

It's... It's...

THE GAMEROOM BLITZ



I FIND THIS COVER APPALLINGLY VIOLENT, AND FURTHERMORE...

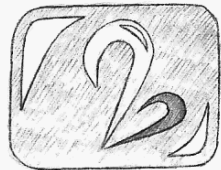
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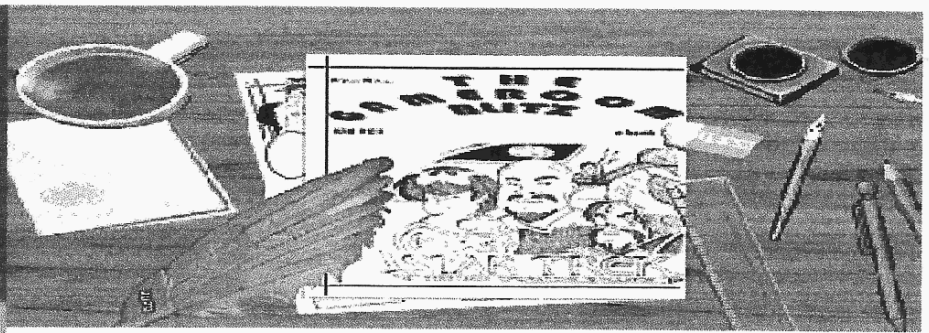
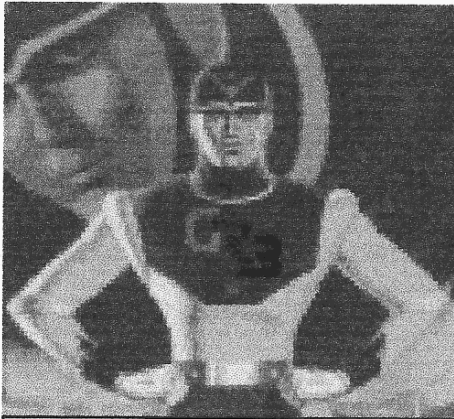


IT'S A FREE-FOR-ALL!

ALSO FEATURED:
The First Annual Eidos Beauty Pageant
Josh Lesnick Goes Berzerk! Again.
Matt DeIG and the Street Fighter Before 3
A Fresh Perspective On School Violence
Jess Suits Up With VR Gear



JessCREATIONS*, Co.
Publishing



THE GAMEROOM BLITZ #7
WINTER 2000

This story has not yet ended.

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COVER ME!

The mascots from Sega, Sony, and Nintendo wage war against each other and their newest opponent, the towering X-Box mech. Who will be the first to hit the canvas? Is Microsoft destined to become an industry leader? And what about the Indrema and Nuon? Er, what about them?

First, I want to apologize for sitting on this issue for so long. If you can believe it, this was originally supposed to be released late this summer, but thanks to a combination of writer's block, procrastination, and lack of interest, that didn't happen. After that, I promised myself that issue seven would be done and out the door before Sony released the Playstation 2, but that deadline, well, dropped dead too. So now, I guess I'll just toss in a sprig of holly and call this the Christmas edition of The Gameroom Blitz. I thought about cancelling the issue entirely because some of the articles and reviews inside are pretty old, but I didn't think that would be fair to my contributors... and I sure as heck wasn't going to rewrite everything I'd done (if I had, this issue wouldn't have been out until Christmas of next year!). Because of this, you're going to notice more recent stuff mixed in with the contributions I received this summer, and I hope you'll forgive any chronological inconsistencies that may result.

I've heard a lot of talk about which of the new and upcoming systems will evolve the hobby, and which will just improve it. Personally, I don't think any of the next generation consoles, even the Game Cube and X-Box, will have the kind of impact that the NES and the Playstation had. Let me explain... before the NES, games typically had enclosed, single screen environments, and while they were enjoyable, there was no real sense of adventure or exploration in titles like Donkey Kong, Pac-Man, and Galaga. Thankfully, Nintendo bulldozed over those boundaries with Super Mario Bros., which let players journey through lands loaded with hidden areas, dangerous enemies led by an especially nasty boss, and helpful items and weapons. The graphics and sound were given more dimension in NES games, too... the characters were no longer represented by roughly drawn, single colored shapes, and their quests were given movie-like soundtracks. When the Genesis and Super NES were released, the artwork became more colorful and detailed, the rounds were lengthened, and the music was given more depth, but nothing new was introduced. I see the same thing happening with the Playstation and its successors... while the PSX was the first game system to bring virtual reality home, the Dreamcast and Playstation 2 just takes the edge off its texture mapped polygons and adds a few million more for good measure. The result is that the gaming experience improves. but doesn't really change. Personally, I don't mind this, because I'm still not quite used to the 3D games that are so popular today and it may be a while before I fully adapt. But I do wonder what that next step up will be... and how far away we are from those mind-altering electronic spores in the PS9 commercials.

In the meantime, let's look at what's available now, shall we? And oh yeah... have a merry Christmas (or a happy Hanukkah, if you swing that way).

