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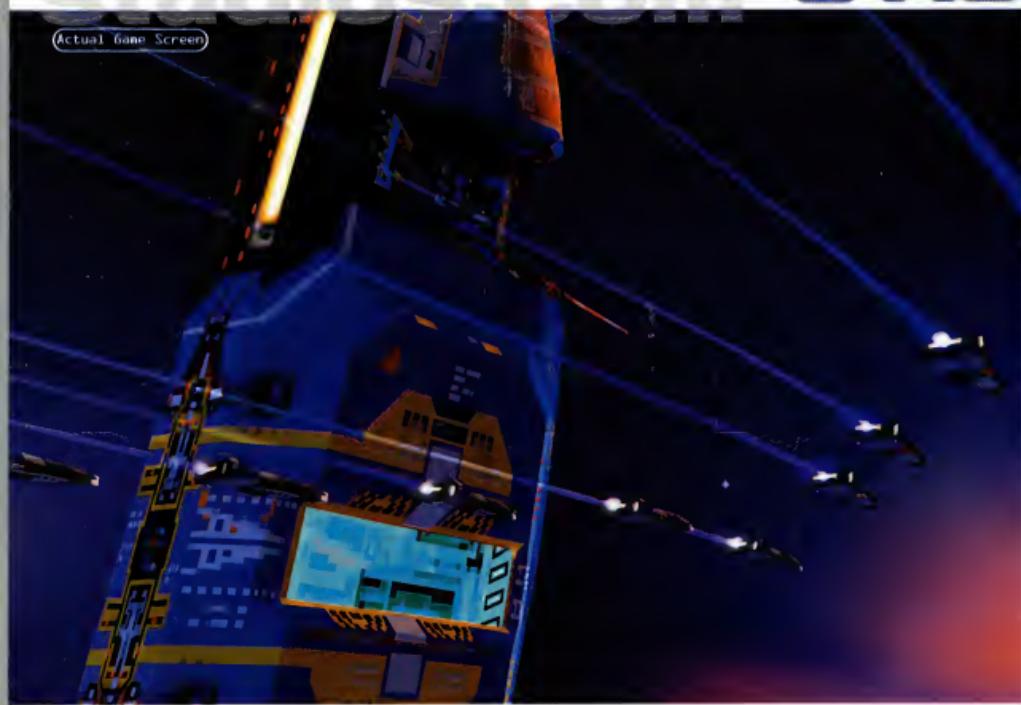
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STORMING



It's been a struggle, but we're almost there. After years of being the sole preserve of only the most dedicated fans, the online first-person shooter is about to come of age. The three giants of the genre — Id Software, Epic, and the newly initiated Valve — are all working to make multiplayer gaming The Next Big Thing, and it looks as though they might just pull it off. Following Next Generation's recent exposé of *Quake III*, we follow up on page 34 with the inside track on *Unreal Tournament* and *Team Fortress 2* — both sequels of a kind that could change the way you play online forever.

Which is no less radical than Sega's own hopes for its groundbreaking Dreamcast epic, *Shenmue*. As more details of Yu Suzuki's pet project emerge, alongside the launch of *Sego Rolly 2*, it's becoming increasingly clear that there has never been a game so visually ambitious. As our gallery of new screens will remind you, however, there has never been a console so eminently capable of fulfilling those ambitions as Dreamcast. The eye candy — and the first review of *Sego Rolly 2* — can be found on page 21.

And in something of a coup, Next Generation has gained exclusive access to Sony Japan to track the progress of one of the most eagerly awaited sequels of the year — *Grim Fandango 2*. PlayStation is pushed to the limit on page 46.

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APRIL 1999

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NEXT GENERATION



UNREAL TOURNAMENT VS TEAM FORTRESS 2

There's definitely something in the industry zeitgeist right now. It used to be that when you thought "multiplayer online," you thought "deathmatch," but three new titles are trying to change that. It's Quake II: Arena (NG 50) is one, and this month we'll take a look at the games that will try to steal its crown. Developer Valve, flush from the success of Half-Life, unveils its WWII sim, Team Fortress 2, starting on p. 34. Meanwhile, can Epic Games overcome its spotty reputation for network play with Unreal Tournament? Find out on p. 38.



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LEARNING CURVES

Racing games have a long lineage, but it's been only recently that they've begun to achieve the realism they've always striven for. Next Generation looks at the history of speed.

GABE NEWELL

He used to work for Microsoft, but that got boring. Then he co-founded Valve, and he's got the hottest game going — Half-Life. So what's Gabe Newell doing for an encore?



INTELLIGENCE

S3 bounces back • Sony sues emulation company Connectix • Microsoft pushes Windows CE for Dreamcast • Sony shows off PlayStation 2 CPU ... maybe • Build your own fighting game



ALPHAS: 20 games previewed

If it's not at least potentially interesting, you don't need to know about it, and we don't bother looking at it. Only the best of what's coming next in computer and video games



FINALS: 15 games reviewed

Find out what we thought of the latest crop of games. If it doesn't reach our exacting standards, we're unmerciful in pointing out its faults. Join in the fun....

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Dreamcast news

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Learning Curves

Racing games are getting better-looking and more realistic all the time

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What's the man who brought us *Half-Life* up to now, and what's he doing next?

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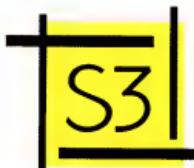
Lots of hardware news on both PC and console fronts,
Sony sues an emulator, and gamers get to build fighting games

INTELLIGENCE

Game industry news and analysis

S3 ANNOUNCES SAVAGE 4

Texture compression and low cost touted



Sight. Sound. Speed.

HARDCORE

I had gotten Final Fantasy VII about a month ago and was fighting the final version of Sephiroth when all of a sudden, the power went out. I got really mad and went to bed. It being 3:00 in the morning). The next day when I got up, the power was back on, so I started up FFX and tried to load my game. To my surprise, my game was no longer there! It seems that the power outage had erased my game. I was so annoyed that I went and got a hammer and destroyed my PlayStation. I still regret that to this day...

Fushigibani@aol.com

Have a hardcore story you want to see in Next Generation? We'd love to hear it. Send it to:
hardcore@next-generation.com

Before the advent of 3Dfx and Voodoo, S3 ruled the graphics accelerator market. Its VIRGE family of integrated 2D/3D accelerators shipped in just about every new computer in the mid-'90s, and it held sway over the 3D world for longer than anyone ever thought possible — especially in light of the fact that its chip was so horribly underpowered. Along with the financial success that VIRGE brought S3, it also brought a tremendous amount of negative PR. The phrase "the world's first 3D decelerator" spread quickly from journalists to gamers — where it has remained ingrained ever since. So much so that even with new, quality 3D chips coming down the pike from S3, gamers that remember the VIRGE are, to this day, extremely wary.

Enter S3's latest foray into the world of 3D: Savage4. And while S3 is very open in stating that it has no plans to compete with 3Dfx's controversial Voodoo3, early demonstrations of the chip show that it could be very much in the same ballpark when it ships

sometime in Q3. Like the Savage3D that S3 shipped in mid-1998, Savage4's defining feature is a texture-compression technology called S3TC (3D texture compression) that can compress textures down to 1/6th of their original size with very little loss in image quality. The effect of having high-resolution textures (up to 2000x2000 pixels) is so

that both *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III: Arena* should arrive on shelves with up to a GB of extra textures for use by either the Savage3D or Savage4. With prices of Savage4 cards expected to be well below that of its largest competition come release — Voodoo3 and NVIDIA's RIVA TNT2 — many first-person shooter fans may opt for this card simply to

The phrase "the world's first 3D decelerator" spread quickly from journalists to gamers

impressive that when *Next Generation* was shown an early version of *Unreal Tournament* running with S3TC, several editors initially thought that they were looking at bump maps rather than flat polygons.

Although S3TC is integrated into DirectX 6.0, and the original Savage3D has been out for well over half a year, many a game has shipped with support for S3TC. This seems to be changing, however, as S3 has informed us play these two titles. Even without S3TC, Savage4, on paper, packs a lot of power under its hood. In addition to being one of the first AGP 4X parts on the market, the new Savage has all of the features we've come to expect from a next-generation card: true 32-bit 3D rendering, single-pass multi-texturing, full-scene anti-aliasing, 16- or 24-bit Z-buffering, hardware bump-mapping, etc. In addition, the Savage4 will support up to 32MB of SD/SGRAM, offer hardware DVD assist, and is the only consumer-level 3D chip (besides the Savage3D) to be able to accomplish single-pass multi-texturing and trilinear filtering at the same time. Add to all this S3's claim that the Savage should be as much as 3x faster than the Savage3D (which gets between 35-40fps in *Quake III* at 800x600 on a PII 450MHz-based system), and you have the makings of a very attractive chip for gamers and



(above left) Uncompressed textures taken from *Unreal Tournament* and (above right) with S3TC (Savage 3 Texture Compression). The qualitative difference is obvious, but will more games support it?



OEMs alike.

Will the Savage4 have enough power and name recognition to shift the balance in the minds of hardcore gamers? It's difficult to say. While it's true that many gamers are still hesitant to give S3

chip from S3 is likely to be very appealing: "Given the overwhelming demand for Savage4, we expect to win a significant share of the mainstream OEM designs in 1999," says Kenneth Potashner, president and CEO of S3 Inc.

Will the Savage4 have enough power and name recognition to shift the balance in the minds of hardcore gamers?

another chance, OEMs seem to feel differently — after all, they made a lot of money with S3. For them, an inexpensive, powerful

As stated earlier, the primary obstacles standing in S3's way are most likely 3Dfx's Voodoo3 and NVIDIA's RIVA TNT2. This time

around, 3Dfx is intent on breaking into the same market as S3 — it wants OEMs, and it wants them bad. 3Dfx's recent acquisition of STB is a clear indication of this. Even though Voodoo3 will not have all of the cutting-edge 3D features many were hoping for, the fact remains that it has a brand presence that S3 would kill for, and that could be all 3Dfx needs to stay on top. NVIDIA, bringing with it some very powerful technology with the TNT2, will also be a threat — not just to S3, but 3Dfx as well. The TNT2 is expected to come very close to competing with Voodoo3

in terms of raw frame rates, and, with its 32-bit color pipeline, it won't be limited to 3Dfx's anorexic 16-bit color palette.

There are, of course, other worries — NEC, with its upcoming PowerVR second-generation part, ATI with its Rage 128, 3DLabs with its upcoming Permedia 3, Matrox with its upcoming G400 — not to mention companies that have yet to announce product. But all things considered, if S3 can get enough game developers to get excited about S3TC, 1999 could well be the year S3 makes its triumphant return to the market it helped create. **NE**

PLAYSTATION 2 SHOWS ITS GUTS — MAYBE

Toshiba and Sony's Ken Kutaragi unveil a new chip



This artist's conception of PlayStation 2 shows it as a DVD-enabled, four-player machine that closely resembles Dreamcast. Close to reality? Impossible to tell

MACs and dividers make it a natural for massively complicated 3D calculations. By way of comparison, the Hitachi SH-4 that powers Dreamcast has four floating-point multipliers and is considered to be an exceptionally impressive performer in 3D math

(the comparison is actually a little unfair, since the fms, or floating point multipliers, in the SH-4 work differently from the MACs and dividers in the Toshiba-Sony chip, but there's little doubt there's a certain amount of one-upping going on here). As for the MPEG2 decoder, there's only one reason to include it: DVD support.

At press time, no one at Sony would either confirm or deny that this processor will form the heart of PlayStation 2000. It may simply be that Kutaragi, who has always been an engineer at heart, may simply have wanted to speak about a hot new chip. But with such clear 3D power, MPEG2 and multimedia extensions, it definitely seems tailor-made for the job. **NS**

By the time you read this, the recent International Solid State Circuits Conference (yes, there is such a thing) will be over, and Sony and Toshiba will have jointly displayed their latest microprocessor. The specs — and the fact that SCEI president and inventor of PlayStation, Ken Kutaragi, was scheduled to be one of the presenters — are certainly intriguing.

The 250MHz processor has a CPU core with 128-bit multimedia

WHAT IS IT?

Along with One on One, this shooter helped EA survive the crash of '94



SONY SUES CONNECTIX

Suit raises questions about
legitimacy of unlicensed emulators



Apple's new G3 Macs are perfect for PlayStation games

IT IS

Sky Fox for Apple II and Commodore 64



Virtual Game Station can replicate almost any controller setup, and it's the "almost" part that officially has Sony riled

As widely expected, Sony has filed suit to stop the distribution and sale of Connectix's Mac-based PlayStation emulator, Virtual Game Station. Sony charges that VGS violates Sony's intellectual property rights. Interestingly, Sony's complaint does not explicitly state that the emulator itself is a violation of Sony's patents, an apparent acknowledgment that VGS was successfully reverse-engineered, but rather alleges that the poor performance of the emulator, and the fact that it can be used to bypass Sony's copy protection, violate the IP rights of Sony and third parties. Specifically, Sony alleges that VGS violates Sony's and third-party publishers' exclusive right to decide when, where, and how a game is displayed and that the low quality of the VGS presentation may harm the PlayStation brand. In fact, a Sony insider recently told **Next Generation** that Connectix approached Sony about getting the company's blessing for VGS, but was rebuffed, allegedly because of the "poor quality" of the emulator.

Sony's case is supported by the ISDA, whose position on unlicensed emulators, according to Kathleen Kang, director of IP and

public policy, is that "emulators whose sole purpose is to play games originally made for one platform on another... infringe on the rights of the software owner, because the software owner has the exclusive right to publish for certain platforms."

Next Generation spoke to several intellectual property experts who disagreed with the ISDA position. "It's a pretty cutting-edge interpretation of IP," said one. "I'm not saying a judge might not buy it, but generally, if you own something, you can do what you want with it. If you wanted to plug it into your Mac, that's your business." As for the piracy issue, most experts that **Next Generation** spoke with agreed that because VGS doesn't exist solely for piracy, as Nintendo's "back-up" units do, the case was

"That's probably Sony's best bet," said another expert. "But the test will be 'are consumers buying VGS knowing all the facts.' And if they are, and they know what they're getting, then it's 'buyer beware.' I don't think Sony can tell anyone not to play somewhere because the game won't look as good." Could Sony avoid the whole debate by simply licensing games exclusively for use on PlayStation itself? Probably not, agreed the experts, as that would run afoul of antitrust law.

As for Connectix, the company seems exceptionally confident about its legal position. "We don't think we've violated any of Sony's intellectual property rights," said spokesperson Roy McDonald. "We've been in this type of business for 10 years, and we're careful about respecting companies' IP in

Major intellectual property case law that could affect the entire industry could be set by this case

weak. "Historically," said one, "just because a technology can be used to infringe is not a good enough reason to enjoin a company from producing or selling it." The expert points out that copy machines, tape recorders, and MP3 players could all be used both to infringe and for legitimate purposes, but that none were banned. (A request for a preliminary injunction against Diamond's Rio MP3 player was rejected by a federal judge.)

What about the danger of damaging the image of the PlayStation brand by presenting an inferior implementation of the PlayStation playing experience?

the process of developing and marketing product." McDonald claims it was only coincidence that the company announced a 1.1 upgrade just after the suit was filed.

With the only possible precedent for this case being Nintendo's unsuccessful attempt to ban Game Genie for NES (Nintendo failed to prove its claim that Game Genie would diminish the good name of NES by making games too easy), major IP case law that would affect the entire computer and videogame industry could be set by this case. **Next Generation** will follow it closely as it progresses.

STOP PRESS: As this story went to press, it was announced that Sony's request for a temporary restraining order was rejected by federal judge Charles Legge in San Francisco. This means that the court doesn't consider any possible infringement by Connectix so egregious that it has to be stopped immediately. Sony can, and presumably will, still attempt to get a permanent injunction as soon as possible, but in the meantime Connectix can, and will, continue selling and supporting Virtual Game Station.

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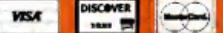
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MICROSOFT CHARTS DREAMCAST STRATEGY

Microsoft unveils its strategy to lure developers to Windows CE for Dreamcast

Throughout the development of Dreamcast, Microsoft has been viewed by many as the least important partner — serious developers would use Sega's thin OS, went the conventional wisdom, and only ports and quickie development projects (casino games and the like) would use Windows CE as the operating system of choice. Microsoft is out to change that impression and has recently announced its Windows CE strategy for Dreamcast.

The goal is to be "small, thin, and fast," says John Jordan, product manager, explaining that Microsoft has removed as much extraneous material as possible from the OS for the Dreamcast version. Gone are things such as printing APIs, the GUI, support for Windows dialog boxes, etc. What's left? Robust networking APIs, for one, and a specially

modified version of DirectX 5 (Microsoft was reluctant to give it a version number — some developers say it is 5.2, others 5.9) that incorporates support for

The rumors of an 8MB memory hit for using WinCE are greatly exaggerated, says Microsoft's John Jordan

almost all of the hardware features of the PowerVR second-generation graphics technology that drives Dreamcast. Also added is support for Dreamcast-specific features such as RAM packs and various Dreamcast controllers. Key loops are written in assembly for Hitachi's SH-4 processor. "The bottom line is that it is highly optimized for Dreamcast," says Jordan. The rumors of an 8MB memory hit for using WinCE are greatly exaggerated, says Jordan, explaining that the maximum footprint is 1.2MB with a full DirectX configuration, although developers who write custom 3D routines can get that down to around 1MB.

Sega, Hudson, and Konami have already committed to using CE for at least some products (more publishers will have been announced at CGD), and Microsoft hopes to woo others with its integrated development environment. In a surprising development, the company's evangelism strategy is: Create for CE (Dreamcast) first, then port to Windows 98. Not even

Microsoft expects everyone to give WinCE a try, but it's clear from the specs that anyone who planned on writing off WinCE for Dreamcast would do well to take another look.

—NFB

Microsoft has optimized its Windows CE for use with Dreamcast, but will programmers use it?



ARCADIA

By Marcus Weisz, editor of *Next Generation*

SATELLITE-BEAMED ARCADE GAMES!

Some of the biggest, coolest technology companies in the world are gearing up to bring their latest and most powerful high-tech systems to an arcade near you. Lucent Technologies (formerly Bell Labs) and Compaq Computer Corp. are working with game experts at Agora Interactive to create a satellite-linked network of arcade video games. With Agora taking the lead, the system of networked player stations — called GATE — will offer everything from multiplayer, online gameplay to game contests, email, and eventually full-blown e-commerce. Remarkably, new game titles could arrive on the screens on a daily, or even hourly, basis, thanks to a satellite-downloading delivery system.

Agora's CEO, Andrew Prell, says the company plans to license existing PC games as-is with only slight adjustments to make them run smoothly on the brawny system. (In other words, no more "Goodbye!" from AOL when you're in the middle of chasing down a bad guy in *Duke Nukem* (or any of the latest hits). "More than 1,000 PC games are introduced each year, and our ability to deliver multiplayer gaming through a network of interactive kiosks is very potent," says Prell. "The Lucent collaborative video game system creates a transparent experience for all game players, who are not aware of the [supporting network] technology at all."

If Agora succeeds in this daunting task, it will have realized the promise that Microsoft, Intel, and the startup National Amusement Network have been talking about for years. Lucent will integrate its "Lucent Collaborative Video" platform into Agora's GATE terminals. This is a network system that Lucent says will provide an "unprecedented low-bandwidth, low-cost, high-broadcast-quality IP desktop

platform providing up to 16 independent video windows without the need for a prohibitively expensive multi-control unit." Look for Agora's first units in top arcades by fall 1999.

ARCADE HITS FOR SPRING

One of America's top arcade games — a guy who gets to test the first units of every new game around — said the most popular arcade games of spring 1999 will be led by Sega's *House of the Dead 2: Deluxe*, which is currently drawing twice as much play as its prequel. Other stellar performers include Namco's shooting game *Time Crisis II* and two sit-down games from Sega, both based on movies: *Star Wars Trilogy* and *Jurassic Park: Lost World*. "They're so hot, it's scary," says this arcade whiz.

MIDWAY SEES ARCADE SALES STABILIZING

The arcade market has been contracting for some while now, but Chicago's Midway Games says the bleeding may have stopped. The bad news: revenues for sales of coin-op revenues fell about 25% compared to the same quarter of the prior year. But, Midway says it's got a strong lineup for this summer and fall, so the rest of the year ought to hold steady as compared to a very disappointing 1998. Good news for Midway came from financial analyst James Lin (Wedbush Morgan Securities), who told Internet newsmagazine *Red Herring* that the factory's "Wavenet" system for remote interactive video gameplay is a hit. "In the markets where it's been tested, coin drop has increased three to four times," Lin said. Wavenet is up and running in about 50 California arcades, linking up Atari driving games for head-to-head action.

DONE WITH DIABLO:

Two former Blizzard boys form Click Entertainment

Considering the success of *Diablo*, it's no surprise that two members of the development team have recently formed their own company, Click Entertainment.

Based in San Francisco, Click was recently started by Daron Gartner and Ben Haas. Gartner, a veteran coder of 11 years, was a senior programmer on *Diablo*, responsible for all of the AI, and some tools and graphics engine development. As an animator with Blizzard North, Haas animated the monsters in *Diablo* (including *Diablo* himself), created spell effects, and led the cinematics team.

Gartner and Haas spent several months conceptualizing for *Diablo* 2

design of their previous game.

"The player begins with seven samurai," says Gartner, "of which he can take out a party of four." Players can control one character but can also set others to ambush or guard. "It's like calling plays in *Madden Football*," says Haas. "Maybe you'll send two guys long and keep two back for protection."

In an early demo level shown exclusively to *Next Generation*, players could lead a samurai into combat against undead soldiers. The level was set inside a palace decorated with splattered blood and highly detailed murals. When a player killed an enemy soldier, the decapitation animation had the



"Click Entertainment" was chosen by Gartner and Haas as it didn't limit the company to kinds of games or a particular medium

before they left to pursue the creation of an action/RPG title based on the fantasy of feudal Japan.

"We're very big fans of Kurosawa films," says Haas. So much so that the project code name, *Throne of Blood*, was snatched directly from a favorite Kurosawa film. In the game, players control a group of samurai that must defeat an army of undead warriors and mythical beasts spawned by a warlord-turned-demon. The gameplay will be similar to *Diablo*'s, with a familiar camera angle and point-and-click lighting. But what separates it from *Diablo* are squad-based tactics that expand on the single-character

soldier's hat hitting the floor before the head landed neatly in it.

Designer Koji Goto is writing the story in Japanese. The game will feature Japanese voice-over, and players may have the option of listening to badly dubbed English or reading subtitles. The game's online presence will be more like *Dungeon Keeper* than *Battle Net*.

Click's nine employees are developing the game for Acclaim Entertainment for release next February, and they didn't tidy up their less-than-palatial workspace before our visit. Encouraging — for unlike some overfunded developers with penthouse offices, Click knows it's the game that's important.



SIMI STAR

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SUMMER 1999



FIGHTER MAKER

If you've ever looked at a fighting game and said, "I could do better than that," well, now's your chance



The fighters themselves aren't that exciting a bunch, but you can make them move any way you wish



The editor uses many of the same tools and techniques found in high-end packages

Asia's Fighter Maker, currently in release in Japan with a U.S. release set for the early summer, is a landmark title in the console market. While PC gamers have long had any number of utilities for modifying their games' skin and level editors for Quake II, for example), Fighter Maker is the first game creation tool designed for PlayStation.

Behind it all, Fighter Maker is a fully functioning — if not exactly inspired — 3D fighting game, with 20 varied characters with 68 moves each as well as 10 backgrounds. However, its name suggests, its primary function is as a kind of "3D Animation 101," allowing you to edit each fighter's moves, or even create whole ones from scratch using traditional 3D keyframing. Naturally, this is a complex process, but the tools and techniques used in Fighter Maker are identical to the basic animation tools in 3D Studio MAX, Lightwave, and other professional software, and it makes an excellent introduction to the ideas and concepts behind 3D animation.

For people who want to dip their toes in and see what it's like,

this makes it possible to do so without expensive hardware and software. Each character supports 260 frames of animation, divided into categories including punches, kicks, throws, resting animation, and victory and defeat sequences (throws being a special case, since you have to animate how the enemy moves as well). The interface is complex, but in fact the process is more streamlined than in many 3D animation packages (if only because the application is so specific).

Once you've animated the character, other tools enable you to adjust how much damage a move does, its range, what joystick and button combination performs it, and even what sound effects it makes.



Users can even create moves that aren't physically possible, such as bending joints the wrong direction, or hanging in mid-air

More advanced tools enable the user to program the character's AI while he or she is an enemy in one-player mode.

In fact, the only thing about a character you can't change and edit is its physical appearance — due to PlayStation memory limitations, adding a polygon and texture editor simply isn't possible. Still, with 20 to choose from, ranging from the usual Shaolin Monk and Special Forces cast-offs to an afro-headed '70s hipster, you're not lacking for character types. True, they're all somewhat generic, but it suits the nature of the product.

It will be interesting to see how well Fighter Maker will sell, who will buy it (the package has only just been released in Japan, and no sales information is available), and what kind of impact this will have on the console market. If it's a hit, will other "maker" titles become available? Asch already has tentative plans for RPG Maker — although the thought of entering all that text by using a controller to select letters sounds tedious to us.

Which may be, in the end, the deciding factor: accessibility. Producers at Ascal freely admit that one of the biggest challenges is going to be getting the huge manual into a package with the disc, for release into a market that's notorious for anti-manual readers. Still, for all those gamers who complained they could do better, they now have a chance to prove it.

NG



CLASSIC GAMING EXPO

After the success of last year's World of Atari show in Las Vegas, the promoters have decided to make it an annual event. The rechristened Classic Gaming Expo will feature two days of pure nostalgia, with classic systems, games, auctions, trading, memorabilia, and speakers, including Ralph Beer, creator of Megavox Odyssey, and Nolan Bushnell. The show will take place August 14-15 at the Plaza Hotel. For more details see <http://www.cgexpo.com>.



Ralph Beer, the father of the first home videogame system, the Megavox Odyssey, 1972 will give the keynote address at CGE '99. Beer's astounding engineering career has earned him 150 patents.

SAVE THE DATE: STAR WARS

On March 25, 1999, at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, turn on your computer and point your browser to <http://www.next-generation.com>, where **Next Generation Online** will reveal the first official details and screenshots of the new *Star Wars Episode I* games from LucasArts. Then get ready for the story only **Next Generation** could bring you in **NG 53**.



IN THE STUDIO



From the mouths of babes ... or is it CEOs? During a teleconference held to announce Acclaim's year-end earnings, Acclaim CEO Greg Fischbach stole a year's worth of his own PR department's thunder by discussing the company's largely-unannounced product lineup for '99. Direct from Fischbach's mouth: *Turok* 3 and *South Park 2* for N64, with *Turok 3* likely hitting before Christmas and *South Park 2* following in early 2000. Sure,



no-brainers, but he also mentioned *Armormie* and *Velocity*, both of which are believed to be PlayStation and N64 titles. Based on the Acclaim comic book about a team of bio-mechanical soldiers, *Armormie* is an action title being developed by Probe, and will use the *Turok 2* engine as a code base. Probe is also working on *Velocity*, a hoverboard racing game. Let's hope it's better than GT Interactive's *Streak*.

Imagin engineer's hard at work on a PC title bound for Dreamcast and PlayStation. The game, entitled *Expendable*, is a 3D third-person shooter played

from a top-down perspective. The game pits players against alien invaders and is due this May. Let's hope it's better than Activision's *Apocalypse*.

