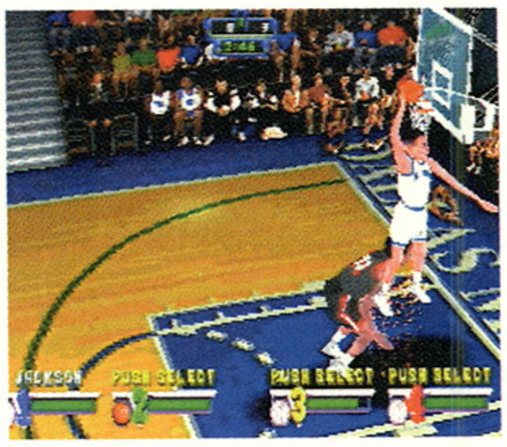
NBA Jam Extreme
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Sculptured Software

The original *NBA Jam* featured multiplayer gaming and high-flying action that caught on in the arcades and in the homes of millions of players. However, the series has since stagnated, with the only significant upgrade being a longer name (*NBA Jam: Tournament Edition*).

NBA Jam Extreme marks a departure in a couple of key areas. First, the creators of the original are now off cranking out *NBA Hang Time* for Williams, leaving the task of creating the next *Jam* game to the developers at Sculptured Software, who previously were only responsible for porting the arcade games to the home. Second, the designers have made the leap to polygonal characters and 3D arenas. As a result, *Extreme* has an entirely new look, and the gameplay doesn't even vaguely resemble the original.

However, the PlayStation version doesn't look or play as good as the arcade version, which is surprising since the arcade version ran on the PlayStation-compatible System 11 board. Often the players dunk the ball with their hand never colliding with the rim, and the overall look and feel just can't compare.

Extreme is still the best-looking *Jam* game yet. Unfortunately, it's also the worst playing, ultimately leaving the player with the choice of either graphics or playability. For our money, the superior gameplay of *NBA Hang Time* gives it the clear edge over this increasingly old, tired series.
Rating: ★★



***Jam Extreme*'s polygonal characters look decent, but games such as *In The Zone 2* managed 10 players on the court at one time and look better**

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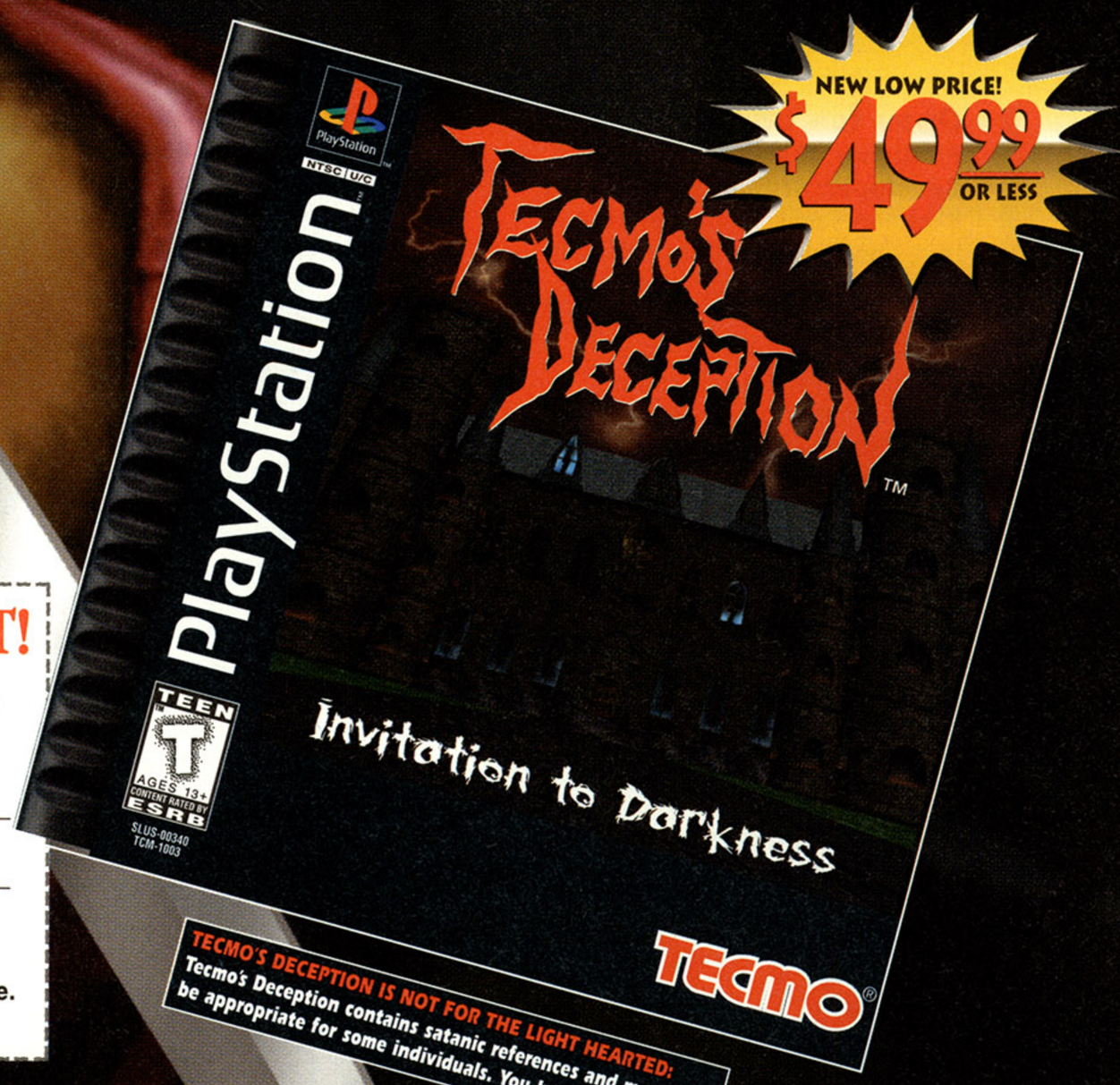

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PlayStation

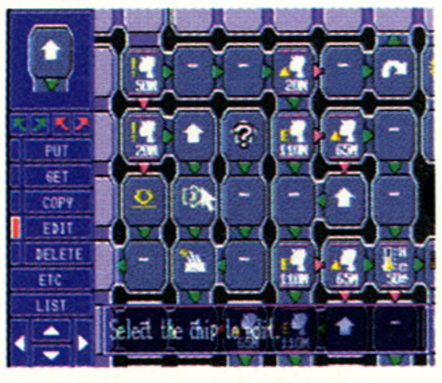
PULSE POUNDING

Carnage Heart

Publisher: Sony CE
Developer: ArtDink

In the slow trickle of more cerebral games into PlayStation's action-heavy library, *Carnage Heart* stands out, bringing an unprecedented level of complexity and depth to the strategy genre.

The premise is gladiatorial combat between armored mechs, known as "Over Kill Engines" or OKEs, but *Carnage Heart*'s gameplay is not based on piloting a mech or even commanding armies of them. Rather, the game centers on designing and programming the player's OKE for battle. The design portion requires the player to select the type of mech and choose its primary and secondary weapons, CPU, engine, armor, radar, and electronic warfare components. Upgrades are acquired by battlefield success and enable the player to purchase blueprints for more powerful OKEs, finance research to develop more powerful weapons, create more OKE-producing factory lines, and even buy information to track enemy activity.

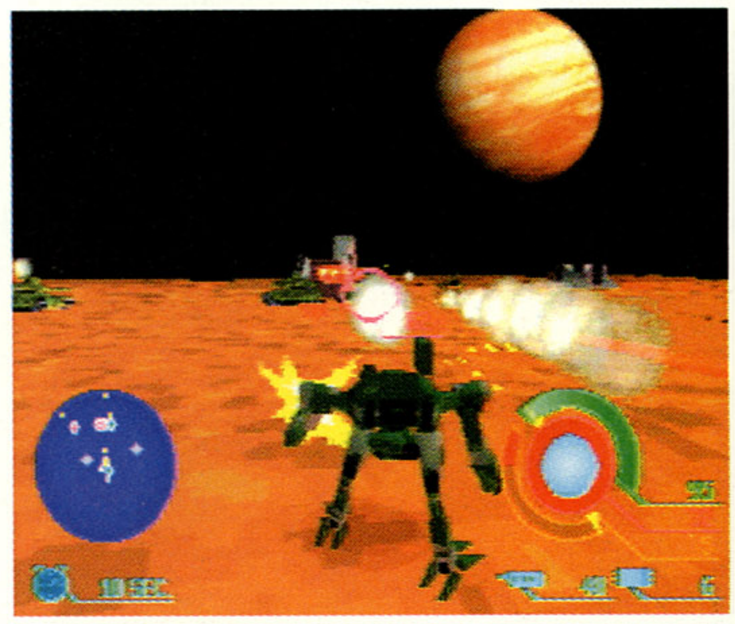


***Carnage Heart* requires a commitment from the player**

But the crux of the game is *Carnage Heart*'s icon-based OKE programming system. The player must actually configure a flowchart-like program that controls the mech's every movement, every attack, and every defense response. A very simplified example would be to have the OKE move forward 30 meters and fire if an enemy is detected within 25 meters, and, if an incoming missile is detected, jump to the left and fire the secondary weapon. The sheer number of different command icons, adjustable parameters for those icons, and the combinations in which they can be assembled results in an extraordinary amount of strategic depth. OKE programs can be saved to a memory cart, and up to four different players can set their mechs loose in the arena to compete.

In terms of game design, *Carnage Heart* is excellent, but some may find the nature of its gameplay and its complexity daunting. *Carnage Heart* requires a serious commitment from the player, but it is a commitment well worth making.

Rating: ★★★★



***Carnage Heart* may be the most innovative, sophisticated, and complicated strategy game ever released for a console system**

Open Ice Challenge

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Williams/Avalanche

It's been said ad nauseam, but that won't stop us from saying it once again: *Open Ice* could have been called *NHL Jam* — the similarities to its NBA arcade counterpart are so extreme (pardon the pun). *Open Ice* was even designed for the arcade to work in *NBA Jam* cabinets. While it wasn't the success *Jam* was, the same fast-paced gameplay remains intact — only it's the same fast-paced gameplay that's been around for four years.

This decent two-on-two hockey game features all 26 NHL teams, over 120 players, and plenty of weird power-up codes like "big head" and "unlimited turbo" which are even included in the manual.

***Open Ice* is a lackluster arcade port with *NBA Jam*'s gameplay**

But this 32-bit version fails to capture the coin-op's flashy essence, perhaps because the characters look smaller and less detailed and are surely missing frames of animation. The color palette, specifically in special effects like the exploding net, just doesn't have the same polish. Also, a few audio effects are noticeably missing, including the music behind the announcer during the "Match-up" screen.

Unlike *NBA Jam* which nicely captured the fast finesse of NBA basketball, *Open Ice* exaggerates the hard hits of hockey with huge checks, but somehow the gameplay never really captures the excitement of the sport even as well as, say, *NHL Powerplay* or *NHL Face Off '97*. Fanatical hockey gamers and those who still haven't got enough *Jam* may want to give this one a look, but most stickhandlers will simply get more out of one of the "real" sport sims.

Rating: ★★

Peak Performance

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Cave

Of the many PlayStation racing games on the market, *Peak Performance* most closely resembles *Need For Speed*, with a multitude of recognizable cars vying for first place on open road courses. The catch is, four of *PP*'s five winding courses are set on mountaintops — peak performance, get it?