 *Jess Ragan*

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Our games really only go up to six or seven, tops. Those with allergies should be warned that The Gameroom Blitz is processed on equipment which is operated by a man who associates with friends whose homes may contain peanuts. Contents may be volatile... approach with extreme caution. Keep away from face when opening. Readers are obligated by federal law to seek out and destroy the Olsen twins. Not responsible for brain damage and/or livestock molestation as a result of listening to The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

Female video game characters, please sign the pledge below.
It's for your own dignity's sake.

I hereby solemnly swear that I...

- Will wait until after puberty to become a martial artist.
- Will refrain from using my behind as a weapon.
- Will not show off my underthings to everyone in the known universe.
- Will dress appropriately for winter weather (ahem... Lara).
- Will not wear shirts that fit me like a sausage casing (again, ahem... LARA).
- Will not stuff foreign objects (ie the heads of my opponents) between my legs.
- Will wear support bras that actually support me.
- Will shoot myself in the head immediately to prevent the creation of more unnecessary sequels (Lara Croft only).
- Will not get a boob job.
- Will not spread unsavory rumors about nude Game Shark codes.
- Will not be computer rendered by horrible artists who will make me look like a transvestite.
- Will not appear naked in MUGEN or other shareware programs by horny teenagers.
- Will refuse the help of fat plumbers, pointy-eared runts in green skirts, and other unlikely heroes and save my own damned self for once.
- Will not raid Sailor Moon's closet for my wardrobe.
- Will fight fairly and not try to distract my male opponents with hypnotically jiggling body parts.
- Will have sex with the editor of The Gameroom Blitz (hey, can't blame a guy for trying!)

SIGNED:

DATED:



Meet The Fleet

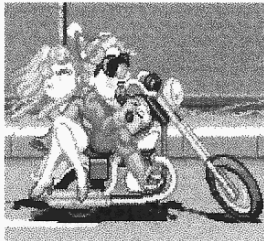
HEY! WHAT ABOUT US?!



Always looking for ways to promote On-File, *Jess Ragan* was elated when friends told him that he was recently featured in a popular web page. However, his jubilation quickly turned to horror when he discovered that the site was actually Fat Pricks in Party Hats, and that his picture was given this caption:

"HA HA! I am great marital arts champion! Watch me do super fag upper! Hi-yah!!!"

Unsatisfied with his accomplishments as a professional writer and a teacher at Tufts University, *Chris Kohler* is currently studying biochemistry. He's already created a vaccine for the common cold as well as a serum designed to break addictions to over fourteen drugs... still, even this hasn't been enough for our aspiring assistant editor. Chris has recently announced that he'll take on a REAL challenge... making MAME run smoothly on anything less than a Cray supercomputer.



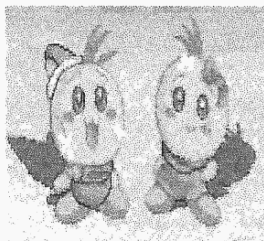
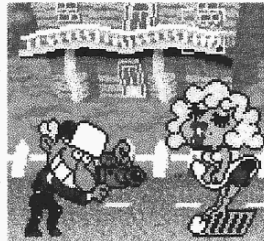
Pat Reynolds recently attended the Electronic Entertainment Expo, and dragged a king's ransom in souvenirs home in an overstuffed duffel bag. Pat was kind enough to let The Game-room Blitz check out some of the goodies first hand, and among our favorites were the tombstone with "Nintendo 64" engraved on it and the chainsaw Pat borrowed from Bruce Campbell, which he used to lop off the heads of everyone responsible for the Evil Dead game.

Josh Lesnick was reintroduced to the wilds of Africa after many years of captivity. We were worried that he wouldn't be able to get used to the unfamiliar environment, but he's done a splendid job, rooting up grubs for food, climbing trees to escape predators, and marking his territory on rocks and shrubs. In his free time, Josh uses a stick to draw big breasted anime' babes in the sand, proving that you can take the hentai artist out of Texas, but you can't take the hentai artist out of the Texan.



Don't get us wrong... we love the big lug, but we're worried that *Kao Megura* has gotten a little too protective of his work. He told us, "Dammit, first everyone steals my Final Fantasy VII FAQ, then that bitch Dr. Ruth Westheimer has the audacity to use my favorite positions in her book Sex For Dummies!!!" We were going to print a picture of Kao here, but since he informed us (at gunpoint) that his image is copyrighted too, we decided instead to run this picture of Dick Clark farting in the new year.

Meanwhile, *George Wilson* went hunting for pictures at E3. Unfortunately, he became distracted by the gorgeous babes at the show, and he came back with dozens of snapshots of womens' panties he managed to get through clever use of his patented Shoe-Cam™. Fifteen minutes later, the police came for HIM, and promptly threw him in the slammer. The cops also confiscated the photos, but George traded us a review for some smokes and a chastity belt.



We mourn the loss of long-time staffers *Byron J. Lisamen* and *Elle Sanders*, who borrowed guns from some high school students and shot each other on the opening day of bear season. Jess Ragan fondly remembers their contributions to both GRB and Project: Ignition, which included such gems of wisdom as "Zzzzz..." and "Stay tuned for next issue when Jess eats raw sewage!" Jess would also like to thank the local taxidermist for doing such a wonderful job with their remains.