On the subject of Activision, the company also has an interesting product line-up for '99. But don't hold your breath for the company's first Dreamcast title because it's currently scheduled to be *Toy Story 2* and will also appear on N64 and PlayStation. The N64 and PlayStation will also get *Tarzan*, based on the animated Disney film, in development by Eurocom. While the game is



likely geared to younger gamers, the early reports are the graphics for the PlayStation version are very lush and similar to *Cash Bandicoot*. The N64 and PlayStation are also getting two sequels, *Vigilante 8: Second Offense* and *Nightmare Creatures 2*. Also in the works for PlayStation? How about a game called *Wu Tang Clan: Killah*. Let's hope it's better than the *Psygnosis Spice Girls* game.

And speaking of Psygnosis, the company has confirmed the PlayStation development of



WipeOut 3. However, by the time the game is done, Psygnosis will be operating under Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE). All of the Psygnosis-owned development studios now report to SCEE's VP of Software development, Juan Montes. Let's hope this restructuring works better than Virgin's.



And like a Virgin, Madonna may be in the process of acquiring the U.S. film rights to Square's *Parasite Eve*. There have been mixed reports, and at press time, Square had denied the deal. The idea of Madonna fans bursting into flames during one of her concerts may sound appealing, but if Madonna does make the film, let's hope it's better than *Desperately Seeking Susan*.



And on the subject of Impossible missions, Infogrames is rumored to be working on a sequel to *Mission Impossible* for Dreamcast. "I wouldn't rule a Dreamcast port out in the future, but there are no plans at the moment," says one Infogrames emissary. However, Infogrames has confirmed a port of the Nintendo 64 game to the PC, PlayStation, and Game Boy Color. German-based X-ample will produce the PlayStation version, while Indian developer Dhruva Interactive is tackling the PC version. Both games will contain various enhancements, including sampled speech, as well as new levels. The PlayStation version is expected to be ready first. When might we expect to see it? At the earliest, sometime this fall.

BIG IN JAPAN

Next Generation reports from the Eastern front

Batteries not included

It's not the first time, and it won't be the last. SNK, Neo Geo's parent company, has been schooled by Nintendo in the fine art of portable game hardware. As the almighty Game Boy caught its second wind (or rather, its third or fourth) in the form of Game Boy Color, SNK launched the Neo Geo Pocket to much fanfare at the Tokyo Game Show — boasting a clear screen and Dreamcast VMS compatibility. But the hoped-for title that SNK was hoping to take out of the Game Boy market never materialized. The figures tell a familiar story: From Oct. 19 to Dec. 20, the Neo Geo Pocket sold fewer than 39,000 units, compared to the Game Boy's untouched 702,000. Who bit whom?

Not to be deterred, SNK has officially announced its own color handheld — Neo Geo Pocket Color, boasting a 16-bit processor and a 146-color screen (from a palette of 4,096) as well as a battery life of 40 hours, the system has the technical edge over Game Boy Color — but as history has proven time and again, that's the least you need to beat Gumpie Yokoi's greatest invention. SNK will require more than yet another version of *King of Fighters* to stand anything but the slimmest chance of success in a market that Nintendo has, pun intended, in its pocket. The Neo Geo Pocket Color will be available in Japan on March 19, priced at ¥8,900.



(clockwise from top)
Baseball Stars,
Neo 21, and the
slot machine sim
Cherry Master.
These titles are
unlikely to cause
Nintendo too many
sleepless nights...

Pocket Color Tech Specs



Processor: 16bit
Display: 160x152 TFT
Colors: 146 on-screen (4,096 total)
Battery Life: 40 hours
Options: Wireless
Communication Unit:
Dreamcast adapter (VMS compatible)



King of Fighters (top), *Pocket Tennis* (bottom right),
and popular puzzler *Puzzle Bobble Mini* are out now

SELLING BIG IN JAPAN THIS MONTH

1. Crash Bandicoot 3 (SCE) PS
2. Bassing Landing (ASOT) PS
3. Dragon Quest Monsters:
Terry's Wonderland (Enix) GB
4. Tales of Phantasia
(Namco) PS
5. Pokemon Cards
(Nintendo) GB
6. Sonic Adventure (Sega) DC
7. Simple 1500 Series
Vol. 1 (MCP) PS
8. Chocobo's Mysterious
Dungeons 2 (Square) PS
9. Street Fighter Zero 3
(Capcom) PS
10. I.Q. Final (SCE) PS

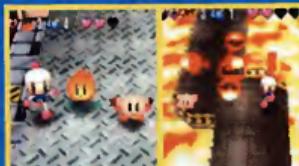
Another Bomb

After the lukewarm reception received by *Bomberman 64*, Hudson's latest attempt can be viewed as either a welcome opportunity to get it right or another nail in the coffin of one of the industry's most beloved franchises, depending on your perspective.

Like its predecessor, *Baku Bomberman 2* takes place in a Mario-style 3D world — only this time, Hudson is hoping to make amends with a series of tighter maps and enclosed mazes that hark back to classic SNES titles. In what sounds regrettably like padding, Hudson has added a sidekick in the form of Pompy, whom the player must use to jointly solve puzzles, and extended the bomb selection. Whether this super-cute character will turn out to be the Robin to Bomberman's Batman or merely a lame Godzuki remains to be seen. Depending on the situation and area, Bomberman will use earth, air, fire, or water-based bombs to defeat the enemies and solve environment-based puzzles.

Still in the early stages of development, despite an announced spring release date, *Baku Bomberman 2* will need to be more than just another star vehicle for Hudson's most famous creation if it's to make its mark and avoid being just another misfire.

NG



Last seen losing the plot in *Bomberman 64*, Hudson's ubiquitous hero returns for a sequel. This time around it's back to basics



The Tokyo Treat

Enigmatic Japanese developer Kenji Ino (head of Warp) reconfirmed his artistic and oblique take on life with an unusual Christmas present. Following up on those dedicated souls who attended the May 1998 D2 announcement (see NG 46), Eno-san's gift consisted of a food package, presumably aimed at clearing up some of the galloping acne displayed by the more sickly otaku seen sniffing around the unveiling. Featured on the packaging is D2's heroine, Laura, while Eno saves his star turn for the back of the box — cooking up a pot of tasty vittles. If only finishing the game was as quick and easy as this, we might see D2 in time for the U.S. Dreamcast launch...

NG



What's cooking? D2 heroine Laura and Warp boss Kenji Ino invite you to dinner — just add hot water

THAT'S A RAP

Sony Japan is currently running a series of ads to promote its *PaRappa the Rapper* sequel, *Um Jammer Lammy* (see page 50). The rapping dog has been sidelined this time around, replaced by rock chick lamb "Lammy." In the ad, *PaRappa* is seen watching TV when he sees Lammy on screen. He immediately forgets his pressing appointment with a nearby lampost and falls, love-struck, in front of the TV set — his pupils the shape of hearts. Not only does love "know no color," it seems, but it's pretty broad-minded when it comes to interspecies relationships...



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DREAMCAST COUNTDOWN

Next Generation tracks the progress of Sega's dream machine

Under Cover



Pulse's *Under Cover* falls somewhere between D2 and Blue Stinger, with a little Resident Evil thrown in for good measure. It received a lukewarm reception

Having quite literally painted the town orange in the run-up to Christmas, Sega is now shifting the focus of its advertising from the distinctive Dreamcast swirl and hardware promotion to what the world is really waiting for: the software. Sega knows that the key to retaining the somewhat fragile confidence of the Japanese public is to pile on the announcements of new titles. This has created a weird internal dynamic — as Sega executives line up for press conferences announcing exciting new software, the PR department is simultaneously fighting a rear-guard action as more and more top-tier titles miss their overly-optimistic ship dates. So it was with a slightly less enthusiastic eye that the press greeted *Under Cover*, the latest Dreamcast title to emerge from a third party, in

FROM JAPAN NOTABLE TITLES STILL TO COME:

FEBRUARY

Aero Dancing	CSK
Digital Horse Racing	Shouei
Get Bass	Sega
White Illumination	Hudson
Powerstone	Capcom

MARCH

Monaco Grand Prix	Ubi Soft
Blue Stinger	Sega
Buggy Heat	CSK
Frame Grille	From
Cho-Hamaru Golf	Sega

1999

Climax Landers	Climax/Sega
Shenmue	Sega
King of Fighters '98	SNK
Maken X	Atlas
Carrier	Jaleco
D2	Warp
Grandia 2	Game Arts
Gundam	Bandal
Let's Make!.. (Soccer)	Sega
Let's Make!.. (Baseball)	Sega
E.G.G	Hudson
Geist Force	Sega
Virtual On Oratorio Tangram	Sega
Virtual On - Side Story	Sega
Star Gladiator 2	Capcom
Psychic Force 2012	Taito
Giant Slam Wrestling	Sega
<i>Under Cover</i>	Pulse



Like AM2 boss, Suzuki, Developer Pulse Interactive believes its latest title will appeal to "light users"

this case Pulse Interactive.

Echoing Yu Suzuki's *Shenmue* sentiments, the game's producer, Masuyusa Ishikawa, was keen to emphasize that this Resident Evil-style 3D adventure would appeal to "light users" — the mass-market audience Sega perceives currently to be the sole preserve of PlayStation.

The game takes place in Tokyo in the year 2025 and is visually very similar to *Blue Stinger*. Featuring a female lead character in the form of detective Kei Samijima, *Under Cover* is inspired by a famous Japanese novel of the same name, the gist of which seems to be along the lines of a cop thriller involving the Mafia.

Sporting less-than-convincing animation and a somewhat simplistic combat system (push once to draw your weapon, twice to aim, and three times to shoot), the Japanese press — though eager to support the "new" Sega — appeared to give the title a decidedly lukewarm reception. It remains to be seen whether *Under Cover*, inspired as it is by a book, is a best seller in the making, or nothing more substantial than an airport read.



Like *Blue Stinger* (which it closely resembles, graphically), *Under Cover* is set in a futuristic city

Yu Suzuki's anticipated opus nears completion

Shenmue



Shenmue lead Ryo Hazuki gets to grips with multiple opponents in the Dynamite Deka-Inspired Quick Timer mode



After a tightly orchestrated unveiling, Sega's most anticipated (and most important) Dreamcast title is edging closer to completion. As more details emerge, *Shenmue* is looking increasingly deserving of Yu Suzuki's enthusiasm.

The plot, though still sketchy, concerns the lives of two characters — Ryo Hazuki and Rei Shenhua. The main protagonist of the story is Ryo Hazuki, who travels to Hong Kong to solve the mystery of his father's recent death. There he meets the love interest, in the form of Rei. The majority of the game takes place in Hong Kong in the mid-1990s (which explains the ripped jeans and *Tan Guri* haricots), but there will be a portion set 30 years previously in Yokosuka, Japan — Ryo's birthplace. Suzuki won't elaborate, but this suggests that you will be able to play as the young Ryo — a technique recently employed in *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.

The previously reported Quick Timer Events mode is now known to be a significant, but (thankfully) relatively small portion of the game. Inspired by Sega's com-op *Dynamite Deka* (*Dynamite Cap*), the single-button "choose

your path" navigation system comes in to play at key points, but will not be used to resolve all combat situations. Sega recently confirmed the inclusion of VF3-style combat in the Play mode — the fully 3D system that makes up the majority of the game.

Suzuki's games are known for their precision controls, and *Shenmue* will be no exception. Unlike *Mario*, control of Ryo will be through a combination of the D-pad and the analog stick. The D-pad moves the character, and the analog control is used for looking around and providing camera control. The shoulder buttons will switch between running and walking. How this will work in practice is debatable — if Suzuki's goal was to provide the player with a control system that features camera control while running, then the D-pad/analog mix could be difficult, as both are on the same side of the controller.

If Suzuki can resolve the doubts surrounding the controls, *Shenmue* could prove to be the killer app Sega needs to make Dreamcast a real object of desire amongst both the hardcore and the mainstream of the game-playing public.



An integral part of *Shenmue* is making money for your character through street gambling

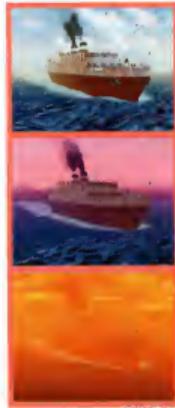
FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
(Sonic Japan)

RELEASE DATE
Out now (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan



Like Nintendo's *Zelda*, *Shenmue* features night and day cycles that provide a great showcase for the console's lighting effects



The detail levels of the models and of the environment are breathtaking, and the expressions on the faces of the characters change in realtime

Far from perfect, but still one of the best racing experiences ever

Sega Rally 2

FORMAT

Dreamcast

PUBLISHER

Sega

DEVELOPER

In-house

RELEASE DATE

Out now (Japan)

ORIGIN

Japan



Graphically, Sega Rally 2 looks crisper on the Dreamcast, but loses some flair due to draw-in and frame drops

When Sega Rally 2 first debuted at last year's Tokyo Game Show, it was far from impressive. Hampered by bland graphics, polygon glitches, and pop-in problems, Sega reportedly locked the conversion team into a room, requiring 24-hour shifts until the game was reworked into something playable. The overtime paid off.

As first-generation games go, Sega Rally 2 is an impressive conversion. The Dreamcast version runs at a slightly higher resolution than the Model 3 arcade edition — just enough to make the gravel seem that much crisper; what's more, just about all the little flourishes

present in the arcade are here, including car weathering, subtle headlight effects, an excellent animated reflection map on the windows, and the occasional person running across the track for a quick photograph.

Such alluring eye candy doesn't come without a cost, however. When performing high-speed maneuvers near large objects, the framerate will noticeably drop, although it doesn't hinder gameplay in single-player mode. Likewise, the Dreamcast's Power VR2 pushes the draw-in to an impressive distance, but it is still present to a noticeable degree, especially to spectators, if not players. To be fair, the coin-op was just as bad in this respect, but it's a shame that Sega's internal teams failed to make headway here. Unfortunately, in two-player, single-screen mode, these flaws become exacerbated to such a degree that it seems as if Rally's being played on a high-resolution Nintendo 64 — hardly the desired effect.

Minor glitches aside, Rally 2 is possibly one of the



Hardcore rally fans may quibble, but for an arcade racer, the control is plenty realistic, and the varied environments are surprisingly deep

finest driving games around. The Saturn port of *Sega Rally* was one of the saving graces of the console, and its sequel provides enough quality gameplay to keep the hardcore fans satisfied — at least until the second-generation titles arrive next month.

As usual, AM2 has flawlessly captured the off- and on-tarmac rally experience. Analog control is excellent, with analog steering, brakes, and acceleration, which delivers one of the most realistic driving sensations yet seen. Without the alarming framerate stutter, it would have no competition. There are five basic modes within the game: Arcade, 10-Year Championship, Time Attack, 2-Player Battle, and Network Play. Arcade mode is a faithful conversion of AM2's original version, where racers can compete on three courses — desert, mountain, and rivera. While all the options normally locked in arcade mode are available for the Dreamcast, it's a shallow substitute for the real meat of the game — the 10-Year Championship.

Sega's made impressive progress in adding depth to its arcade ports. The Championship gives players the opportunity to race through 16 standard courses in six different environments — desert, mountain, rivera, muddy, snowy, and ice racing. Predictably, each environment caters to different driving styles and cars, but the courses are cleverly designed, and make for a lot of exciting driving. Players can also customize their cars to a greater extent. Unlike the arcade option, cars can use different-speed transmissions and change a variety of parameters, including twelve types of tires, gear ratios, shocks, and brakes. Warming each year unlocks a new car, adding more replay value to an already deeper-than-average game.

Perhaps *Sega Rally 2*'s greatest blessing (and curse) lies in its steep learning curve. To play through a game is easy. To win is almost inhumanly difficult. It's clearly



geared toward expert gamers, requiring thorough knowledge of the car, the system, and the controls to eke out the extra few seconds that make the difference between fourth and first place. Drivers will find that even one or two bumps against a wall will cost them the year — even on the easiest levels. The fun isn't diminished, but to move further into the game requires a serious time commitment.

As Sega's third Dreamcast title, *Rally 2* is an impressive demonstration of the Dreamcast's potential. Graphically brilliant, damn fun to play, and deeper than any previous port, it is, like *Sonic Adventure*, so close to perfect that the flaws stand out in contrast. In the end, it's a solid conversion that could've been spectacular if it had only been released a little later. Expect *Sega Rally 2* to get a full tune up before the U.S. version ships.

10-Year Championship gives players the opportunity to compete in more courses — and more competitive options than any other mode

RATING



Seeing these screenshots and actually playing the game are two very different things. The larger the TV, the better this game looks.

Sting's first Dreamcast title
advances the status quo and not much else

Evolution

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
ESP

DEVELOPER
Sting

RELEASE DATE
Out now (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan



Although it's still a traditional RPG, the graphics are a step up from anything seen in the 32-bit era



Evolution may become the benchmark by which all other RPGs are judged. Not because it's technologically advanced or graphically spectacular, but because it's perfectly average.

Sting seems to have lifted a page from Camelot Software's *Shining Force III* in making this game. While it has crisper edges, higher resolution textures, and characters designed from polygons instead of sprites, it remains largely indistinguishable from any overhead, polygonal, turn-based combat RPG on the Saturn. In fact, it's quite apparent that the designers started work on Evolution before the Dreamcast specs were even finalized, as it displays none of the graphical flair or complexity that *Climax Landers* possesses even in its nascent state. Exploring the randomly-generated mazes with simple

repeating-tile graphics is reminiscent of a high-tech version of the classic low-resolution Atari dungeon explorers.

It does have its charms, though. The designers have made an honest effort to incorporate the Dreamcast's graphics power into the game, with impressive particle-based spell effects that challenge some of Square's better *Final Fantasy* efforts. Neat touches such as an excellent autopilot system and a flexible spell development system show that Sting is keeping abreast of the advances in RPG interfaces. Finally, even basic dungeon-delving is addictive enough to become a habit — just one level is never enough.

RATING

★★★☆☆



Gameplay, on the other hand, isn't much different from the very first 3D RPGs. Gamers in search of the new should wait for *Shenmue*.

From Software abandons PlayStation exclusivity,
but not the world of giant robots

Frame Gride

Basking in the glow of its successful giant-robot beat-'em-up franchise *Armored Core* on PlayStation, and with a second sequel to the game, *Armored Core: Master of Arena*, now underway, From Software is gearing up to release *Frame Gride*, a Dreamcast spin-off of sorts from the popular action series.

Giant robots still take center stage in this title, although the main focus here will no doubt be the one-on-one combat mode, which will utilize a local split-screen display and additionally enable two players to link-up via Dreamcast's built-in modem. A traditional story mode, which will feature four separate story lines, is also in the cards. Players will be asked a series of questions that will determine which path they'll embark on.

In common with the *Armored Core* titles, the game sports the essential robot upgrade system, which involves a seemingly limitless array of different heads,



Best known for its *Armored Core* series, From Software's first Dreamcast effort falls under the same heading: giant robot combat

torsos, arms, legs, and other various components for each *Frame Gride*, as the tanks-on-legs will be referred to this time around. The developer has expanded upon this system by including various materials from which these parts can be made, including silver, crystal, and ceramics. Players can further upgrade their robots through the use of Liberate Stones, which bestow elemental powers, increased attributes (such as hit points and speed), and special abilities such as flight.

Gameplay facets aside, the title's lush, organic environments and decidedly intricate robot designs are easily its strongest suit at this early stage. They will no doubt go a long way to win it favor among Dreamcast owners who will soon be faced with no fewer than four separate titles in the genre — none of which has yet to equal *Frame Gride*'s sheer visual splendor. If its lineage is any indicator, the rest of the title will more than match its glossy exterior.

NE



Even in its early form, *Frame Gride* runs the gamut of Dreamcast's impressive environmental effects



Two-player combat will take place via a split-screen display locally or a head-to-head Internet connection

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
From Software

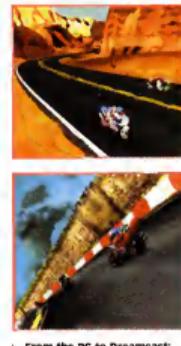
DEVELOPER
From Software

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
Japan

REDLINE RACER

Criterion Studios developed this arcade-style motorcycle racing title last year for PC, and Ubi Soft picked it up. Now *Redline Racer* has been announced for Dreamcast, although no release date has been set. The game features the unusual option of choosing the gender of your rider, along with 3 modes — single race, tournament, and versus. It's worth remembering that Sega of America has repeatedly stated its distaste for ports from the PC — but with the Dreamcast in need of solid titles in Japan, it's hard to see SOJ turning this one down.



From the PC to Dreamcast, *redline racer* certainly looks better than the average port

It's action unusual as **Atlus makes its Dreamcast debut**

Maken X

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Atlus

DEVELOPER
Atlus

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
Japan

STUNT GRAND PRIX

Team 17, the U.K. developer responsible for the PlayStation version of PC title Worms, is throwing its hat into the Dreamcast ring early — noting the publicity benefits of being one of the first to pin its colors to the Sega mast. Stunt Grand Prix provides 20 stunt cars for the player to race, coupled with what is claimed to be a hyper-realistic physics engine (aren't they all?). Development is leading on PC, and no release date has yet been announced.



British developer Team 17 is well into development of its first DC title — *Stunt Grand Prix*

With development headed by Cozy Okada and Kazuma Kaneko (the producer and character artist responsible for *Soul Hackers*), Atlus' initial offering on Dreamcast, *Maken X*, showcases the same love for the bizarre that the duo's popular role-playing game brought to Saturn in 1997.

The extremely bizarre is at the crux of this incredibly dark action-adventure title, in which players assume the role of a Maken, a spirit able to leap from body to body at will. This ability will form a focal point of the game, allowing players to possess any of 10 different hosts and consequently make use of their inherent abilities in battle. Utilizing all 10 characters will prove essential to completing the game, and, as a result, Atlus has bestowed a strangely fitting moniker on the game system — *Braun Jack*.

Fighting through the game's richly-detailed and disturbing environments — all of which, Atlus promises, will run at a brisk 60fps — players will be pitted against enemies and traps that may as well have leapt straight from the twisted mind of the Marquis de Sade. Confrontations with these creatures are to be (ahem) tied together in a nearly non-stop fashion, although the occasional cinematic will be called upon to provide a break for the player.

In an effort to move away from the pure hack-and-slash gameplay of other first-person adventure titles, the developer has instituted a *Zelda*-like lock-on system, which it has dubbed "auto-focus." Taking Miyamoto's



Players will come up against a host of sadomasochism-inspired foes and traps, including leather-bound women

inspiration a step further, it will enable the player to not only track a specific enemy when engaged, but also target specific areas on their bodies.

Atlus is also making strides with the game's audio, which is scheduled to make full use of Dreamcast's 3D positional sound technology to create the sensation of action occurring all around the player. Options to listen through speakers or headphones will be provided, though Atlus has already stated that the latter will provide the most frightening experience.



Maken X boasts surprisingly disturbing imagery that is promised to be further enhanced with the addition of 3D environmental audio effects

Konami's first Dreamcast effort takes shape — and sets its sights on Namco's Ace Combat

Flight Shooting



The high-polygon count makes for locales that are often every bit as detailed as aircraft flying high above them

Aenal combat is the premise of Konami's initial effort for Sega's next-generation hardware. The tentatively-titled *Flight Shooting* is the publisher's first foray into the genre since the 1987 release of *Top Gun* for Nintendo Entertainment System. Joined by the odds, yet highly marketable (for Japan, at least), Pop'n Music on Konami's foreign Dreamcast software schedule, the

game promises hyper-realistic environments and aircraft, coupled with arcade-style play that aims to give Namco's well-established *Ace Combat* series a formidable challenge.

Early glimpses have revealed a game that, while visually stunning, remains largely arcade-style when its underlying gameplay is compared to most PC-based flight simulations. Designed purely as a console product, the game will forego most of the often panicky realistic trappings of the genre, and instead rely on basic meters for fuel, damage, and ammunition. Konami's clear emphasis with this title will be on creating breathtaking environments and aircraft models that move at breakneck speed — and not re-creating the countless knobs and switches of a real tactical fighter cockpit.

Konami has plans to include a wide assortment of aircraft — and not just those of the fixed-wing variety. Thirty real-world aircraft are called for, including the F/A-18 Hornet, F-14 Tomcat, and SU-34 Platypus, along with other common and not-so-common craft, such as attack helicopters and stealth fighters. Bombers and transports will also play key roles in several missions, although they won't actually come under player control. These craft will take to the skies over several different terrain types, of which mountains, deserts, and snow-covered plains have been revealed.

Debuting in December in Japan, *Flight Shooting* is expected to ship by year's end, meaning that it will face an inevitable on-shelf battle against Namco's forthcoming *Ace Combat 3* for PlayStation. It will have a more direct challenge, however, coming in the form of CTR's Dreamcast-only *Aero Dancing*, a title that, unlike Konami's, is rooted exclusively in air-show-like aerobatics and not full-tilt warfare simulation.



Flight Shooting will offer players an in-cockpit viewpoint complete with a fully-functional Heads Up Display (HUD)

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
Konami

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
Japan

VIRTUA STRIKER 2

*Sega has announced the conversion of its Model 3 Step 2 coin-op soccer title, *Virtua Striker 2 Version 99* for Dreamcast. Having only just appeared in Japanese arcades, the game is making a speedy leap to the super-console and is likely to be a big seller when it arrives in stores this April.*



Another Sega coin-op comes to Dreamcast. *Virtua Striker 2* should do well in Japan

Panther Software hopes the second time's a charm for its anime-based action title

Space Griffon

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Panther Software

DEVELOPER
Panther Software

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
Japan

Released in 1995 for the then en vogue (in Japan, at least) Sega Saturn, Space Griffon conveyed much of the look of its anime namesake but suffered under the hardware limitations of its host console's 3D-unfriendly architecture. Four years later, the developer is giving the first-person action title a second go, this time on a machine that will undoubtedly prove to be more than equal to the graphical task.

Assuming the role of freshly recruited robot jockey Jim Villington, players are put in control of several advanced "mecha" on a mission to get to the bottom of strange goings-on in an underground factory complex.

SEGA SUPERSPEED RACING

Challenging Ubi Soft's Monaco Grand Prix is Sega's own recently announced Superspeed Racing. Sporting the American CART license and featuring design help from Team Rahal, the game boasts 27 official drivers from the 17 CART teams and a comprehensive 19 tracks (including a super-speed oval). Superspeed Racing is tentatively scheduled for a March release in Japan.



Sega's Superspeed Racing is fast, but looks a little too first-generation at this stage



The robot models are miles ahead of previous titles, including Sega's own Virtual On coin-op hits. The first-person genre is currently under-represented on Dreamcast — Space Griffon goes some way to rectifying that

Each robot has the ability to switch between three basic forms: cruise, assault, and combat. Cruise mode enables flight, which should prove particularly handy in exploring the massive industrial complex. The latter two forms are intended for enemy confrontations and offer varying degrees of maneuverability. Jumping back and forth between modes changes the on-screen data display as well, offering enemy statistics (range, type, target lock) when in combat form and a map and compass combination when exploring.

Combat itself should prove familiar to the first-

person-shooter crowd, with players going up against airborne, roving, and stationary enemies. Due to the fact that players are piloting multi-ton robots, the game isn't likely to have the pace of an Unreal or a Half-Life, however. Exploration appears to be nothing more than a means of encountering more enemies — players' puzzle-solving and map-making skills will likely take a back seat.

One of the first titles of its kind on Dreamcast, Space Griffon will not only have to please fans of the genre, but fans of anime as well in order to prove a success its second time around.