The game blends standard street action with a touch of rally. It's part sim, with 21 real cars to choose from, and part arcade,

***Peak Performance* offers cool, yet more affordable race cars**

with short-cut tunnels, sections of dirt road, and lots of power-sliding. The cars aren't licensed, but are well modeled and easily distinguishable, although one of the game's drawbacks is that very few cars are truly high-end, with a line-up that includes a Miata, an MR2, a Nissan Sentra, and an RX7. While each car's features can be adjusted, the cars do not take damage nor does the game implement the physics necessary for the spectacular crashes found in *Destruction Derby 2* or *Need for Speed*.

In spite of good lighting, almost non-existent pop-in, and cool skid effects, the graphics are mostly mediocre, with scenery made up of standard PlayStation library elements we've all seen too many times before. Still, occasional weird little details pop out — look for cow-abducting UFOs when racing at night through the countryside. The music is the same cheesy, quasi-metal, guitar-driven stuff found in many Japanese racers, but the sound effects are solid enough.

In the end, *PP*'s racing weighs in at just above average. But with many unique options, including a "create-your-own obstacle course," *Peak Performance* should be enough to entice drivers looking for a "different" racer as opposed to an improved version of "more of the same."

Rating: ★★★

Spider

Publisher: BMG
Developer: Boss Games

It's impossible to say exactly how many examples it takes to make an official genre, but the "path-based 3D action/platform" games

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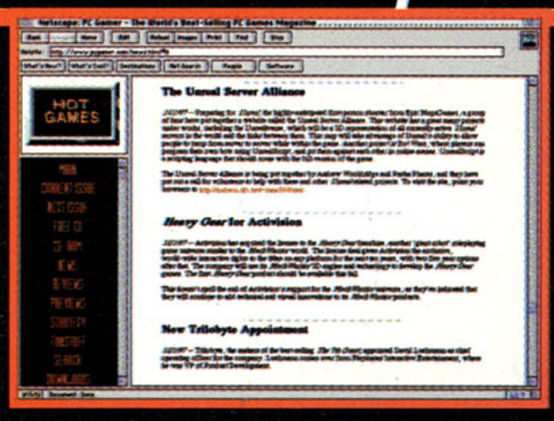

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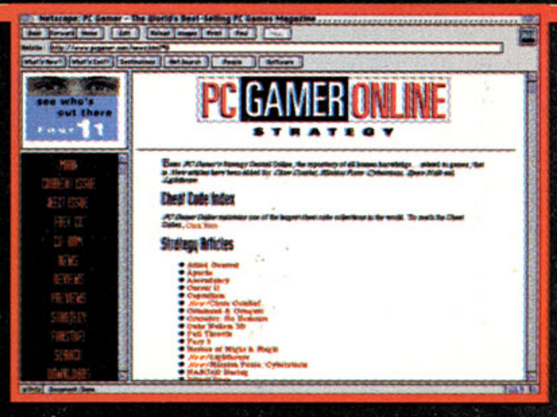

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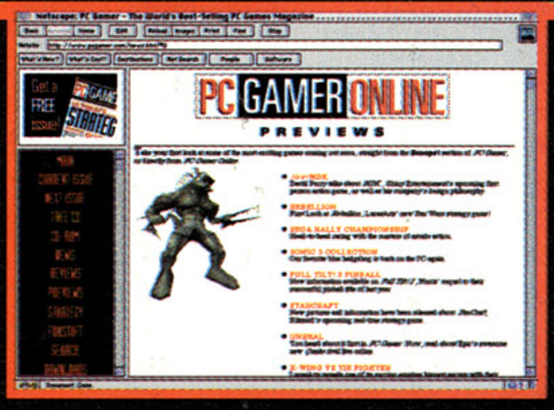

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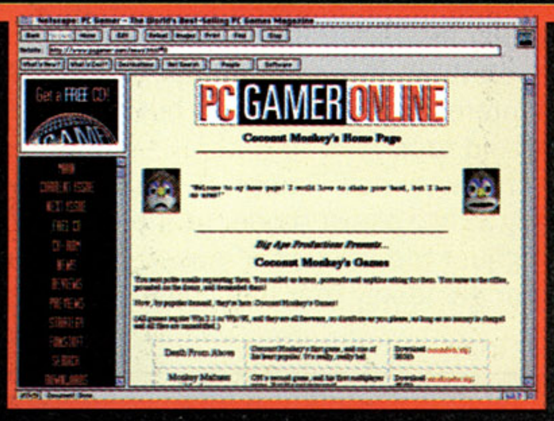

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With its 32-bit looks but 16-bit gameplay, *Spider* isn't exactly a giant leap for mankind

are beginning to pile up on the 32-bit systems. *Spider*, the latest in this quasi-genre, gives players the opportunity to explore as a cyber spider, battling insects, rats, bats, and other creepy crawly things. In doing so, players have to employ all the platform game skills of the 16-bit days and be wary of all the same tricks and pitfalls.

To be fair, certain aspects of the game, such as the ability to crawl on the walls or hang from the ceiling with the spider's web, do give *Spider* some unique qualities. Also, the designers have been generous with the number of levels and the game looks good, but in the end these features aren't enough to disguise the familiarity of the game mechanics. While some may enjoy the retro feel of the game's standard formula, many others will find it difficult not to be disappointed by the lack of any real progress in gameplay, given the technology thrown at it and the game's admittedly interesting premise. All in all, there's nothing here to go wild over.

Rating: ★★★

Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat

Developer: SSI

Publisher: Mindscape

Console systems have traditionally suffered from a lack of real-time strategy games, but *Warhammer* is a fairly strong entry in the genre for PlayStation — although it was originally a PC title. Set in the medieval fantasy *Warhammer* universe, the game puts players in command of a group of mercenaries who try to earn money, grow more powerful, and ultimately defeat the forces of the Horned Rat, whose plans for conquest are shown through a series of hand-drawn animated cut scenes.

***Warhammer* is decent, real-time strategy game for PlayStation**

Graphically the game isn't very exciting. Low-res, sprite-based armies clash on a battlefield; its level of detail can only be described as "mild," although many of the buildings and some other items are built of texture-mapped polygons. Even more impressive, however, the soundtrack is outstanding — dark, medieval Redbook audio which could easily be at home backing up a major motion picture.

However, *Warhammer*'s strength is its depth. Money and men must be managed effectively, and there are dozens of creatures to fight, as well as many and interesting uses of magic. Wizards can cast dozens of different spells, while equally numerous magical items can be found, and their effects and uses slowly discovered.

The interface is confusing at first, but it only takes about an hour to catch on. The pace may be a little slow to some, and the major motivation of the game seems to be in cleverly building up one's forces to the point where a battle can be won, as opposed to the strategy of actually winning the battle. However, in the end, wargame fans will appraciate the game's complexity, depth, and the amount of time one needs to complete it.

Rating: ★★★

PlayStation

CUTTING EDGE

Soul Blade

Publisher: Namco

Developer: Namco

As an arcade fighting game called *Soul Edge*, Namco's contribution to the weapon-fighting sub-genre enjoyed less success than it deserved. In its conversion to PlayStation, the renamed *Soul Blade* looks to have enough new elements to propel itself to the upper tier of home-console fighting games.

Although a moderate arcade success, *Soul Blade* is another fine Namco contribution to PlayStation's fighting game line-up

Based on version 2.0 of the arcade release, all the characters and levels from *Soul Edge* have made the transition to the home. *Soul Blade* also features the exquisite graphics and fast-paced gameplay that made the game a worthy, though underappreciated, arcade experience. Each of the ten characters possesses a unique weapon; the player must understand strengths and weaknesses of it. The focus of the gameplay is on the thrust, parry, and block nature of weapons combat — a nice change of pace from the standard hand-to-hand combat games. Also, Namco has decided to stick with the tradition established with the *Tekken* series and has added several useful options, including the now standard practice mode, team battle, and a pseudo-RPG game which enables players to access more powerful weapons as they progress.

We have only a few minor complaints about the gameplay in *Soul Blade*, the most significant being a slight delay in response time when initiating a move. The control system incorporates a simple but effective use of a high attack, low attack, kick, and block button, but never quite reaches the snappy, dead-on feel of *Virtua Fighter 2*. However, it should be noted that this slight nuisance becomes barely noticeable as the player learns to anticipate.

Visually, there's little to complain about. The polygon characters move smoothly, and the addition of animated elements (such as waving flags) in the backgrounds is a nice touch. The music is quite good, although the sound is pretty standard; the only notable effect is the "clang" of metal blades. The voice-over announcer is an interesting new wrinkle, but since he says exactly the same thing at the conclusion of every battle, it gets old fast.

Compared to the character-rich *Tekken 2*, *Soul Blade* may seem slightly lacking, but there is plenty of replay value, especially in two-player mode. In the end, *Soul Blade* easily reaches the upper echelon of fighting games, lacking just the fraction of speed and response to keep it from the very top. It's another example of the superior gameplay that has come to be expected from Namco.

Rating: ★★★★

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Saturn

Bug Too!
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega

When the original *Bug!* first hit the Saturn with talk of it being a "Sonic killer," many Sega fans wondered what the hell was going on. It's not that it was particularly bad — in many ways it opened the door for the kind of 3D action games we're seeing today — but it wasn't all it was cracked up to be. Now, in the Saturn's third year, Sega delivers *Bug Too!*, and the impact is even less impressive.

The 3D platform game is quickly

***Bug Too!* is a lot like the original — but it's even less inspiring**

becoming a bona fide genre with a couple of advantages — namely speed and the ease with which designers can implement camera angles — that help make the lack of true freedom acceptable. But *Bug Too!* simply drags, and the player is treated to only one very generic view, from the side.

What *Bug Too!* does add are more stylish backgrounds, two new playable characters (although the gameplay difference between the two is near negligible), and a few other fancy touches, but for the most part it's just more of the same. With action-platform games like *Nights* and *Sonic* coming from Sega there's just no reason to buy *Bug Too!*.

Rating: ★★

Die Hard Arcade
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega

Although designed for easy conversion of arcade games to Saturn, the ST-V "Titan" board has so far produced only a string of mediocre titles like *Funky Head Boxers*, gaining a reputation for quirky but forgettable gameplay. No longer. *Die Hard Arcade*, a genuine hit in the arcades, makes a perfect transition onto Saturn. The game, loosely based on the *Die Hard* film storyline, pits itinerant cops John McClane and Kris Thompson (yes, she's new) against a mad bomber in the refurbished Nakatomi skyscraper. You need to rescue the President's daughter and kick the hell out of the villains that infest the building — a simple if surefire formula for an action game.

Die Hard Arcade is best described as *Final Fight 3D*. Players and enemies can move in and out of the play area, but fighting takes place on a 2D plane. Players don't have the degree of freedom or variety of moves as in say, *Virtua Fighter 3*, but the arsenal of throws, punches, kicks, and combos should please all but the most hard-core fighting fanatics. Cool weapons, from spray can flame throwers to rocket launchers, spice up the game without feeling gratuitous.

The major complaint is the game's length. It's quite possible, even on harder levels, to breeze to the end in less than an hour, and Sega has even given players a means of earning more credits by playing an arcade-perfect translation of *Deep Scan*, its ancient sub-hunting game.

Visually, the game is virtually identical to the arcade version, looking better than anything Sega's released since *Virtua Fighter 2*. *Die Hard Arcade* is designed for pure and simple action, and it delivers.