Oh, yeah! Well, to my left is *Mandi Paugh*. She wrote the Tails' Adventure review in this issue, but you can find more of her work on the GRB web site, and even more than that on her own site, The Official Mega Man Web Page. It's the ultimate one stop shopping center for everyone's favorite multipurpose android, including everything from game reviews and ratings to fan fiction starring not only Mega Man but other game characters as well. You can find it at www.ibis-research.com/MM. The site that hosts Mandi's page is owned by a company that creates military simulations. I was having loads of fun with one of their products, until I realized that I grabbed the wrong program and that I really had launched twenty ballistic missiles at Illinois. Oopsie!

Anyhoo, to my right is *Matt DelGuidice*. Since I couldn't find any decent arcades in Michigan, Matt both offered to write an Arcade Squeezins column for me but bought a Street Fighter II cabinet, just so he'd have something to write about! No, not really. Matt established himself in fandom by writing several columns for Video Zone, edited by his friend Chris Kohler. More recently he starred as a stereotypical Irish cop in a high school production of Guys & Dolls. At the last showing of the play, he southered over to a newsstand, asked the person behind the counter for a box of Lucky Charms, and got it. Yes, really.



Then we have *Ben Leatherman*, who wrote the review of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater for the Dreamcast. Ben is a colorful lad to say the least, having run for mayor in his hometown (I have a bumper sticker he gave me, well, somewhere. Maybe it's in Arizona along with all my other stuff). I thought Ben's kissing the Capcom deejay and getting pistol-whipped by the Planet of the Apes cast at 1999's E3 was wacky, but recently he upped the ante by visiting several wrestling events, taking a sign that read "Jess 3:16" with him. Jess was happy that this sign actually made it on an episode of Monday Nitro, but he wasn't too pleased about being invited to a two on one hardcore wrestling match starring Hollywood Hogan and Scott Steiner. Er, Ben, you want to fill in for me?



DREAMCAST

Unlike their last two flagship systems, which had obvious strengths but just as apparent weaknesses, Sega's Dreamcast is a well-rounded machine that doesn't overemphasize or neglect any specific area. It's reasonably fast, is capable of a fairly high polygon output, and handles 2D graphics even better than its predecessor, the Saturn. However, since it's older than the Playstation 2, the X-Box, and the Game Cube, its technology is bound to be outclassed by that of its competitors.

Fortunately for Sega, older technology is also cheaper technology, and this means that the system will always retail for at least \$50 less than the DVD compatible Playstation 2 and the more advanced X-Box and Game Cube. While it can be argued that you get what you pay for, the Dreamcast is still pretty impressive, and DVD compatibility aside, the gap between its abilities the Playstation 2's isn't that wide.

Initial market penetration and aggressive support by third parties like Capcom (who was won over by the Saturn's abilities and has been fiercely loyal to Sega ever since) has made the Dreamcast's software library clearly superior to the more recently introduced Playstation 2's. And even though many companies have started investing their resources in the PS2 to appease the still mighty Sony, it's possible that Dreamcast games will remain more fun and imaginative than their Playstation 2 counterparts. After all, Sony owes much of its initial success to second rate versions of popular Sega games, like Crash Bandicoot and Tekken.

PLAYSTATION 2

Sometimes I wonder if Sony's fans are undyingly faithful, masochistic, stupid, or perhaps all three, because they've taken an unbelievable amount of abuse from the company and still remain convinced that the Playstation 2 will be the one and only game system worth buying. The PS2 had an utterly miserable launch in Japan, being released with a handful of games that were anything but revolutionary and a high capacity memory card that was better at destroying game saves than retaining them. You'd think the Japanese would be outraged by this, but no... their blind faith in the Sony brand name has made the Playstation 2 a success, while the Dreamcasts in electronics and toy stores are working on their fifth coat of dust. Sony's showing at the last Electronic Entertainment Expo was just as terrible... everyone who was actually there would agree that the Dreamcast was the real star of the show. Yet somehow, after the dust had cleared and the Playstation 2 was picking its teeth off the floor, the mainstream news media and uninformed casual gamers declared that it, not the Dreamcast, was E3's main attraction.

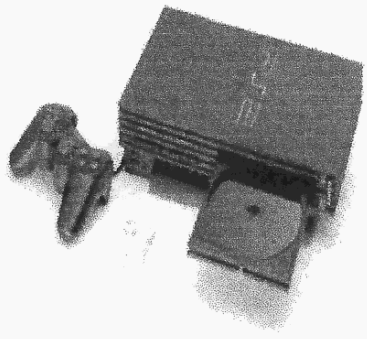
Now, the Playstation 2 is set to be released in the United States with a shortage of units, two dozen largely uninteresting games, no mascot (because both Spyro and Crash Bandicoot have hopped aboard the X-Box train), and no pre-release hype other than that given to them by the schmucks at Time and Newsweek. The Dreamcast has an immense software library, and Zelda: Mask of Majora- perhaps the best game that will ever be written for the Nintendo 64- is about to be

Sega's last chance for redemption is also the first 128-bit game system on store shelves. Will the Dreamcast dig the troubled company out of its grave or just throw another mound of dirt on its coffin?



