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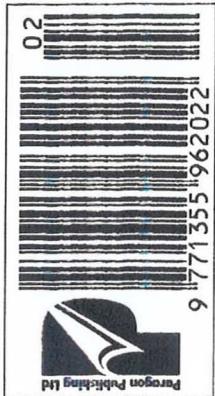
3DO

Magazine

An official 3DO publication

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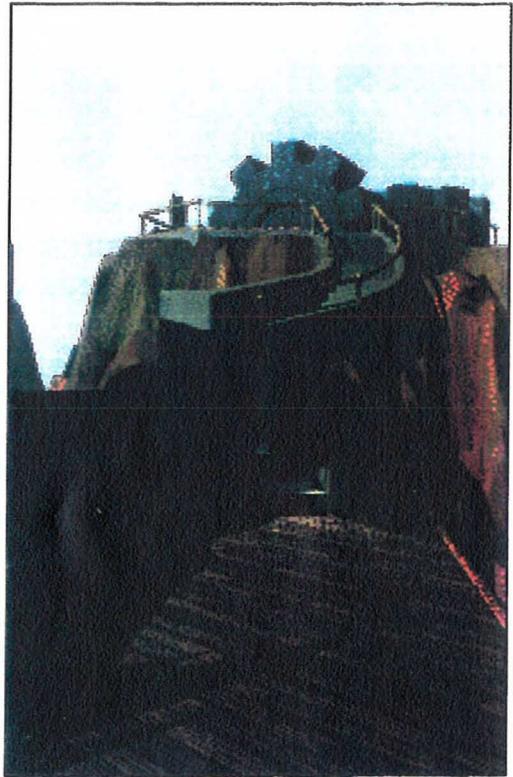
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It's Mystical
The best adventure of all time gets a face lift on the 3DO system

Reviewed Inside: Return Fire, Demolition Man, StarBlade, Operation JumpGate, Family Feud, Rebel Assault, Shanghai Triple Threat, Virtuoso, Iron Angel Of The Apocalypse and more.

Features include: Massive CES report; new GoldStar GPA 101M review; joystick round-up, plus interviews with EA's Chris Thompson and Silent Software's Baron Von Wolfsheild.

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NEW!



Return Fire has come from nowhere and looks set to go down as one of, if not *the*, best two-player game on the 3DO system. Dazzling 3-D technology, stunning pre-generated landscapes, four awesomely powerful attack-vehicles and a challenge bigger than any faced by Schwarzenegger make this a brilliant start to the year for the 3DO. Create your very own Lebanon in miniature - get Silent Software's exasperatingly addictive *Return Fire*. You wouldn't believe how much fun war could be.

Return Fire

Publisher: The 3DO Company © TBA **Developer:** Silent Software **Save Game:** SRAM Slots **Price:** £TBA **Available:** TBA

Like all the best games, *Return Fire* revolves around a beautifully simple premise – annihilate your opponent. Like all of the best games again, lurking beneath this simple surface are engagingly complex intricacies that beg to be explored and mastered. A potent concoction of *Syndicate* and *Cannon Fodder*, *Return Fire* brilliantly implements an isometric/top-down view of the action with miniaturised dogs of war as its players. 32-bit technology allows a revolutionary break from the static perspective and non-scrolling limitations of a fixed landscape, the 3DO providing a real-time generated backdrop with atmospheric zooms into the action, fast scrolling, detailed landscapes and realistic use of urban terrain. Static screenshots may not look much – but wait until you see the game's lightning moves, and impressive, true 3D virtual display.

Every game pits the green forces against the brown, irrespective of whether you're playing a one or a two-player game. Each side must send out a chosen vehicle (tank, APV, jeep or chopper) to journey through the enemy battlements to find the opponent's flag tower. The flag must then be returned (only the jeep can be used to actually recover it) to the Allied base to secure victory. Naturally though, it isn't that easy. Enemy battlements are huge, with Kafka-esque corridors of roads linking one encampment full of missile-firing turrets and gun-toting helicopters to another. The flag tower is often found right at the centre of enemy forces, accessible only after mad, deathly battle. Mines are everywhere you don't expect them to be, destroying your tank/whatever in one mighty explosion. Your opponent, moreover, may well have decided to abandon his search for your flag and just be gunning for you – chasing you down long, stretching roads in his mother of a helicopter.