Rating: ★★★★

Jackie Chan, move over — McClane turns the simple mop into a deadly weapon in *Die Hard Arcade*

Saturn

LEAPING LIZARDS

Some battles are more significant than others, which illustrates the tight interaction between story and game

Dragon Force
Publisher: Working Designs
Developer: Working Designs/Sega of Japan

Aside from the odd Koei title, the strategy wargame is a scarce commodity on console systems. As a result, *Dragon Force* has been highly anticipated, and the end result is worth the wait.

Best described as a wargame pared down to its barest essentials, *Dragon Force* is straightforward, with little resource management and almost no freedom of movement — just form an army, take over a castle, and move to the next one. Between battles, the administrative mode enables more detailed control over things like keeping subjects loyal and fortifying castles. The interface is beautiful in its simplicity, enabling players to conveniently access a host of options through a controller best suited to delivering Sarah's lightning kick.

Although not the most exciting graphics in the world, the battles have an epic feel to them

Working Designs has managed to create characters with a minimum of text, which helps make this RPG work

Combat is also a simple yet innovative affair. Battles take place up close and personal, with each general controlling up to 100 units. Although players don't handle each individual unit, tactical controls are surprisingly versatile. Expert players will find that the right formation will enable smaller forces to triumph against overwhelming odds. The system does have its flaws, but the game captures the glory of battle in a way few others do.

The most groundbreaking element, however, is the storyline. While most wargames are saddled with a premise that gets thrown away with the shrinkwrap, the story in *Dragon Force* is so well integrated that the game almost feels secondary. Each major character in the game approaches world conquest with a different motive, and gameplay changes accordingly. Players who choose the mad dictator Goldark will find very few allies, while Wein will have entire nations joining him at the drop of a hat. Working Designs boasts 150+ characters in this game, and it's done a fantastic job of fleshing out complete personalities in two lines of dialogue. Toward the end of the game, events proceed to a grand climax, but players don't feel tricked into a linear path.

Seamlessly welding both traditional wargaming and RPG elements, Working Designs and Sega have created a classic that should appeal to fans of both genres.

Rating: ★★★★

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Saturn

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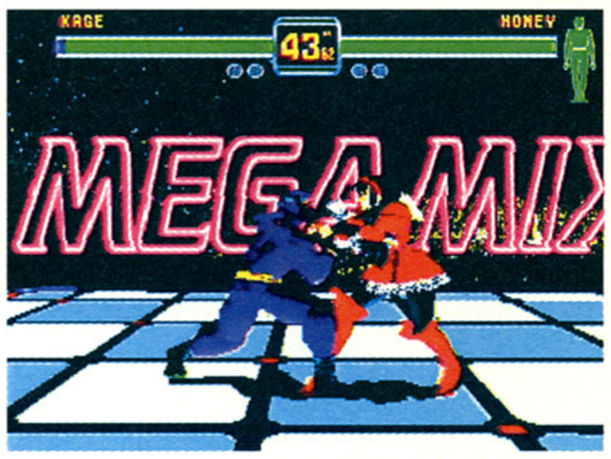


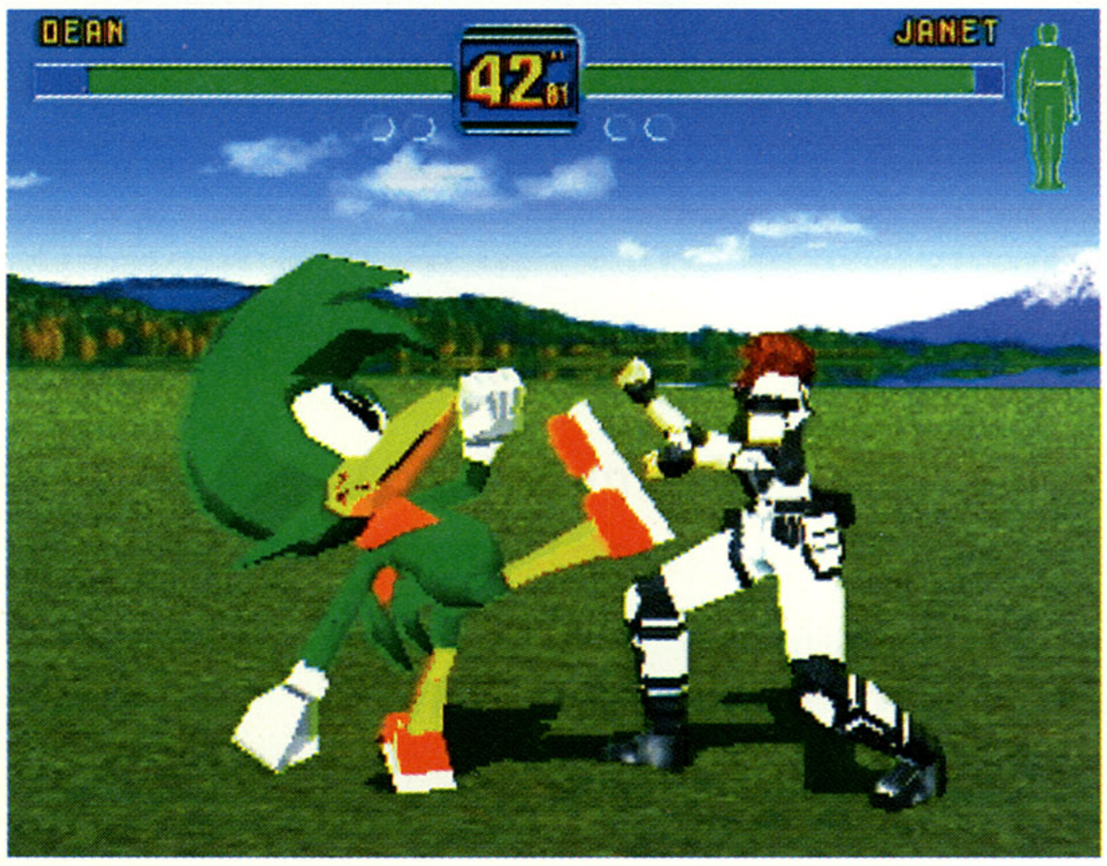
Matching the *VF* characters against those from *Fighting Vipers* creates some extremely interesting dynamics

Fighters Megamix

Publisher: Sega
Developer: AM2

Simply put, this is the best fighting game ever on a system that's already chock full of great fighting games. From the genius team that brought you the *Virtua Fighter* series and *Fighting Vipers* comes a kind of "greatest hits" collection called *Fighters Megamix*. Conceptually the game is a gimme — combine one great fighting game series with another and see what kind of chemistry emerges when the realistic, finesse-style fighters of *VF* meet the stylized, street savvy team of *FV*. This actually works brilliantly — sparks fly, and some fascinating matches of strategy and reflex ensue, all built around that patented AM2 dead-on, responsive control.

Contrary to many "collection-" style games where past successes are simply repackaged, Sega took the opportunity to enhance the characters with new moves (many from *VF3*) and add new fighting styles. The inclusion of the many secret characters derived from other AM2 games helps make this game a must-have, even for those who already own both *VF2* and *FV*. At press time, **NG** staffers had found 12 hidden fighters, including characters from the *Sonic: The Fighters* arcade game, *Virtua Cop*, and even *Daytona USA* (trust us, you just have to see it). This extra bonus gives the game a lasting replay value that most fighting games just don't possess.



Secret characters like Bean from the *Sonic: The Fighters* arcade game help keep the action interesting and unique

What finally helps to make this game so special is the long list of gameplay options. Topping the list is the ability to switch back and forth between *Vipers* and *Virtua Fighter* modes. In doing so, the characters from each series are able to take on the attributes of the other (such as armor-breaking moves for the *VF* characters). Hyper Mode, which throws the game into break-neck speed, is also fun to play around with, and the option to play either inside a walled arena or outside of it helps balance the characters and their special abilities.

In fact, *Fighters Megamix* has only one mildly disappointing drawback: most characters sport a low polygon count and have slightly rough textures, and the game is a hair lower-res than *VF2* for Saturn. Frankly though, it's so superbly animated, and the game controls so well, such a subtle and purely cosmetic flaw is hardly noticed. This is AM2 performing at peak levels, and every fighting fan should sit up and take notice.

Rating: ★★★★★

Many new moves from *Virtua Fighter 3* help give the game a fresh feel and keep it entertaining

PC

Archimedean Dynasty

Publisher: Blue Byte Software
Developer: Blue Byte Software

Blue Byte surprised role-playing gamers with its involving and entertaining *Albion*, and it's doing the same with *Archimedean Dynasty*. The game is a submarine simulation, in which single-man subs are the norm in a post-apocalyptic Earth several centuries in our future.

The game plays a bit like Origin's *Privateer*, in that players take on odd jobs to earn enough cash to outfit their ship, but the storyline doesn't let them wander far. The combat is well done, with an excellent and beautiful 3D engine providing realism to the already tricky real-time maneuvers underneath the sea. With currents and chasms in the way, it's hard to tell what's going to happen next. Rather than feeling like you're just flying around a fishbowl, you really feel like you're underwater, in a single-seated attack submarine.

From the inside of the sub in *Archimedean Dynasty*, interesting items are unveiled, such as these enemy tanks

Weapons are varied, and the missions make playing the game interesting. Because the designers at Blue Byte saved disc space by avoiding the full-motion video route, the story is intriguing and deep. It may not be the most sophisticated sim, but the underwater strategy combined with the story is enough to indicate that Blue Byte is a company worth watching.

Rating: ★★★

Lords of the Realm II

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Impressions

Lords of the Realm II comes from Impressions, Sierra's premier strategy game developer and is simply an outstanding upgrade and improvement over the already excellent original. Set in medieval Europe, the game enables players to allocate labor resources between agriculture, mining and timber, and industry (weapons manufacturing), with an eye

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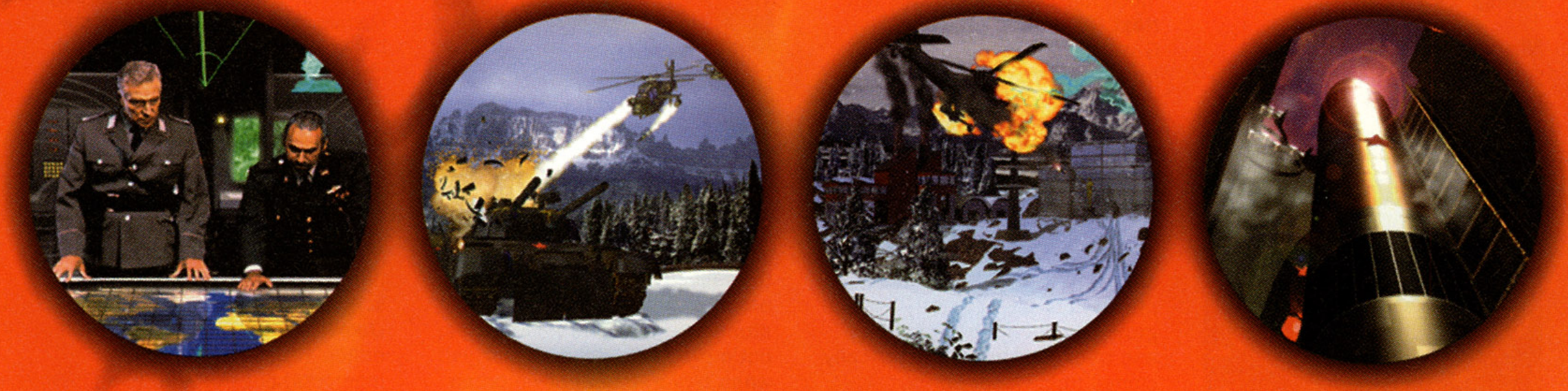

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The battles in *Lords of the Realm* are bloody and quick

toward defending your borders and conquering the land. The population must be fed and kept happy, and random events like Mad Cow disease and the Black Death cause dramatic and painful population crashes. And, unlike many games in which raising an army has no impact on a population, the appropriate number of peasants are drafted into the army, and morale accordingly plummets.