The Dreamcast's games could be even better if Sega would stop riding the fence and either start making use of the system's included modem or ignore it entirely. Although Sega's funneled millions of dollars into an on-line service for Dreamcast users, the web browser customers are given is limited and, without an optional keyboard, very frustrating to use. Even worse, there's been only a few American Dreamcast games that let you use the network to compete against other players, making it rather pointless if you've already subscribed to an on-line service.

Sega's system has to face off against a number of tough competitors in the next two years, and it's unlikely that it can still hold on after battling the Playstation 2, the X-Box, and the Game Cube. But even if it isn't a success in the future, the Dreamcast's versatility and terrific games make it a worthwhile investment now.



Sony is confident of the success of this heir apparent to the Playstation empire... perhaps a little too confident. Is the PS2 guaranteed to crush its competitors, or will Sony's arrogance come back to haunt them?

released, yet all anyone really cares about is the Playstation 2.

Are there any real reasons to get excited about Sony's next system? Well, there's the fact that third parties have been just as quick to embrace the Playstation 2 as the public, so you know it will have plenty of great games eventually, including some exclusives you won't be able to play anywhere else. Then there's the PS2 hardware... it has a lot of advantages over the Dreamcast's, including a higher disc capacity, more overall memory, and a faster clock speed. Finally, there's the system's DVD compatibility, which will keep the system entertaining even after its games have lost their flavor. So the Playstation 2 will be worth buying eventually... just don't be one of the sheep that runs out and throws down \$300 for the system the moment it's released. Give the PS2 some time to take root and establish itself... that way, you'll really feel that it was worth the price.

X-BOX

Hey, wait a minute... isn't this the same Bill Gates who predicted that game consoles would eventually be obsoleted by the personal computer market? Since that hasn't happened (and it probably never will), Gates has decided to both beat 'em AND join 'em by creating a console that's more like an Intel PC than any other system on the market. And to the naysayers (like myself) who claim that the Intel x86 chip is grossly outdated and never was designed for games in the first place, Big Brother Bill's added a bunch of new features to make up for this, like a high clock speed, a 3D graphics accelerator, a hard drive, an inkjet printer, and... wait, are we still talking about a game system here?

OK, so the X-Box is about as much of a game system as Coleco's ADAM was a computer (although I've heard Bill Gates took care of that chronic rust problem... sorry, Simpsons reference there). But it will be pretty easy to translate popular PC games like Diablo and Unreal to the system, and they won't need to be optimized or suffer from weird side effects like similar Dreamcast conversions. It's easy money for both Microsoft and its third parties, which is why the creators of Oddworld are backing the X-Box, not the Playstation 2, with its next game Munch's Odyssey

Another advantage the X-Box will have over its competitors is that it'll be a networking monster. Computer fans have discovered that there's no better way to enjoy multi-player games than to hook several

Microsoft CEO Bill Gates wants to translate his success with PCs to the video game market. But X hasn't always marked the spot for Gates, as the lackluster MSX proved. Will he have more luck this time?



(An early prototype from 20 years ago, the XT)

PCs together... but doing this takes a lot of time, money, and worst of all, patience. The X-Box has the potential to make networked games a lot more popular due to its relatively compact size and uncomplicated set-up... players will be able to toss their systems into a duffel bag, then daisy chain them and connect each to a television or monitor once they've made it to their friend's house. That's a whole lot easier than lugging an enormous home computer and its peripherals around, then hooking several of the machines together, setting them up for network play, then crossing your fingers and hoping that the systems' hardware and configuration differences won't create a conflict that will fry one of your buddies' network cards.

The X-Box will be powerful and well supported, but if you've got a fast PC and know how to use it, well, what's the point?

GAME CUBE

Well, here it is! After holding its tongue for countless months about Project: Dolphin, Nintendo introduced its new system at a Japanese toy fair, with a surprising look that's equal parts Dreamcast, N64, and the Apple G4 Cube. Stranger still is the controller, with three directional pads and a large blue button surrounded by secondary keys. This joypad looks great for something like, say, corridor shooters... you can cut through the hordes of monsters, aliens, and terrorists by smashing the primary button, then simply press one of the buttons around it to switch weapons when you're out of bullets for the chain gun. But hey, what about sprite-based games like Capcom's fighters... or SNK's... or heck, Capcom vs. SNK? It appears from the controller alone that the Game Cube, like its ancestor, the Nintendo 64, will be very 2D unfriendly... its unique design is terrific for games with first-person perspectives but will absolutely ruin side-scrolling action titles that are more complex than Super Smash Bros. (hmm... that'd be nearly all of them!).

Even if Nintendo is putting all its eggs in one basket, it's one heck of a basket. Although game development on the system is still very early, Nintendo's been able to whip up some demos that already prove the Game Cube will crush the Dreamcast and the Playstation 2 from a technological standpoint. Better yet, Nintendo's using the Game Cube's power (and a nifty new minidisc format) to reintroduce popular characters like Metroid's Samus Aran, who never got much exposure on the N64. If they make her game a launch title, hey, I'm sold already!



The failure of the N64 surprised nearly everyone. Can Nintendo make a stunning comeback with the Dolphin, or has the name synonymous with great video games in the 80's become yesterday's news?