Vehicle selection is the most important immediate concern at the beginning of each game, but this is fairly simple at first. It's best to use the helicopter, initially, to recon the area, discover where the enemy flag tower is so that you can determine the fastest, most efficient route to get there. Unfortunately, the helicopters aren't the most effective vehicles to use against enemy battlements so, once you've worked out your way-points, it's best to fly back to your base and replace your craft with a tank or APV and wipe out a path to the flag. The APV is

particularly effective at destroying airborne enemies, but both are excellent at punching a hole through the enemy's line, leaving the way fairly clear for your weak, poorly armed jeep to nip through to the flag and back.

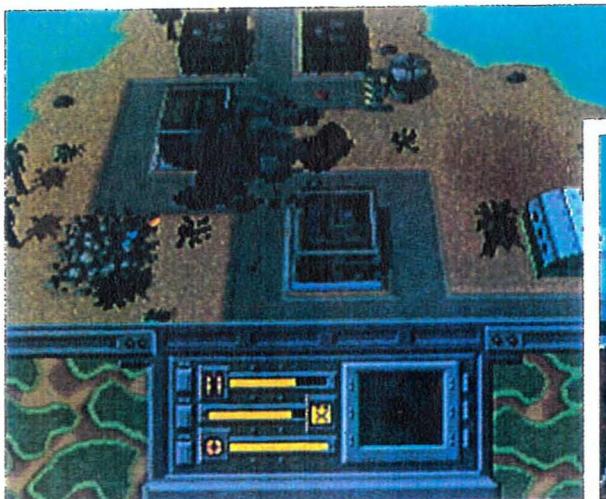
The first one-player mission lets you get used to the way the game works. There are no enemy battlements, no enemy craft – just the flag tower. Silent Software have ensured that the learning curve given to the player is such that you're never confused, but always up against a challenge. Just as you think you've mastered the game's intricacies, another 'trick' is learnt, momentarily giving you an advantage over your opponent – until he/she discovers something you don't know and the game starts to swing in the other direction. At first, just shooting down an enemy helicopter with your tank is incredibly difficult, chances are it'll destroy you pretty

The extraordinary zooming and scrolling of *Return Fire* is best demonstrated when your new vehicle rolls out of storage. The camera zooms in close as your tank rolls onto the tarmac, before smoothly pulling back to give a wide view of any enemies. This looks like no game ever seen on a console.

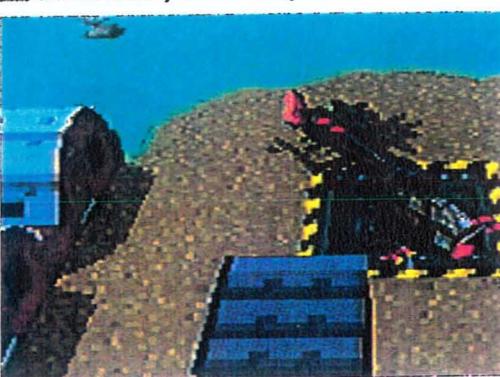
quickly. But when you've stopped flailing wildly, and master the separately controlled turret, it begins to get a little easier. Eventually, with just a little bit of luck, you'll be shooting the things down left, right and centre.