It's precisely this plausible, realistic economy that gives the game its strength. It's like *Civilization* — it genuinely feels like running a real empire with a real population, not generalized abstractions, and gives a certain sense of the dynamics of ruling. The graphics are also excellent, and having the colors on the map change with the seasons is a particularly nice touch.

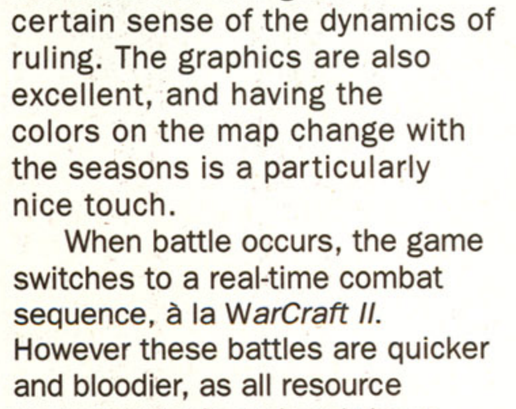
When battle occurs, the game switches to a real-time combat sequence, à la W*arCraft II*. However these battles are quicker and bloodier, as all resource management has already been done off-screen. The real-time battles are a blast, particularly when attacking castles, but the enemy AI is pretty inept at siege warfare. The lack of a custom castle-building option is also disappointing. However, apart from these subtle flaws, this is an excellent strategy game, and one of the year's best.

Rating: ★★★★

Master of Orion II

Publisher: MicroProse
Developer: MicroProse

MOO II — as it's known to its fans — is the long-awaited sequel to one of the best-loved space strategy games of all time. Players begin by choosing one of the many races, each with their own special abilities, disadvantages, and peccadilloes. Beginning on a planet (or planets), you research technology, send out ships to explore nearby systems, and soon find yourself at the heart of a vast web of starlanes, planets, and fleets of ominous-sounding aliens.



***MOO II* is a strategy game sequel in the galactic conquest genre**

Alternately, players can build one of the custom races, by spending points on special abilities and disadvantages, and this is definitely the way to go, as some abilities, like "creative" are absolute must-haves. Unfortunately, this custom race building also throws the game balance off a bit. Ships too can be customized, and during combat, the game switches to a grid with ships firing away each in turn. These battles are repetitive, but easy to automate. Another nice touch is that when a planet is conquered, the enemy aliens are not automatically converted into friendly citizens: it takes time to assimilate them, and the natives can become restless.

At 160+ pages, the manual is both thorough and readable, and in a day when some manuals are being dropped or shoveled onto the CDs as text files, this solidity is welcome and reassuring. *Master of Orion II* is a good, solid space strategy game. Some have complained the AI is too easy, but perhaps the biggest problem is that the game is a little too stagnant, and doesn't really break new ground in the now-crowded galactic conquest genre.

Rating: ★★★

Nitro Racers

Publisher: 3DO (Europe)
Developer: Torque

For anyone who remembers how much fun *Super Sprint* was (on **Next Generation**'s "Top 100 Games of All Time" in **NG21**, it ranked 59th), *Nitro Racers* is right up your alley. Currently available only in Europe, the game is a simple top-down racer with beautifully rendered tracks and cars. And simplicity is this game's watchword: the graphics are crisp and clean and control is snappy, but the game makes no pretense of trying to be groundbreaking. The gameplay and track designs are practically cloned from *Super Sprint*, although *Nitro Racers* is missing the power-ups and the car upgrades between races.

The only real gripe is that the game doesn't have a massive amount of longevity or depth, but it comes bundled with a nifty little track editor that enables players to build and trade their own custom tracks. Its editor can import bitmaps from any paint program, so players can use it to add bridges, tunnels, and obstacles like speed bumps, and away they go.

***Nitro Racers* doesn't pretend to be groundbreaking, but it has clean graphics, snappy control, and multiplayer options — now if it were only available here**

With its nearly flawless control, multiplayer options, and track editor, *Nitro Racers* would be one worth picking up — if 3DO releases it over here.

Rating: ★★★★

Scorched Planet

Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Developer: Criterion Studios

When midnight rolls around, some games will keep you at the computer monitor plugging away, heedless of sleep or nutrition, a slave to whatever is in the CD-ROM drive. If you're looking for that kind of obsessive, quality game, avoid *Scorched Planet*. Not that it's a complete waste of time, it just doesn't break any barriers or push the envelope.

Look at all the things to blow up. Too bad *Scorched Planet* isn't as exciting as the enemies in it

Scorched Planet is simply mediocre. Players fly an assault ship, blasting at aliens and trying to rescue humans. The graphics are nice, but not absolutely stunning. Play control is precise, but movement becomes sluggish when trying to bear down on an enemy unit. Although the missions vary, there isn't really anything out of the ordinary about rescuing humans from alien invasions and taking them through tunnels to warp them to safety. In fact, there are times when the game comes across a bit like a *3D Defender*, except without that classic's pace.

The multiplayer options let eight players join together, but even that's not an extraordinary event in today's market. Really, the only unusual aspect of the game is that vehicles can morph between a flying ship and a tank, each with its own capabilities and weapons. But that's hardly enough to maintain attention spans into the wee hours of the morning.

Rating: ★★

Wages of War

Publisher: 3DO
Developer: New World Computing

Wages of War is a turn-based, squad-level combat game. It's extremely similar to Sir-Tech's *Jagged Alliance* and *Deadly Games* (which, in turn, were patterned after *X-Com*), in that players hire mercenaries (up to eight at a time), equip them, and then send them into perilous missions. Each mercenary hired costs a certain amount of money, and must be equipped with a selection of weapons rented, not bought, each turn from catalogs.

***Wages of War* disappoints with its limited scenarios and gameplay**

Once in combat, the game switches to a turn-by-turn mode. However, unlike *X-COM* or *Deadly Games*, in which turns alternate between whole teams, here each character on both sides has a speed rating, and initiative passes back and forth.

Since it's a Win95-only title, the graphics are richer than the earlier DOS games, but they move correspondingly slower. However, *Wages of War*'s worst flaw is the very limited number of scenarios, and unlike *Deadly Games*, there is no mission editor. *Wages of War* has its moments, but overall it is an average title that adds little but a Windows 95 interface to the genre of turn-based, squad-level combat.

Rating: ★★

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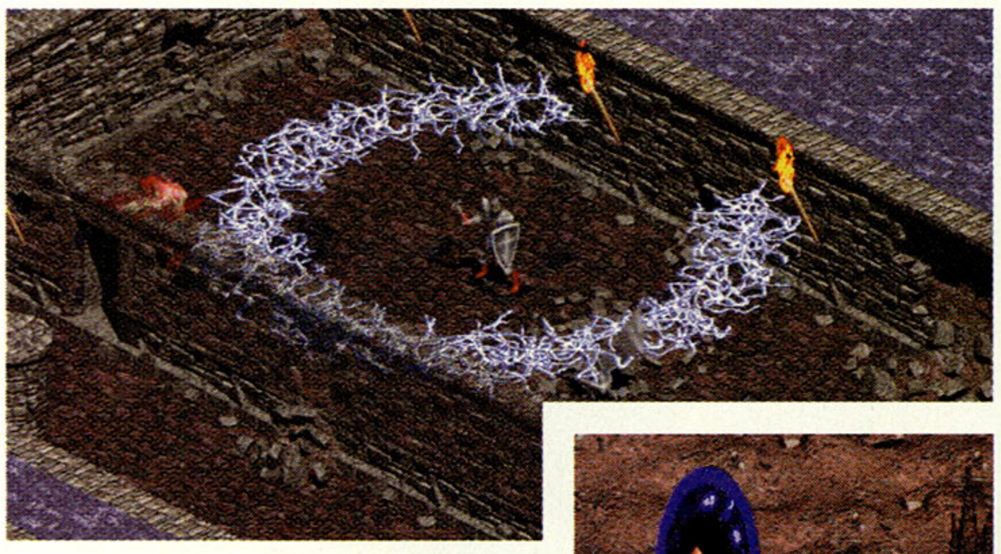
PC

CALIENTE

Diablo
Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard North

While Blizzard is pitching *Diablo* as an RPG, at its heart it's more of a high-tech update to the arcade classic *Gauntlet*, but with enough changes and improvements to make it a completely new experience, and one of the best titles so far this year. Instead of four characters, it has three — a fighter, a sorcerer, and a rogue. As you'd expect, each has individual strengths and limitations, and as players advance in levels they can easily augment any shortcomings. The interface uses the mouse almost exclusively; knowing the keyboard shortcuts will greatly improve the experience, but playing the game is simple and easy, which leaves players to concentrate on fighting.

The graphics are overwhelming. Even the rendered creatures are beautifully detailed, down to the corded muscles on a demon's back. The levels are created randomly each time the game is played, as are the quests that your character receives. That means unlimited replay value — *Diablo* will always be a new experience, and no two levels will ever be the same.



Connect to the Internet and play with strangers. Battle.net is Blizzard's free online gaming service and a location for this new addiction

***Diablo*'s three characters each have their individual strengths; players can fix their weaknesses. Play is simple, however, so the focus is more on straight fighting than on the game's RPG elements**

The game also boasts the launch of Battle.net, Blizzard's free online gaming service. With a 32-bit connection to the Internet, you can hook up and play people from all over the country. The game only supports four players in multiplayer, which may seem limited, but it makes sense when you consider how many times four players stumble over each other getting through a single door.

Diablo is a good addition to any PC gamer's collection. It's pretty, it's simple to play, and, overall, it's fun. Remember the point of the game is less on following a story and building up a character than on hacking and slashing through dungeons; the quests function simply to give players a reason to kill monsters. On that level, it succeeds brilliantly.

Rating: ★★★★

Mac

Prime Target
Publisher: MacSoft
Developer: MacSoft

Prime Target is a first-person shooter with a twist. Set amid the historic buildings of Washington, D.C. in 2004, the game keeps players' violent, testosterone-pumped animal brains busy mowing down bad guys in bad suits, while their more thoughtful and logical higher functions get to solve a politically charged murder mystery. The combination is a unique attempt to rework an old design, and for the most part it works.

Prime Target is based on Bungie's *Marathon II* engine

Prime Target is yet another title based on Bungie's *Marathon II* engine, so gameplay is exactly what you would expect. The graphics don't live up to the *Marathon* heritage, but its depth and multiplayer options shine. Levels are large and challenging, and MacSoft has introduced two welcome innovations: moveable furniture and the ability to duck. In fact, these two elements, integrated into gameplay, make this a better than average game; if you don't use the furniture for cover, you're history.

With the recent release of *ZPC* and the forthcoming releases of *Damage Inc.*, *Unreal*, and *Mac Quake*, it's hard to make a convincing argument for *Prime Target*, but ultimately, if you like first-person shooters or network games, you'll enjoy it until something better comes along.

Rating: ★★★

ZPC
Publisher: GT Interactive
Developer: Zombie

For players who have already mastered the halls of *Marathon Infinity* and are looking for some more Bungie-inspired mayhem, the quest has ended with *ZPC*, the latest from *Zombie* and GT Interactive. In *ZPC* (the acronym stands for *Zero Population Count*), players get to be Arman, a fourth-generation Psionic War Messiah, who's out to crush the evil occult group known as the Black Brethren and regain his Psionic Crown.