CASUALTIES

Every war's got to have them, even the upcoming game system wars. And the consoles whose foxholes will conveniently double as graves will almost definitely be the Nuon and the Indrema. The Nuon hasn't even been released yet and it's already off to a lousy start... its hardware specifications are at best a baby step above the Playstation's, the controller design is almost guaranteed to net the manufacturers a lawsuit from Nintendo, and the system's killer app (or in this case, its killed app) is Tempest 3000, the sequel to the game that gave the Atari Jaguar a few blips on the radar before it was torpedoed by the Super NES and Genesis. Just like Tempest 2000, it's a safe bet that the game will be introduced on Sega and Sony's respective systems after the Nuon hits the canvas.

And in the other corner, we have the Indrema, another Glass Joe with a processor similar to the X-Box's. The main difference is that it runs from the operating system Linux. Y'know, Linux's freedom of customization and open source code might be great for advanced computer users, but it's only going to frustrate someone who just wants to play video games. And while it might make game development easy for the Indrema's third parties, this won't matter much when nobody short of the occasional fly-by-night computer game developer will want to touch the thing. I would say that they could salvage the Indrema by turning it into an Internet portal, but that's not even viable because there are Web terminals like WebTV and the MSN Companion that cost a lot less.

The latest game systems, especially the Playstation 2, have been getting a lot of media exposure, but that DOESN'T mean that the video game industry is a gravy train that's guaranteed to make everyone who hops aboard millions of dollars. The companies responsible for the Nuon and Indrema should consider what happened to another greedy corporation that tried to force its way into the business in 1982. That company, Emerson, funneled most of its resources into the pathetic Arcadia 2001 and got just what it deserved for this insult when the market crashed two years later. Rest assured that if you follow in their footsteps, it'll lead you straight off a cliff.



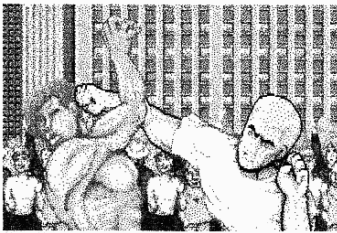
Arcade Squeezins

LOVINGLY JUICED BY SPECIAL GUEST
MATT DELGUIDICE

Most gamers, like me, spend many, many hours and dollars in arcades, feeding a steady stream of quarters into our favorite games, whether they be fighters, shooters, pinball, or racers. Every now and then, we may stop to contemplate how much money we've wasted on them during our lives (I usually make myself feel better by reminding how much people waste on stuff like soda, which is usually more expensive, less entertaining, and doesn't last nearly as long). But more often, when I wasn't thinking about where I messed up in my latest Marvel vs. Capcom 2 match, or what might've happened if I'd snagged that triple shot in Gauntlet Legends instead of running away, I often find myself pondering how indescribably COOL it would be to actually OWN an arcade game myself. It's always seemed like an impossible goal; something that wouldn't happen unless I won a contest or worked for an arcade that would give me a discount.

Well, to quote the final verse in the ending theme of the "Muppet Babies" cartoon of yesteryear, "Dreeeeeeeeams...can come true."

Myself and a friend were cruising around on eBay during our study hall one afternoon, and on a whim, I said to him, "Hey Nick, look for 'Street Fighter Arcade.'" What



The NAACP must have loved this intro from the original arcade version of Street Fighter II.

came up were several links for operating manuals, original marquees, artwork, and an original Street Fighter II arcade machine. After exchanging glances, the link was clicked, and there it stood. Not a Super Nintendo game. Not a PC Board. It was the actual stand-up cabinet joystick and buttons ARCADE GAME. Put up just twelve hours before and ending in sixty, the mother of all fighters loomed

Thanks largely to the upcoming Paramount Pictures (bleech) movie, Eidos has been pushing their mascot Lara Croft as a sex symbol in recent ads for the Dreamcast version of her latest game, The Last Revelation. If you look around, you can find everything from Lara draped in a towel just barely covering her netherregions to her blowing a kiss with the Tomb Raider logo in it. This got me thinking... what about Core Design's first mascot? Lara Croft may have seduced plenty of Playstation owners (who really need to get a life... ahem...), but she's certainly no more curvaceous than Chuck Rock, the star of Core's side-scrolling platformer of the same name. This tantalizing troglodyte was running around half naked long before Lara Croft was a twinkle in a horny game designer's eye, but does Eidos even bother to mention him? Noooo. So in the interest of fairness and equal time, The Gameroom Blitz decided to compare the two heroes and see who's most deserving of a multi-million dollar ad campaign aimed right between the legs of your average gamer.

OUR LOVELY CONTESTANTS...

SEX:
BREASTS:
FAVORITE QUOTE:
NUDE CODE:
GREATEST FEAR:
KIDS?:
WEAPONS:
LIKES:
DISLIKES:
MOVIE DOUBLE:



And the winner is... Chuck Rock, who else? Not that he really deserved it... in fact, we skipped the swimsuit competition because of him, but what the heck... we just couldn't risk having Lara Croft on yet another magazine cover.

before us, begging to be bid upon. Overcome with the sheer giddiness of seeing it, we ignored the part about \$80 for a shipping crate and another \$80 for shipping, placed an original bid of \$50, talked to another friend of ours to go in with us, and crossed our fingers.