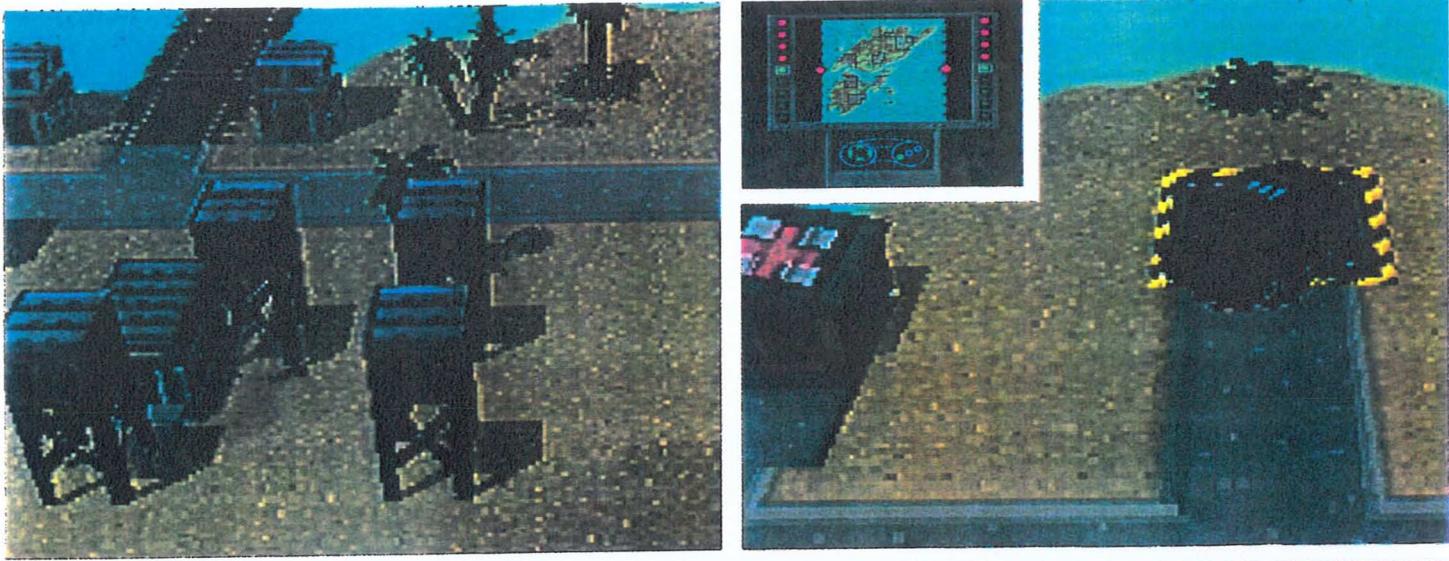
While the game's design is undoubtedly exceedingly good it's the graphics that go a long way to explain *Return Fire*'s success. The 3D is perfect, the miniature craft and building are architectural marvels. The authenticity of the spiralling landscape means that the terrain is usable – you can actually shelter behind buildings and creep up on opposing forces. Some of the buildings are also 'interactive' – the player can re-fuel at oil installations, or pick up ammo at enemy bases. Moreover, everything is up for being destroyed – most cities look like Beirut at the worst of its troubles, rubble and burning buildings lying prostrate beneath your feet. It's great fun levelling an enemy city in this way, especially in two-

player mode, your devastating effect mirrored on your opponents crumpled face as you destroy his buildings, run over his (populated) tents and waste his forces. There can be no doubt that two player games are a key to a platformer's success and the 3DO is fast gaining a valuable collection of them. As well as *SSF2X*, *John Madden*, *FIFA Soccer* and *Off The Road Interceptor*, thanks to Silent Software, the 3DO company can now include another one. And if *Return Fire* doesn't sell a hundred thousand pieces of hardware, the world will have proved itself!