ZPC is one of a handful of first-person shooters based on Bungie's *Marathon II* engine. Gameplay sticks to the tried-and-true tactics of the legion of *Doom* clones: gather ammo, run down corridors, and frag your enemies.

While the level and puzzle design are entirely satisfying, *ZPC* would be just another pretender to the throne if it weren't for the tremendous atmosphere provided by artist Aidan Hughes and musicians Roland and Paul Barker (from industrial bands Ministry and Revolting Cocks).

***ZPC* benefits from the *Marathon II* engine, the music of Ministry and Revolting Cocks, and the art of Adrian Hughes**

Best known for "Rocky," an animated ident for MTV, and his album covers for KMFDM, Hughes's predominantly black and red palette and structuralist approach make *ZPC* one of the most unique-looking games around. Although perhaps a bit cartoonish, the stylish graphics are never the less uniquely engaging, adding a great deal to the experience. *ZPC*'s combination of action-packed gameplay and comic book atmosphere guarantee a good time for any corridor shooter fans out there.

Rating: ★★★★

FORMULA 1

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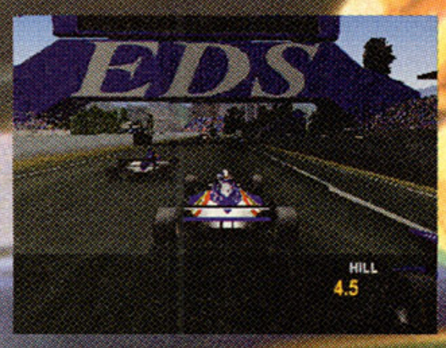

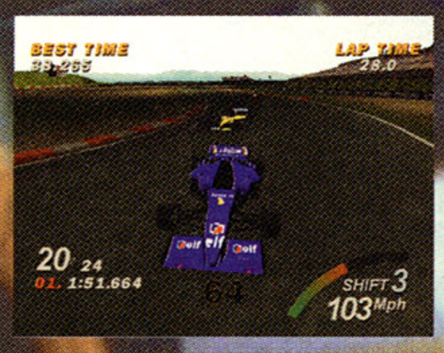

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Mac

SMASHING

Titanic

Publisher: GTE Interactive
Developer: Cyberflix

One of the brightest lights in what are surely very dark days for the adventure game genre is Cyberflix. With *Titanic*, the company has again taken the text-free graphic adventure to a new high point, both technically and creatively. Unlike *Myst*-clones or FMV boondoggles, the game runs in real 3D (although movement is restricted to a grid), and supports inventory-based puzzles and heavy character interaction.

The game takes place aboard the Titanic; the player takes the role of a British agent who must retrieve a stolen book from a German agent before he can exchange it for British naval plans. If things go right, players can change history for the better. Of course, if they screw up, or only partially succeed, the future will be very, very different — and all bad. Players are given as much time as they need to explore and solve the initial puzzles in the game, but once the ship has its fateful close encounter with an iceberg, only two hours remain, played in real time, to solve the endgame before the ship sinks.

The tile in the turkish bath is an exact duplicate of that on the Titanic — CyberFlix used a real tile of the same pattern as a model

These aren't prerendered scenes, but the in-game, scrolling graphics

Overall, the game features good control, logical, well-done puzzles, and astounding realism — Cyberflix employed a historical researcher full time especially for the project. Just how realistic is it? Well, for example, early in the game a radio is playing; Cyberflix actually got the BBC playlist to make sure that the songs playing on the radio are the exactly the same songs that were playing on the radio the day the Titanic sailed from London. Everything, from the tile pattern on the floors to the maker's mark (and pattern) on the chinaware, has been painstakingly re-created so it's exactly as it was on the Titanic. Amazing — and what raised the game from a four- to a five-star ranking.

This is easily one of the best adventure titles of the year, for Mac or PC.

Rating: ★★★★★

Arcade

Alpine Racer 2

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

As the sequel to the brilliant and original *Alpine Racer*, a title that seemingly appeared from nowhere to stun the arcade industry, *Alpine Racer 2* is a good game with some disappointments. What makes it different from other skiing games are its various choices of players, brand new courses (new high-speed and technical courses have been added), and two-player competitive skiing. With simply huge courses — one of which fills the screen with a frighteningly giant wall — and cool background elements, *Alpine Racer* is more beautiful than its predecessor.

***Alpine Racer 2* has huge courses with beautiful backgrounds, and you can link to play against a pal. However, it isn't that much improved over the first**

But the skiing itself is not noticeably different (neither more difficult nor more engaging), and the AI is essentially the same — opponent skiers appear on the course but rarely affect the gameplay or the player's outcome. Still, choosing from three players adds some depth in the style, speed, and strategy of the gameplay and is unique for this kind of game.

The only other added feature is the cabinet's linkability, a smart move that makes the game more attractive and instantly more fun. Although the two-player mode is a welcome addition, in the final analysis there aren't enough other improvements to carry *Alpine Racer 2* now that the novelty of the original has worn off.

Rating: ★★★

Dead or Alive

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo

Tecmo has pulled off a surprisingly fine effort with *Dead or Alive*, a game with lots of polygons and an extremely familiar style. A fighting game that mimics *Virtua Fighter 2* in its look and feel to a frightening degree (which is not a big shock when you understand it's built on licensed Model 2 technology) *Dead or Alive* boasts smooth control, crisp polygonal graphics, and an attitude that may enable this game to stand on its own despite its familiar origins.

With its three-button controls, *Dead or Alive* follows the legacy of *Virtua Fighter 2* (although kick and punch buttons are reversed — go figure), with several similar characters, various familiar environments, and similar sound effects and soundtracks. But it's the variety of characters, unusual moves, and danger zone-based arenas that separate this game from its AM2 ancestor. The version we played featured very tough AI, which forces players to learn deeper moves and more complex strategy and adds depth to the gameplay.

***Dead or Alive* has a variety of characters, is built on licensed Model 2 technology, and features very tough AI. Overall, it's very fun fighting game**

The danger zones are somewhat unique as well. Instead of the standard Ring Out, the perimeter of each arena is a metal, cage-like platform with hot coals underneath. Characters knocked over onto these mesh planks lose a tremendous amount of health — a good reason to stay close to the arena's center.

Dead or Alive has improved drastically since the time we played it at E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo) last May. Counters, blocks, throws, submission holds, and nicely set up combinations do justice to the fighting system, and the overall feel and look has been fleshed out beautifully. A great effort by a company not known for 3D fighting games.

Rating: ★★★★

Sega Ski Super G

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega

Though it has possibly one of the goofiest titles for a game (doesn't the alliteration and assonance sound goofy?), the name doesn't detract from the excellent skiing gameplay found in *Sega Ski Super G*.

As with other physically demanding arcade games (like the jet skiing sims that have cropped up lately or the pedaling

Despite the silly title, *Sega Ski Super G* is a challenging skiing game. Watch out Namco

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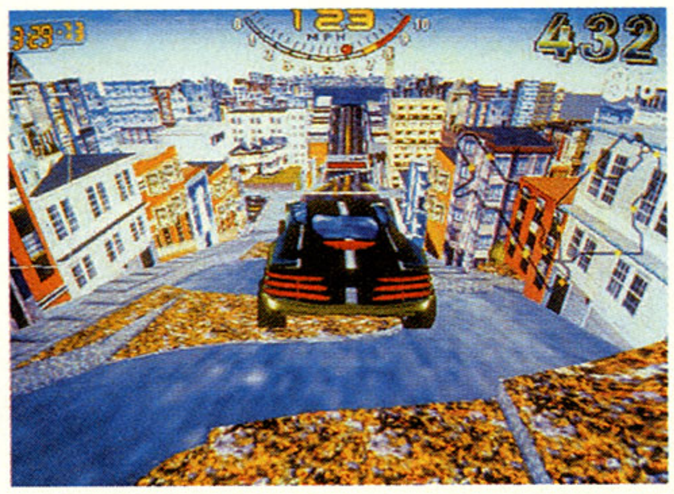
NEWS STRATEGIES REVIEWS

NEXT GENERATION

Arcade

TOTAL RUSH

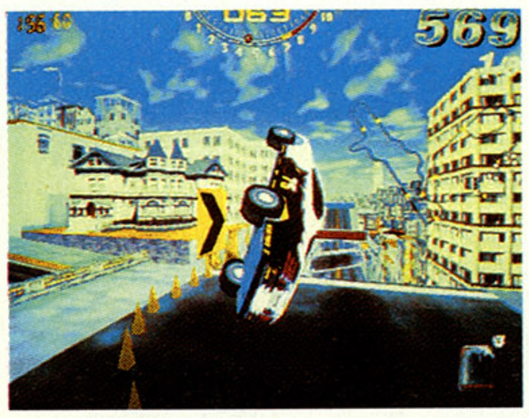


You can speed, jump, fly as if you were in an episode of "Streets of San Francisco"

San Francisco Rush

Publisher: Atari Games
Developer: Atari Games

Atari Games's *San Francisco Rush* shows what happens when a developer puts all the pieces together and makes a game work. Crazy high jumps (reminiscent of Steve McQueen's *Bullit*) in localized courses where several shortcuts give players the advantage — and, if you're in a better arcade, the possibility of eight players — set this game up as a smart, fresh alternative to Namco's and Sega's usual driving fare.



Spin around the city where bridges, Victorian buildings, and bodies of water provide the game's backdrop

Using 3Dfx's specialized dual-chip set as the heart of its engine, *SF Rush* conjures brilliantly clear colors and shading, clean polygonal backgrounds and cars, and a solid sense of high speed. Vehicle handling is slightly reminiscent of Atari's infamous *Hard Drivin'*, with its force-feedback steering wheel, and varies moderately with each of the four different suped-up street cars.

Other little effects add to the overall feeling that make *SF Rush* great. Speakers embedded into the arcade seat (at ear level) provide realistic sound effects that bring the experience as close as it can get, and a clutch offers gamers the option of feathering or redlining, adding further to the excellent feel of control.

But what's coolest about this game are the shortcuts: into sewers, off broken-down freeways, onto skyscraper rooftops, and other unexpected places. Camouflaged in the urban settings of San Francisco, these shortcuts can put players far ahead of opponents, or if they blow it and crash, a shortcut can set them back to the end of the pack. Either way, it adds a thrill of discovery not usually found in driving games and makes the risk well worth it.

Rating: ★★★★

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

TEEN AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

What you get to do: Shoot with gun, shoot with D-pad, shoot with D-pad and partner, shoot with gun and partner,

©1997 SegaSoft Inc. All rights reserved. SegaSoft and the SegaSoft logo are trademarks of SegaSoft Inc. Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Sega Saturn is a trademark of Sega. Scud: The Disposable Assassin, the character

of Namco's *Prop Cycle*), *Super G* takes some adjustment, particularly because its slanted foot pedals force the player to lean forward. Once you get the hang of it, however, the simulation provides excellent, fast skiing. Sega took lessons from Namco's successful *Alpine Racer* and improved on its sense of speed, obstacle placement, pacing, and replay value. Once players finish near the front of the pack, they're able to move onto the next race without having to drop in four more quarters.

As a nice touch, opponent skiers are more of a nuisance. They get in the way, knock you off the path, and actually compete far more than they do in other skiing games. But most important, the skiing is fast, the courses feature varying kinds of snow (if you go off course, thick powder sprays), and the runs are always challenging.

The three kinds of courses offered (Technical, Standard, and Speed) provide a fast, competitive skiing experience that's totally engaging and makes this an excellent challenge to Namco's *Alpine Racer 2*.