The next two days were an agonizing series of discussions about how much we were willing to pay, planning out custody, and repeatedly asking if the price had gone up since the last time we checked.

Finally, our big moment came. During the last 15 minutes, I put a maximum bid of \$500 and reloaded the page every two seconds, watching it like a vulture waiting for a weary desert traveler to take his final breath. Someone, with three seconds to go, made one final bid increase, but I was not to be denied. Four seconds later, me and my friend James were doing some form of a happy dance, laughing about how we won and how Nick was a whole town away, probably a nervous wreck. A few weeks later, we had our original Street Fighter II arcade game up and running.

Sure we faced barrages of taunting and disbelief. "Haven't you ever seen the episode of the Simpsons where the three of them buy the comic?"

Yes, Chris. We aren't ten-year-olds.

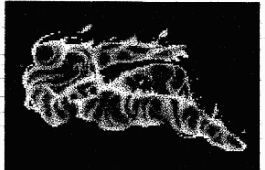
"Maybe I'll buy it off you guys when you're sick of fighting over it."

Sorry, Chris. This bad boy isn't going anywhere.

And so on.

So what's the moral of the story? It's pretty simple: Something that seems as out there as owning an arcade game is actually quite feasible. There are stores and businesses that sell cabinets, PC Boards, and supplies all over the place. If you really want to own an arcade game, you don't need to enter all those contests that Nintendo Power and EGM have in every issue where the odds are, quite literally, one million, five hundred sixty-four thousand, two hundred and thirty-six to one. You don't need to wait until the local arcade is going out of business and has a liquidation sale. All you need is money. That's right. Not luck, not some long, drawn-out master plan. You just need money and plenty of it.

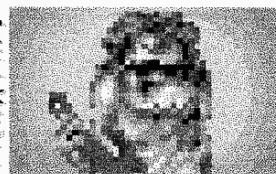
And if you think that that sounds materialistic, shallow and just plain bad, you can kiss my sweet round ass. I don't see YOU with an original Street Fighter II machine.



Ironically, the flame animation in Street Fighter II looks ten times better than in the otherwise improved spinoffs.



LARA CROFT



CHUCK ROCK

Female. Allegedly. Large & most likely enhanced "Like, duh or something!" For the last time, dammit, no! Cancerous agents in silicone Anything to get into that E cup Crappy guns that look like chalkboard erasers Her undeserved fame The spiked pits she's constantly falling into Angelina Jolie (who?)

All man, baby! Big AND 100% natural! "Unga bunga!" Oh, please, heavens no Bonk makes a comeback One, the son of Chuck Enormous gut, nostril hair curling caveman odor Leafy undergarments Low-fat woolly mammoth recipes Well, Chris Farley's dead...

we're diggin' into the mailbox for...



POST
OFF
FILE
PARTIAL

Shadows of the Gorfian Empire...

(From a conversation with Gorf designer and Shockwave co-founder
Jamie Faye Fenton, formerly Jay Fenton)

* Why was the round Galaxians removed from the home versions of Gorf? Was it due to a legal conflict with Namco, memory limitations, or both?

The license agreement only covered the arcade version. Namco would not license it for home use.

* What did you think of the home versions of Gorf? Which one did you think best captured the spirit of the original? I personally liked the VIC-20 game myself... it may have been blocky, but it was amazingly close to the arcade version, right down to the intensity, color scheme, and overall hard-edged feel.

I like that conversion as well.

* Did you have any creative control over the home versions of Gorf? The ColecoVision "translation" (if you want to call it that) of Gorf was just horrendous... I have a hard time believing you would have put your personal seal of approval on it.

I did not. I developed Gorf for Dave Nutting Associates and they may still be the legal owner of the game.

* Now that I mention it, I can't believe the person responsible for ColecoVision Gorf ever played the arcade game! I mean, really, who's idea was it to replace the menacing voice of the Gorfian leader with that stupidly cute music? And the graphics, the enemy attack patterns, the colors... all wrong, wrong, wrong!

It probably had to do with the inability to do a speech synthesizer using the sound hardware.

* Do you own the rights to Gorf, or do they still belong to Midway?

Either Midway or DNA.

* What happened to Bally, anyway? One minute, they're a leader in the video game industry, and the next, they're building fitness centers for narcissistic, steroid-popping muscleheads. I always wondered why they ditched video games even after Nintendo made them popular again.

In a word, PacMan. The phenomenal success of this game completely saturated the market for video games. For several years later, there was little popular interest. Bally decided to make money on slot machines and fitness centers.

* Why did Midway remove Gorf, Wizard of Wor, Omega Race, and Satan's Hollow from their latest Playstation arcade classics disc? I would have bought the collection just for those games, but without them, the Arcade Party Pack isn't even worth buying used.

I don't know. I did participate in an interview last year with the group producing a Midway classics CD. Perhaps they were going to subdivide into several volumes.

* Will there ever be any new Gorf translations? It'd be cool to see Gorf and Wizard of Wor paired together on a Color GameBoy cart.

I occasionally think about reviving the game. There was a sequel in progress when the game market crashed. It was called Ms. Gorf. It had dual joysticks, lots of firepower, and multiple missions. Unfortunately the hardware it was designed for is long gone.