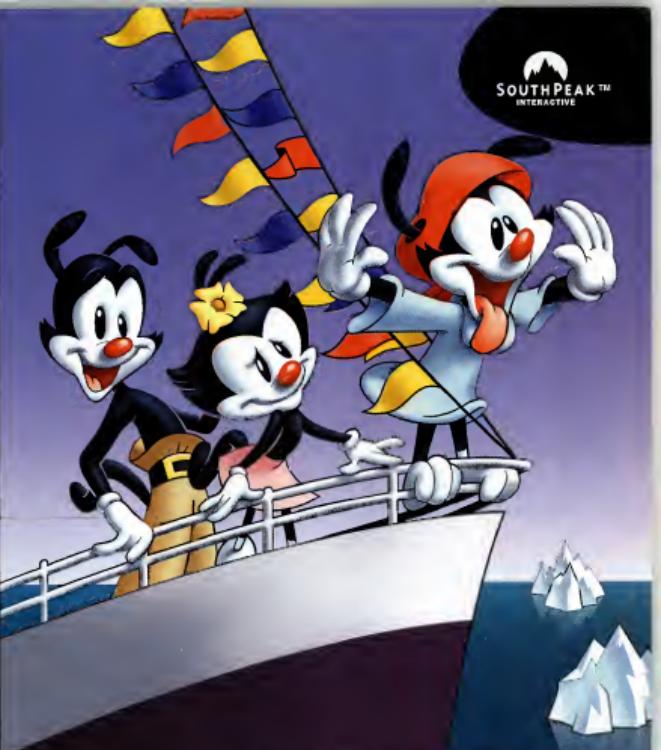


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Gran Turismo 2 PlayStation **Team Fortress 2** PC **Road Rash 64** N64
Unreal Tournament PC **Um Jammer Lammy** PlayStation

ALPHAS

The future of games foretold here



Unreal, *Gran Turismo*, *Team Fortress*, *Parappa*. Four titles that couldn't be more different from each other. With the arrival of spring comes word (and screenshots) of the next projects from their respective creators. But are they all sequels? The answers lie on the following pages



34 **Team Fortress 2** Valve updates its cult war title



38 **Unreal Tournament** Epic revamps multi-player (*Unreal*, for real)

45 **Bust-a-Move 2** PlayStation Enix busts out its disco-dueling sequel

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TEAM FORTRESS 2

It stunned the single-player world with the superlative *Half-Life*. Valve's next mission? To prove the developer can bring the multiplayer masses to war and back



Unlike traditional deathmatch, Team Fortress 2 places its emphasis on teamwork instead of individuality

The problem with Quake and Unreal is that they present these ethereal environments that people have no connection with," says Robin Walker. In contrast, Walker (designer) and John Cook (lead programmer) have created an instantly recognizable look and feel for *Team Fortress 2*: the stylized warfare of epics such as *The Longest Day*, *Stalingrad*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. "We're going for cinematic warfare," explains Walker. "We want it to look like a war movie." But not just because the duo thinks the war-movie motif would work well in a first-person shooter. The look and feel of the game were carefully chosen to appeal to a broader audience than traditional online, multiplayer gamers.

That wasn't the case with the original *Team Fortress*, a multiplayer Quake mod originally created for Walker and Cook's LAN-party friends. "We wanted something beyond capture the

flag, and we'd heard about QuakeC, so we just decided to do it. We put it on the Net and had no plans to update it, but we just kept getting email, so..." says Walker, trailing off.

In retrospect, the huge fan response to *Team Fortress* isn't surprising. *TF* took team play well beyond Capture the Flag, improving gameplay objectives but most notably adding different classes of players, each of which required a different skill set to play well. Some of the classes departed rather dramatically from traditional FPS fare — it's safe to say that no one at Id ever considered putting medics in Quake.

While the different classes struck most players of *TF* as a fun new way to play, they may also represent something far more elusive: a way to bring mainstream and mass market gamers into what has traditionally been the realm of the hardest of hardcore players: online,

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Sierra Studios

DEVELOPER
Valve

RELEASE DATE
July 1999

ORIGIN
U.S.



The design of every level will ensure that each type of player is valuable

multiplayer, first-person shooters.

Why bother trying to appeal to the mainstream at all? "Multiplayer is just the best experience you can have gaming, but there's a whole bunch of people who want to play multiplayer games, but they don't want deathmatch," says Walker. "A multiplayer game is only as good as the number of people who play it, and if we can get more people playing, everyone is going to have more fun."

But unlike *Unreal Tournament* (page 38) or *Quake III: Arena* (NG 50), which attempt to bring new people into the genre by offering extensive training or bot missions, T2 brings them in by fundamentally changing the way the first-person shooters are played.

It's simple, really. There will be nine classes: light infantry, heavy infantry, medic, engineer, commando, demolitions man, sniper, commander, and rocket infantry. In T2, each with different weapons and abilities, and each requiring different skills. Most classes have analogs

"A multiplayer game is only as good as the number of people who play it"

Robin Walker, Designer, Valve

in traditional armed forces, or at least in the small teams featured in movies like *The Dirty Dozen*, *Or Force 10 From Navarone*. Can't aim, but love running around shooting? Try heavy infantry, which features lots of wild spray, but doesn't require good aim. Camper?



A bridge too far? The demolitions expert proves his worth

Sniper. And if you don't like (or can't) shoot at all, help your friends as a medic (healing other players), engineer (building or dismantling set-pieces such as machine-gun nests or cameras), or spy. If you don't even like moving around at all, try your hand at Commander: watching the battle from soldier-mounted cameras (à la Gomer from *Aliens*) and dispensing orders.

The maps (20 will be supplied) feature goals as diverse as "storm the



Team Fortress 2 tries to maintain realism. If you die in mid-match you are then shuttled back into the game via airlift or APC as a reinforcement



beach" (one team attacks, one defends) to "snatch the dictator, alive" (both teams have the same goal) to "escort/kill the civilian." More importantly, the maps are designed so that all team members (up to 32 per team) are valuable in each mission. You could storm the beach without a medic, but you probably wouldn't want to.



Valve is hoping the "old war feel" will make the game more accessible

Equally important to drawing in new players, says Cook, is the game's atmosphere. "It provides instant context. It's really just more background. If we can re-create Omaha Beach, people will know exactly what to do. If we put someone in this situation they've seen countless times in war movies, there won't be any confusion; they'll just know how to play." Another reason for the war environment? "People want reasons for what they're doing. War is something everyone can understand."

Veteran online players have been used to fighting enemies who look identical and animate poorly, but the TF team feels that's too abstract. There will be eight faces per team, and four

"People want reasons for what they're doing. War is something everyone can understand."

John Cook, Lead Programmer, Valve

different teams. Although the teams and their weapons are based on reality (Soviet-style, NATO, etc), the team is quick to point out that the goal is not simulation. "That's the worst thing you can call us!" says Cook. "We want it to be familiar, but we'll always pick fun over realism. So, it might look like an AK-47, but that doesn't mean it's a simulated AK-47." That said, the goal of the look of



Each class has a unique look to help distinguish it in the field



It's likely some teammates will want to stay back with the big guns

the players is to "wrap the player in plausibility."

Part of that plausibility will come from the parametric animation, which lets the team dynamically merge animations. If a player is walking one way and firing another, the animation reflects that. "Guys look like they're doing what they're supposed to be doing," says Walker. The team says that changing the animations based on player's injury levels is also possible, so if you get hit in the leg, you'll limp, although this may not make it into the final game.

Another bow to realism that non-traditional players will appreciate, and which also adds to the war-style gameplay, is respawning. Instead of just reappearing where they die, players respawn in logical places, such as the back of an APC or helicopter, and then arrive at the game on masse as reinforcements. (The reinforcement rate can be adjusted.)

Obviously, getting the player's attention isn't going to be Valve's problem with Team Fortress 2. The true challenge here will be living up to the expectations that the game is already starting to create. Even so, with the company's dedication to in-game realism, approachable game goals, and an interface designed around the first-time player, it seems very likely that even with the competition offered by Unreal Tournament and Quake III: Arena the company is headed for another major success.



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UNREAL TOURNAMENT

One of the best PC action games ever gets a facelift and a new purpose in life: teaching you to play online



Are they live or are they "simulated human opponents"? Developer Epic hopes you won't be able to tell.



In NG 44, we called *Unreal* "the single best action game ever to appear on PC," and we meant it at the time. *Half-Life* has arguably taken the top spot since then. Yet if the game had an Achilles heel, it was its multiplayer modes — its networking code was, to put it kindly, less than efficient. Despite the wealth of interesting weapons and arenas, ping times killed it, and *Unreal* servers that had been so enthusiastically set up came down almost as quickly. On a certain level, *Unreal Tournament* is meant to address this shortcoming.

But it would be an oversimplification to characterize *Unreal Tournament* as a mere expansion pack with cleaner networking code. Like id with *Quake III* (ING 50), Epic wants *Unreal Tournament* to be the world's first multiplayer training game, inviting players of all skill levels and experience. "If you think about it," explains Cliff Bleszinski, Tournament's lead designer, "to play online you've got to get

a computer, get the game you want to play, get an Internet connection, download GameSpy, find a good server — and then when you finally get on there, in five

The game includes four different play modes: Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Domination, and Assault

minutes you get your ass kicked, and you never want to play again. One of the things we're trying to do is appeal to a wide audience."

To this end, Tournament incorporates a number of improvements and differences beyond simply a few new arenas. The game includes four different play modes: Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Domination (where players fight to control specific points on the level), and Assault (one team attacks a structure; one defends); and although these are all multiplayer games, single players can

FORMAT

PC
GT Interactive

PUBLISHER

GT Interactive

DEVELOPER

Epic Games

RELEASE DATE

April 1999

ORIGIN

U.S.

enjoy them as well — thanks to Tournament's heavy emphasis on Bots.

Sorry, we meant "Simulated Human Opponent."

"The average person doesn't know what the hell a 'bot' is," Blezinski argues. "They don't know what a frag is, they don't know what a deathmatch is, and we're not taking any of this for granted. We're not making any assumption about the player's skill — anyone from Joe Six-Pack to the really hard-core guys can get into this easy. We're explaining everything as if it were the first time a person's ever played a game. So if you say to somebody, 'Simulated Human Opponent,' they can easily figure out what that is. They don't go, 'What's a Bot?'" Right.

Bot programmer Steven Polge explains, "there's been improvements to the Bots pretty much in every phase. Probably what was already strongest about the Bots was their ability to navigate around the map, but I've even made a lot of improvements about that, especially with ward geometry or understanding lifts, especially complicated lifts. One of the things I've spent a lot of time on is trying to make the Bots more human-like in terms of their feelings; it's very easy to make a Bot that doesn't miss, but what you want is a Bot that hits or misses like a human opponent."

The Bots in Tournament can function on their own, or they can take commands from the player, who can even modify a given Bot's "personality" by adjusting



The character skins now sport twice the texture resolution

parameters such as skill level, accuracy, combat style (a combination of aggressiveness and how often they take cover), likelihood of camping, alertness, and even favorite weapon. In every gameplay mode, the number of players can vary up to sixteen and can mix real players and Bots in any combination, another feature that makes getting into a game online much easier. "I think people will play four-on-four Capture the Flag where there's just one human player on



If there's one thing the Unreal engine does well, it's pretty environments



There are 12 weapons, and even the old ones have been redesigned





Here are some more
Better Homes and Unreal
Gardens shots

each side leading the team," Polge says. "Victory is in part based on your personal skill, but in large part it's also based on managing your team and changing your strategy to fit the moment, and really setting that up. You can even play with all Bots and just issue commands — the fire button switches between teammates' views — at which point it becomes a Real Time Strategy game."

Each mode of play includes tutorial missions, and as you progress Mortal Kombat-style up the tournament bracket, the Bots use increasingly sophisticated tactics. The hope is that by the time you've got a few completed single-player tournaments under your belt, you'll be ready for the Internet.

The game also features a surprisingly Windows-like interface. While some argue that it makes the game feel a bit like using Excel, there's no denying that "newbies" will find it familiar.

Many of the weapons from the original Unreal will make a return. "But," Bleszinski says, "the guns look a lot more like guns now, which was one complaint

By the time you've got a few completed single-player tournaments under your belt, you'll be ready for the Internet

that a lot of people had; they didn't look like guns, they looked like Cuisinart! Now weapons include a Plasma Cannon with a lightning bolt alt fire, and the Redeemer, a rocket launcher with a hose camera.

Another new gadget is the Translocator, which comes in two parts, the Source Module and the Destination Module. The Destination Module is thrown somewhere, and by activating the Source

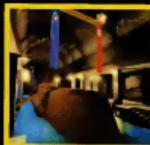


The Redeemer's rocket sends out a lethal shock wave (above). Cliff Bleszinski says, "It's just about the biggest damn gun you've ever seen!"

Module, you teleport to that location. The device can be used like a grappling hook to reach places you couldn't otherwise reach by jumping, or as a quick escape route (destination Modules can be left in place indefinitely), or, if you're very good, as a weapon by telefraggering. Destination modules left lying around can be shot at and moved around by other players (imp a lava pit, for example), and a damaged Module frags the player who tries to use it.

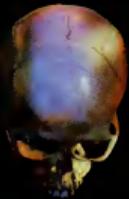
Graphically, the guns and character skins have had their textures doubled in resolution (the characters are uncannily detailed). New effects for shields and a Predator-style invisibility power-up also look very good.

Considering Unreal's iffy multiplayer heritage, Tournament has a lot to prove, and with Quake III aiming at the exact same audience, with essentially the same strategy, it's going to be a tough battle. (One big advantage: Tournament should ship first.) That said, it's fair to say that Unreal Tournament is shaping up to be a multiplayer addict's dream. And with Epic going out of its way to make sure that even first-time players can join in the fun, if it helps to spread the popularity of first-person shooters on the Internet, that can't be a bad thing.



Can Epic woo back Net players who were burned once? It thinks so

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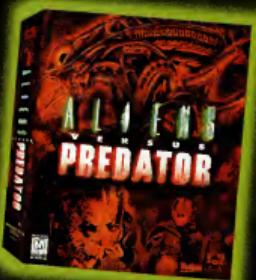
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BUST A MOVE 2: DANCE PARADISE MIX

Enix prepares to hit the floor yet again with the sequel to the dance title of '98



Fan favorites Hico and Shorty return to the cast along with newcomers Tatsunou and Comet, each with their own specific dance styles and unique stages

Hot on the heels of the PaPappa craze in Japan, Enix returned the flavor by releasing one of the more memorable titles in the same vein, Bust-A-Move (renamed Bust-A-Groove in the U.S.). Featuring a set of flawlessly motion-captured dancers and backed by an outrageously catchy collection of dance tunes, Bust-A-Move showed where the newly created, but hard-to-categorize, dance genre could go and successfully transcended mere imitation.

With games like Konami's Dance Dance Revolution being currently ported to PlayStation and poised for success, Enix has been quick to follow up the original title's international success with a sequel, Bust-A-Move 2: Dance Paradise Mix. This time around, Enix promises a new system for entering dance commands, new characters, a bevy of wildly interactive stages, as well as a brand-new company to provide the game's soundtrack.

The newly implemented "Intelligent System" allows the game to adjust command sequences to better fit the player's ability. In the original, each character possessed a set string of moves that only differed at the player successfully progressed from one set to the next. If the player's timing was off (enter in a string of directional commands during the first three beats, then a symbol button on the fourth), penalties meant starting over at the beginning of the string. In Bust-A-Move 2, less dexterous players who enter in the fourth beat command too early or too late will have a whole different set of moves to enter instead of being penalized. This feature promises to provide more variety in gameplay while adding a good layer of complexity to the standard set of moves.

Another feature to be included in the sequel is the overhaul of each character's stage. While Bust-A-Move featured stages



Shorty's stage takes place on a wooden raft that floats through an amusement park jungle ride area and features many surprises

bereft of any real interaction, Enix has sought to remedy the mostly static backdrops by placing each character in their own completely kinetic stage, filled with obstacles, a "rolling" course, and plenty of visual surprises for the sequel. For instance, Shorty's stage takes place on a raft that floats down a theme-park river that houses snapping alligators, medesome ghosts, and amusement-park-type tunnels. Players are rewarded for exceptional gameplay with backgrounds that transform into surreal landscapes. In addition to several returning characters, Bust-A-Move 2 welcomes the arrival of a handful of new dancers: Tatsunou (a bratty 11-year-old schoolboy), Bio (Gas-O's father) and Comet (BAM's Freda's younger sister).

Musically, the development team has chosen to forego its past partnership with Avex Trax in favor of East West Japan and Frontier Booking International to provide the game's soundtrack. Boasting tunes from big name talent such as Morris White of Earth, Wind and Fire fame, Metro the game's developer shows it has more than a little creative ambition up its sleeve. Though there has been no word as to Bust-A-Move 2's fate Stateside, with a string of improvements and additions, Enix's premier franchise looks to continue its quirky, innovative moves when it releases in Japan this spring.



Bust A Move 2's "Intelligent System" ensures a much more varied set of dance moves for each character during gameplay



Abundantly animated stages will figure prominently into *BAM 2*'s gameplay

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
Enix (Japan)

DEVELOPER
Metro

RELEASE DATE
Spring 1999 (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan

GRAN TURISMO 2

Next Generation travels to Japan to meet the man responsible for last year's best PlayStation racing game and digs all the dirt on the eagerly awaited sequel

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
SCEI

DEVELOPER
Polyphony Digital Inc.

RELEASE DATE
TBA

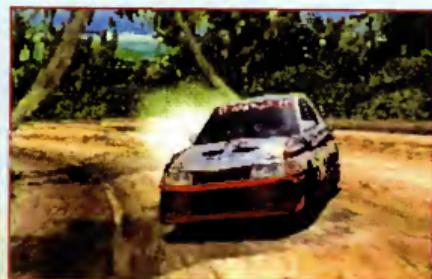
ORIGIN
Japan

Kazunori Yamauchi



The original *Gran Turismo* was a massive hit worldwide, and deservedly so. Perhaps the ultimate racing game for the car fanatic, it practically redefined the genre on PlayStation in both graphics and gameplay, and a sequel is not only inevitable, but highly desirable. Second time around, the original team members remain, but they're joined by 30 part-time graphic designers, and just about every aspect of the original has been enhanced — out of necessity rather than luxury. *Gran Turismo* uses about 75% of the PlayStation's maximum performance, so that means there's another 25% extra," explains producer Kazunori Yamauchi. "And what I'm trying to achieve in *Gran Turismo 2* is to try and use the remaining 25% to bring out all of the aspects of the original at a higher quality."

And this is where the improvements come in, perhaps the most striking of which is that *Gran Turismo 2* features several categories of motorsports, namely production, GT, rally, and sportscar racing. Another impressive and exciting revelation is that 400-odd vehicles are currently due to make the final code. "We're aiming to get the cars to look even more realistic," he reveals. "So the visual quality is going to be



enhanced, but it's unlikely to have the same impact as *Gran Turismo* had, as that was so different from all the other racing games of that time. But we're aiming to use the graphics in a way that if car enthusiasts or car lovers look at the game they will be very happy with those minor improvements — the overall level of detail should please them."

No doubt it will, but then so will the selection. Although unable to divulge any of the many vehicles we were shown as potential final models (pending licensing negotiations with their respective manufacturers) the lineup is way more comprehensive

than the game's predecessor. But not only does GT2 offer a far more international automotive menu, the cars have been picked by individuals with an ample knowledge of the subject. Sure, expect plenty of obvious motoring entries but even the briefest of scrolls through the vehicles on offer reveals some real surprises, including special and limited editions bound to delight even the most dedicated motoring aficionado.

There's a huge selection of tracks, too. Most were still being designed at the time of this writing, but expect twice the number of the original as well as a mixture of circuits and point-to-point stages. Like the cars, the track also now boast a more multinational flavor, so don't be

surprised to find yourself rallying in Tahiti, negotiating 90-degree turns in a Seattle street circuit, speeding



through Rome's ancient, narrow streets, and of course, slinging the car around every bend in the Côte d'Azur.

Naturally, these will also benefit from a polygonal makeover. "You've

as possible. The model will behave more authentically and that will mean the cars would drive as real cars drive." This, needless to say, is ambitious, but given the astounding dynamics in the original game,

sportscar in the game. So we didn't just add four-wheel drive; we also changed the height of the engine," he says. "We modified the car in order to make what in our opinion was the ideal sportscar." However,



Notice how the suspension acts different for each tire of the cars — It's this kind of realism that's made the series one of the best, and best selling

probably noticed that something like R4's environments are as pretty as the cars themselves, so I would also like to improve our tracks' aesthetics," says Yamauchi.

"However, GT2 uses almost half of the PlayStation's ability in physics modeling so all of the game's other aspects must be used with the remaining 50%." Surely then, Gouraud shading is out of the question? "We'd used Gouraud shading in Motor Roof GP, so technically we're able to do it, but as half of the CPU power is used for physics, using Gouraud shading for the entire game would exceed the cache memory capacity," he explains.

"If the information exceeds the memory capacity, the performance of the CPU drops dramatically, which is why we didn't use it in the first game. But for GT2, we're trying to implement some Gouraud shading. We'll think of the most effective use for it."

Of course, improvements extend beyond a higher number of cars, circuits and prettier graphics. "The third major improvement in GT2 would be the car physics model," Yamauchi adds. "The physics in GT was very close to real life cars but was still lacking some of the mechanics actual cars have, so in GT2 I'd like to make it as complete

perhaps not unrealistic. Next Gen was shown the set-up options screens used by the designers to input the characteristics for the cars featured in the game, and it's one of the most comprehensive listings we've seen yet. Every aspect of a motor car can be altered, from the usual torque, gear ratios, brake balance, and suspension stiffness to steering angle, axle width, alloy size, and tire tread.

"The physics in GT was very close to real life cars, but ... I'd like to make it as complete as possible. The model will behave more authentically and that will mean the cars will drive as real cars."

For a car enthusiast, the temptation to experiment with these parameters must be enormous, and given the appearance of a certain "tweaked" 4WD Mitsubishi FTO in the original game, it's not something Yamauchi is necessarily capable of resisting. "That's right, there is a 4WD FTO in GT, but I made it for two reasons," he confesses. "While developing GT I heard a rumor that Mitsubishi was trying to make a 4WD FTO, but it gave up the idea because making a 4WD turbocharged sportscar would end up too expensive. The other reason was as an experiment in making the ideal

despite the incredibly driver-friendly result, Yamauchi is keen to emphasize that no programming tricks were used to achieve this. Rather, it was a case of tweaking the suspension, moving the gas tank and engine to the ideal position, and having the ideal wheelbase and tread, with surprising consequences. "As a result of finding ideal positions for these things, I found that many cars in real life are totally





The Gran Turismo series is made for auto enthusiasts by a group of auto enthusiasts, and it shows in every loving detail

unbalanced," he announces confidently. "Among all the cars, the closest to perfection is the Ferrari 355. Compared with the Honda NSX, the suspension is very soft but does not exhibit as much body roll, and it's very comfortable to drive as well as really fast on circuits."

Having personally driven most of the cars in *Gran Turismo*, Yamauchi is in a position to make the above

developing GT, but his current vehicle, a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution 5, has suffered no such fate.

"Sound is one of the things that I'm not satisfied with in *Gran Turismo*. For instance, we tried to make the graphics and other aspects as sophisticated as possible, but we didn't have enough time to work on sophisticated sound. So even if GT had good sound, GT2's will be better."

"Among all the cars, the closest to perfection is the Ferrari 355. Compared with the Honda NSX, the suspension is very soft but does not exhibit as much body roll, and it's very comfortable to drive..."

reflection with a certain amount of authority. So you listen when he explains why he likes compact, fast cars and why the Lotus Elise and the forthcoming Honda S2000 (for which he has already placed an order), are two of his favorite cars. He may have crashed his Subaru Impreza whilst

he boasts. "Actual cars sound better, which is why I'm not satisfied. Whether from inside or out, the car sounds a lot better."

And if you think Yamauchi is a tad harsh on GT's sound quality, you may be surprised to read what he has to say about the game's CPU drivers. "The AI is one probably one of the lowest achievements in GT, so in GT2 it will be much improved. For instance, the opponents will drive as if actual human beings were driving them," he reveals. But of course, everything in life is relative. "When I say that it was probably the lowest aspect, it's compared with the game's other aspects. Compared with other racing games, this low achievement is probably still superior. In normal racing games, a car comes up to you, overtakes you and races into the distance. And then another one comes and does the same thing — or you do it to them — and you'll probably never see more than a

couple of cars at the same time on the screen. With GT, the group of six cars are always racing with each other, which is actually very difficult to achieve."

Predictably, and like R4, GT2 will support Sony's Pocket Station for players wishing to grow their vehicles when separated from their 32-bit machine. Less predictably, jog Con compatibility will be offered, in addition to normal Dual Shock use. "When I first heard Nemco was making this force feedback controller, I thought it would be perfect for GT2 because it would make players feel as though they were driving the vehicles," explains Yamauchi. "But when I tried it, it proved less precise than I expected. If Namco had made it in the right way it would have been a perfect control method, so I was a little disappointed."

But despite this slight blemish on what is otherwise shaping up to be a thoroughly unmissable videogame driving experience, Yamauchi quickly rekindles our spirit with a final mission statement: "I would like to see more people play the game — in fact, as many people as possible whilst still maintaining the fun aspect of the original, so the aim is to provide a game that everyone can enjoy, albeit at a higher level," he says. "*Gran Turismo* was released December 1997. I'm told that there are still people playing it now, but let's say that an average player may have taken two months to complete the original game. For GT2, we're expecting the average user to spend a year playing it."



Photography by Leslie Lohse

SHADOW MAN

Acclaim's next hero may not be Turok, but he's still got a fighting chance



Shadow Man doesn't move as gracefully as Lara Croft, but he tries to make up for it by being far more violent



Minor puzzles are scattered throughout the game, such as crossing a lava-filled room

When *Next Generation* first looked at *Shadow Man* more than a year ago (NG 38), we saw the beginnings of a third-person adventure that was equally ominous and violent. The developers at Iguana UK told us they intended to take players to realms beyond the natural world with a plot heavily laden with voodoo flavor. Now, just a few months shy of completion, the game is looking to do just that.

"Everything was on paper but the technology," says Darren Falcus, managing director of Iguana UK. But now, as his latest demo proves, the gameplay and cut scenes capture the intended style — albeit almost a year late. "It's been a very ambitious project," Falcus explains. "Maybe we underestimated it, but we want it to be done right."

To Acclaim's credit, the game hasn't been rushed out the door. The developer has been given the time to add quality voice-over and cut scenes done with the in-game models. Of *Shadow Man's* 16 levels, 12 are set in the macabre netherworld called Deadside, and the other four are real-world environments set in backwater Louisiana.

Currently, the team is finishing the AI, placing enemies, and tweaking level design. The RPG elements are also being balanced, as *Shadow Man* will gain power and new abilities throughout the

game. According to Falcus, the PC version will be finished first, with the N64 and PlayStation versions following closely behind.

So will *Shadow Man* hit with as much thunder as *Turok*? On the Tomb Raider-less N64, it's possible. Players bombarded with horrific environments and mature themes rarely found in this medium may overlook the minor gameplay issues that seem to come with late titles. And even if it's not perfect, *Shadow Man* should represent a step forward for the genre.



Iguana UK developed the Vista 3D engine for *Shadow Man*, which will also be used as a code base for the sequel

FORMAT
PC, PlayStation, N64

PUBLISHER
Acclaim

DEVELOPER
Iguana UK

RELEASE DATE
Summer 1999

ORIGIN
UK

UM JAMMER LAMMY

Gaming's hip-hop pop-culture hero gets upstaged in the follow-up to *PaRappa the Rapper*



Though the music style of *Um Jammer Lammy* will change, the quirky 2D visuals of *PaRappa* remain the same



Greenblatt's distinctive character designs and Matsuura's ear for catchy tunes should make the entire presentation of *Um Jammer Lammy* a truly inspired work

In a market filled to the brim with big-budget action-oriented titles aimed at an increasingly sophisticated audience, who would have thought that *PaRappa*, a simple-looking game featuring a rapping dog and an ultra-pop soundtrack could have captured the imagination of the mass market? SCEI bet on the venture and came up with a highly marketable mascot who single-handedly created a whole new genre — rhythm action — within console gaming and spawned a set of inspired clones.