Rating: ★★★★

Sega Touring Car

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Sega Annex

As the first game from Sega Annex, a development team that split from AM3, *Sega Touring Car* carries on the tradition of Sega's greatest racing games — great polygon graphics, strong opponent AI, a sense of speed... you know the story. However, where this title truly excels is also where, in its way, it fails: *Sega Touring Car* is the most painstakingly realistic driving game yet.

After you play the game a few times, the developers' intent becomes obvious: re-create the sport of touring car racing in every detail. Turns must be taken with extreme precision and planning, power slides can't be fudged, and every maneuver counts — players who want to graduate to the next course have to find ways to shave off literally 100ths of a second. This is serious, unforgiving, real racing, not the arcade thrill so abundantly accessible in *Daytona USA*.

***Sega Touring Car*'s greatest strength is also its weakness: this game is super-realistic**

This may be why this game is highly regarded by gaming onlookers, but not often played, as the professional challenge of *Sega Touring Car* is simply too daunting for many people. One could even argue this isn't meant to be a game as such, but rather a racing simulation requiring practice, patience, and a real love for the sport.

Most players will appreciate the wonderful car physics (with four fully licensed cars from the real-world tour) that combine beautifully with the force feedback steering wheel and the untouchable selection of rave numbers in the soundtrack. For many however, this is a highly acquired taste.

Rating: ★★★

SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

3DO

Genesis

Virtual Boy

Neo-Geo

Super NES

shoot with D-pad and gun, shoot with gun in each hand. What you don't get to do: Recite poetry, pick daisies, hug lovable stuffed animals.

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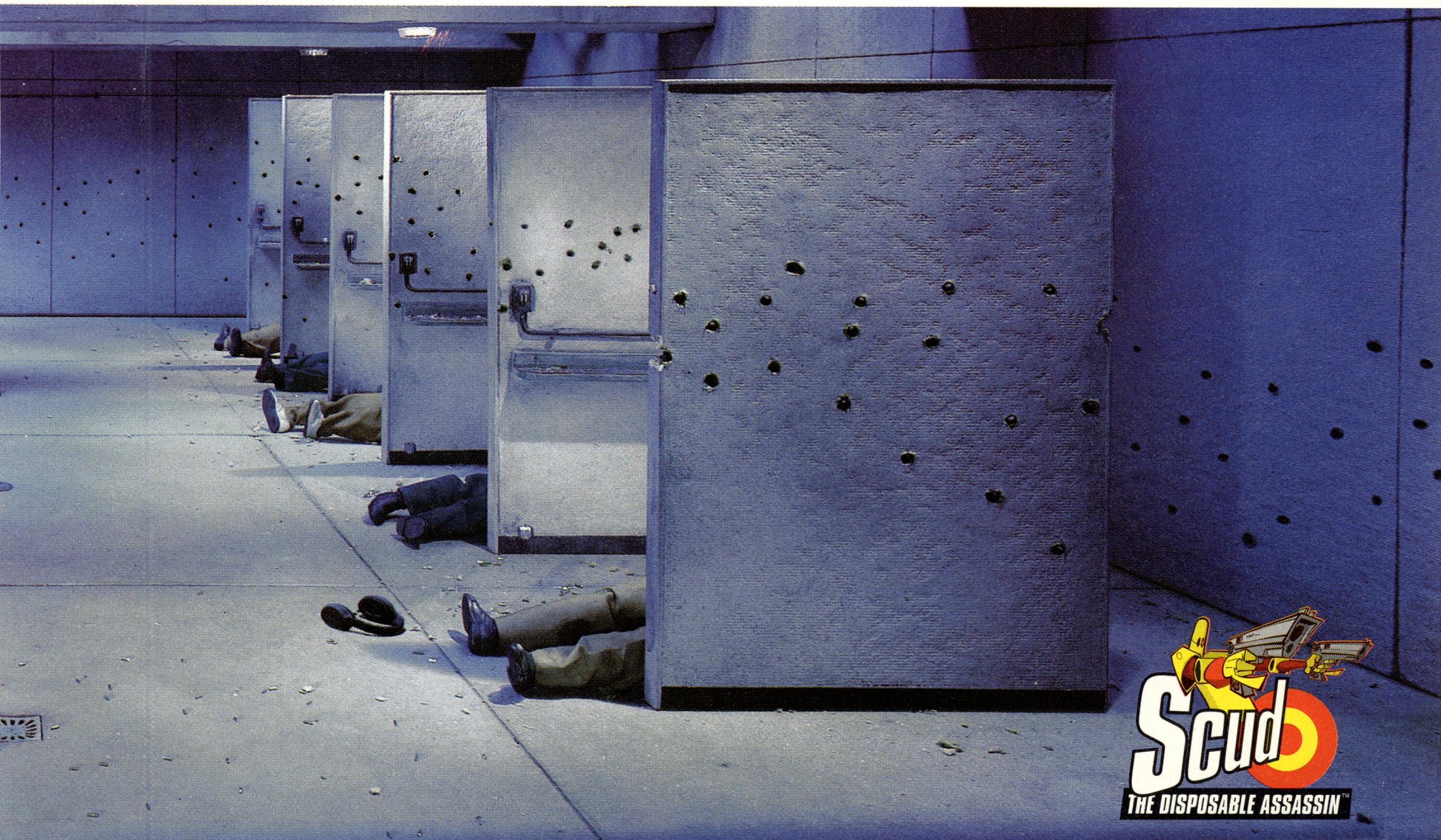

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Next Generation gamers guide

More games than you can shake a joystick at

The following is a round-up of all the final review scores given to next-generation console games. Titles with the suffix (Japan) are not available in the U.S. Have fun.

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Nintendo 64		
Cruis'n USA	Nintendo	★
Killer Instinct Gold	Nintendo	★★★
Mortal Kombat Trilogy	Williams	★★★
Pilotwings	Nintendo	★★★★
Shadows of the Empire	Nintendo	★★★
Shoji Chess	Nintendo	★★
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim	★★★
Waverace 64	Nintendo	★★★★★
PlayStation		
Adidas Power Soccer	Psygnosis	★★★
Agile Warrior	Virgin	★★
Air Combat	Namco	★★★
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★
Allied General	SSI	★★★★
Alone in the Dark 2	Kokopeli	★★
Aquanaut's Holiday	Sony	★★
Arcade's Greatest HIts	Midway	★★★★
Arc the Lad	Sony	★★
Area 51	Midway	★★
Assault Rigs	Sony	★★
A-Train	Maxis	★★★
Bases Loaded	Jaleco	★
Battle Arena Toshinden	PlayMates	★★★
Battle Arena Tohshinden 2	Sony	★★★
Beyond the Beyond	Sony	★★
Black Dawn	Virgin	★★★★
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★★
Bogey Dead 6	Sony	★★★
Bottom of the Ninth	Konami	★★★★
Boxer's Road	New Corp (Japan)	★★★
Braindead-13	ReadySoft	★★
Bubble Bobble	Acclaim	★★★
Burning Road	Playmates	★★★
Bust-A-Move 2	Acclaim	★★★★
Carnage Heart	Sony CE	★★★★
Casper	Interplay	★★★
Chessmaster 3D	Mindscape	★★★★
Codename Tenka	Psygnosis	★★★
College Slam	Acclaim	★★
Cool Boarders	Sony	★★★
Cosmic Race	Neorex (Japan)	★
Crash Bandicoot	Sony	★★★
Crime Crackers	Sony (Japan)	★
Criticom	Vic Tokai	★
Cyberia	Interplay	★★
CyberSled	Namco	★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★
Cyber War	Coco Nuts	★
D	Acclaim	★★★
Dark Stalkers	Capcom	★★★
Deception	Tecmo	★★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★
Descent	Interplay	★★★★
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★
Discworld	Psygnosis	★★★
Die Hard Trilogy	Fox	★★★★
Disruptor	Universal	★★★★
The Divide: Enemies Within	Viacom New Media	★★
Doom	Williams	★★★★★
Dragon Ball Z	Bandai (Japan)	★★
DragonHeart: Fire & Steel	Acclaim	★
ESPN Extreme Games	Sony	★★★
Fade to Black	Electronic Arts	★★★★
FIFA Soccer	EA Sports	★★★★
Final Doom	Williams	★★★
The Final Round	Konami	★★
Floating Runner	THQ	★★
Formula 1	Psygnosis	★★★★★
Geom Cube	American Technos	★★
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Goal Storm	Konami	★★★★
Gridrunner	Virgin	★★★
Gunner's Heaven	Media Vision	★★★★
Gunship	Microprose	★★
Hardball 5	Accolade	★★
Hi Octane	EA	★★
The Hive	Trimark	★★
Horned Owl	Sony	★★★
Impact Racing	Acclaim	★★★
International Track & Field	Konami	★★★★
In the Hunt	THQ	★
In the Zone	Konami	★★★
Iron & Blood	Acclaim	★★
Jet Moto	Sony	★★★★
Johnny Bazookatone	US Gold	★★
Jumping Flash!	Sony	★★★★
Jumping Flash 2	Sony	★★★★
Jupiter Strike	Acclaim	★
Kileak the Blood 2	Sony	★
Kileak:The DNA Imperative	Sony	★★
Killing Zone	Acclaim	★
King's Field (Japan)	From Software	★★
King's Field 2	Asciiware	★★★★
King of Fighters '95	Sony	★★
Krazy Ivan	Psygnosis	★★★
Loaded	Interplay	★★★
Magic Carpet	EA	★★★
Madden '97	EA	★★★★
Mobile Suit Gundam	Bandai (Japan)	★★
Mortal Kombat 3	Williams	★★
Motor Toon Grand Prix	Sony (Japan)	★★
Myst	Psygnosis	★★
Namco Museum, Vol. 1	Namco	★★★★
Namco's Museum, Vol. 2	Namco	★★
Namco's Museum, Vol.3	Namco	★★
Nanotek Warrior	Virgin Games	★★★★
NASCAR Racing	Sierra	★★★
NBA Jam TE	Acclaim	★★★★
NBA Shoot Out	Sony	★★★
NBA In the Zone	Konami	★★
NCAA Gamebreaker	Sony	★★★★
Need for Speed	EA	★★★★
NFL Full Contact	Konami	★★
NFL GameDay '97	Sony	★★★★★
NHL Face Off	Sony	★★★★
NHL Powerplay '96	Virgin	★★★★
Novastorm	Psygnosis	★
Off-World Interceptor Extr.	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Olympic Soccer	US Gold	★★★
Olympic Summer Games	US Gold	★★★
Open Ice Challenge	Midway	★★
Panzer General	SSI	★★★★
Peak Performance	Atlus	★★★
Perfect Weapon	ASC	★★
Persona Revelations	Atlas	★★★
PGA Tour Invitational '96	EA	★★★
Philosoma	Sony	★★
PO'ed	Accolade	★★★
Power Baseball	Konami (Japan)	★
Power Serve 3D Tennis	Ocean	★★
Primal Rage	Time-Warner	★★
Project Overkill	Konami	★★★
Psychic Detective	EA	★
Raiden Project	Sony	★★
Rayman	UbiSoft	★★★★
Reloaded	Interplay	★★
Resident Evil	Capcom	★★★★★
Resurrection: Rise 2	Time-Warner	★
Return Fire	Time Warner	★★★★
Revolution X	Acclaim	★
Ridge Racer	Namco	★★★
Ridge Racer Revolution	Namco	★★★
Road Rash	EA	★★
Robo Pit	THQ	★★★
Robotron X	Midway	★★★
Romance of 3 Kingdoms IV	Koei	★★★
Shellshock	US Gold	★★★
Shockwave Assault	EA Studios	★★
Silverload	Vic Tokai	★★★★
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★
Skeleton Warriors	Playmates	★★★
Slam 'n' Jam	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Soul Blade	Namco	★★★★
Soviet Strike	EA	★★★★
Space Griffon	Atlus	★
Space Hulk	Electronic Arts	★★★
Space Jam	Acclaim	★
Spider	BMG	★★
Spot Goes to	Virgin	★
Starblade Alpha	Namco	★
Starfighter	Acclaim	★★★
Star Gladiator	Capcom	★★★
StarWinder	Mindscape	★★★
Steel Harbinger	Mindscape	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha	Capcom	★★★
Street Fighter:The Movie	Capcom	★★
Street Racer	UBI Soft	★★★
Striker	Acclaim	★
Tecmo Super Bowl	Tecmo	★
Tecmo World Golf	Tecmo	★
Tekken	Namco	★★★★
Tekken 2	Namco	★★★★★
Tempest X	Interplay	★★★★
Ten Pin Alley	ASC Games	★★★★
Tetris Plus	Jaleco	★★★
Theme Park	EA	★★★
Thunderstrike 2	US Gold	★★★★
Time Commando	Activision	★★★
Tobal No. 1	Sony	★★★★
Tokyo Highway Battle	Jaleco	★★★
Top Gun: Fire at Will	Spectrum Holobyte	★★
Total Eclipse Turbo	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Triple Play '97	EA Sports	★★★★
Twisted Metal	Sony	★★★
Viewpoint	EA	★
Virtual Pool	Interplay	★★★
VR Soccer	Interplay	★★★
V-Tennis	Acclaim	★★
Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat	SSI	★★★
Warhawk	Sony	★★★★
WipeOut	Psygnosis	★★★★★
Williams Arcade Great. Hits	Williams	★★★★
Wing Commander III	EA	★★★
World Cup Golf	US Gold	★★★
Worms	Ocean	★★★★
WWF Wrestlemania	Acclaim	★★★
X-Com UFO Defense	Microprose	★★★★★
Zero Divide	Time Warner	★★
Zoop	Viacom	★★★
Saturn		
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★
Alone in the Dark	T•HQ	★★★
Astal	Sega	★★★
Baku Baku Animals	Sega	★★★★