Thank you for your letter. I always enjoy hearing from people who like my games. I would love to see future versions appear, however the legal situation is murky.

- Jamie Faye Fenton

I asked Jamie for more information about Ms. Gorf, since I had no idea a sequel to one of my favorite arcade games had been planned. Unfortunately, I haven't heard from Miss(ter?) Fenton in a very long time. C'mon, man! You can't just leave me hanging after dropping a bomb like this on me!

The DeGiudice Kiss...

Tadaima sanjo!

Well, my fellow master of Saikyo-Ryuu, I'd have to say that The Gamera Blitz #6 is, without a doubt, the very first one I've ever seen. If you've been wondering why I haven't bothered to talk to you about it for over a month, it was because it took me a while to work up enough energy to tear open that big, bulky envelope.

I have to say that GRB #6 was all I had expected and then some. I especially liked the Destroy All Monsters boss tribute, though I have to disagree with Pat Reynolds' choice of Sagat. I mean, the guy had his eye knocked out by Dan's dad, and got a huge ass scar from one of Ryu's sho-ryu-kens. The guy's practically falling apart! When super combos were added to the series, I'm surprised he escaped with all his limbs attached.

This being the first GRB I've had a chance to read, I have to praise the layout first. I really like the balance between reviews, humor pieces, and the various essays. I'd love to check out the previous five issues (unless I have to pay for them or something).

I was a little disappointed when I read that this would probably be the last print edition of GRB, and even more so after I actually read the rest of it. The On-File site looks great and all now that you've finally gotten around to updating it, but don't give up on the print edition just yet. I'm going to need SOMETHING when I can't find my Bathroom Reader and don't have the time to look for it.

The rest of the story: Overall, GRB #6 was a great issue and I can't think of a single thing that I didn't enjoy reading. Plus, your artwork adds a personal touch that I always like to see (as opposed to all those cold, uncaring corporate fanzines). Keep up the great work. And for GOD'S SAKE, put some pants on!

Matt D.

Oops! My bad! Just let me grab these slacks and... <ZIP!> Ah, that's much better. You make an interesting point about Sagat... I've always wondered why he never showed up for any of the later

Street Fighter games. I guess he ran out of duct tape and didn't want to risk being sent home in a bunch of alphabetically labelled Ziploc bags. Still, you've got to give the guy credit for fighting fairly, which is something his boss, M(F) Bison never bothers to do. It was bad enough that he could warp in the last two Street Fighter Alphas, but giving him that super psycho crusher in the third game- you know, the one that fills up the entire frickin' screen?- was just cruel. No wonder Capcom added the dramatic battle mode to the home versions of Alpha 3... it takes two players to even have a remote chance of beating the jerk. Then there's Onslaught, Gill, and every one of those accursed bosses from The King of Fighters... hoo boy. Anybody got a small planet I can drop on these guys?

What IS It With Dogs and Crap Anyway?

Well, I finally got home and am finished getting all of my crap into my house (although not technically into the bedroom: it's all piled in the kitchen) and have had time to read The Gameroom Blitz whilst in the sacred U-Haul of transport. Excuse me while I kick my dog, who has just eaten a pile of poo and now wants to be personal with me. <BOOT!> Okay.

Let's see, it's time for a lengthy LoC here... well, the cover is nice (although nothing special really: I was hoping for something humorous). I really like Elly's joke in the corner, though. Of course, I thought it was a complete joke and didn't ACTUALLY expect Dreamcast and Playstation coverage... still, very cute. I very much agree with just about everything you said about bosses... not much else to say there. Very solid theme for the issue. I liked my profile, of course, you forgot to mention that I also do a little fanzine called Video Zone, if you catch my drift. Of course, if there's anyone reading GRB that doesn't know that I do Video Zone, well, I have to wonder about them. Oh, and that's Tufts UNIVERSITY, bub.

By the way: I am using a really crappy keyboard (my dad's) right now, and so that is responsible for any mypos I tay mape. Your profile quote made me laugh out loud. Self-deprecating humor is the best kind, ne? (STOP! STOP ME BEFORE I USE JAPANESE AGAIN!)

A big "hell yeah" to Pacula on the Changeling. That thing was the most evil fucker on the planet. Of course, I also have to smack him for calling Kefka a wuss. Sure, you could beat him in like one round if you were powerful enough, but Final Fantasy VI's boss fight (from the statues on up) was just SO much better than FFFV's in terms of complexity and sheer crap-your-pants-in-awe graphics.

I'd really love to see Street Fighter: The Movie's music video, but unfortunately, I've got way better things to do right now than trying to conquer that torture device using only Jean-Claude Van Dam. It is funny, though, that they thought adding Ryo Aska would somehow make up for the fact that the game is a piece of shit. Hey, there's my Joe Santulli joke, only about six months old... is it the mark of a great writer when you look back on something you wrote only months ago and are embarrassed by its poor quality? Or does it just mean that I suck?