While the game's phenomenal success in the Japanese market foretold little of its Stateside demand, *PaRappa the Rapper* managed to ignite an underground fervor, ensuring the cartoon character's entrenchment as a memorable mascot in the U.S. Using a "Simon Says" type of interface, the game enticed players to "rap" along with *PaRappa* through a series of interactive segments that neatly tied into a whimsical storyline of "Boy Meets Girl," or more appropriately, "Dog Meets Flower." *PaRappa*'s refusal to take itself seriously went well with the title's brilliantly catchy soundtrack and remarkable character designs, resulting in a product that more resembled an inspired art project than an actual game.

Much like *PaRappa the Rapper*, *Um Jammer Lammy* utilizes a seamless mix of cinematics and interactive segments, which meld together like an animated storybook

Nonetheless, the end product showed off what a little imagination, a lot of humor, and a ton of talent could do in the videogame market. And with the demand for a sequel, *PaRappa*'s creators, Rodney Greenblatt (character design/story) and Masaya Matsuura (music/programming), have taken up the challenge to bring the *PaRappa* universe to interactive life once again. On the second run, *PaRappa* is no longer; instead players will be introduced to another one of Greenblatt's characters, Um Jammer Lammy, a female lamb with a penchant for rock 'n' roll.

With only a brief cameo appearance from the red-capped hip hop hero, Um Jammer Lammy focuses more on Lammy and her rock band, Milk Can. But despite *PaRappa*'s absence in the lead role of the game, his past cohorts play pivotal parts in Lammy's adventures: Katy Kat appears as a bassist in Milk Can, while Master Chop Chop Onion drops in for a series of sing-

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
SCEA

DEVELOPER
SCEI

RELEASE DATE
1999

ORIGIN
Japan



Gameplay scenarios will pit Lammy against some of the rap masters featured in PaRappa. But this time around, the music is decidedly more pop than hip-hop

along on stage with the band. Unfortunately, with the game still in development in Japan, it's still unknown whether or not the storyline from the original will continue with Um Jammer Lammy. But SCEI has added a two-player mode as well as a "jam mode."

The two-player mode allows gamers to test their abilities against a friend. Unlike the two-player mode in games like 989 Studios' Bust-A-Groove and Konami's Dance Dance Revolution, Lammy will most likely utilize a "switch-off" type of interaction, giving each player a chance to dazzle the audience before handing the spotlight over to the opponent. Since the

Two-player mode has been a feature long promised to be included in the sequel—even before the original hit the States. The option promises to provide a higher amount of replay value than PaRappa

game relies on both a success meter (gauging the player's performance from "Cool" to "Awful") as well as a points system (freestyle and a consistent "Cool" reading rewards players with high points), the winner will be the one with the highest score. Whether or not two players can join in during the Story Mode is currently unknown, but it might be an interesting feat if the designers are able to pull it off. SCEI has remained tightlipped about the game's jam mode, but it's safe to say that the option will allow a larger number of gamers to face off in pairs, with the winner progressing into the next round.

With a strong publisher behind the game, as well as a devoted audience that remembers PaRappa as the pioneer of one of the most popular genres in current Japanese gaming, Um Jammer Lammy is slated for an unspecified 1999 PlayStation release in the U.S., but promises to shine just as brightly the second time around.



Rodney Greenblatt's whimsical character designs perfectly embody the franchise's eye-catching style and lighthearted feel!



Lammy's rocking trio Milk Can debuts in PaRappa's sequel



I'M THE GOOD AND THE BAD.
YOU'RE JUST UGLY.



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ROAD RASH 64

In the hands of THQ, can EA's faltering franchise regain its luster on Nintendo 64?



Bikers have been textured in either dark or bright colors to make their club affiliation more easily identifiable.



"We're planning to do up to four-player racing, and we'd like to do some additional four-player modes, like deathmatch"

Don Traeger, Executive Producer, Pacific Power and Light

that's exactly what's happening with *Road Rash 64*. Under development at Pacific Power and Light (formerly DT Productions, started by EA ex-pat and BMG Interactive survivor Don Traeger), the first-ever *Nintendo Road Rash* shows more promise and playability in its pre-alpha state than the finished version of last year's *Road Rash 3D* for PlayStation.



The city section, only now coming into the game, will have multiple districts, including a run-down area as well as a high-rise section.

"I think sometimes you can lose focus on what's really the heart and soul of the game," says Traeger, politely sidestepping the notion of the franchise's recent decline. "*Road Rash* has always been racing and fighting; I believe that the brand still has a lot of value and potential."

Traeger admits the datastreaming technology behind *Road Rash 3D* is pretty amazing, but explains that the engine, tools, and technology for *Road Rash 64* have been developed from scratch for Nintendo 64. However, many of EA's design concepts from *Road Rash 3D* will be carried through to this project. Specifically, courses will link up to form an entire *Road Rash* universe, and the Big Game mode will enable players to ride as a "club" members. (The term "gang" is a no-no; EA's viewpoint is that the word has a negative connotation. By that logic, as long as you're in a "club," it's okay to beat someone with a crowbar while going 90 mph on a motorcycle.)

As the game will be optimized for Nintendo 64, "we're planning to do up to four player racing," says Traeger. "We'd like to do some additional four-player modes, like deathmatch, but I don't want to

THE AI RIDERS HAVE BEEN PROGRAMMED TO BUNCH UP AND CRASH AT TIMES, creating a very intense environment for players. One biker down can create an awful mess

FORMAT
Nintendo 64

PUBLISHER
THQ

DEVELOPER
Pacific Power and Light

RELEASE DATE
Fall 1999

ORIGIN
U.S.



In the Big Game mode, players can join either the colorful sport bikers or the grungy cruiser bikers. Or go it alone and face the consequences

promise anything yet."

While pre-alpha, the game runs without slowdown and can display as many as 11 bikes onscreen at once. "We're going to push enough polygons to keep a lot of bikes onscreen," says Lead Programmer Cory Ondrejka. "We hate those racing games where you see only one car. With *Road Rash* you need to see

perhaps the most surreal series ever conceived. To keep the action fast-paced, a hand-animated, skeletal-based animation system was chosen over a motion-capture system.

But there's a long way to go before a release this fall. "We're obviously not done with the display engine," says Ondrejka. "Until the track engine goes in, we really don't have a good way of placing objects."

Subsequently, the game is sparse on scenery, and damage textures, some breakable objects, and the occasional hidden short cut are all on the "to do" list. Sound effects hadn't been incorporated, and the team was still dickering about how to use the 4-meg expansion pack and its effects on several experimental letterbox/widescreen modes.

But if the game continues to evolve in the manner it has thus far, three things may happen. Pacific Power and Light's first title (of three) will be a success; THQ will continue to prove the N64 a viable platform; and hopefully, someone at EA, locked away in their ivory campus, will look up from their stock ticker and take note.

"We're going to push enough polygons to keep a lot of bikes onscreen"

Cory Ondrejka, Lead Programmer, Pacific Power and Light

more than that — it's a combat game."

And the combat is in there. *Next Generation* ran through a test track to find the excitement of *Road Rash* of yore, punching and kicking the opposition as it came alongside. Ondrejka explains that the trademark weapons have yet to be implemented, but the chain, the lead pipe, the crowbar, the nunchaku, the billyclub, the cattle prod, and the tazer are all planned. The team is also planning some new melee weapons and a dreaded new move — enabling players to jam a stick into the front wheel of an opposing rider. To keep the fighting gameplay at the pinnacle of intensity, the AI riders will occasionally form packs, creating very dangerous situations as the fighting explodes into an epic brawl.

Aside from the fighting, the game's physics engine is right on par. Programmer Lef Terry has even modeled air friction so that drafting physics will apply. The bikes already handle with just the right mix of real-world physics and arcade buoyancy, bringing a new level of realism to



Separate models were created for riders of the cruiser bikes and sport bikes; players can also choose a male or female rider



NG



Spectacular crashes remain a big part of the game

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REVOLUTION

A TEAM SPORT FOR

D MERCENARIES EVERYWHERE

THIS IS A CHALLENGE.

TO ANYONE WHO EVER

1903 A MAN DOWN IN A 3D SHOOTER
AND LIVED IT

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.

PROVE THAT YOU ARE THE BEST OF THE BEST.
THIS IS THE SPOT TO GET A HEAD START ON YOUR FUTURE.

THIS IS A SINGLE-PLAYER TRIAL BY FIRE.

A TEAM SPORT FOR

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WPA

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JADE COCOON: THE STORY OF TAMAMAYU

Can the developer of *Virtua Fighter 3tb* make a great RPG?



Cocooning an enemy, the staple gameplay feature that sets the game apart from the pack, is portrayed with dramatic in-game camerawork



Players can meld two captured monsters together in realtime to engineer powerful offspring with attributes of both parents

Nintendo 64 games stockpiled from the floor to the three-story-high ceiling. This gamer's equivalent of Aladdin's cave of treasure is the storage facility of game distributor SVC, Crave's parent company.

"Because we already have strong relationships with many publishers," says Crave Senior Director of Marketing Jane Gibson, "we can strategically fill certain gaps in the market." Specifically, the company will be publishing Nintendo 64 versions of Activision's Asteroids and Battlezone, but its next big title is the English conversion of the Japanese RPG,

Tamamayu Monogatari, or Jade Cocoon.

Set in the fantasy world of Syrus, Jade Cocoon places players in the role of Levant, a boy on the verge of manhood who has inherited his family's magical power to capture monsters in a cocoon. Players begin with short trips into the forest to capture monsters in turn-based combat until certain events launch them on a genuine quest. Once a monster is beaten to a fraction of its original hit points, players can kill it or attempt to cocoon the monster. Once a monster is cocooned, players can have the monster spun into silk for cash or can opt to keep the monster and raise it, subsequently enabling the player to make three monsters part of the party. But there's more to this option than standard

FORMAT

PlayStation

PUBLISHER

Crave Entertainment

DEVELOPER

Genki

RELEASE DATE

July 1999

ORIGIN

Japan



The town works on a money system, so players need not spend as much time running around from shop to shop



Every line of dialogue has voice-over, and there are up to 190 minutes recorded



The game features eight different worlds, each with its own boss monster

Tamagotchi-style monster raising. A player can merge two captured monsters together in realtime to create a more powerful monster. The new monster will actually have physical characteristics of both monsters, as well as several attributes of the "parent" monsters. For example, merging a monster with a fire attack with a monster with a water attack will yield a monster with both attacks, but neither attack will be quite as powerful as it was before.

Players can continue to genetically engineer their monsters, recombining them with new monsters as much as they like. And how is it done in realtime? Crave's Senior Producer Mike Arkin explains that each of the game's 150 monsters feature the exact same number of polygons, making it easier to blend the models.

Monsters aside, the human characters in Jade Cocoon are realistically modeled. An influence of Virtua Fighter 3b, concurrently in development at Genki? Perhaps, but it's likely that this decision came from Katsuya Konou, a famous anime art director who recently directed the animation in "Princess Mononoke," the largest-grossing anime in the history of Japan. Konou is the art lead for Jade Cocoon, and his mastery of style is evident in every frame. The 600 pre-rendered backdrops are impressive, and even more so is the anime intro sequence, but surprisingly, what struck *Next Generation* were the cut scenes.

"The in-game engine is very flexible," says Crave Producer Daryl Pitts, "making for brilliant in-game cut scenes."

Pitts is right. The characters move with graceful expression, and the solid use of the in-game camera brings a cinematic quality to those segments that put them on par with those found in *Tenchu*, and perhaps even *Metal Gear Solid*.

Like any good RPG, players will gain levels and upgrade weapons and armor as

they battle their way through the game's eight worlds. Pitts explains that the game's portal design prevents repetitive backtracking, and that even after the game has been won, players can continue to hunt monsters in the woods and raise them. Why? Well, for the PocketStation battle mode. Attaching a PocketStation will also unlock special monsters, eight of which are very rare. The rare monsters appear randomly, but Pitts believes players could spend a year with the game and only find one or two of them.

While we could go on about the plot, and how the wife of the player's character plays a significant role, it's best for players to discover this on their own. And will RPG enthusiasts find this game niche with story? "It's extremely rich," says Arkin. "You may need to play it two or three times to get all the story."

Of course, we don't really know, because everything was still in Japanese. But considering the high quality of the rest of the game, we're willing to take his word for it.



The high-quality anime intro to Jade Cocoon, and the work of one of Japan's biggest animators on the project, demonstrates Japan's acceptance of the videogame as a serious artistic medium

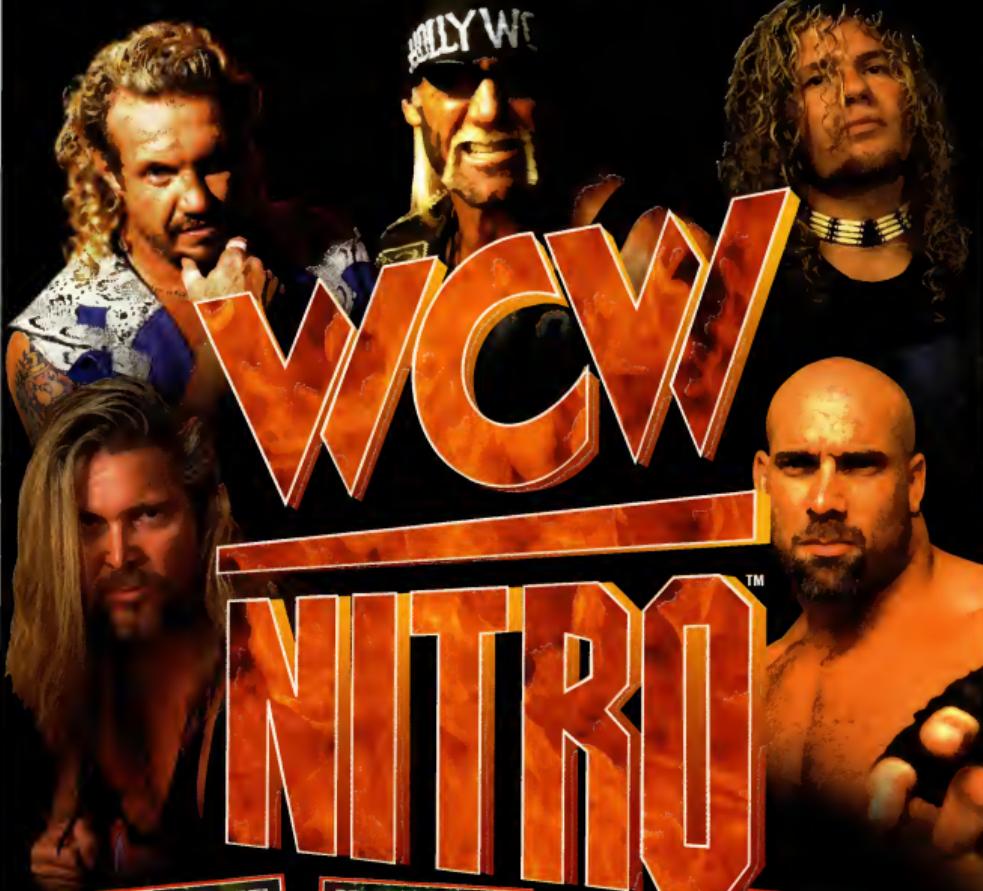


Two captured monsters can be morphed together and then genetically re-engineered to form a stronger monster



For the U.S. version, Genki is adding Dual Shock support, improving loading times, and redesigning several menus

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WINDOWS
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MILESTONES

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

Recently released in Japan, *Final Fantasy VIII* leads the pack of next-generation console RPGs. While U.S. gamers eagerly await this recent installment of Japan's juggernaut.

franchise, other developers are working hard to come up with some inspired content of their own, including *Never Dies*, *Trans-Am Racing*, *Jet Force Gemini*, and the "nearly done" *Daikatana*.

FINAL FANTASY VIII PlayStation



TOMORROW NEVER OIES

PlayStation



While we first saw Bond at E3 last year, MGM assures us this third-person action game will be a summer release, complete with a two-player mode.

CYBERNETIC EMPIRE



This PlayStation adventure from Japanese developer Wolf Team resembles a certain high-profile title from Konami.

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER



Crystal Dynamics' Soul Reaver for the PC will bring models with a higher polygon count and some new lighting effects.

JET FORCE GEMINI

Nintendo 64



The latest Jet Force Gemini screenshots to come out of Rare lead us to believe the game will incorporate a fair amount of platform elements to round out the shoot'em-up action. Given the cutesy nature of the characters, the action element may take the back seat. It will be interesting to see how well Rare can blend the genres.

TRANS-AM RACING PC**VAMPIRE** PlayStation

だって、おたかは本当に恋の
その美しい恋を含む。



カーシュラット回路



Not the anticipated PC RPG from Nihilistic, this PlayStation RPG from Japan offers more traditional console elements with a gothic storyline.

HEAVY GEAR 2 PC

During the writing of our fall preview, Activision insisted *HG2* would hit stores during the '98 holiday window. That window has moved to March.

RC STUNT COPTER

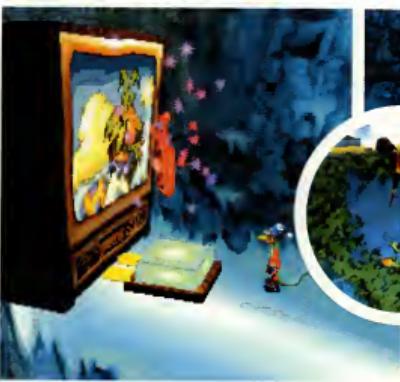
Dave Perry and Co. have taken their Playstreme RC helicopter sim and have since built a cartoonish game world around it.

DISCWORLD NOIR

Author Terry Pratchett's Discworld takes a private detective twist in this atmospheric adventure bound for PC/PlayStation

DAIKATANA PC

DAIKATANA lies in the eye of the ion Storm. Many team members have gone with the wind, but this title (shipping June?) may be enjoyable, yet unlikely to surpass Half-Life

GEX 3: DEEP COVER GECKO PlayStation

While Crystal Dynamics is touting the fact that Baywatch's Marilice Andrade is featured in the cut scenes, we are far more interested in how the game has changed from last year's installment. It looks good, if similar to the last game, with notable camera improvements.



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Actual 3rd hole, Coeur d'Alene

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—Bill Reagan,
General Manager,
The Coeur d'Alene Resort



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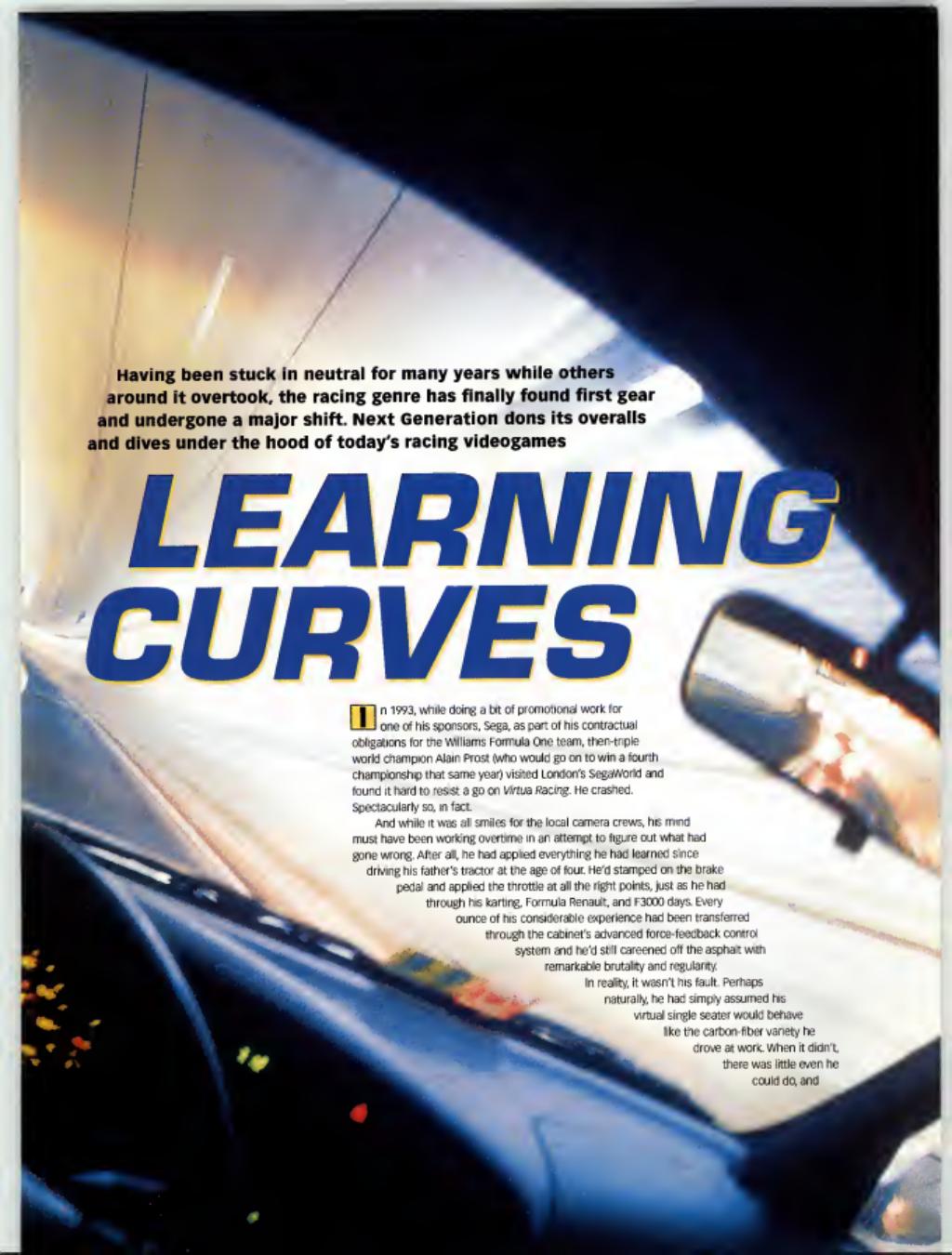
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Having been stuck in neutral for many years while others around it overtook, the racing genre has finally found first gear and undergone a major shift. Next Generation dons its overalls and dives under the hood of today's racing videogames

LEARNING CURVES

In 1993, while doing a bit of promotional work for one of his sponsors, Sega, as part of his contractual obligations for the Williams Formula One team, then-triple world champion Alain Prost (who would go on to win a fourth championship that same year) visited London's SegaWorld and found it hard to resist a go on Virtua Racing. He crashed. Spectacularly so, in fact.

And while it was all smiles for the local camera crews, his mind must have been working overtime in an attempt to figure out what had gone wrong. After all, he had applied everything he had learned since driving his father's tractor at the age of four. He'd stamped on the brake pedal and applied the throttle at all the right points, just as he had through his karting, Formula Renault, and i3000 days. Every ounce of his considerable experience had been transferred through the cabinet's advanced force-feedback control system and he'd still careened off the asphalt with remarkable brutality and regularity.

In reality, it wasn't his fault. Perhaps naturally, he had simply assumed his virtual single seater would behave like the carbon-fiber variety he drove at work. When it didn't, there was little even he could do, and

the result must have surprised him as much as those standing around watching.

But anyone who walked away thinking that *Virtua Racing* was hard because it was realistic couldn't have got their steering rods more crossed. Like the world's first 3D arcade racer, Namco's 1989 *Winning Run*, or the highly popular sprite-based Monaco Grand Prix before it, Sega's first polygonal racer was difficult because its developer had played around with Newton's principles of physics and come up with a highly suspect set of dynamics.

POWER TO THE PEDAL

The truth is, until not too long ago racing games had little use for a brake button. In fact, the majority of titles featuring fast vehicles could be played by wildly swinging the steering wheel or yanking the joystick without having to think about the application of the middle pedal. Who ever even thought about braking in *Final Lap*, *Chase HQ*, or even *OutRun*? These days, that's no longer the case. Whereas cars could once be thrown into corners at unrealistic velocity without fear of understeer setting in, the current incorporation of authentic dynamics into games requires an equally realistic approach.

And, as any racing driver worth his STP overalls will tell you, braking is the essence of a fast lap. Any fool can floor the accelerator in a straight line, but

DYNAMICS

Taking the driving experience into the future

COLIN MCRAE RALLY



GRAN TURISMO



Authentic dynamics are the future of racing games. TOCA's producer, Gavin Raeburn, believes the most important thing to get right in a driving game is to convince you that you're part of the game, part of the experience.

"Getting the physics of the car right is a very important first step," he says. And you know you've got it right when someone can apply their knowledge of driving to the polygonal vehicle onscreen and see it behave the way it would in real life. Next Generation witnessed this when a rally instructor, who had never before played a videogame, got to grips with one of *Colin McRae Rally's* Corsican stages and posted a very respectable time.

Grand Prix Legends is more difficult, but

GP LEGENDS



GRAN PRIX 2



only because it's realistically recreating the task of driving a 1967 F1 car. That isn't to say the modern F1 car is a learner-friendly vehicle, but a quick go on *Grand Prix 2* should illustrate the advancements in stability, deceleration ability, and the effect of downforce on cornering speeds that 30 years of development allow.

Part of the genius of *Gran Turismo* is that the standard production cars make it accessible to most individuals. Its vehicles are not — initially — motorized beasts boasting 700 horsepower and requiring a racing licence. They're everyday models that you can steer around the track with little problems, provided you keep to velocities that are within your driving ability. Just like in real life, in fact.



Atari's *Night Driver*, from 1976: the very first "3D" racing game in history

picking the optimal braking point and deceleration intensity before a bend while approaching at two to three times the national speed limit is a little trickier. Brake too much, too early, and you'll fail to carry enough speed into the corner, resulting in lost time; coming in too fast, though, causes you to waste precious seconds correcting the car on the exit of the bend. That's assuming you've managed to round the curve without running up crashing into the wall, of course.

Prost is now an F1 team manager with two paid drivers to take the laps for him rather than having to worry about it himself, and if the *Virtua Racing* experience has haunted him over the last six years, he

would find a trip down to his local arcade particularly exorcising because along with the graphics, physics in coin-ops have since moved up a gear. *Ridge Racer* et al still exist, but their like faces inevitable extinction. The arrival of Daytona on the arcade scene marked the beginning of an ever more dynamically complex grid of motor racing coin-ops. Where once *OutRun* had stood as the ultimate driving experience, the tire screeching now came from the Sega Rallis and *Racing Jams* of the arcade racing world. The consumer game soon heard about it, and the console driving game followed in the coin-ops' slipstream. It's no coincidence that despite the existence of countless arcade-style racers, *Gran*

Turismo and TOCA were last year's best-selling PlayStation racing titles.

FAST LEARNER

"I recently realized that making the cars in the game as close as possible to real cars doesn't necessarily mean that it will make controlling the game difficult," says Kazunori Yamauchi, producer of *Gran Turismo* and its equally impressive sequel (see p. 46). "So even if you reproduce the actual car within the game, the driving should become even easier — putting in a more complex physics model doesn't mean it will be difficult."

These days, after the immediacy of *Gran Turismo*, this may seem a perfectly logical statement, but as realism has traditionally been linked with difficulty, it's still a particularly revolutionary concept. "Of course, and I thought the same way too at the beginning, especially after playing lots of simulations on PC," says Yamauchi. "But while developing GT, I gradually had the feeling that making it more elaborate would not necessarily make it a more difficult game, although I didn't know this for sure until we did it. But if you consider real-life driving — for instance, I take my car to the local circuit and can drive — it isn't as difficult as many think. Of course, if you are driving a sports car and adopt a highly advanced driving technique, this would be very difficult, but if you drive normally, everybody can do it, so I thought, 'Why can't this be



Once upon a time, all driving games wanted to be like Sega's enduring and gloriously playable *OutRun* arcade

"The user must feel at one with the car he's driving, and it must respond in a way he would expect the real car to"

Gavin Raeburn, Codemasters

reproduced in a game?"