THE SPIDER THAT'S ALSO AN EXTERMINATOR

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Bases Loaded '96:		
DoubleHeader	Jaleco	★
Dragon Force	Working Designs	★★★★
Battle Arena Toshinden Remix	Takara	★★★
Battle Monsters	Naxat Soft	★★
Blackfire	Sega	★★★
Bubble Bobble w/		
Rainbow Islands	Acclaim	★★★
Bug!	Sega	★★
Bug Too!	Sega	★★
Bust-a-Move 2: Arcade Ed.	Acclaim	★★★
Casper: The Movie	Interplay	★★★
Center Ring Boxing	JVC	★★
Clockwork Knight	Sega	★★
Clockwork Knight 2	Sega	★★★
College Slam	Acclaim	★★
Congo The Movie:		
The Lost City of Zinj	Sega	★★
Corpse Killer: Graveyard Ed.	Digital Pictures	★
Creature Shock: Special Ed.	Data East	★
Criticom	Vic Tokai	★
Cyberia	Interplay	★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★
D	Acclaim	★★★
Darius Gaiden	Acclaim	★★
Dark Legends	Data East	★★
Daytona USA	Sega	★★★★
Daedalus	Sega	★★★
Decathlete	Sega	★★★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★
Die Hard Arcade	Sega	★★★★
Double Switch	Digital Pictures	★★
Earthworm Jim 2	Playmates	★★★
FIFA '96	Electronic Arts	★★★★★
Fighters Megamix	Sega	★★★★★
Fighting Vipers	Sega	★★★★★
F1 Challenge	Virgin	★★★
F1 Live Information	Sega (Japan)	★★★
Frank Thomas		
Big Hurt Baseball	Acclaim	★★★
Galactic Attack	Acclaim	★★★
Galaxy Fight	Acclaim	★★
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Ghen War	Sega	★★★
Golden Axe: The Duel	Sega	★★
Gotha	Sega	★★★
Gran Chaser	Sega	★★★
Greatest 9Baseball	Sega (Japan)	★★★★
Guardian	Sega	★★★
Gun Griffon	Sega	★★★
Hang-On GP '95	Sega	★★★
Hi-Octane	EA	★★
High Velocity	Atlus	★★★
The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Impact Racing	Acclaim	★★
In the Hunt	T•HQ	★
Iron Storm	Working Designs	★★★★
Johnny Bazookatone	US Gold	★★
Krazy Ivan	Sega	★★
Last Gladiators	Kaze Co	★★★★
Legend of Oasis	Sega	★★★★
Loaded	Interplay	★★★
Magic Carpet	EA	★★★★
Mansion of Hidden Souls	Sega	★★★
Minnesota Fats: Pool Legend	Data East	★
Mortal Kombat II	Acclaim	★★★
Myst	SunSoft	★★
NBA Action '96	Sega	★★
NBA Jam TE	Acclaim	★★★
The Need For Speed	EA	★★★★
NFL Quarterback Club '96	Acclaim	★★
NFL Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	★★★
NFL '97	Sega	★
NHL All-Star Hockey	Sega	★★
NHL Powerplay '96	Virgin	★★★★★
Nights	Sega	★★★★★
Night Warriors:		
Dark Stalkers' Revenge	Capcom	★★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Olympic Soccer	U.S. Gold	★★★
Panzer Dragoon	Sega	★★★★
Panzer Dragoon II Zwei	Sega	★★★★

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Pebble Beach Golf Links	Sega	★★★
Primal Rage	TWI	★★
Quarterback Attack	Digital Pictures	★★★
Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	★★★
Rayman	Ubi Soft	★★★
Revolution X	Acclaim	★
Riglord Saga	Sega	★★★
Rise 2: Resurrection	Acclaim	★
Road Rash	EA	★★
Robo-Pit	Kokopelli	★★★
Robotica	Acclaim	★
Romance of the Three		
Kingdoms IV: Wall of Fire	Koei	★★★
Saturn Bomberman	Hudson	★★★★
Sega Rally Championship	Sega	★★★★★
Shanghai: Triple Threat	Activision	★★★
Shellshock	US Gold	★★★
Shining Wisdom	Working Designs	★★★
Shin Shinobi Den	Sega	★★★
Shockwave Assault	EA	★★
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★
Skeleton Warriors	Playmates	★★★
Slam 'N' Jam 96	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Solar Eclipse	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Space Hulk: Vengeance of		
the Blood Angels	EA	★★★
Star Fighter	Acclaim	★★
SteamGear Mash	Takara	★★
Street Fighter: The Movie	Acclaim	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha	Capcom	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha II	Capcom	★★★★
Striker	Acclaim	★
Tama	Tengen	★★
Tetris Plus	Jaleco	★★★
Theme Park	EA	★★★
3D Baseball	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Three Dirty Dwarves	Sega	★★★
True Pinball	Ocean	★★★
Thunderstrike 2	US Gold	★★★★
Torico (Gekkamugentan-		
Torico in Japan)	Sega	★★★★
Toshinden URA	Sega	★
Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3	Williams	★★★
Valora Valley Golf	Vic Tokai	★★
Virtua Copy 2	Sega	★★★★
Virtual Hydlide	Atlus	★★
Virtual Volleyball	Imagineer	★
Virtua Cop	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★
Virtua Fighter Kids	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter Remix	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter 2	Sega	★★★★★
Virtua Racing	Time Warner	★★★
Virtual Open Tennis	Acclaim	★★★
Wicked 18	Vic Tokai	★★★
Wing Arms	Sega	★★★
Winning Post	Koei	★★
Wipeout	Sega	★★★★
World Cup Golf: Pro Edition	US Gold	★★★
World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★
World Series Baseball II	Sega	★★★★★
Worldwide Soccer	Sega	★★★
Worldwide Soccer 2	Sega	★★★★★
Worms	Ocean	★★★
WWF Wrestlemania:		
The Arcade Game	Acclaim	★★★
X-Men: Children		
of the Atom	Capcom	★★★

For your information

Here's what the ratings signify:

★★★★★ Revolutionary
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Average
★ Bad

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KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

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Don't repress those feelings! Express them. Communicate with your gaming friends. Write us at **Next Generation** Letters, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. Fax us: (415) 468-4686. E-mail us: ngonline@imagine-inc.com. Even if we don't answer you, we'll at least read your prose

Pushing the envelope

I believe it would be in your best interest, for the sake of coherence, to explain why the Nintendo 64 game *PilotWings 64* got a four-star rating in **NG25** (page 68) instead of the five-star rating originally given to this game.

J. Karathanos
jkarat@po-box.mcgill.ca

Yes, a lot of the game scores listed in the "Every PlayStation, Saturn, and Nintendo 64 game reviewed" feature in **NG25** differed from the scores printed in previous issues. This is because in light of subsequent releases and the inevitable march of time, some games seem better or — more likely — worse than when they at first appeared. For the record, the ratings featured in **NG25** should be considered **Next Generation**'s official score.

I'd like to comment on Vince DeNardo's defense of the altering of historical fact in Interplay's *Conquest of the New World* in

The conflict continues: should *Conquest* be fantasy or reality?

NG25. I most certainly would have to agree with the guy. History is overflowing with tragedy and injustice walking hand in hand with discovery and adventure. I myself play games, in part, to escape reality. I don't want to play games that duplicate life's horrors; I see plenty of that on the news.

The bottom line is that games should be fun, and that often entails a departure from reality in varying degrees. There are plenty of educational and reference titles out there for those of us who feel the need for that sort of thing. I am by no means saying forget the suffering of the past, but simply that it has its place; too much reality will invariably ruin almost any game. Now what fun would that be? "The game pauses as Lara goes behind a bush to..." Get my meaning?

Grimdrak@ix.netcom.com

Vince DeNardo acknowledges that *Conquest of the New World* is far from an accurate recreation of what really happened when the Europeans first arrived in North America, but he hopes people playing the game will become interested about the time period, and so go to the library or watch the Learning Channel. In this way, he argues, they will learn the truth about what really happened in this controversial part of America's history. I find this almost unreasonable.

If you are going to produce a game with the hopes of educating people, make sure it educates them. A game set in a certain time period doesn't necessarily prompt players to run out to their library.

Vendelron@aol.com

Next Generation agrees with this second point of view. If a game is to be based on "real" history and is marketed using the idea that the player can "step back in time" or "take on the role of..." then it should be as historically accurate as possible. If you want more sensational action or more easily digested politics, fine — but don't pretend that it's real.

Once again, the videogame industry is under attack by politicians. Politicians seem to forget that a lot of violence is committed with a gun, not your Sega Saturn or Sony PlayStation. Now I'm not necessarily campaigning for gun control, just saying that politicians are too chicken to take on big organizations like the NRA. Instead, they like to pick easy targets like the videogame industry to make a name for themselves.

If politicians are really concerned about the possibility that videogames could make people likely to commit a violent act, then the government should fund research in this area. Let's not prematurely condemn the videogame industry before we see some substantial proof.

Peter Cheung
pche6961@mchip00.med.nyu.edu

Read **Next Generation**'s exclusive interview with Senator Joseph Lieberman — one of the two "politicians" campaigning against violent content in videogames — on page 8. Next month, we'll offer an alternative point of view.

I have to disagree (to some extent) with what Mr. Comair of DigiPen says in **NG25** about using other peoples' programming libraries. While I agree that everyone should learn to code in assembly, using another person's graphic library isn't as unheard of as he makes it seem.