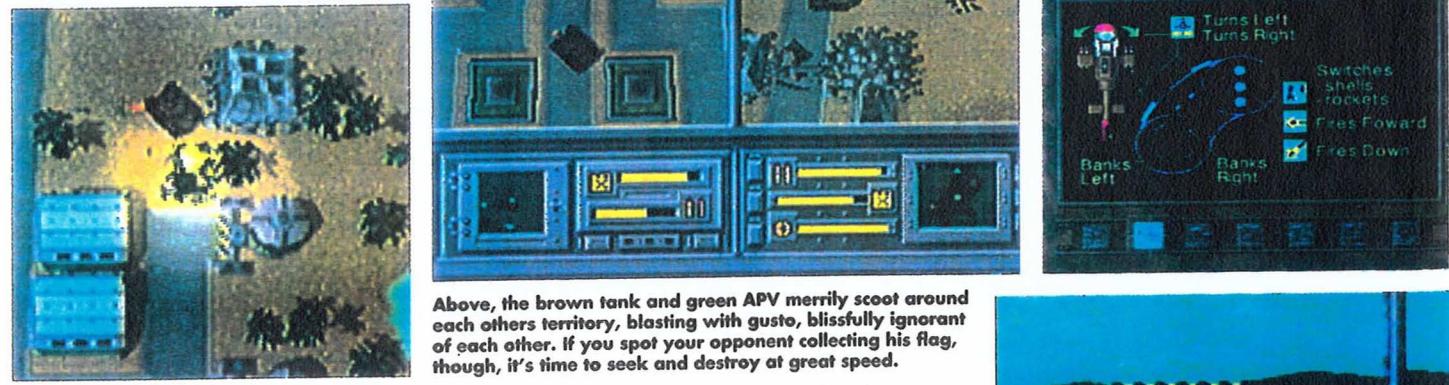


Left, a plane's been downed above your APV. Below, a chopper is ready to launch. It's the most difficult craft to control, but the fastest and good for checking out where trouble is likely to occur early on.





Destroying helicopters and jets is enjoyably satisfying (above). Instead of just disintegrating, their charred remains fall dramatically to the ground (or sea). Dead as can be.



Above, the brown tank and green APV merrily scoot around each other's territory, blasting with gusto, blissfully ignorant of each other. If you spot your opponent collecting his flag, though, it's time to seek and destroy at great speed.

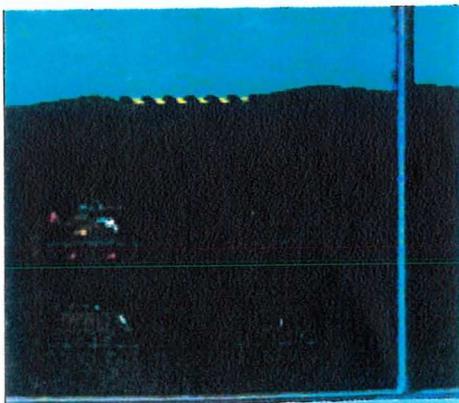
an unfair place to be.

It's the graphic details within *Return Fire* that make the game such a joy. You'll get a real kick when you destroy your first building and watch its tiny inhabitants running for cover. With your tank you can then run them over and hear the sickest of squishy noises. And don't think this is mindless violence. Fail to run them over and they'll start lobbing grenades at you or taking pot shots from unreachable corners. A gorgeous touch is being able turn the jeep into an amphibious craft – it's vital, in fact, when you need to get to a remote island but the bridge, connecting it to the mainland, has been destroyed by the enemy.

Return Fire may seem like Sensible Software's much vaunted *Cannon Fodder*, and it is – but it's got so much

more to it that you cannot fail to be blown away. Imagine *Cannon Fodder* with an instantly addictive, all-action, simultaneous two-player mode, state-of-the-art graphics, a true 3-D terrain, four types of perfectly modelled vehicles of destruction and a game engine requiring sophisticated strategy and planning. Only then can you possibly begin to appreciate just what an advance this game is, and what a wise investment you made when you bought the most advanced console in the world, the 3DO – the only platform that could possibly have delivered such an extraordinary, and completely essential, title. Make sure that you reserve your very own copy today. □ dw

3DO Magazine rating: ★★★★



Your selection of hardcore military hardware sits snugly beneath ground, each offering unique advantages to be weighed up before selection.