According to Yamauchi, the problem with many racing simulations is that they fail to use real or precise physics models. "That's why it makes the game difficult," he says. "If you're driving your own car in a straight line on a track and turn into the first corner, the car will not spin and crash

into a wall. So that's how cars are made, and that's how they should be reproduced in the game — it might be very difficult, but if you do have the correct physics model reproduced in the game, then it should be achievable."

Most developers now recognize the importance of physics, although some believe a little cheating can enhance the gaming experience. "The user must feel at one with the car he's driving, and it must respond in a way he would expect the

REALISM

The crucial, delicate balance between authenticity and game aspects

TOCA



GRAN TURISMO



COLIN MCRAE RALLY



Advances in processing power have undoubtedly allowed developers to release ever more authentic and complete recreations of motorsporting activity, but there is also an undeniable trend towards realism in all games, not just racing titles. The concept is simple — placing you within a real-world environment not only makes it easier to relate to the game, but it also allows you to react to that environment in a realistic way. So *GoldenEye* guards can be shot through glass, falling from excessive heights will kill Lara, and Solid Snake must refrain from making any sound or suffer the consequences.

You can have too much of a good thing, of course. "In TOCA we went for out-and-out realism, which is what we thought people

wanted, but although the tracks were as accurately modeled as it was possible to get, we still got criticized for the tracks looking bland," says Gavin Raeburn, the title's producer. "Unfortunately, as the real tracks are built for the most part on deserted airfields, they are just very bland. So, yes, the user may say they want realism, but what they really want is what they imagine or remember the realism to actually be like — the whole experience. You need to build a believable world that reflects the sport or style of racing you are trying to re-create." However, for some people, such as one of last year's new Touring Car series drivers who admitted learning the tracks by playing TOCA on his PlayStation, only absolute realism will ever do.

real car to, otherwise he'll blame the game for his driving mistakes and feel frustrated," says Gavin Raeburn, producer on both of Codemasters' highly successful TOCA games. "This doesn't actually mean the car physics need to be a carbon copy of real life, and, in fact, I believe exaggerating certain areas of physics is necessary if you're to match the expectation of what the user remembers or believes real driving experience is actually like."

Was this the case with two popular Touring Car sims? "Yes. For TOCA and especially TOCA 2, we tweaked certain areas of the game to make it more involving," he says. "For example, although the cars are all front-wheel-drive in TOCA 2, we moved the weight balance of all the TOCA cars back about one to two feet. This simple change makes the cars handle even-so-slightly more like mid-engined cars, and makes them a lot less frustrating and a lot less dull to drive."

REALITY BITES

For others, however, only complete realism will do. Take Mike Lescault, director of development at Papyrus and a longtime developer of racing simulations for the PC. When he

talks about the dynamics of the company's sublime *Grand Prix Legends*, you soon realize that he's part of this group. In fact, given his enthusiasm for skid marks, he probably chairs the meetings. "Usually in racing games, if a car crashes, you can see the tire marks as two straight lines going into the distance," he says. "With us, however, you can see how they twist and contort as the car spins, and if you hit a barrier and fly into the air, the skid marks will stop as you see it flip through the air — and if you watch it in slow motion, as one side hits the ground you'll see a skid mark where the tires hit, and afterward you drive around the track and you just see this mess of skid marks. That really adds to the game."

He's right, of course — a good racing game is more than just a bunch of mathematical equations; it's an entire package, which includes the right quantity and blend of all the necessary elements. Knowing which elements and how much, however, is what differentiates *Grand Prix Legends* from *Test Drive Off Road 2*, for example. "The graphics are very important —

POPULARITY

Understanding gamers' enduring passion for driving titles

The popularity of racing games remains startlingly high despite fierce competition from other genres, yet the explanation is remarkably simple. Cars are everywhere — there are few individuals whose life doesn't involve driving or being driven in some form of motorized transport. As such, it's possibly the easiest of videogames to identify with — individuals who have never played a videogame can pick up a joystick and steer a car around a track with some degree of success within seconds. However, the chances of getting them to manipulate a plump plumber around *Mario 64*'s world with the same immediacy are comparatively thin.

And there is an undeniable global interest in cars traveling at high speeds — after the Olympics and the World Cup, F1 races are the

most widely watched sporting event on the planet.

Although some might view NASCAR as a sport followed mostly by rednecks who only watch in the hope someone will die in a spectacular crash, at its best, motor racing is easily one of the most thrilling forms of entertainment to grace today's cathode ray tubes. Well, as long as you're into cars, that is. And you probably are. Racing games continually top Next Generation's reader surveys as the favorite genre, but ironically, it is one of the categories to undergo the least amount of change over the years. The promise of racing games remains the same as always — i.e., remarkably simple — regardless of whether the racing occurs on an F1 circuit, a dusty rally stage, or the surface of some distant planet.

POLE POSITION



F1 WORLD GP



"If you feel part of the game and feel in control of the car you are driving, you will probably be having fun"

Geoff Raeburn, Codemasters

how the game looks is important," says Yamada. "But when you're actually driving a car, especially when you're driving a sports car, probably the most important thing is to communicate with your own

car and the road you're driving on. Even though you're not holding a steering wheel, it's important to maintain such communication with the joystick and emulate the feeling of driving."

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

TOCA's Raeburn adopts a simpler approach. "Total immersion in the game itself is what's important," he says. "It doesn't matter how badly programmed the game is, or whether it's a simulation or arcade game, top-down scroller or in 3D — if you feel part of the game and feel in control of the car you are driving, then you will probably be having fun." Ask Raeburn to list his favorite games and in between *Grand Prix 2* and *Colin McRae Rally*, you'll find the perfect illustration of his claim: "The car racing section in *Die Hard Trilogy*, because although the car physics are dreadful, the feeling of involvement is absolutely spot on."



Geoff Raeburn's 1993 *Grand Prix* set a precedent others were to follow



EA's *Need for Speed* remains one of the few games to convincingly re-create a car's weight

Commodore 64 had achieved similar results through the use of outrageous combat elements and fine control. And a little further down the road, Geoff Crammond's *Grand Prix* demonstrated that PC racing sims, however detailed, could be utterly captivating. And in full 3D.

Nowadays, of course, no publishing executive who wants to keep his job would dream of greenlighting a 2D racing game. The move to 3D was a crucial one for the racing genre — it allowed the implementation of the real-world physics models discussed above and believable environments, to name but two immediate enhancements. In fact, so critical was the move into 3D that it could be argued that of all the genres currently

being given a 3D overhaul, racing games have benefitted the most. Raeburn, however, disagrees. "I think all game genres have taken a step closer to reality and have benefitted from 3D — it's all getting back to this feeling of immersion within the game," he argues. "However, making things work in 3D is a lot more difficult than 2D. The closer you get to reality, the more people compare your game with their own view of reality. It's like comparing reading a book to watching a film — the more information you are given, the more holes there are to pick at."

But Raeburn does concede that 3D cards represent the most important evolution of the last few years.

"These have allowed two things to happen," he says. "Obviously, the graphics have become much more believable and photorealistic, but also, the use of 3D accelerator cards has eased the burden on the main processor, so it can do other things such as more sophisticated car physics and effects."

POWER INJECTION

As a PlayStation developer, Kazunori Yamauchi may not have 3D cards at his disposal, but his conclusion is identical. "When we first started developing on the PlayStation, my first impression was the ability to freely use 3D graphics," he divulges. "Using 3D is a major improvement, of course, but eventually I realized that probably the most revolutionary aspect has been the increase in computing power — no matter how many calculations are required, the CPU must always be able to cope."

AI

Without it, a driving game is just an impressive mathematical equation

GRAN TURISMO



GP LEGENDS



Many years ago, racing game AI extended to CPU-controlled cars stubbornly followed a predetermined line, lap after lap, until the checkered flag came out. As with every other aspect, things are a little different now. Without decent AI, even a combination of impeccable gameplay, photorealistic graphics, flawless structure, and the world's finest vehicles amounts to very little.

Poor AI is unconvincing. It reminds you that you're playing a game. In the case of Psygnosis' first F1 title, you're reminded of this every time you attempt to overtake in a corner and your opponent consistently rams the side of your vehicle. Now, in *Daytona USA*, competitors career into you because they want you out of

the race. Cars also ram you in *TOCA 2*, but usually only after you've hit them first. Each of your 15 opponents has a distinct personality, reacting differently to other track users. In *GP Legends*, drivers give you a pretty hard time, make mistakes, and are hesitant about overtaking your damaged car unless you indicate a mechanical failure by holding your polygonal arm up in the air. And although its producer thinks it's the weakest aspect of the game, in *Gran Turismo* an overtaken competitor will immediately move into your slipstream in an attempt at returning the favor, for example. Good racing AI should draw you in and give your opponents a more human feel, which in turn enhances the realism of the whole game.

TOCA 2



F1



The Ridge Racer PlayStation series — members of a disappearing breed?

And the future is all about processing power, with all the benefits associated with this increase. "Visually, at least, we'll probably see racing games with photorealistic graphics in the very near future," says Yamauchi. "As far as computing power is concerned, soon we'll probably have a machine that'll allow us to make even more calculations. We'll have the hardware to develop the almost perfect racing game."

Reburn sees limitations, however. "Well, graphics and sound will obviously continue to improve, but in the standard home setup, I don't see much room for improvement in things such as motion feedback or VR helmets — whatever technical innovations happen, they will need to be cheap to have mass market appeal," he warns. "The physics used within the game will also improve as processor power increases, but again, this will be of limited use if sensory feedback from the game can't be cheaply improved. However, I would imagine network play will become more popular, especially with the possibility of modem support being included as standard on consoles such as Dreamcast."

Network play, this is another area Mike Lescuit gets excited about — understandably so. The potential is massive, but currently things are not quite as they should be. "We're really kind of disappointed with the growth of the Internet," he laments. "We were hoping it would build faster and be more stable, because once it is, you

STRUCTURE

The differentiating factor between a videogame and a simulation

Sim-like driving games have long been the domain of PCs, but to assume that those titles would be unlikely to appeal to a console-owning crowd because of their complexity is a gross misjudgment. The absence of sim titles on plug-and-play machines has always been a mathematical issue, and not until the arrival of the 32-bit era had consoles offered processing power able to deal with the complex physics models required for simulating realistic car dynamics. With the technical side taken care of, developers were finally able to release console titles that had only been previously enjoyed by the PC fraternity. But releasing sims, however complex, wouldn't have been enough to satisfy console owners bred on games boasting a structure far ahead of anything seen on PC monitors. Take *Need for Speed* on 3DO, for example. Essentially an

evolution of the early *Test Drive* games for Amiga and ST, its realistic-handling vehicles would have amounted to little without superb track design, civilian traffic, police chases, and CPU opponents to add the competitive edge. The resulting motoring cocktail remains one of videogaming's finest driving titles.

It may surprise you to find that the exquisite structure in *Gran Turismo*, however, was not premeditated. "The structure may have come out in the most ideal way, but this wasn't something I had planned," admits Kazunori Yamauchi, GT's producer. "It was the result of all the discussions, all the problem-solving and meetings we had. We wanted to make a game that didn't exist before — we wanted as many people as possible to play, and we wanted them to play for as long as possible."



can do some great stuff — you can have some real fun racing. Even on a LAN, when we have people getting together, it's great fun racing wheel-to-wheel with guys, and sometimes you do touch wheels, and it's usually pretty catastrophic when that happens — as it is in real life. Especially when you're mixing in AI players, too, because sometimes it's really hard to tell whether the guy in front of you is an AI or a human — they'll both make mistakes, they'll both slide out a little bit, and

they'll both drive pretty hard. But multiplayer is really important in racing sims; I think it's going to be the future. We just want to make sure that we're ready when the Internet can handle what we're doing."

GET CONNECTED

And when you look at the multiplayer options in *Grand Prix Legends*, you can't help feeling that Papyrus is right on track. "One neat thing about GPL is that it's really a



F-1 World Grand Prix is a beneficiary of increases in processing power



Daytona USA (left) was one of the early arcade leaders to support more realistic dynamics. Others, primarily Sega Rally (center) and its sequel (right), have since followed in its tire tracks





Ultimate Race Pro: an example of how a lack of structure can severely hinder a promising game

dedicated flying server application, so when you decide to host a race, even in single player mode you're both the client and the server — you have a server running, and the AI is connected to the server, and you're connected to your own server, so you can actually exit out and start fooling around with changing your setup. The AI is still out there on the track going around even though you can't see it," says Lescaut. "What this means is that people can connect and leave as they want while the server is on. And it's really cool because you could be racing with five AI players, five people from a LAN, and five people over the Internet, so you could really have all that for a field of 15, 18, 20 people all coming from different areas, which is kind of neat, and I don't think anybody's ever done that for a racing sim."

"We're pretty excited about the multiplayer options



Licensing at work in Racing Jam (top) and Max Power Racing (above)

but we're not going to say on the box 'play over the Internet,'" he adds intriguingly. "Because it's a racing sim, it's all about crashes, and when you're wheel-to-wheel with somebody, even a little bit of latency can cause problems — if you have any more than a quarter to half a second of latency, you're getting into trouble trying to play GPF over the Internet, and that's something we just can't control. So we don't want to guarantee people that they can play over the Internet, but we have given them the tools to do so."

So, perhaps predictably, digital racing fans can look forward to more realism: photorealistic graphics, improved sound, authentic dynamics, Internet play for the ultimate opposing AI, and a possible active control system to realistically convey what's happening on the wall-mounted

"But as far as racing games go, you'll probably see a perfect, flawlessly real example in the very near future"

Kazunori Yamauchi, Polyphony Digital

AUDIO

An integral — yet often overlooked — portion of the proceedings



If you've already read this issue's *Gran Turismo 2* preview (see p. 46), you'll know that Kazunori Yamauchi, the game's producer, was disappointed with the sound in *Gran Turismo* and wished he'd had more time to improve it so that it matched up to the standards of the game's other areas.

With the arrival of CDs as a storage medium for games, the audio reproduction is usually a case of sampling and compressing the real thing. Yet given this relatively simple process, Gavin Raeburn, producer of the *TOCA* series, still feels that not everyone is getting it right. "Sound is often an overlooked part of racing

games, but is, I feel, one of the most important areas," he says. "Playing *TOCA* with the sound turned down is a very odd experience when you're used to playing it with the volume cranked right up. You lose the sense of being there and feel very distant to the action. Sound should be used to give atmosphere in the build-up to the race and especially to give feedback on how the car is driving during the race (tire squeals, crashes, cars creeping up behind you, and so on)."

Unable to drive the Ferrari in *GP Legends* unless the volume is set at eardrum-numbing level, we know exactly what Raeburn means.

Plasmatron screen. True, it doesn't sound like an earth-shaking conclusion — the same could be said of almost any genre — but then the driving game is hardly the genre most open to dramatic change. Think of it more in terms of a gradual evolution. Of course, there are some who feel that tomorrow's consoles would be wasted on a simple racing concept. "Such machines will probably be too good for just making racing games, so we may have to think about using such processing power for something else," says Yamauchi. "We should be using that powerful hardware to make other types of simulators, simulators which would deal with humans or the human mind, for example. But as far as racing games go, you'll see a perfect, flawlessly real example in the very near future."

That should be good news to Alain Prost.



A black and white photograph of a man kneeling on a dark, textured surface, likely asphalt or concrete. He is wearing a light-colored t-shirt with a circular logo on the chest, dark pants, and sneakers. He is holding a small flashlight in his right hand and looking upwards towards the sky. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some structural elements like a bridge or overpass.

Can you tell me if your eyeball rolled,
or was it more of a bounce?



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3dfx

Half-Life changed all the rules.

Cinematic, terrifying, absorbing, and oozing with life, it caught both gamers and certain Texas-based developers napping. But how did Valve manage such a feat? And what has it got planned for the future?

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY



Have you played *Half-Life* yet? If not, run to your nearest game store and buy a copy now. In years to come, when we're all checking into virtual travel centers for cyber-vacations in ultra-real computer-generated worlds, we'll look back at *Half-Life* as a crucial milestone on the road that led us there. It's perhaps the most important PC game since *Doom*.

Gabe Newell is one of Valve's two co-founders and leaders of the *Half-Life* project. **Next Generation** visited Valve's headquarters in Seattle to talk about the making of *Half-Life* and what tricks the newcomer developer has up its sleeve for the future.

NG: Both you and Mike Harrington, Valve's other co-founder, started at Microsoft, right?

GABE: Right. I was at Microsoft for 13 years, and Mike had been there for nine years. We had always been interested in games, but when I really became convinced that they were going to eventually take over as an entertainment medium from movies and television was when I played *Ultima Underworld*. I just was stunned at how far games had come.

NG: And then what prompted the decision to start Valve?

GABE: I had started a bunch of different businesses inside of Microsoft, so I was pretty comfortable with that. We both had worked on a bunch of different software applications, and we were both sort of at the point where we really needed to sit down and say, "Okay, we've been doing this for a long time, and we can pretty much pick what kinds of things we want to do. What would we really enjoy more than anything else?" And when it got right



down to it, neither one of us could imagine anything that would be more fun to do than games.

NG: As ex-Microsoft employees, you came to Valve with no direct experience of the games business. Do you feel this fresh approach helped?

GABE: In developing operating systems, you get a certain amount of discipline. You just sort of learn good software development methodology. There is absolutely no doubt that Microsoft and the people who compete with Microsoft usually have much better development practices than a lot of people in the gaming industry, just in terms of nuts and bolts things, like thinking through architectural decisions and understanding how to get bugs out and stuff like that.

But I think in some ways we brought a sort of a



They said the world should be interactive and the story should matter more. People wanted to be in a world. They didn't want to be in a shooting gallery

naïveté that was pretty useful in the end. A lot of what makes *Half-Life* interesting, we think, is simply the result of doing what the press and game players said they wanted. We read a lot of reviews and talked to a lot of game players and discovered that there was a lot of consistency in what people wanted. It wasn't like there were five totally different directions people wanted to go. They said the world should be interactive and the story should matter more. People wanted to be in a world. They didn't want to be in a shooting gallery.

NG: And you don't see many other companies listening to gamers as much?

GABE: It seems like a lot of the developers have a kind of cynical and almost contemptuous attitude toward their customers, and somehow, that's supposed to be kind of cool. I think the most extreme example is John Romero's "I'm Going to Make You My Bitch" ads. We, on the other hand, were coming into this, and we were pretty clear





that we desperately wanted customers, you know? Customers are really cool, you know?

NG: Certainly in retrospect, it seems people wanted the 3D shooter to "grow up."

GABE: I think there is this interesting notion that traditionally these games are about sort of mastery and dominance, and that's a really adolescent fantasy. In a lot of shooters, the player was the deadliest thing in the world, right? The whole point of the game was to reach the point where you just killed everything. We thought people wanted a different kind of experience. That there was a broad audience that didn't just want to be the master of everything and the killer of everything.

NG: So, once you'd worked out what kind of gaming experience players wanted, how did *Half-Life* begin to take shape as a concept?

GABE: I'd been a big fan of *Doom*. *Doom* just scared the bejesus out of me when I was playing it. I remember at 2

Doom just scared the bejesus out of me when I was playing it. I remember at 2 in the morning, just realizing that I was genuinely frightened

In the morning, just realizing that I was genuinely frightened. It wasn't like started frightened, it was simply that I didn't want to move forward anymore. I wanted to go back and just move around in the areas that I knew didn't have any monsters for a while, because moving forward was always very risky and scary.

Then there was this Stephen King novella called "The Mist." I'd been reading, and I remember wanting very much to have something with the narrative richness and characters of the Stephen King story and yet have it be occurring like in *Doom*.

NG: And where did the concept go from there?

GABE: We wanted to have a world that was really interactive. If I shoot the wall, the wall should change, you know? Similarly, if I were to throw a grenade at a grunt, he should react to it, right? I mean, he should run away from it or lie down on the ground and duck for cover. If he can't run away from it, he should yell "shit" or, you know, "fire in the hole" or something like that. There was just this notion that it was pretty important to make the world responsive to what you do.

NG: Most critics and gamers would agree that *Half-Life*



achieves this spectacularly. The game world seems genuinely alive. So what's so special about the *Half-Life* AI that makes this happen?

GABE: I think we did what everyone else should have been doing all along. Underneath all of *Half-Life*'s AI there is sort of a skeleton architecture that the whole thing is built on top of, and that's just the result of being a good software design engineer.

And what this does is give you flexibility to add behaviors and to add new technologies in a way that they can all work together. Like adding the person-to-person conversation stuff, where two scientists will talk with each other or a security guard and a scientist will talk to each other. The architecture totally supported that, even though that wasn't something we originally knew we were going to be able to do.

Fairly often, when playing the game, something would happen and people would say, "Oh, that must have been scripted" — but no, that was the AI happening. And that's exactly what we wanted. Players should just never be able to tell where procedurally generated world behavior ends and where authored events begin.

NG: It's certainly a great leap forward.

GABE: I really don't think we did anything that someone from MIT would look at and say, "Wow, they broke new ground here," but I think we just set a pretty high bar for the complexity of the behaviors in games.

NG: Did you always plan to use the Quake engine?

GABE: Not at first. We assumed that we would be developing our own technology. But we had good contacts with people at id, and we realized that although we had a list of things we thought were really important, stuff like animation technology and artificial intelligence, a lot of the other game components John [Carmack] had already done incredibly well with the Quake engine, we really didn't need to push those and spend a lot of time duplicating it.

As it turns out, John was pretty interested in what we were doing. Our approach took in a set of things that he wasn't particularly focused on, so he thought it was pretty complementary. It wasn't like we were going to try to reinvent everything he had already done. He was pretty intrigued to see if we would be able to pull this stuff off.

NG: How much of the Quake code did you end up rewriting?

GABE: In the end, probably about 75% of it was Valve code.

NG: One of the things Carmack said in last month's interview was that in 18 months, you can do either a great game or a great engine, but not both. Do you agree?

GABE: I guess I wouldn't really say it in those terms. I think what you need to do is know what your game is going to be and why it's an interesting game. Why is this just not another piece of crap copying what everybody else has done? If you start from the sense of what the gameplay is going to be like, you're going to figure it out and say, "Here are the five things we have to do better than anything else, and then here are the 40 things that other people do perfectly well already." Nobody nowadays thinks, "Oh, I'm going to spend a whole bunch of time setting up installation." There are too many people already providing perfectly decent installation packages. So you work out what you're going to work on yourself and what you're going to license in from the outside.

NG: Half-Life is now a huge success, both critically and commercially, but it was a year late. What was the darkest moment during its development?

Gabe: The worst time was back in the period leading up to the original shipping date, when we suddenly realized we had a really tough choice to make. On the one hand, we had won Action Game of the Year at E3 and seemed to have a lot of interesting technology. Sierra really would have been very happy to have an action title ready to ship in the first quarter of last year. On the other hand, we knew it wasn't the product we really thought should be. It wasn't the experience that we were aiming for; it was just a collection of features.

NG: It's pretty clear you made the right decision...

Gabe: Now, in retrospect, we're all going who-ho, sure. But at the time, we spent a lot of sleepless nights staring at ceilings and saying, "Oh my God, what have we gotten ourselves into?" There is some quote — I wish I could remember it. I think it's "Courage is who you are in the dark." Those were pretty dark moments for us, to make the choices that we made, and things got pretty tough for a while. But everyone here just rolled up their sleeves, dug in, and got the job done.

NG: We've noticed that at the end of *Half-Life*, there are no individual credits. In most games, everyone from the producer to the tea boy gets his name in lights with a detailed description of what he contributed. What does this brevity of detail tell us about how *Half-Life* was made?

Gabe: The fact is that we are incredibly collaborative. Part of the problem when we speak with the press is that it's a lot easier to talk about things when you can say "Oh, this person did this" and "That person did that." But we've really found we work better when we get a bunch of different people working on things.

NG: This flies in the face of a lot of conventional wisdom that says games are best when they're the "vision" of one individual...

Gabe: I know that to some people at other developers, the notion of a level being created and authored by more than a single person strikes them as really weird. When we interviewed some people from some companies down in Texas, they couldn't imagine how we don't just collapse into a heap of sort of bikering opinions or how it maintains any integrity through that part of the game. You know, why doesn't it just become really diluted? But for us, we really found that the more people got involved, the better the ideas got.

So at the end of the game when you see the credits, there are no titles for anyone. It's like, "We're Valve and this is our game."

NG: And do you think this teamwork makes Valve more likely to make better games in the future?

Gabe: In terms of putting the team together, one thing that was really weird to me, coming into this, is we would talk to creative people who had clearly been incredibly important in making people millions and millions of dollars, and they had nothing but horror stories to tell about the companies they've been part of. Take someone like Chuck Jones, who was the lead artist on *Duke Nukem*. He didn't have a lot of fond memories of that experience and how he'd been treated. So just in really basic things, like every employee here has part ownership of the company, we tried to be different. Whenever we hire somebody, we say, "We want you to be here 10 years from now."



If you look back at some of the biggest games of the last few years, there are very few development teams that have remained intact. The Tomb Raider team is gone, the Duke Nukem team is gone, and the Jedi Knight team is gone. But we really haven't lost anyone off of the *Half-Life* project.

NG: So what's next for Valve and the *Half-Life* team?

Gabe: Obviously we haven't announced *Half-Life* 2 or said anything about it yet, so my comments will be sort of in general or pertaining to future Valve games.

NG: Okay, sure.

Gabe: Well, as we progress we think the entities in the game world need to have much richer behaviors.

You should have allies, you should have enemies, and you should have people where it's not really clear which they are. People you meet in the game should be unique, and they should behave uniquely. Players should be feeling "Oh shit, it's that guy again — he's a real bastard," you know, or "This person is kind of helpful, but last time he chickened out on me." We need to include a lot of unique behaviors.

NG: They should evolve more as real people...

Gabe: Right, and we need the reactions of these people

We spent a lot of sleepless nights staring at ceilings and saying, "Oh my God, what have we gotten ourselves into?"

to be a lot more complicated. They should come into situations looking at things, but right now their eyes just aren't moving around. Then, if something is going on, they should respond to what is happening on a physical basis. And they should comment on it; they should talk about it. It should affect the decisions they're making.

They should also be responding and interacting with each other regardless of what the player is doing. As much as possible, you should just be able to sit there and watch a couple of them interact with each other and still be entertained by that. We have a very tiny bit of that in *Half-Life*, where people will start talking to each other, but that's at a pretty minimal level of interaction. If they are just sitting there in a room, they should sort of look



around in the room, if there's something useful for them to do, then they should start doing it.

NG: How about from an animation point of view?

Gabe: There are lots of reasons to have some sort of reactive kinematics in the physics model. I don't think we're going to go all the way toward completely algorithmic animation, which is the direction the *Trespasser* team went to. That is way too difficult to do at

It's you in there, not some character. We're not trying to get you to be someone else. We're trying to put you as deeply as possible into a world and into an experience

this point, but definitely there should be some reactive kinematics. When things are walking up slopes, for example, they should adjust how they walk. *Team Fortress 2* has this thing called "parametric animation" which allows us to blend together different kinds of animations like running, turning, and being shot at in the same sequence. And, depending on the specific event, we can blend in different degrees of each ingredient so it's different if someone's shot by something that does a little or a lot of damage. And your eye will pick that up. Players won't even be able to tell people how they know that a person got hurt a lot, but they'll know.

NG: It seems that you're talking about a move away from pre-authored animation...