In fact, Blizzard's smash PC hit *WarCraft II* and Activision's *MechWarrior 2* both used the Smacker graphic library to aid in the design of their excellent products. And many companies are developing games using Microsoft's own Game SDK libraries for almost all Windows 95-based games. I see graphics and sound libraries as the programmer's friend (as long they are optimized very tightly), and just as the guitarist doesn't have to build his own guitar to make great music, I don't think a game developer has to write 100% of the code to produce the game they want.

Jeremy W. Deats
jeremy@neosoft.com

A fair point.

Macintosh users have a reputation for being fierce loyalists who are quick to jump at the throats of those who neglect to give credit to the OS and the machine's many qualities. Well here we go again.

In **NG17**, you gave an in-depth article on the history and future of joysticks, yet you made a very large error. On page 37 you stated: "A third control technology has not yet been utilized...a method of control which has elements of both digital and analog

corresponding

sticks...[which] uses an optical system." You further stated that this method was to be used in the new Microsoft SideWinder stick.

Well, to put things in their proper perspective, this type of system has been in use for years in the Gravis MouseStick and MouseStick II for the Macintosh. This is the only "analog" system available for the Macintosh as it is the only one which adapts to the Mac's style of interface — necessity is the mother of invention.

Perhaps MicroSoft adapted this idea for its SideWinder. But then it wouldn't be like Microsoft to go ahead and "emulate" Macintosh ingenuity.

Gary Lozinski
lozinski@sfu.ca

And it wouldn't be the first time there have been a rush of Macintosh supporters eager to point such "emulation" out. But seriously, thanks.

I can't understand why you haven't given more attention to Tom Kalinske and his resigning from Sega of America. You interviewed him two or three times, and your interviews were always interesting. Mr. Kalinske may be responsible for some bad moments in Sega's history (32X, Sega CD), but he's also responsible for giving Nintendo a punch in the mouth in the 16-bit era.

I would like to know the specifics as to why exactly he got the boot. You deliver the best videogame news in the industry. I'm sure it would make an interesting story.

Benjamin P. Hopper
sonic@uky.campus.mci.net

We completely agree, Benjamin, the Tom Kalinske story is a very interesting one. But typically, every time a company loses a leader of Tom Kalinske's stature, people on the outside (and ultimately, this includes **Next Generation**) never get the full story. Why? Because the company isn't going to talk about it (either the leader was great — in which case it's bad news that he or she's quit for greener pastures, or the leader got fired — in which case it's bad news because it means that the company has had poor leadership for a while), and the ex-leader isn't going to talk about it (as a professional courtesy).

Unfortunately, this cripples the kind of story you suggest from the start.

Your November 1996 issue features an article called "The Great Videogame Swindle?" It is an excerpt from the book *Electronic Nation* by Stephen L. Kent. I have looked high and low for this book, but have been unable to find it. Do you happen to have an address or phone number for the publisher where I might be able to order it directly?

Jeffrey A. Newcomb
jnewcomb@ix.netcom.com

To date, author Steven Kent is having trouble convincing publishers that a book on the history of videogames would have much of an audience. If you would like to get in touch with Mr. Kent, you can reach him at stevenkent@aol.com. His mailing address is:
10014 NE 140th St.
Bothell
Wash. 98011

I would like to correct some misinformation that has appeared in the pages of **Next Generation**. In **NG25**, there is a letter from Adrian Ashfield, in which he quite correctly notes that a BeBox is not an Amiga, and that the Amiga is not necessarily dead and buried. However, he is wrong when he says Amiga has been taken over by VIScorp. VIScorp did indeed try to buy the Amiga properties from Escom's bankruptcy trustees, but the deal fell through. Now other companies are bidding on those properties.

The "original Amiga engineers" VIScorp supposedly had on board consisted mainly of Carl Sassenrath, who has since resigned from VIScorp in a fit over their un-businesslike attitude. Meanwhile, the leading contender for Amiga ownership now appears to be Quikpak, who has been U.S. distributor for Amiga products for some time. Quikpak has a very high reputation among Amiga users.

Another company worth watching is Phase 5, who has announced an Amiga-compatible computer for 1997 with specifications that I can only call stunning. Its new machine is code-named "A\box" and has caused a tremendous amount of excitement among Amiga programmers. In some way, the hardware appears similar to a pumped-up Atari Jaguar, with

The BeBox (shown here) is not an Amiga machine, but we wish both a prosperous future

the bus doubled to 128 bits and the 68000 replaced by a pair of PowerPC processors! Please refer to their web site: <http://www.phase5.de/news/aboxe.html>

I was very happy to get all the wonderful information about Yaroze in the January issue, but also a little sad. If the Amiga had never fallen on hard times, the Yaroze would not be necessary. It is aimed at budding game coders, a group who previously relied on Amiga 500 and Amiga 1200 computers. In some ways, the Amiga 1200 was the last of the archetypal home computers. I hope that companies like Phase 5 can eventually pave the way for them to rise again. I feel the public needs something to fill the yawning gap between $200 game consoles and $2,000 Wintel behemoths, as home computers like the A1200 once did.

Tony Belding
tlbelding@htcomp.net

Thanks Tony. We wish the Amiga a very successful future.

When you have screenshots of web pages for next month's article on the "Let's Create" system for PlayStation (like in **NG25**), please make them look good. Netscape shows Japanese characters as garbage text. Download a copy of Internet Explorer and the Japanese language pack. Then the pages will show the actual Japanese characters. Of course it will still be unintelligible to most of us, at least it won't look stupid.

endquote@pacbell.net

Yes — this was our mistake. But we thank you for the tip.

Just wanted to thank you for the wonderful surprise enclosed with **NG25**. In addition to the Macintosh CD, you also included a music Disc by a group called The Sega Saturn (oh, the band names kids come up with today!) titled "Nights Into Dreams." When I popped it into our PlayStation CD player, I heard several mostly instrumental arrangements leading up to the most beautiful a cappella rendition of a song apparently called "In The Night."

After a dozen listenings, this impeccably recorded track sounds as good as the first hearing, with its lush harmonies tastefully arranged with extended-but-accessible chording. I hope you continue to include such thoughtful musical extras in the future.

Bill Wilson, Atlanta, GA
bill.wilson@index.com

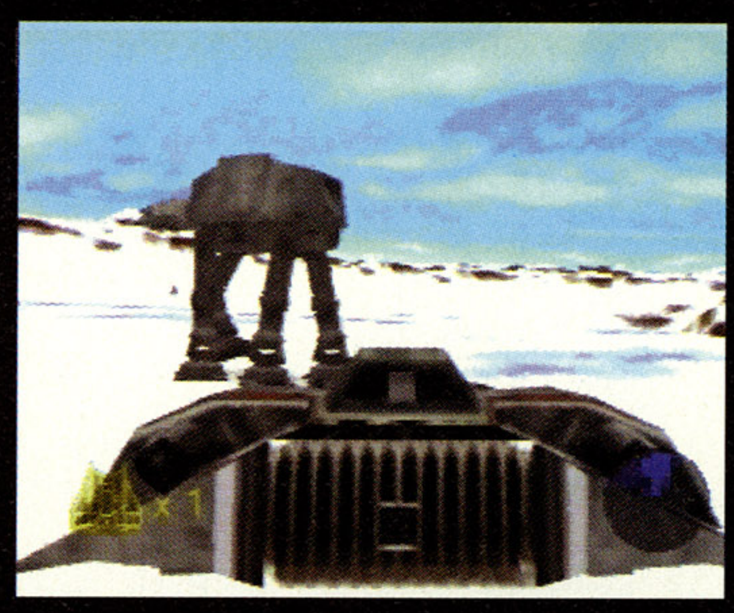
Sarcasm, ladies and gentlemen; it's alive and well and living in Atlanta. Seriously, we do plan to include more PlayStation and Saturn discs in future issues of **Next Generation** — so don't anyone start feeling left out.

Next Month

"Quality Over Quantity?"

"...poor"

Cruis'n USA
★ (NG26)



"...uninspired"

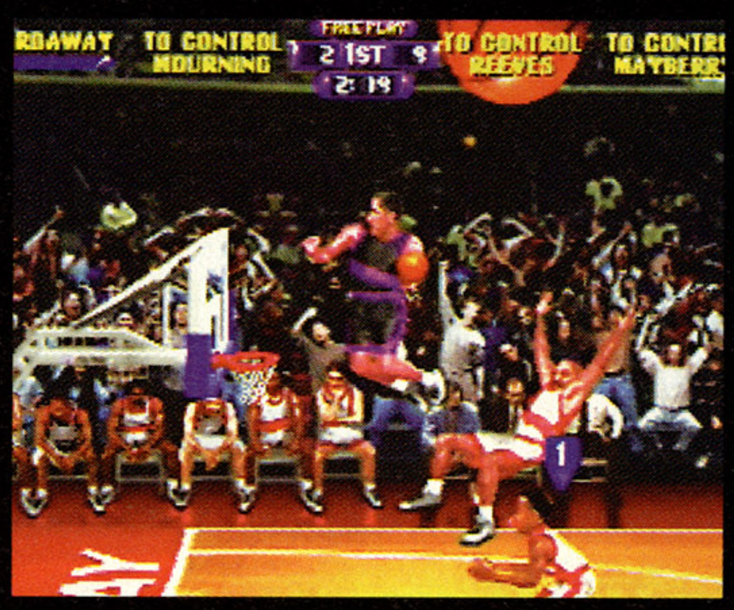
Shadows of the Empire
★★ (NG26)

"...too many holes"

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
★★★ (NG28)

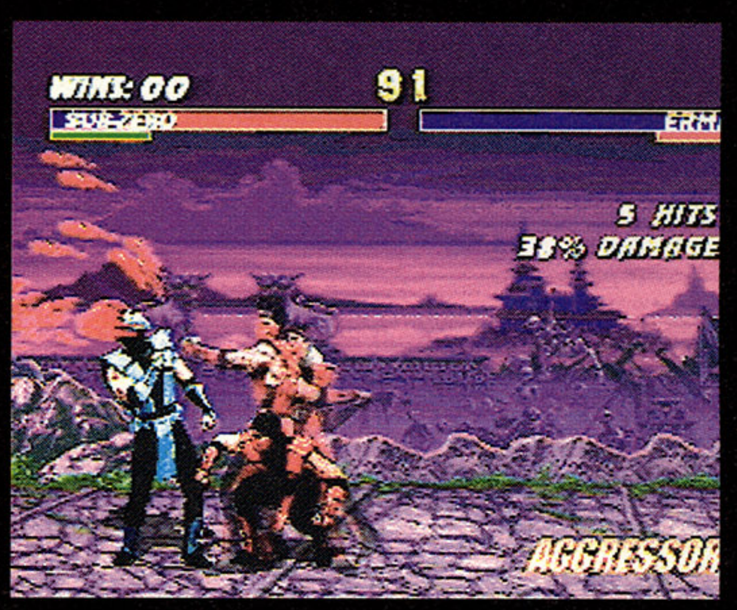
"...part of a dying breed"

Killer Instinct Gold
★★ (NG26)



"...boring"

NBA Hang Time
★★ (NG29)



"...old and tired"

Mortal Kombat Trilogy
★★★ (NG25)

We Don't Think So.

Next month Next Generation asks Nintendo the tough questions.

Next Generation #29
on sale April 15, 1997.

Smart readers have already subscribed. To find out how you too can save money and guarantee your copy, turn to the insert between pages 64 and 65.

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