Gabe: You still need to have authored animation, but you need to procedurally deform this animation by having reactive kinematics that respond to whatever might be happening in the game world at that time. You need to be able to have AI, but then you need to be able to say if, for some reason, this character ends up in this room and is sitting around for a couple of minutes, he will walk over to the bench and begin putting together this piece of apparatus. And if this other guy is there, he will come over and talk to him. The key isn't to pick either authored or AI-based behavior — the key is to do both, and then integrate the two as seamlessly as possible.

NG: How else will you continue to evolve the feeling of actually "being there"?

Gabe: I think for a while we're going to continue to push in the direction of making the player's character as transparent as possible. We really want to put the player into the experience. We're not going to move in a *Sonic*

the Hedgehog direction. You are supposed to be the star of Valve's games — it's you in there, not some character. We're not trying to get you to be someone else. We're trying to put you as deeply as possible into a world and into an experience. We want players to bring as much of themselves as they can, rather than, you know, listening to some voice-over to find out what their character is meant to be thinking.

NG: And, of course, as processing power continues to evolve, future games will continue to look better and better...

Gabe: Clearly, just from an engine perspective, we need level detail rendered on models. That will probably happen sooner rather than later. There are so many things that will change on the rendering side. For *Half-Life*, we were limited to about 2 megabytes of texture per scene. We were limited to about 3,000 triangles per scene on models and about 500 triangles per scene for the world. Over all, we were looking at about 3 megabytes per level. This will improve.

NG: What about the multi-player component? Where do you think you can break new ground?

Gabe: I think there is this notion that somehow making multi-player games is easier than making single-player games, right? People seem to think that in multi-player games, the worlds and levels can be really simple and that the players have to do all the work to create the experience for themselves. People seem to think that simply by throwing a lot of players into a room it's going to be fun. It would be nice if it were true, and it certainly makes it easier to get your multi-player games out, but being in a multi-player game with the wrong people can be a terrible, tedious experience.

NG: So what's the solution?

Gabe: It seems pretty clear to us that in the same way people wanted story and interactivity from the single-player experience, the multi-player game should offer a similarly complicated world. Multi-player games should be just as sophisticated as the single-player experience, but with the option of going through it cooperatively with other people. We want it to be a shared, "we're in this together" kind of thing. There may be other groups you run into that you have a competitive relationship with, but people want to go exploring and adventuring together. This seems to be something we hear from people over and over.

People complain a lot that there is no cooperative mode to play through *Half-Life*. Our sense is that a lot more people would be interested in being in this big, complicated, explorable world if they were able to go in there with their friends. That makes it a much richer experience. Being on the same side with other people and working with other people is fundamentally a lot more interesting to people than viewing the multi-player experiences as a deathmatch experience.

NG: And do you think the success of *Half-Life* will inspire Valve to even greater feats in the future?

Gabe: I personally handled around 200 support calls when *Half-Life* initially shipped, because I really wanted to know exactly what was going on when people were picking up our game and playing it. And it was great. It was exhilarating to have people say, "Wow; this is the best PC game I've played since *Doom*."

That's what we were aiming for, and when it happened — it's like, nothing else even comes close. I can't imagine doing anything more exciting.

NG





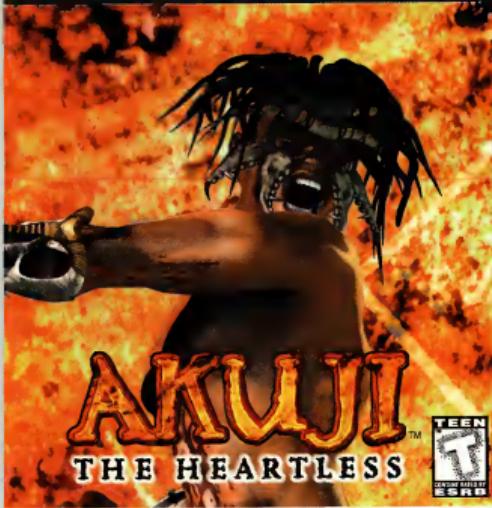
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There are 2 ways to enter the contest:

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- 2) Send a three-minutes (or less) videotape of you showing your enthusiasm for **Next Generation** — be creative and daring!

A **Next Generation** representative will be the judge and will base the decision on the originality, enthusiasm, and amount of game-related goods featured. There will be bonus points available based upon how fawning and adulstorous you are in your tape.

To enter the contest, all you have to do is send the picture or videotape with your name, address, phone number, and age written on the back of the picture or on the label of the videotape. Two lucky winners will win their choice of \$500 worth of gaming gear. Sorry, no runner-up prizes this time. The closing date for entries is April 15, 1999. Good luck!

IT COULD ALL BE YOURS....



Official Rules and Other Legal Crap

One entry per individual, per category (videotape and pictures). All entries must be received no later than February 15, 1999 with the winner being announced on or around April 26, 1999. A **Next Generation** representative will be the judge and their decision is final. Each of the judging criteria (originality, enthusiasm and amount of game-related goods) will be weighted equally at 33%. By entering this contest you agree that **Next Generation**, anyone involved in the contest, and its contest sponsor may use your name, likeness, picture and/or videotape for promotional purposes without further compensation. **Next Generation** is not responsible for late or incorrectly addressed entries. Entries will not be returned. All prizes will be awarded and no minimum number of entries is required. Prizes won by minors will be awarded to the legal guardian. **Next Generation** is not responsible for any damages or expenses that the winner might incur as a result of the receipt of a prize, and winners are responsible for income taxes based on the value of the prize received. The name of the winner may also be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Imagine Media, Inc., c/o Michele Stratton, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. This contest is limited to residents of the United States. No purchase necessary; void in Arizona, Maryland, Vermont, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.



**Some months even the most jaded gamer is impressed,
and this month is certainly one of those**

FINALS

The best written game reviews in the business

Next Generation never pulls punches or minces words, but we also know how to praise greatness when we see it, and recognize and encourage innovation. Are we too generous or too mean? Let us know.

★★★★★

Revolutionary

Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed, a new high watermark.

★★★★

Excellent

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

★★★

Good

A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★

Average

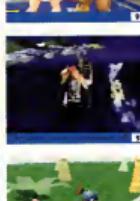
Perhaps competent — certainly uninspired.

★

Bad

Crucially flawed in design or application.

 Denotes a review of a Japanese product.



84	Baldur's Gate	PC
The best RPG ever?		

87	Alpha Centauri	PC
The finest strategy game since Civilization		

88	Silent Hill	PlayStation
A fine little horror yarn		

	Akuji the Heartless	PlayStation
90		

	Bomberman Racing	PlayStation
90		

	Civilization II	PlayStation
90		

	Contender	PlayStation
91		

	Dead in the Water	PlayStation
91		

	Guardian's Crusade	PlayStation
91		

	Street Fighter Zero 3	PlayStation
92		

	Syphon Filter	PlayStation
92		

	WCW/NWO Thunder	PlayStation
92		

	Return to Krondor	PC
93		

	Thief	PC
93		

	Wargasm	PC
93		



Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Blue Sky Software



It took a while, and it was made by a bunch of Medical Doctors, but great stuff comes from the unlikeliest of places

FORGOTTEN REALMS: BALDUR'S GATE



The game world is huge, with players moving from section to section on the vast world map, and incredible new sights to see around every corner

Boolean games are the rock upon which the church of computer games was built. Games like Wizardry, Ultima, and Bard's Tale still make genocidal gamers cry tears of nostalgia for those halcyon days when the worth of a game was measured in how

many weekends (and friends) you lost playing it rather than how fast you could move your mouse.

Baldur's Gate manages to satisfy the old gamer's cravings while remaining distinctly contemporary. And it is the first RPG to really take advantage of today's technology rather than merely elaborating on games of the past.

RPGs were at one time meticulously planned, with every detail of a world included on a stack of floppy disks. With the advent of faster processors and the CD-ROM, seemingly limitless worlds

appeared. The logic seemed simple enough: If earlier games with 200 NPCs were good, worlds with 10,000 NPCs (made using a random person generator) would be even better. If a nine-level dungeon seemed like fun, how about an infinitely deep dungeon — or a game that generated new dungeons every time you played?

Sadly, the artifice of these bulked-up RPGs was immediately apparent to the player. After talking to NPC number 20, which was outwardly similar to NPC numbers one through 19 but with a different name and a new hat, players knew at once they were wasting time in a world bursting with sound and fury, but signifying nothing. As a result, these gargantuan, stale promontories were invariably tossed, and gamers began to yearn for the days when the Woodheads and Goblins of the world actually planned out every part of a game. In short, RPG fans began to long for

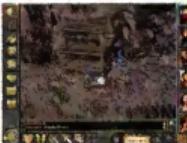


There are countless shops that trade in goods and services that are both mundane and mystical





One of the magnificent temples in the game. Bioware has made the gods from TSR's *Forgotten Realms* integral to the story.



actual game design.

Falout set the stage, but *Baldur's Gate* finally delivers what RPG gamers have been looking for. However, as we've said, it doesn't stop there. The game uses five CDs to deliver what ends up being a huge amount of gameplay, all in a beautiful world. Every map has

the ability to stop the clock and meticulously plan your characters' moves. At the same time, the game possesses a fluid and intuitive realtime mode of action that is very satisfying. The game plays well both in realtime and in paused settings, though the harder battles are nigh impossible without pausing the game.

And while the good interface, the multiplayer functionality, and beautiful graphics all make *Baldur's Gate* stand out, it is the eminently satisfying role-playing elements that make it a real

winner. The primary quests are engrossing, many of the side quests are amusing, and the story of who your character is and why he or she is on this journey keeps you guessing. We're especially pleased to say that the ending of the game manages to avoid lame fantasy clichés and left us hungry for more.

The only problems are the few bugs that keep the game from running smoothly and the absolutely awful pathfinding. Commanded to move across the map, characters will find something inconvenient to get stuck on, even if they have to run to the neighbor's house to borrow it. In addition, the game's core multiplayer design is at first confusing (not to mention distracting). However, a dedicated team working together will master it. These flaws aside, the game never, ever becomes dull, and each chapter (there are seven) is more exciting than the last. We seriously can't imagine how Bioware is going to outdo themselves in future titles, but we can't wait to find out.

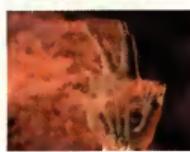
In fact, we're so looking forward to new adventures in the *Forgotten Realms* that we've found ourselves no longer pining for the good old days of *Wizardry*, *Ultima*, and *Bard's Tale*. The kings are dead. Long live the king.

We seriously can't imagine how Bioware is going to outdo themselves in future titles, but we can't wait to find out

preplanned events, and every area has quests, items, tricks, and traps. In short, the game has been completely designed from head to toe. Stacked on top of that, though, is the ability to play the entire game with friends. We're not talking about a special deathmatch mode or a multiplayer dungeon either — every second of the single-player experience is available in the multiplayer mode, an innovation that is entirely new for RPGs.

Not only do new technologies allow the game to be the first real multiplayer RPG, but they also allow it to be one of the first that's deeply replayable. It's unlikely that players will see the entire game during their first playthrough. Add to that multiple ways to solve several of the problems in the game, varying from playing spy to using brute force, and you have a recipe for at least two completely different experiences.

The interface is a mélange of old and new. Point-and-click is the name of the game, with a clock running in the lower left corner. When you enter combat, you have



When your main character dies, the game ends immediately — the CG movies and cut scenes are entertaining and well done.



RATING



Putting together an effective party (then making sure they all stay alive long enough to grow more and more effective) is one of the game's many decision-filled challenges.

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Sid Meier creates yet another masterpiece in this game that, at a glance, looks all too familiar



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Firaxis



The new technology advances and strange doodads are interesting in themselves

At its core, Alpha Centauri is a civilization set on another planet, with vastly different technologies and unit types — which is both its greatest strength and most inherent weakness.

The game's structure is almost exactly the same as Civilization: "nutrients" instead of food, "terraformers" instead of settlers, and so on. The layout and interaction of each of these elements is very familiar, and Alpha Centauri is an expansion and retouching of those core gameplay values. Alpha Centauri is a CV game through and through, and while that's not a bad thing, that first blush may disappoint some, thinking they've just bought the same game in a new set of clothes.

Continuing to play, however, reveals myriad differences that run deeper than cosmetic. To begin with, the colonists of Alpha Centauri are divided into seven different "factions." But while in Civilization there was little difference in playing as, or against, the Americans or the Zulus, in Alpha Centauri each faction has a distinct personality, as well as differing strengths, weaknesses, and starting abilities. The Stepdaughters of Gaia, for example, are so in tune with the



Look familiar? It may come from a different publisher, but there's no doubt to Alpha Centauri's pedigree

planet that they can command the otherwise vicious native "mind worms," but their pacifist nature leaves them militarily weak. The complex ways in which the factions interact make diplomacy and negotiation far more important than in Civilization. Add in at least four different ways to win the game, including conquest, diplomacy, economic dominance, and transcendence (the next stage in human evolution), plus multiplayer options, and the number of victory strategies increase exponentially.



Between vying for power on the Planetary Council and figuring out the best way to run the people, things get very complicated



However, there are some problems. The icons and graphics have a lot of detail, which is a mixed blessing — the map often becomes so cluttered with cities, units, solar collectors, and terrain bonus markers that it's virtually impossible to tell what's going on. Also, while the new technologies are interesting, the connection between tech advances and their effects — "Polymorphic Software" gives you artillery units, for example — is often tenuous.

Still, few things will warm a strategy fan's heart more than seeing Sid Meier's name on a box (and Brian Reynolds' name tucked innocuously on the credits page). Now go away; we're going to spend the next 48 hours trying to evolve beyond human thought.

RATING





Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami



The action is intense, but it's not necessarily the primary source of gameplay. Exploration and storyline are much more important



The company that brought you *Metal Gear Solid* comes up with another — very different — masterpiece

SILENT HILL

Never the one-trick pony, Konami saw its most recent success with the phenomenal *Metal Gear Solid*. The game showcased the company's ability to not only masterfully utilize the PlayStation hardware, but also create an effective marriage between story and interaction, showing how good a game can be at involving the player with more than gut-level action. With the release of Konami's *Silent Hill*, the company takes storyline and character development one step further and successfully strikes out into bold new territory.

On the surface, *Silent Hill* could be passed off as nothing more than a *Resident Evil* clone, with the same horror backbone and action elements as Capcom's groundbreaking series. But in reality, the two games have little in common beyond a shared horror premise and a few similarities in puzzle play. While *Resident Evil*'s emphasis is firmly entrenched in the schlocky B-movie gore of the '90s, *Silent Hill* plays more like a perfectly paced piece of surreal, literary horror fiction from the late '70s. Believable characters, a mercilessly bizarre storyline that



The effective use of light and darkness throughout *Silent Hill* provides a good amount of shiver for the buck

never lets up, and an incredibly well-developed sense of dread that pervades every nook and cranny of the game make *Silent Hill* a truly realized work of imagination, joining the ranks of games like Infocom's *Lurking Horror* and Valve's *Half-Life*.

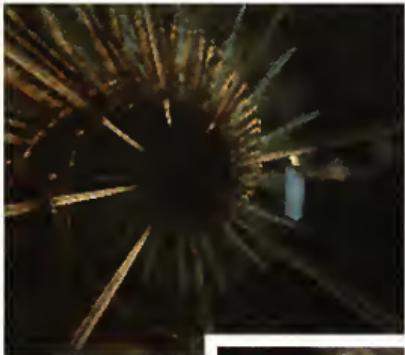
As small-town writer Harry Mason, players take a trip to the resort town of Silent Hill and are quickly propelled into a nightmare when daughter Cheryl mysteriously disappears after a car crash. The rest of the game is



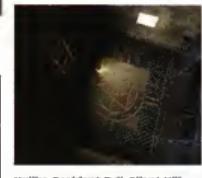
spent searching for Cheryl in the surreal landscape of Silent Hill. The formerly crowded tourist spot has been transformed into an abandoned ghost town harboring demons and inexplicable events that hint at something beyond Harry's original quest. Corpses line the streets and corridors of familiar buildings, and the murky daylight abruptly shifts into the darkness of night at the simple opening of a door or turning of a key. Things are never quite what they seem at any point in the game, keeping the player guessing at what will happen around every corner. The mood is perfectly enhanced by loud thuds in the middle of empty rooms or by the spooky sobbing of an unseen child in a dark hall.

Every trick in the book is used to perfection in order to create a

The grotesque imagery and bizarre premise take the ideas pioneered in *Resident Evil* one giant step beyond the horror threshold



Dramatic camera angles provide a great amount of cinematic flavor in *Silent Hill*



Unlike *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill* concentrates on exploration



constant feeling of dread and terror that can actually be physically felt when using the Dual Shock controller, which pulses with Harry's heartbeat when he becomes injured or intensely frightened. Add to this the use of a pocket radio in the game that allows you to hear enemies before they appear and the game actually creates a very tangible sense of fear. But the most impressive technological feature in the game is actually the most important. With most of the game taking place in the dark, Harry uses a pocket flashlight that can



I've got a monster here.

be turned on or off at the touch of a button. Using the small flashlight provides a limited range of vision and succeeds in creating a steady amount of suspense by plunging players into a constant battle with the unknown.

But beyond the gimmicks and technological feats, the best thing about *Silent Hill* is the believability of the game's lead character, Harry Mason. While this isn't a feat in itself, the way in which the game shows how an average Joe confronts the extraordinary goings-on really endear us to him in a way you just don't feel about the larger-than-life superheroes in games like *Duke Nukem* or *Tomb Raider*. Harry's exceedingly clumsy with weapons, has horrible aim, and reacts to many of the events in the game in ways that we might find ourselves reacting. There are no infinite bazooka rounds or grenade launchers for Harry — just his wits and an array of ordinary weapons to defend himself with. And it's this genuine connection with Harry and the game's other characters that deepens the immersion, making the events feel much more real and hence, much more terrifying.

Throughout the game there are only a few stumbling blocks



Interaction with the few characters still alive in the town works at building a sense of desperation and solitude throughout the game and succeeds in immersing the player in the game's eerie universe

that lessen *Silent Hill*'s appeal. Out-of-place puzzles that jar the realism of some of the environments threaten to spoil the mood that *Silent Hill* masterfully creates, while the good amount of slow-paced exploration will likely turn off players looking for the thrill-kill instant gratification of the more action-oriented *Resident Evil* series. But neither of these flaws even comes close to negating the real strides made by Konami in creating a game that so perfectly fleshes out a concept. Games that not only surpass their predecessors but also genuinely capture the imagination like *Silent Hill* does don't come along nearly often enough. No gamer can afford to miss it.

RATING



Key points in the game are brilliantly illustrated with the use of CG cinematics as well as polygonal in-game movies

AKUJI THE HEARTLESS

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Eldos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics

With Legacy of Kain on the horizon, Crystal Dynamics has taken a turn into the dark underworld of voodoo with its latest action title, Akuji the Heartless. Utilizing the game engine from *Geek: Enter the Gecko*, Akuji couldn't be a further cry from the bright, cartoonish camp associated with Crystal's famous mascot. Instead, Akuji travels darkly as he passes leading through the bowels of hell, searching for a way to return to the overworld and wreak vengeance on those who murdered him. Not exactly Saturday-morning kiddy stuff, but Crystal Dynamics has carried off the transition incredibly well.

Traveling through a long series of imaginatively designed and beautifully realized levels, Akuji is able to wield various spells and slash away at surprisingly intelligent enemies. Puzzles figure into the gameplay in the form of the usual switch-hitting and item-collecting, but due to the way each area is designed, the task never seems too tedious. Visually, the game is a dark wonder; with Crystal Dynamics taking the rarely traveled path of a colorful-but-highly-atmospheric vision of hell, rather than the typically gloomy, gothic architecture used ad nauseam. It's this fresh approach to the standard platform-adventure genre that gives the game a boost in the right direction.



Clever, colorful lighting helps keep *Akuji the Heartless* from being too dark and gloomy

But the game does have its share of problems, most notably in the control. With a minimal amount of animation left to moving around, movement appears sloppy when jumping and too slow when running. This translates into tough precision jumps and a tricky time outrunning certain enemies. The camera, while highly improved from *Geek: Enter the Gecko*'s bizarre angles, is still too slow to stay ahead of the action. But with a one-button, over-the-shoulder view, the cameras never much as a problem as the sluggish controls.

Crystal Dynamics has certainly provided gamers with a solid action title with enough imagination to please those who possess a penchant for the macabre. Yet the rough controls and animations keep Akuji from truly stepping into the genre's lime-light.

RATING

★★★☆☆

BOMBERMAN FANTASY RACING

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Hudsonsoft

trademark Bomberman weapons are available and are used pretty much as in traditional Bomberman games. The tracks are all bright snow or sand, and course designs are erratic and tricky, keeping the game just a step above the difficulty level for the market it seems to be aimed at: the quickly growing 12-and-under audience.

The learning curve is high and would be daunting for the younger set. But while the game may not be the choice for the kiddies, it may also turn off veteran racing fans with its lack of real physics and its hyper-arcade controls. For all its cuteness and quirk, the somewhat stiff digital controls and tough tracks of *Bomberman Racing* make it a choice for fans and racing veterans only.

RATING

★★★☆☆



Bomberman Fantasy Racing is no *Mario Kart*, but it ain't bad

CIVILIZATION II

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Activision

Although consoles seem to lend themselves to fighting and action games over deep strategy,

experiences, releases like *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft 2* have done well enough to prove that there is a devoted, if limited, audience for them. How appropriate, then, that the finest of all strategy games should find its way to PlayStation.



Console strategy games don't get any better than this: *Civilization II* comes to PlayStation in all its glory

Like the PC version, which was #4 in our 50 greatest games of all time (NE 50), *Civilization II* on PlayStation gives you the daunting task of developing a civilization from the ground up and leading it from the stone age to the space age. Every minute detail, from exploration to city construction to technology to religion, is under your control — yet the design is so elegant that the game never becomes tedious, and you're slowly drawn into an ever-expanding world of construction, politics, and war. In fact, there are so many varieties involved that it just begs to be played over and over again just so you can experiment with the hundreds of different options. The PlayStation version is

remarkably faithful to the PC version. Of course, the interface has been redesigned, but it's quite intuitive for the standard controller and is easy to learn (unlike the poohy thought-out version of the original *Civilization* that surfaced in the late days of Super NES). Unfortunately, the graphics have taken quite a hit due to lower resolution, but this doesn't affect the game much. Speed also takes a bit of a hit, especially when your civilization reaches a large size, but it's tolerable and never bogs down.

Overall, *CIV II* remains one of strategy gaming's finest hours and is a welcome addition on PlayStation. For those who are willing, it's a game of limitless possibilities.

RATING

★★★★★

CONTENDER

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Victor Interactive

Never it seems, has a game aimed so low, and missed even that goal so spectacularly. Contender is everything we dislike about poorly done games, and, in fact, it rightfully earns the moniker of being a "last generation" game.

The problems with Contender start as soon as you try to play. While boxing is by no means the most complicated sport, in this game it has been simplified to the extreme so as to appeal to a more "arcade-action" audience. Unlike its closest cousin Punch Out, however, which relied on strategy and personality for the majority of its appeal, Contender relies on the simple formula of punch

a few times, block a few times, repeat. To add some much-needed variety, there is also the obligatory super punch, which, of course, hurts much more than a normal punch, but it's easily avoided. Just imagine a videogame version of Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots with a few minor "virtual-pet" perks and you'll understand the hell that *Next Generation* went through to bring you this review.

In the game's favor, there are quite a few boxers to choose from (including several women). Unfortunately, the first-generation graphics engine used for the game leaves characters looking blocky, with huge seams between joints, effectively removing what little personality they received in their design phase. Of course, it goes without saying that the animation is

just as bad, with jerky, hand-animated motions that do little more than suck the little remaining life out of an already lifeless game.

From the uninspired graphics to the sloppy and ill-thought-out gameplay, there is nothing in

Contender that stands out as being particularly good and quite a bit that is actually painful to experience. Sony should be ashamed of inflicting this abomination on the gaming public.

RATING



Did some wise guy make a joke about how no boxing game could be worse than Knockout Kings? Well, try playing Contender

DEAD IN THE WATER

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: ASC
Developer: Player 1

Dead in the Water is Twisted Metal on water or a destructive佐 Capades for sentimental fans of Death Race 2000. In this game, the rules are simple: Destroy everything for money and points. It's a mysterious race that takes place every year somewhere in the Bermuda Triangle and the grand prize is the revelation of an age-old secret, but the winners have never been seen again.

What Player 1 has done well is mix the game in a vicious, grim sensibility that will certainly disturb average gamers. What it hasn't done is actually build a decent game.

While there's a fantastic sense of speed, it's usually ruined by awkward turns in the courses and even the occasional full-screen slow-down. While the wave mechanics and explosions are sometimes amazing displays of dead-on physics, mostly they're erratic and inconsistent. The standard metal soundtrack isn't by any means complemented by bad music production, and the sound effects and character voices are some of the stupidest ever.

A decent-looking 3D polygonal game, *Dead in the Water* over is a mixed bag, with the straight battle races being the ultimate lube. But in any case, steer clear of this shipwreck.

RATING



GUARDIAN'S CRUSADE

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Teamsoft



Quirky and interesting, *Guardian's Crusade* is charming enough to be a keeper

clean, high-resolution treat with simple, yet unique, character designs and backdrops. Battles are also clever in that random enemy encounters are replaced by the ability to see them wandering the field and evade them if desired, much like *Saga Frontier* or *Chrono Trigger*. But the really clever twist is that enemies change shape and appearance in relation to their strength. Smaller enemies will run from you and pose little threat, while bigger enemies actively pursue the player and pack a wallop during combat. As you go up in levels, the relative threat of different monsters will be reflected in their physical appearance — a very inventive touch in a turn-based RPG.

Storywise, *Guardian's Crusade* doesn't really break any new ground, but the characters are strengthened by the quality of the game's translation. With a dose of humor, quirky dialogue, and memorable characters, the game plays like a familiar trip through welcome RPG elements without tedium. Plus, the ability to alter elements of Baby the monster by feeding it and treating it differently during battle also adds a new layer of interaction to the game.

Considering the competition from more well-known RPG brand names, Activision has done a fine job with *Guardian's Crusade* by giving the title charm and polish. Nice one.

RATING



Dead in the Water is fun for about half an hour — then you figure out how limited it is

STREET FIGHTER ZERO 3

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

While Capcom's Street Fighter series of games has always been the high-water mark for 2D fighters, the lack of innovation in each successive title has kept the series in a comfortable, if uneventful, groove. With Street Fighter Zero 3, this has all changed. Capcom may have outdone itself with the most playable and innovative fighting game since the original Street Fighter II.

The key to SFZ 3's success comes from the fact that Capcom has pulled out all of the stops to make sure that every aspect of the game has been refined to perfection. Indeed, every complaint that players have had over the years, from turtling (blocking a lot) to throwing, has been addressed, and plenty of new

features have been added on top of that. For example, at the beginning of each match, players can now select from three different kinds of super moves (called "isms"), and there is now even a limited amount of "air juggling" in the game for those who are adept at stringing moves together. With more than 25 characters to choose from (including all of the characters from both the Street Fighter II and Street Fighter Alpha series, as well as some new additions), there is an almost unlimited amount of replay value.

For those who prefer to play single-player, Capcom has added an exciting story-based mode, where you fly around the world fighting different characters and earning experience and moves in an almost RPG-like fashion. There is also a mode for those who have the Japanese PocketStation, in which you can

download characters and train them to fight other PocketStation-wielding opponents. One thing is for certain — there is no lack of content in this title, and between beating all of the modes and finding all of the secrets, players will be occupied for a long time.

Admittedly, the game has lost a little animation in the conversion to PlayStation. Unless you are really looking, however, it is not noticeable and doesn't detract at all from the feel of the game. Most importantly, unlike some other recent Capcom translations, the game never slows down. However, Street Fighter zero 3, with all of its home-version-only features, is perhaps the finest home translation Capcom has ever done. Add to that the fact that this is the best Street Fighter yet, and you have a must-buy game.

RATING



Those of you still love to fight in 2D will find Street Fighter Zero 3 a godsend

WCW/NWO THUNDER

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Inland Productions



WCW/NWO Thunder is the latest, and quite possibly the last, of THQ's wrestlers

version of the game, you can leave the ring, grab spare items to use as weapons, and even receive help from an allied wrestler when in trouble. If you're so inclined, you can even change allegiances at the player select screen.

The cage match is a fight to the finish with no outside help at all. One has to wonder about the fans during the cage match. Where did they all go? For some unexplained reason, the cage match has absolutely no background, and yet the action still seems to flow down.

One big downside to Thunder is the lack of a four-player mode. What fun is the Battle Royal if you can't duke it out with a large group? The omission seems like a glaring oversight.

Thunder is a worthy purchase if you absolutely must have the latest WCW/NWO rosters. While the improvements made in Thunder aren't terribly significant, they do make it a worthy upgrade from Nitro — but they don't put Thunder at the top of the wrestling pile just yet. It's good, but WWF Warzone is still merely superficial.

The core gameplay in Thunder feels a lot like in Nitro. Moves are simple and animations are basic, which limit the depth of the game but make it easy for a beginning player to jump right in. As in the previous

SYPHON FILTER

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: SBS Studios
Developer: Eidec

We've seen a lot of third-person games in the last year, and there are sure to be many more in 1999. Syphon Filter is one of the first of this new crop, and it manages to stand out due in part to some slick stylistic elements, an involving storyline, and most importantly, some good, high-intensity action.

What keeps Syphon Filter ahead of the pack is that it actually manages to keep the player involved all of the way through the game. As Gabe Logan, anti-terrorist agent extraordinaire, you must work your way through several levels featuring a wide assortment of objectives that are



Syphon Filter is one of the better third-person games this year — of course, it is only April

cleverly tied into the plot so that they don't stand out as puzzles. Memorable moments abound, including defusing a hostage situation with a night-vision sniper rifle or chasing a terrorist through active subway tunnels. Unfortunately, most of the time the action isn't very challenging, and players will tend to get stuck trying to find one of the many mission objectives hidden in the shadows. Having to stop and wander around with the flashlight does tend to break up the otherwise excellent pace.

Although moving Gabe around still feels fairly slippery (leading to several deaths), the mechanism that Eidec created for targeting enemies is excellent. Using a lock-on button, Gabe will aim at the nearest enemy, no matter where he is. This allows players to pull off such maneuvers as shooting behind themselves while running or taking a sniper off a roof. It does simplify the game somewhat, but it makes you feel much more like a secret agent with some talent rather than a mindless drone that has to constantly pivot in place to shoot a single bad guy.

With unique gameplay, a tight story, and some genuinely exciting moments, Syphon Filter is one of the first quality action games of the year and well worth a good look.

RATING



RATING



WARGASM

Platform: PC
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: DID



The best thing about Wargasm is its title — the rest just isn't that arousing.

In Wargasm, your task is to win back land using a sort of global holodeck that simulates combat while yielding real, national economic consequences. Your forces consist of soldiers, tanks, and helicopters. Control of these units ranges from first-person shooter to combat vehicle simulation to realtime strategy. So as you might guess, the game suffers from a sort of identity crisis.

The main problem is poor unit control. In RTS style, the top-down tactical view has a clumsy interface. For direct control, you choose between five variations of joystick and keyboard input, all fairly limited

Worse, you can forget about remappable keys, analog throttle support, or even mouse use.

Graphically, Wargasm looks very similar to incoming, but on a much larger scale. The audio effects are well-done, and while the musical score is immersive, even that hurts more than it helps — changes between tracks often lock up the game for far too long and make it unplayable if the CD is in the drive.

Where Wargasm delivers is in the experience of battle itself. It's pretty satisfying stuff, but this is a very challenging title — actually, make that frustrating. Each nation you conquer provides more units with better technology, but first you've got to face that technology yourself with inferior equipment. Beyond fighting against heavy odds, though, there really isn't much else here — very little strategy and zero resource management. Even "Multiple Wargasm" (the multiplayer component) isn't as exciting as it sounds; it offers deathmatch only, which can get old pretty quickly.

At the end of the day, Wargasm has a clever moniker that makes you take notice. But even that was stolen outright from a song by thrash metal band L7, and it's a shame the game doesn't live up to it.

RATING

★★☆☆☆

THIEF

Platform: PC
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Developer: Looking Glass Studios

Thief is yet another example of a first-person action title with a twist. The hook is that the player is a master thief in a medieval world of sorcery and 19th century technology. Gameplay emphasizes stealth and intellect over blazing guns, as most Quake clones do. From level design to sound design and weaponry, everything in Thief requires the player to be sneaky.

To do that, a thief has to have the right gear, including water arrows, fire arrows, and a sword, but most importantly, a set that players can use to sneak up behind guards and knock them out cold. Water arrows are also an important commodity, as most of the action takes place in

corridors dimly lit by torches that can be doused by a quick splash. A visibility indicator at the bottom of the screen lets players know how easy it is for guards to see them. Guards can also hear thieves as they travel over varying surfaces that make different amounts of noise. Thief has perhaps one of the best implementations of hardware-accelerated sound design, and players will definitely want a DirectSound3D-compatible card to take advantage of it.

Graphically, Thief can't compare to Unreal or Half-Life, and sneaking about can get repetitive. Thief is also very difficult, and players should plan on dying often as they explore. One of the most curious design decisions

RETURN TO KRONOR

Platform: PC
Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Pyrotechnix

Fans of Betrayal at Krondor have been waiting for another Krondor game for years. Based on the Midkemia novels written by Raymond E. Feist, the license was let go after the initial poor sales of Betrayal. However, Sierra got the license back, and the result is finally a sequel to one of the best-loved role-playing games of the past several years. But not all those fans are going to be terribly pleased with what they got.

Return to Krondor does a lot of things right — the story is excellent, the graphics are superb, and the combat is exciting. The backgrounds are prerendered, but your party is fully in 3D as you wander around the city of Krondor and then into the Kingdom's wilderness. Fighting is turn-based, and there are enough options to afford a number of different strategies. In most cases, the camera can cycle through several different positions to let you get the best view, but unfortunately, you can't always do this during normal exploration, and the computer-controlled camera angles make some navigation confusing.

But RPG fans will also be disappointed with the linear storyline. Most of the game involves the classic errand-boy type quests, although there

are the occasional acts of heroism, such as saving orphans from a burning building. These side quests take place one after another, and you can't progress to the next part of the game until you've accomplished your assigned tasks. Ultimately, however, the biggest problem is length. Average gamers will finish inside a week, while hardcore gamers will be done in a matter of days. Considering the rigid linearity of the game, there is little to no replay value, which means small bang for your buck. The game is well-made, and the plot will keep gamers on the edge of their seats. It's just too bad they won't stay there very long.

RATING

★★★☆☆



Return to Krondor never lives up to the promise of being a sequel to Betrayal at Krondor

Half-Life. While Thief doesn't have the graphic or narrative flair of these two games, it is still a fun game to play. The sound design, level design, and gameplay are all top-notch and a worthy addition to the genre.

RATING

★★★★★



Although it doesn't catch the eye like Half-Life or Unreal, Thief pulls off enough interesting twists to more than keep you coming back

ADVANCED STRATEGIES

How designers play their games

SILENT HILL: PART TWO

SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION PUBLISHER: KONAMI DEVELOPER: KONAMI

INTRODUCTION

In **NG 51**, we ran the first half of the walkthrough for Konami's *Silent Hill*. This month, we'll finish off the game, but keep in mind — there are several different endings that you can experience. The following guide will take you straight through to the finale of the game, but it won't give you any hints or secrets regarding the

three other endings you can get by enabling certain "fragments" located in different areas of the game. What they are, and how to get them, is left for you to discover. In addition, there are also a few secret items that open up once you complete your first game and play through on a gold "Next Fear" save.



Once you access the area beyond the spiked turnstiles in the basement, you'll enter an automatic elevator that will lower you down to a fiery battleground. This is Harry's first confrontation with a boss creature. The objective during this fight is to shoot the lizard's head enough times so that its mouth splits open to reveal a huge set of jaws. Use the flaming platform in the center of the room to gain some distance between you and the lizard in order to turn, then aim and begin shooting.

When the lizard's jaws begin to open, it will slowly chase you down. When it gets nearest to you, its jaws will stretch wide

open in attempts to swallow you whole. Make sure to tease the lizard a bit by standing still, then stepping back when it closes in. When the jaws open, it will lunge a bit forward, so make sure to keep a safe distance by stepping a few steps back. When its mouth opens its widest, fire a well-placed Shotgun blast straight down its throat. If you time your blast just right and hit the monster's mouth when it's opened as wide as possible, the fight will be over. Just one shot. If you miss, simply repeat the process until you fire a shot at exactly the right moment. Only the Shotgun will work with one shot. Easy stuff.

THE GIRL IN THE BLUE DRESS

After defeating the Fairy Tale Lizard, you'll be automatically transported to the Boiler Room of the original School building. A woman in a blue dress will appear momentarily before disappearing. In her place, she'll leave the K. Gordon Key. Pick it up and exit the Boiler Room. Harry will hear church bells, which means that someone in town must still be alive. Head up the

stairs to the first floor and save your game in the Infirmary. Visit the Reception Desk and read the paper lying on the table. You'll be able to note that K. Gordon is a teacher at the school who lives in the town. Harry will automatically make a note of it on the City Map. Exit the School and head out onto the city streets.

10

As you exit the School, head down Bradbury Street and make a sharp left into the alleyway running behind the houses along Levin Street. At the fourth corridor leading into the backyards beyond the garages, take a right and open the back gate to K. Gordon's

THE TEACHER'S HOUSE

house. You'll automatically use the K. Gordon Key to enter the house through the back door. Inside you can save your game. There's nothing else to do inside the house, so exit through the front door and head south to Bradbury Street.

BALKAN CHURCH

In order to reach the Church, you'll need to take Bloch Street. Once you arrive inside the Church, you'll meet up with a strange old woman. She'll tell you to "follow the path and head

to the hospital." Once she leaves, pick up the "Faurost" and Drawbridge Key on the altar. You can also use the Notepad near the entrance to save your game.

12

Once you're ready to brave the streets again, head out to the eastern expressway leading out of the residential section of Silent Hill. When you reach the Drawbridge, head to the bridge control tower on the right-hand side of the walkway. Climb up to the second story and enter. Pick up the Shopping Area Map off the desk inside, then use the Drawbridge Key on the control panel near the front window. This will lower the bridge, allowing you to enter Central Silent Hill.

The area of town is teeming with zombie wildlife, so you'll have to use your duck 'n' dodge routine to jukie your enemies while heading to the Police Station along Sagan St. Make your way inside and enter the side room in the building. There's a chalkboard with some cryptic clues written on it. In chalk, for a change, not blood that reads:

Raw Material is White Claudia, a plant peculiar to the region

Manufactured here?

Dealer — manufacturer?

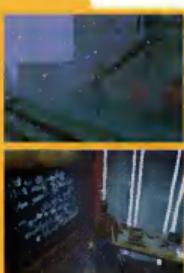
There's also a weird memo on the desk that reads:

Coroner Seals called

Unlikely Officer Gucci murdered

Apparently died naturally

But, medical records show Officer Gucci had no prior symptoms of heart disease.



Product only available in select areas of Silent Hill

ALCHEMILLA HOSPITAL

Once you enter the building, pick up the Hospital Map on the bench near the entrance. You can use the Notepad on the reception counter to save and heal. Only one door in this area is open, so continue through it. You'll meet yet another normal human on the other side. Dr. Kaufmann has been keeping guard over his small room since the nightmare began. He'll chat with Harry for a bit, then take off with his briefcase in hand. Next, head through the door leading north.

Go through the next room into the main room behind the Reception Desk, then pick up the First Aid Kit on backtrace to the Examination Room and head through the door leading into the east hall.

When you emerge, take the first open doorway directly to the right of where you exited. Inside the office, pick up the Hospital Basement Map lying on the desk and move through the south door. You'll find yourself in a meeting room. Pick up the Basement Key off the long table and return to the men's hallway. Enter the next set of double doors leading to the kitchen. Pick up the Plastic Bottle from the corner counter, then exit.

Enter the next room directly to the north of the kitchen and you'll find a small office. It looks like someone's ransacked the room in search of something specific. Behind the desk, examine the spilled contents on the floor and you'll notice a smashed glass vial. Use the Plastic bottle to pick up the remaining liquid, then exit.

Use the Basement Key on the doorway in the hall leading to the staircase. Begin your descent into the lower realms of the hospital — and make sure to have your flashlight ready! When you emerge, head through the only open doorway way to the left of the staircase door. You'll find a Generator inside. Flip the switch and you'll power up the elevator.

You can go back to the first floor and save your game, but steward, hop into the elevator and ride it to the second floor. The doors are locked, so get into the elevator again and head to the third floor. The same situation occurs with the double doors being locked, so get into the elevator one more time when you attempt to press the buttons, you'll notice that a fourth floor has mysteriously appeared on the button menu. It's not mapped out on the Hospital Map, so go ahead and prepare yourself for the next step. Hit the fourth floor button.



ALCHEMILLA HOSPITAL NIGHTMARE



Once you reach the fourth floor, head into the new area. You'll notice that the building has suddenly transformed into a nightmare version of its former self with rusted walls and bloodied gurneys strewn about. The structure of the fourth floor is exactly the same as the second and third floors on the former hospital's map, so head through the double doors. All of the doors along the next two hallways are locked with the exception of the exit doors, so simply run the length of the two connecting hallways, heading through the door at each end until you reach the staircase.

Climb down the staircase all the way to the first floor. When you exit, duck through the double doors beyond the bathrooms. Your first objective in the first-floor hallway is to find the Director's Room that sits just before the stairwell near the elevator. Inside you'll find a Notepad to save and replenish your health. Make sure to pick up the red Queen's Plate on the table.

Exit the Director's Room and head to the second floor using the staircase accessible on the first floor. Make your way into the left-hand hallway and enter the first door on the left to the nurse's room and pick up the lighter on the cot. Exit the room and take note of the stone boards at either end of the hall. The board at the north end of the hall is blank, but the board near the passage to the right hand hall has a list of five names on it:

The Grim Reaper's List:
 35 Lydia Findly
 60 Ilver F. White
 18 Albert Lorts
 45 Roberta T. Morgan
 38 Edward C. Briggs

There are two other rooms open in this hallway. The one room at the far north end contains a set of tentacles guarding another card Plate on the wall. You'll need something in order to clear the tentacles and reach the plate, so remember the location for later. The other room can be found on the right hand side of the hall. Inside you'll find a door puzzle and a set of clues on the wall which read:

"The clouds flowing over the hill."
 "The clear sky on a sunny day."
 "The tangerines turned bitter."
 "The lucky four-leaf-clover."
 "The violets in the garden."
 "The dandelions on the roadside."
 "The sleeping time which has visited me."
 "The flow from a slashed wrist."

Examine the door puzzle and you'll find the slots for four accompanying plates. You don't have all the plates yet, so exit the room and head back to the staircase.

Take the stairs to the third floor and enter the hallway. Take out the lurking nurses and duck into the boys' bathroom to the right; inside, pick up the blue Plate of Urine sitting on the windowsill. Return to the hall and head to the left-hand door at the far north end of the corridor. Inside, you'll find a nurse guarding a pink steel plate on the wall. There's nothing you can do at this point, so exit the room and head into the next open room down the hall. You'll now be inside Room 302. There is a Notepad and a working VCR inside, so make sure to save your game and head back out. You'll find an empty birch cage sitting in the center of the next open room on the left-hand wall. While there's nothing you can do with either the VCR, the Birch cage, or the Steel Plate at this point, remember them for a later puzzle.

In the game, it's time to explore the east hall of the third floor. Head there through the center double doors.

Once you enter the new hall, duck into the first room to the right guarded by double doors. Inside, make sure to pick up the Blood Pack sitting on the set of shelves. Reenter the hall and head to the room (Room 306) two doors down. Inside, pick up the yellow Plate of Cat hanging on the far wall.

Return to the second floor Nurse's Room and head into the left room with the tentacles. Inside, use the Blood Pack near the tentacles and you'll be able to distract the monster long enough to grab the green Plate of Hatter from the wall behind it. Return to the Nurse's Room and approach the puzzle plate on the door leading right; in clockwise order, place the plate pieces in the slots starting with the Plate of Turle (blue), Plate of Hatter (green), Plate of Cat (yellow), then the Plate of Queen (red). The door should now be unlocked, allowing you access to the east hall of the second floor.

Once you're in the east hall, head through the double doors to enter the Prep Room through the double doors to the right. Head into the adjoining room through the next set of double doors and you'll be in the ICU room. Pick up the Basement Storeroom Key from the table inside, then exit all the way back to the hallway. Head up the hall and duck into the double doors to the right between the two angle doors. Inside, pick up the Disinfecting Alcohol from the gurney inside and exit. Return to the first floor of the hospital and head through the single door at the far north end of the hall before the elevator doors.

You'll be heading down the staircase to the Basement. Once you enter the Basement, head straight across the hall to the Basement Storeroom and use the Storeroom Key to enter. Once inside, collect the goodies of the various shelves, then examine the cabinet sitting against the back corner. If you're positioned between the corner and the cabinet, you'll be able to push the shelves to reveal a wooden door in the wall behind it.

Enter the new room and you'll find a grate covered by ivy guarding a comidor below the Basement. Use the Disinfecting Alcohol on the grate, then use the Lighter to set it ablaze. The grate will now open, giving you free access to the mysterious corridor positioned below.

Head through the grates and down the small hall below. Enter the next hallway and immediately make a dash past the nurses to get through the rusty sliding door along the left-hand wall. The second hallway harbors six doors and a few murderous nurses. Make your way through the first door to your immediate right. Pick up the Videotape sitting on the cot inside, then exit back out into the hallway. Head to the last door on the left-hand side of the hall and enter. Harry will sense that someone has been in the room. Just recently.

A picture on the machine next to the bloody cot reveals a picture of a girl that closely resembles Cheryl. The girl in the picture is named "Alissa." Pick up the Examination Room Key sitting next to the picture, then exit back out into the hallway and make your way all the way back to the first floor of the hospital.

Head into the office room to the right of the locked double doors leading back out into the lobby. Avoid the mad doctor inside and use the Examination Room Key to enter the adjoining room. Inside, you'll find a scared nurse cowering beneath a cot in the caulked Examination Room. Her name is Lisa Garland, and for once, you've found someone in the nightmare mirror world of Silent Hill. After a short conversation with Lisa, the world abruptly changes back to daytime.

NG RESOURCES



THE ANTIQUE SHOW

You'll awake in the murky glow of the Examination Room, but Lisa is gone. Dahlia Gillespie has returned, instead, to provide you with a few more cryptic clues as to your mission. She'll also drop a green key on the desk near the door. Once she's gone, pick up the Antique Show Key from the desk and exit the room. Head to the Reception/Clothing area and save your game.

It's finally time to exit the Hospital. Head out onto the streets and follow Simmons St. all the way north until you reach the Green Lion Antique Shop past the Silent Hill Shopping Center. Head through the open doorway and down the steps to reach a locked door. Use the Antique Shop key to enter. Inside, you can use the Notepad and collect a few goodies. Examine the stone wall in the back of the shop and you'll find that some of the shelves have been recently moved. Push them out of the way and a huge gaping hole will be revealed in the wall.

As you are inspecting the hole in the wall, Cybil will walk into the shop. She'll tell you that she saw a girl that looked like Cheryl "float" across the gap in the asphalt at the end of Bachman Road. The information puzzles you further, but the urge to explore the area behind the wall presses you to move on. With Cybil covering you from the shop, enter the hall through the hole. Follow the corridor to a small alcove through the next doorway. You'll find a room with a small altar inside. Pick up the Axe on the wall, but there's little else to find in the room.

As you attempt to exit back out to the shop, the alarum suddenly goes up in flames. The vision fades out and you find yourself back in Alchemilla Hospital with Lisa at your side.

16

Lisa tells you that you had been having a bad dream and goes on to answer some of your questions concerning Dahlia Gillespie's cryptic comments. She tells you that Dahlia had lost her child in a fire several years ago and had lived the life of a hermit ever since. But before you can get more information from Lisa, the room fades again and you wake up on the floor of the Anteque Shop.

Solve your game and exit the shop altogether. Once you make it to the street, head to the left and stick to the buildings until you pass a chain-link gate covering the entrance to the

Shopping Center. There's a tear in the gate so duck through. You'll find yourself in the destroyed hull of the town mall.

Head for the escalators, but before you can ascend, a nearby wall of television monitors lights up. Once the cinema is over, continue up the escalators and head to the left. Enter the small shop near the bench along the railings.

Inside the Jewelry Shop, pick up the Ammo, then save your game. Exit and head left. As you approach the enemy lurking in the darkness just out of your sight, the floor falls out from under you.

THE CATERPILLAR

After landing on a patch of sand far below, a large caterpillar emerges from the ground. Equip the Shotgun or Hunting Gun and watch the floor. The creature will surface in a random area, cross the floor, and dive down below the sand. When it surfaces, clear away from the line it travels in and keep shooting at it. You can pick up the Hunting Rifle sitting in the broken window along the wall on the left-hand side of the room. Avoid getting hit by the surfacing enemy and dodge the red beams it will

occasionally shoot out at you, as well.

The fight isn't too tough, but you'll have to use a good stash of ammo to finally get the Caterpillar to dive for the last time. Once you've defeated the boss, it will make a successful escape out the far window. In doing this, the Caterpillar provides you with your escape route to the outside world. Head through the broken window to emerge in the back lot of the Shopping Center.

17

Occasionally shoot out at you, as well.

Once you reach the back lot, head to the right and follow the chain-linked street around the twisting maze of floating windmills. You'll emerge on Sagan St. heading west. Follow Sagan until you reach Crichton, then turn left and follow it all the way to the Alchemilla Hospital. The road is treacherous and filled with gaps and monsters, but this is the only path to the hospital.

When you reach the Hospital, head inside and go directly to the Examination Room. Lisa will be waiting for you now. She'll voice her fears and ask you not to leave. After asking her about

alternate routes to the lake, she'll remember that the Sewers near Midway Elementary School were rumors to lead at the way to the Resort Area where the lake is. After refusing your offers to let her accompany you on your journey, she tells you that as scared as she is to stay, she somehow feels that she'll be in danger if she leaves the hospital. After the drama, leave the Examination Room, then head out onto the streets once again.

FINDING LISA

cool. Use the Shotgun or Hunting Rifle to take shots at the Moth, but make sure to keep a good amount of distance between you both. Use the water tower as a wall to evade the red projectiles that the moth emits when it attacks. Simply keep moving, and after the moth attacks, countermatch with several rounds of fire. It shouldn't take more than a couple of well-placed rounds to defeat the Moth and win the battle.

TO THE SEWERS

your map, then a quick cinema will take you there automatically.

The gate guarding the Sewers is locked, but you can break the lock by equipping either the Steel Pipe or the Axe and taking a few swipes at it. Once the lock is broken, enter and find the open manhole on the ground. When you're ready, descend into the Sewers.

18

Once the Moth is defeated, the nightmare world suddenly transforms back into the dimly lit daytime. Head down the staircase to reach the streets. If you need to, use the Notepad in the Reception area of the Hospital to save your game.

When you're ready, head back to Old Silent Hill, which lies westward, across the drawbridge. Once you enter the residential part of town, you'll be shown where to go on

THE SEWERS

Once you enter the Sewers, follow the first tunnel until you reach a fork in the road. To the right is a locked gate, so head left and follow the path. You'll pass a bridge leading to the right, but keep running until you reach the end of the walkway. Pick up the goodies sitting on either edge of the sewer duct, then head down a right-hand walkway. Follow the walkway until you reach a gate. Head through and follow the corridor all the way around the winding sets of sewer generators. You'll eventually end up in an open office of sorts. Pick up the Sewer Map from the desk inside, use the Notepad if you need to, then make sure to lift the Sewer Key from the opened cabinet on the wall.

Continue through the right-hand door and follow the pathway until you reach the next gate. You'll automatically unlock the gate and find yourself in the central area of the C level sewers.

Find your way south to the first locked gate you encountered when you entered the Sewers. Use the Sewer Key and pass through the gate. Follow the path and continue

heading south until you reach a ladder leading up to the D level of the Sewers. Once you reach D level, make sure to pick up the First Aid Kit to the right, then head south until you reach the split leading to a dead tunnel to the right and a long tunnel to the left.

Head down the long tunnel as it heads east and then ultimately south. When you reach the end of the tunnel, head to the right since you don't have the key to open the exit to the left. You'll need to unlock a series of three gates along the wide tunnel, but when you make it through the third gate, examine the dead end of the path. In the water just beyond the walkway, you'll find a Sewer Exit Key floating in the red-stained water. Pick it up. Once you do, a horde of sewer lizards will emerge from the water. You don't need to fight them to escape if you're fast enough.

Backtrack all the way to the east through the three gates and use the Sewer Exit Key to unlock the fourth and furthest gate. Now you're home free. Use the Notepad near the ladder if you need to, then climb the ladder to reach the Resort Area.

21

22

When you emerge from the Sewers, you'll find yourself in the Lake Resort area of the town. Make sure to explore the gabled building sitting next to the area you emerge from in order to pick up the Resort Area Map and a few boxes of ammo.

Head south on Sandford Rd., until you hit Sandford, then follow the road west. Suddenly, the sky grows even darker and the road changes into the nightmarish steel-girded world that

infiltrated the Hospital and School. What's going on? You get the feeling that the situation has grown even more serious, but you have no choice but to continue onto the Lighthouse. Past the East and West Garages, head south along the pier and down the flight of steps at the very end. Cross the wooden plank that leads to the deck of small boat. Enter the double doors to pass through the boat.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Inside, you encounter Cybil. She's safe, but hasn't a clue as to what's happening. During the conversation, Dahlia Gillespie makes another one of her grand entrances. She'll urge you to stop the events that are about to occur at both the Amusement Park to the west of the Resort Area as well as atop the Lighthouse. The Mark of Samiel is being completed more quickly than either of you thought; Cybil offers to stake out the Amusement Park, while you check out the goings-on at the Lighthouse. Shortly thereafter, Dahlia Gillespie leaves as well. Save your game and exit through the door to the side of the

boat's wheel.

From the boat, follow the path, which zigzags across a series of starcases. When you reach the Lighthouse, you can use the Notepad to save your game. Climb the spiral staircase to the top of the Lighthouse, but you'll find it's too late. You'll catch a glimpse of the young woman in the blue dress before she disappears once again. The Mark of Samiel is freshly imprinted on the roof, but there's nothing you can do about it. Climb back down the Lighthouse and backtrack all the way to Sandford Street.

24

You discover that the road leading directly to the Lakeside Amusement Park has been obliterated, so you'll need to find an alternate path to find Cybil. Search along the right side of West Sandford St. to locate an open gate leading into a yard filled with manholes. One of the manholes is open, allowing you to enter a small set of sewers leading to the Amusement Park.

CYBIL

With no enemies in sight and only a few structures still standing, the Amusement Park provides you with a nice respite from the monster-filled Resort Area. Find the Food Stand. There's a Notepad on the back counter of the stand, so make sure to use it. Fix the broken Merry-Go-Round in the park.

Once you find it, climb the short steps leading onto the floor of the ride. A cinema shows Cybil waving in a wheelchair and walking towards you. From the look in her eyes, there's something very wrong with her. She'll attempt to gun you down, then the real fight starts.

Your best plan for attack is to evade Cybil whenever possible. Two shots from her revolver and you're dead, so make

TO THE AMUSEMENT PARK

When you enter, you'll see a brief cinema showing Cybil in some major trouble. Climb down the ladder and pick up the Sewer Map hanging on the wall. The sewers leading to the park are fairly straightforward, short, and very easy to navigate. Simply refer to the map if you get stuck. Once you reach the exit ladder, you'll be able to climb up to the Amusement Park.

sure to heal up every time you get hit. Take a couple of shots at her when her back is turned. She's pretty slow, and you'll have a chance to recuperate whenever the Merry-Go-Round starts up. When it stops, Cybil will hop off the ride and begin her attack again. After hitting her enough times, she'll run out of bullets and toss her gun aside.

Her new attack is a simple whack with the back of her hand. Don't underestimate her strength — she's tough and will do plenty of damage if you don't check your health from time to time. She'll also attempt to strangle you, but this does no damage. There are different ways to end the battle, but for the sake of this guide — simply keep shooting Cybil until she is defeated.

25

Once the fight with Cybil is over, you'll encounter Alessa in the flesh. She'll invade your grasp until the Flareos begins to glow in your pocket. The object will automatically be activated and Alessa will be struck with a beam of light which renders her powerless. At that moment, Dahlia Gillespie will appear and chase Alessa as if she were her own child. But surprisingly

ALESSA

enough, you'll discover that Alessa is indeed Dahlia's daughter and the two will disappear as mysteriously as they appeared.

With even more questions than answers, you'll only have a brief moment to mourn the loss of Cybil before the world fades around you and you wake up once again in the Examination Room of the Hospital.

NOWHERE

As you regain consciousness, you'll awake in the Hospital. Lisa is patiently waiting by your side, and she'll reveal some new fears she has about her involvement with the strange events at the Hospital. She'll abruptly leave the room to solve the mystery by herself.

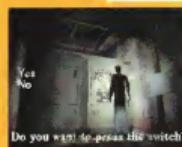
Follow her through the door and you'll find that you're no longer in the Hospital, but in a new area of the game's "other world." You'll automatically ride to the basement in the elevator to find yourself in a series of hallways and rooms that mimic places you've visited at different points in the game. The first hallway has exactly the same layout as any hallway from the Alchemista Hospital. There are three locked doors along the hall that have specific names scrawled on them ("Phleg," "Ophele," "Haghit"). Head through the door to the left of the Phleg door and use the Notepad to save your game.

Next, return to the hall and enter the door between the Ophele and Haghit doors. Head down the stairs and you'll enter a room resembling a Classroom from the Midwich Elementary School. A desk in the center of the room has a few lines of

graffiti scrawled on it, but simply head through the door on the opposite side of the room. In the side room, pick up the Pliers and Screwdriver from the table and backtrack to the main hall.

Enter the door to the right of the elevator you entered on. You'll find a key wedged into a faucet at the back of the room. Use the Pliers to free the Ophele key from the faucet, then head back out into the hall. Use the key to enter the Ophele door and the Haghit door. You'll enter a second hallway with a familiar set of stone boards on either end. One of them will display the "Grim Reaper's List" you remember from your first trip through the Hospital earlier in the game.

Before you begin the Grim Reaper's puzzle, enter the room first door on the left next to the double doors. Inside you'll find an astrological puzzle arranged along a steel column in the back of the room. Examine the plates along the sides of the room and you'll find pictures of astrological animals above a specific number. The numbers refer to the order in which the puzzle refers to each sign. Therefore, Libra is set at "12," meaning you begin your count at Libra. Approach the steel column and there



Do you want to press this switch?





are three more astrological pictures with a set of numbers beneath them that you can choose from. The left-hand number pad shows a picture of the goat for Capricorn. Press "3," then examine the middle picture, which shows a bull for Taurus. Press "7" and move to the final picture of a Scorpion. Press "1" for Scorpio and the blue Stone of Time should fall from the steel column. Pick it up and exit the room.

In the hallway, examine the two stone boards at either end of the hall. The south board is the Grim Reaper's List, while the previously blank stone board at the north end of the hall will give you a clue as to what the board means. Examine the letter plate near the door next to the Grim Reaper's List. You'll find a list of letter buttons. Enter in "A-L-E-R-T" which stands for the first letter of each patient's name in order from youngest to oldest. The door will unlock.

Pass through the connecting storeroom and head into the far room to pick up the Amulet of Solomon. When you reenter the storeroom, Lisa will be waiting for you. To avoid any spoilers, we'll kindly skip to the next part of the game. Make sure to reenter the storeroom to read Lisa's diary, which is sitting in the center of the floor. When you're ready to move on, backtrack to the main hall.

Head to the Antique Shop room next to the door of Phaleg and use the Stone of Time on the clock near the entrance. The face of the clock will break, giving you access to the key of Haggith. Use the key to enter the double doors at the far end of the hallway.

You'll find that you now have access to the elevator. Use it to reach the second floor of the building. When you exit the elevator you'll find yourself in the west wing of a set of two hallways. Enter the farthest-left-hand door to find the room with the familiar Steel Plate on the back wall. Use the Screwdriver to remove the plate, but the Key that sits in the wall recess is protected by a set of electric wires. Return to the hall and pass through the sole door on the right-hand wall. Inside, pick up the Camera from the desk, then exit.

Use the double door next to the bathrooms to enter the east hall. There is only one room open to you in this hall, so find the second door on the right-hand wall. You'll find yourself in the Jewelry Store. Pick up the Crest of Mercury and Ring of Contract from the broken display counters, then make your way all the way back to the elevator.

Take the elevator up to the third floor to discover yourself in a familiar area with a small altar. Two locked doors lead off to the left and right, but you need a specific button combination to unlock them both. Examine the paintings on either side of the altar, then use the Camera to highlight sets of symbols etched into the two canvases. Each symbol must be entered into the corresponding door to unlock them. Through the left-hand door, you'll find the Birdcage Key sitting on the far chair. Through the right-hand door, you'll find a Health Drink and a strange botany book. It reads:

There's a place mark in the book.

WHITE CLAUDIA

Perennial herb found near water. Reaches height of 10 to 15 inches. Oblong leaves, white blossoms. Seeds contain halucinogen. Ancient records show it was used for religious ceremonies. The halucinogenic effect was key



Electricity: Power to the key. I'll get sheathed it, grab it now.

Continue through the door to the left of the non-working elevator and you'll find the birdcage. Use the Birdcage Key to



grab the Key of Phaleg hanging inside. Exit the room and you'll finally be able to enter the Door of Phaleg.

Through the last door, you'll discover that you've entered a hallway that looks a lot like the second floor of the Hospital Basement. Enter the first door to the right and you'll be in the kitchen. Use the Ring of Contract on the refrigerator chain, then pick up the Dagger of Melchior. Exit the room and enter the second room on the left.

Pick up the Ankh from a nail on the wall. Exit the room and enter the second door on the right-hand side of the hall. You'll enter another storeroom. Pick up the items from the shelves, then open the bag of jellybeans on the far shelf. The bag will break open and then the Key of Belhor will drop on the ground. Pick it up, then enter the adjoining room to the left.

In the AV room, use the Videotape from your earlier trip to the Hospital Basement and place it into the VCR. You'll now be able to watch the unabridged version of the tape, which shows a desperate Lisa describing one of the patients under her care.

What is it? Still has an unusually high fever. Eyes don't open . . . getting a pulse, but just barely breathing. Skin is all charred . . . even when I change the bandages, the blood and pus keep oozing through. Why? What is keeping that child alive? Can't stand it any longer. Promise . . . won't tell a soul . . . so please . . .

What is she referring to? Exit back out to the hall and use the Key of Belhor in the first door on the left wall. Cut the power on the generator so that you can return to pick up the electrified key on the second floor. Backtrack to the first hallway and find your way into the second floor hall by entering through the double doors along the long wall of the hall. Find the room with the Steel Plate, and you can now grab the Key of Aratron from the recess in the wall. Return to the basement hallway and use the key to enter the third room on the right.

When you enter, you'll experience a flashback. Once the scene has faded, pick up the Disc of Ouroboros from the machine to the right of the bed. Exit and head through the last door in the hall to the left.

You'll enter a child's room, filled with fairytale books and crayon drawings. Use the Notepad to save your game, then examine the wooden door at the back of the room. Use the Dagger of Melchior, Ankh, Disc of Ouroboros, Amulet of Solomon, and Crest of Mercury to unlock the door. When you're ready, head through the door and into the unknown.

FINALE

The series of electric beams that she'll fire off in a row. You can tell when the attack is about to commence when the electricity begins to collect around the boss. Keep moving around the circumference of the room to outrun the lightning storm, then return to your pattern of fire once it subsides. The boss is tough and will most likely outlast your ammo. When you get a chance, ram into the forcefield protecting the boss to weaken its defenses. After enough damage is inflicted to the boss, she'll succumb, and you'll successfully finish the game. Now it's up to you to discover the other endings. Congratulations!

28

On the other side of the door, you'll witness another vision of Dafna and Alessia struggling at the top of a staircase. After the vision dissipates, head down the staircase to descend into the final area of the game. Depending on which flagstones you enacted during the course of the game, you may have a different ending sequence, complete with a different end boss. The following boss strategy is for those who followed the walkthrough meticulously with no diversions.

Once the fight begins, make sure to simply fire off as many shots as possible at the boss, but be careful to stay mobile for





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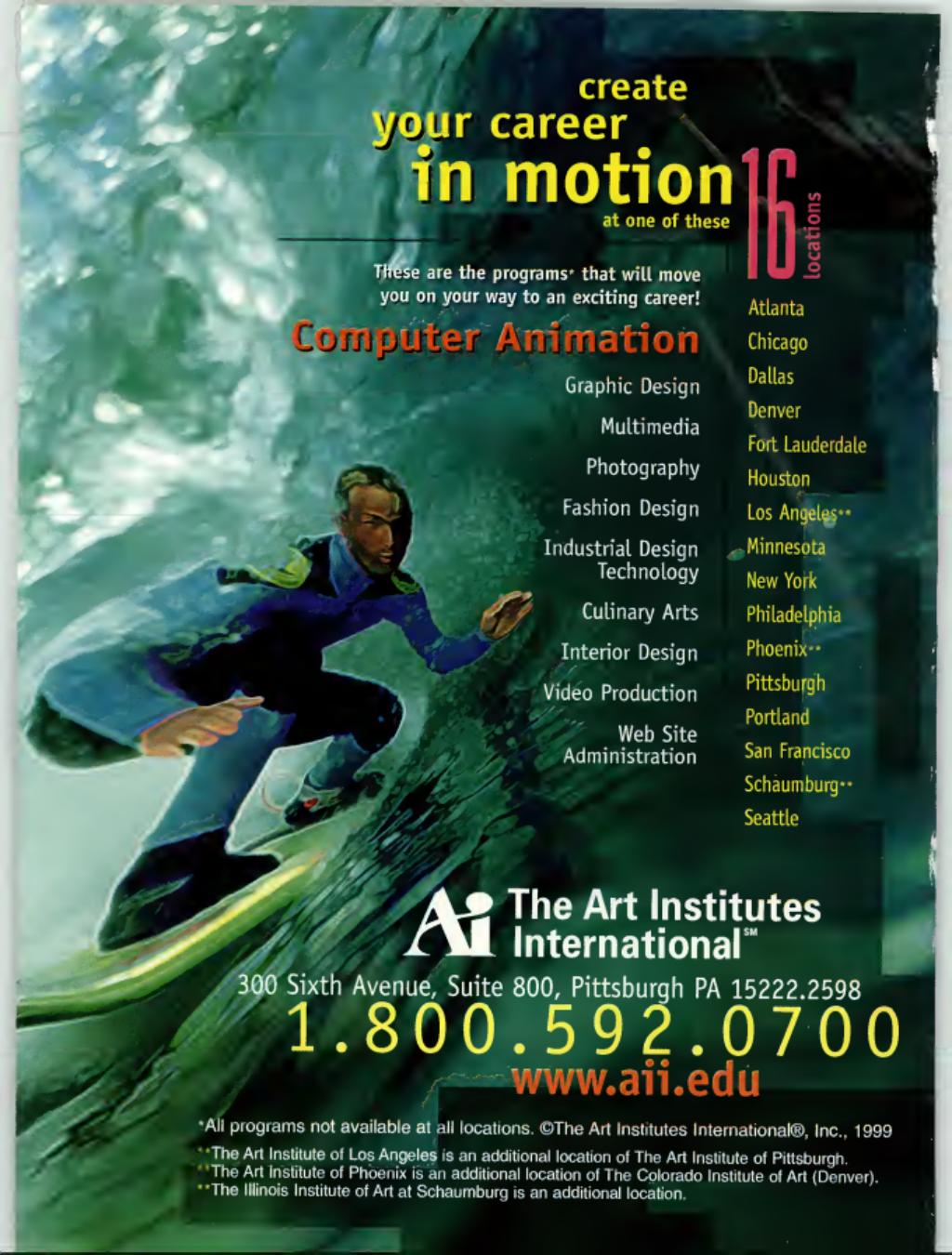
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ENDING

Next Generation, a link to the past

Intellivision Lives!

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO?

BODY SLAM: SUPER PRO WRESTLING Released in 1988, this option-packed wrestling classic from INTV was one of the last games released for the Intellivision. It's also one of the most fun.



More than 15 years after the Mattel Intellivision imploded (almost taking the creator of Barbie and Hot Wheels down with it), a group of the original programmers and designers have released a stunning Intellivision compilation on CD for Mac and PC. Although, with only three million units sold, Intellivision has never held the same kind of place in the national consciousness as the 2600 or Apple II, during the early 1980s it was the most powerful home console around, and many of its games are classics that

cannot be found elsewhere.

The disc, *Intellivision Lives!*, features a wealth of information about the system, including more than 50 playable ROM images. There's also a multimedia history of Mattel Electronics, biographies of the creators of Intellivision and



Retroview

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

THE BOYS FROM THE DARKSIDE — PART 2

Sam Tramiel, the last president of Atari Corporation, had a heart attack shortly before the company merged with JTS. I asked one of his old associates what he thought about it. He responded, "You know what's strange about Sam having a heart attack? I never knew he had a heart."

The Tramiels, family patriarch Jack Tramiel in particular, were masters of hardball business. They were famous for allegedly stretching payables to suppliers — sometimes to their suppliers' demise. They had a reputation for ruthless cutbacks and unbelievably meticulous cost-cutting practices. As the heads of Commodore and Atari, Jack and Sam routinely sorted through their executives' travel expense reports to make sure their companies were not billed for non-essential expenses

or overly generous tips in restaurants. The Tramiels' style of business was not entirely uncommon in other industries, but in the wild-spending videogame industry of the 1980s, people took it personally.

Nineteen eighty-four was a cataclysmic year in the home computer industry; it began with Jack Tramiel, the founder of Commodore, leaving his company under unpleasant circumstances. At the same time, Atari was struggling to right itself. Atari stock plummeted at the end of 1982 when Atari CEO Ray Kassar announced that the company had not reached its sales projections. The company's fortunes got worse the following year, and a new president named Jim Morgan was hired. Morgan began his tenure with huge cutbacks, trimming the company's buildings dramatically and cutting its American workforce from 9,800 to 3,500 while sending

3,000 manufacturing jobs overseas. When the company still reported huge losses, Warner Communications, the company that purchased Atari from founder Nolan Bushnell, decided to pull the plug. In the end, it sold all of the company except the coin-op division to Jack Tramiel for \$240 million in promissory notes based on future earnings.

Speculation on why Tramiel purchased Atari varies. Some people feel he did it to get revenge on Commodore; others think he did it to bring his sons Sam, Leonard, and Gary together; still others think he did it to make one last financial killing to ensure his family's future fortunes. Whatever his reasons, Jack Tramiel's dark reputation preceded him as he arrived at Atari.

Everybody was expecting something draconian to happen. When they first walked in the

QUESTION

After Pac-Man, Todd Frye worked on (but never finished) a conversion of this Nemo shooter:

its games, videos of commercials and staff-made home movies, and enormous amounts of information about the hardware and individual games (including many unreleased and unfinished titles).

For each game there is information about the development process, packing art, any interesting bugs or Easter eggs, instructions, and, in most cases, a playable ROM. Unfortunately, many licensed games couldn't be included in the package (AD&D fans take note). The unreleased Adventure is identical to AD&D.

Overall, the presentation is excellent, although the hyperlink navigation can be a little confusing. Still, those interested in Intellivision can find almost every question they ever had answered, as well as massive amounts of trivia and nostalgia. The emulator is also well-done; games can be played from inside the multimedia presentation or straight from the emulator. What may be best about

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Intellivision Lives! website. At the top is a banner with the title 'Intellivision Lives!' and a subtitle 'The History, Hardware, Software, and People of the Intellivision'. Below the banner are two main sections: 'Main Menu' and '1983 Releases'. The 'Main Menu' section features a large image of a group of people, likely the original Intellivision team, with the text 'INTELLIVISION' and 'Intellivision Lives!'. The '1983 Releases' section features a large image of the 'Kool-Aid Man' video game cartridge with the text 'KOOL-AID MAN' and 'Intellivision Lives!'. There are also links for 'THE HISTORY', 'THE HARDWARE', 'THE SOFTWARE', and 'THE PEOPLE'.

the package is how well it captures what was clearly the amazing atmosphere that existed at intellivision — the battles against marketing, the practical jokes, the all-nighters, and, above all, the commitment to making cool games.

Intellivision Lives! is easily equal in quality to any of the Namco Museums or Midway collections, and at less than \$30.00, it belongs on the shelf of every Next Generation reader. More information can be found at <http://www.intellivisionlives.com>.

building, someone got on the P.A. system and did the line from *The Empire Strikes Back*. I think it went, "Attention, Imperial storm troopers have entered the base."

Kelly Turner
Former Atari Employee

Jim Morgan may have cut Atari's payroll in half, but this was a simple trimming compared to Tramiel standards. Jack appointed Sam as president of the company, and the two of them set up offices in the corporate headquarters. People who witnessed their takeover described them as tireless and merciless. Within a short time, Atari's worldwide payroll was reduced from 5,000 people to 1,500.

Everywhere they looked, the Tramiels saw excesses they could cut. Marketing was a typical example. Commodore operated with a slim 25 employees in its

marketing department. Atari had a 300-person marketing division when the Tramiels arrived. Jack Tramiel reduced the number of secretaries, engineers, and administrators dramatically. The "Tramiel Fire Sale," as one employee described it, was not restricted to the wholesale reduction of jobs. Atari's new management sent crews to evaluate the company's assets. Carts filled with computer and office equipment soon lined the walls. Equipment deemed unnecessary was either sold off or stolen. According to one ex-employee, equipment theft reached epic levels.

It's funny, I was actually in Greece the day that Atari sort of went tapatio and was sold to the Tramiels, so I missed it. The way I had it described to me, it sounded like the last days of Vietnam, where people were pushing

helicopters off of aircraft carriers so they could get the fighters down because the fighters were worth more than the helicopters. Well, it sounded like the same thing at Atari. Stuff was just flying out the doors and out the windows. If it wasn't nailed down in the last couple of days there, people were walking out the door and stuffing it in their cars.

Steve Race
Former vice president
Atari Europe Division

Atari, which had gone from being known as the fastest-growing company in American history to being labeled as the albatross around Warner Communications' neck, was about to catch a ride on an all-new roller coaster. This one, however, would end the company's existence once and for all. **Next Month: The Fall of Atari**

ANSWER

Kevous (picture courtesy of Keiko Iida)



Letters

Notes from a mail dominated society

I found a major error made by Id Software in your interview about Quake III. On page 41, when Lead Designer Tim Willits is talking about character classes, he says, "But it's great being the heavy guy because you can survive a real good shot to the head and keep on playing." But then on page 43, when you ask Willits, "How about GoldenEye-style hit-specific animations, and location-based damage?" Then Willits says that "The designers feel they slow down the game and aren't noticeable enough to be worth it." Doesn't that just contradict what Willits says about the "real good shot to the head"?? Or were you/Willits talking about the hit-specific animations? I would appreciate it if you could clear this up for me. Thanks!

Melvin Chu
HeckleMS@aol.com

Well done, Melvin. Willits responds: "There is no location-based damage. What I should have said was, 'the heavy guy can take a couple of direct hits.' I was just trying to be more graphic and violent." Spoken like a true level designer.

I can't believe it. Man I'm bummed. I am a loyal reader of your magazine, as well as a subscriber for at least four issues,

and yet my name did not appear on your Hardcore page (W-through-Z) in the February issue. According to my alphabetizing calculations, I should have appeared between Eric Wise and Joshua Wise. That was my one shot at immortality and you guys fumbled the ball.

I have an idea. I remain a dedicated subscriber, and next month you guys devote an entire page to my name. I'm not an egomaniac or anything—it's just that I'm really super into myself.

Greg Wise

Hmm... Instead of a whole page, how about we print your letter. The entire hardcore ad campaign was generated from a subscriber list that was current when the campaign started, way back in the middle of last year, meaning that if you subscribed after the ads started running, you were out of luck. Sorry. We'll figure out another way to immortalize our subscribers this year, though; we promise.

No offense guys, but I tore out your top 50 list and used it to wipe myself. But everything else is as delightful as a warm, sunny spring day.

MeguesPAGE@aol.com



No, there won't be hit specific reactions or location-based damage in Quake III, but there will definitely be very big guys

Okay-dokey. We'll just let that stand a) as testament to our paper quality and b) to represent the opinions of everyone who disagreed with our choices for the top 50.

A couple things about your "Fifty Best Games of All Time" list. First, why 50? Why not the ever-popular 100 best games of all time list, especially since you had the creative sense to include PC games in it? Did you really think 50 was enough? Second of all, was this your "The Most-Fun-to-Play Games of All Time" list from your viewpoint, and you merely made a mistake in calling the list "The Greatest Games"? And were you also thinking about the most influential games when you said "The Greatest Games"? I'm confused!

Jacob Powell
Einfall@juno.com

It was basically, "What are the top 50 games we would play, if we had every game ever made in front of us." However, that wasn't as catchy a title as "The greatest games..." so we went with that instead.

Why do game producers give a hint that a sequel of a game is going to come out when the original has only been out for about a month? One such case is South Park: It's only been out for a month, but there is already an announced sequel!

Alex Goodman
alexgoodman@hotmail.com

Usually, if a company can tell a game will be hot, it will start on the sequel well before the first game is finished, to cut down on the time between initial release and the sequel. That's how Eidos manages to get a Tomb Raider game out every 12 months instead of every 18 months.

You guys printed a letter in issue 49 from a reader who was counting polygons in a



Yup, another South Park game is pretty much a sure thing

Lionhead Studios screenshot. The reader couldn't see how the "citizen" could be made up of only 12 polygons. With clever texture-mapping (and alpha-blending), some camera tricks, and high-quality art, he could easily assemble a body out of 12 polys. Legs: two each, arms: two each, torso: two, head: one, neck: one. This provides for basic articulation at the major joints as well... Remember, Lionhead's counting polygons, not triangles.

Eric P. Miller
enorm@engr.sgi.com

Good point. We've been staring at those citizens and scratching our heads ever since we ran the story

I just finished reading the top 50 list in the February 1999 issue of *Next Generation*. Correct me if I'm wrong (but I'm not), but is that a pic of Quake I, not Quake II? That made me wonder if Quake II was fifth on the list or Quake I? We all make mistakes, like when I play freeze tag in Quake II and keep pushing a certain player named kittylgsx into the lava just so she can frag me into a people-circle.

kingevil@optonline.net

In fact, an artist incorrectly put a Quake I shot in there, not Quake II. We've made this mistake before, but branding a "II" over the eye of one of the artists should ensure that we don't make it again.

I just read your interview with Hironobu Sakaguchi ("The Man Behind the Fantasies") and, the Final Fantasy series being one of my favorite series of games of all time, I can't help but wonder why you didn't ask — or at least imply — the question, "Will there be a Final Fantasy for the Dreamcast?" You asked Namco, why can't you ask Square?

Martin Weisenburger
absolutezerox@hotmail.com

We did, but we cut Mr. Sakaguchi's rather predictable answer (it was along the lines of "We have no plans to announce anything about that right now, but thanks for asking") in favor of putting in more useful (and interesting) information.

I just got my subscription copy of NG 50 in the mail yesterday, and as a true NG devotee, I quickly looked up the last page of the top 50 games article. Unfortunately I found what I had feared and predicted for so long. Mario was in place 3, Zelda in place 1, and runner-up was still Tetris. When you guys published your top 100 list a while back, I told my friends that the next time NG published a greatest game list it was going to be Place 1: Flavor of the Month, Place 2: Tetris. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see the pattern here.

I'll admit Zelda is a kick-ass game, but within two years it will just be another high point in game history and nobody will want to play it because the interface will be outdated, the graphics considered sub-par, etc. Tetris, on the other hand, will be used as a demo for the Game Boy (which they'll be selling until judgment day and then some) and people will still keep a copy of it or one of its close derivatives on their desktop (I know I have mine). So please, next time, take this into account: A game that is supposed to be the greatest of all



Just as with every interview, we didn't print every question we asked Hironobu Sakaguchi — some answers are just dull

time (and the whole century, decade, millennium, etc. gig is getting old) should be replayable within five years, and I can't see Zeldas fulfilling that role. Can you?

Colleen Callahan
kickin72@uh.edu

Keep reading...

I thank you for placing Tetris at number two in your top 50! This game often doesn't get the credit it deserves. You will probably receive complaints from many readers about ranking it so highly. Oh well. As you said, it really is the "essence of gameplay at its most basic." In fact, Pavlov has stated in interviews that the number of Tetris piece shapes is seven because that is the number of items that the average person can keep in short-term memory (the same reason that phone numbers are seven digits.) Not only that, Tetris may be the only videogame that has been ported to pretty much every game or computer platform.

What's more, it can be considered a "Zen meditation exercise" — according to one

article, "Tetris significantly raises cerebral glucose metabolic rates (GMRs), meaning brain energy consumption soars. Yet, after four to eight weeks of daily doses, GMRs sink to normal, while performance increases seven-fold, on average."

And don't forget that Tetris was pretty much the killer app that made all those initial sales of the Game Boy. All in all, pretty amazing for such a simple piece of software. Lastly, thank you for not mentioning all those trashy Tetris sequels and rip-offs that merely dilute the perfection that is the original Tetris.

Karl W. Reinsch
kreinach@RadicX.net

Thanks for the letter, Karl, please, do us a favor. Email Colleen and tell her it's OK. Tetris didn't get #1.

I issue 50, page 21, there's an error while listing the Nintendos characters in Smash Brothers. Her name is Samus, Metroid(s) were the creatures she fought. Also, on page 53: Diablo is Westwood's big hit? I believe that

honor belongs to a little-known company responsible for the cult underground games called WarCraft and StarCraft.

Eugene V.
evillane@nighthawk.
airforce.net

I just picked up the February issue of Next Generation. Did you guys realize the preview of Darkstone refers to Diablo as "Westwood's highly popular dungeon crawl"? Now I realize why you guys don't sign those reviews.

av88@earthlink.net

We would like to apologize to Blizzard for accidentally crediting Diablo to Westwood. The offending editor has had acid tossed in his face

In NG 50, page 101, you state that the game Twisted Metal 3 was published and developed by EA Sports. But this is entirely wrong; 989 Studios published and developed this game, not EA Sports.

gary55@excite.com

As Electronic Arts, 989 Studios, and hundreds of readers let us know, the credit (or more accurately, the blame) for Twisted Metal 3 belongs with 989 Studios, not EA. We were going to trash acid in the face of the editor who made the mistake, but we already did that, so instead we made him play Twisted Metal 3 again.

Cruel, but necessary.

NG



Ah Tetris ... really, does it get any better than this?

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