Liked the Dreamcast thing. You're right: Sega has a good chance to really do some damage with the DC, especially because of the huge window of opportunity they're going to have before the release of the Playstation 2. And considering that Sony wants to release the system at \$300 or so, the Dreamcast at \$150 (by the time the PS2 launches) will look pretty appealing, especially if it has the third-party support the Saturn lacked. Too bad you didn't get to play it... My Electronics Boutique had a Dreamcast controller on display but no system. Weird. They also had Marvel vs. Capcom action figures in the same place. Considering the general coolness of the characters, I *might* be tempted to buy Lilith in the near future... you never know.

Gosh, that Video Zone review... you make me blush! Al was rather annoyed that you neglected to review The Dark Side... I just won't mention to him that it was actually a "ten best" list and that TDS got the shaft. He REFUSES to admit that TDS might ever have been worse than other fanzines... Speaking of 'zines that were worse than even early issues of The Dark Side, there's Megamania. Boy, I love a good bashing of Jim Pittaro every now and again. You know what he did oh so many years ago? He stopped producing Megamania, but never told me and continued to accept issues of Video Zone without so much as a letter of comment. Bastard.

I'm not sure where you mentioned this, but you're right: gamers are practically forced to own a Playstation these days. You can't play games otherwise...

So, I'm Juggernaut? "BAH!!! I'M UNSTOPPABLE!" Whenever he'd say that, I'd yell, "BAH! I'M INCONTINENT!" That ALWAYS got a laugh out of Al. That, and the one time I sang, "Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O. And on that farm he had a Juggernaut, BAH DAH AAH DAH BAAAAAAAHAH! I'M INCONTINENT!"

Shut up.

Nice review of Panzer Dragoon Saga. I take issue, though, with (surprise!) the Final Fantasy VII review. The statements seem rather contradictory: you've only played the game for an hour and yet you attack the game for being shallow? And trust me, although you compliment the story, you haven't even SEEN "gripping" yet. The Midgar area is, yes, rather linear, and its backgrounds ARE dark, but this is just the beginning of the game. Trust me. This may seem like hyperbole, but you haven't even scratched the surface. Literally. The one thing that I DISagree with you about [besides everything else about the game? -ed.] is in regard to the game's translation. Often used argument: in Battle Square (where else? Gold Saucer!), you're asked if you want to battle. You are given two choices:

**OFF COURSE!
NO, WAY!**

Half-Ass confirmed what people have been saying for years: the Saturn is gay.

My parents did not really get the Cory You game.com quote, but it made me laugh at what was apparently a very inappropriate decibel level for the car.

Hey, I'm five minutes from Claire Danes right now.

Loved that Sony customer service rep. Of course, you've gotta have pity on him [why? - ed.]. He's probably just some loser who doesn't even play games and is woefully misinformed by his supervisor on what to say. Besides, if Sony wants to fuck themselves, so much the better. We can always import.

Well, that's the issue. More news: check out the Star Wars issue of Nintendo Power if you get the opportunity, if only to see the serious push Nintendo is putting behind the Game Boy Color. First and foremost, there's Super Mario Bros. Deluxe, which not only features Super Mario Bros., but also the Japanese Super Mario Bros. 2! This is in addition to new levels in which two players can race and compete, and special "challenge" levels with hidden red coins and Yoshi eggs, if you can believe that. There's also Pokemon Pinball, which turns the GameBoy into an uncomfortably shaped sex toy, as well as Conker's Pocket Tales, another Rare title. Besides those games, Nintendo themselves are actually working on GBC translations of Crystalis and Bionic Commando (!). Of course, what's even MORE exciting (or just scary) is Capcom's line-up. Capcom is apparently throwing their full weight behind the Game Boy Color, with translations of Ghosts 'n Goblins, 1942, Street Fighter Alpha (!), and Resident Evil 2 (!!!). Konami isn't far behind with Metal Gear Solid (!!!) and Simon's Quest (apparently, NES to Game Boy Color translations are easy as hell). An 8-bit Alpha? Damn. Finally, from the height of portable fun to the beginning: I finally got a Microvision from my brother's best friend. It and the three games are even BOXED with all the foam and crap they

originally came with. Primitive, but a wonderful piece of history.

Chris.

Ah, dogs... You've just gotta love 'em. A while back, my mom invited me over to the farm to show me a herding technique she taught her malamute mix. She led the dog down to the barn, pointed a finger at the goats, and commanded, "Go get 'em, Sadie!" Sadie obediently ran into the goats' pen, shot a menacing glance at the cantakerous caprines, put her head down as if to charge... then proceeded to gobble up their droppings like they were half-priced Raisinettes. I can't say I was impressed.

Annyway, while we're on the subject of turds, I spent another thirteen hellish hours with Final Fantasy VII, and decided that not only was the game's cinematic approach to EVERYTHING was wrong for the series, but that all the copies of the game should be fed through a chipper to keep people from ever having to play it again. The graphics are gloomy and confusing, the characters are uninteresting (Aerith didn't die quickly enough if you ask me...), the fights are beyond dull, and the magic spells that everyone wet their pants over, while admittedly impressive, take far too long to actually have an effect on enemies and aren't worth watching for the seventieth time. The only thing I did change my mind about was the translation... Barrett's constant exclamations of "Sheeit!" fooled me into thinking that it was well localized, but the further you get into the game the more awkward the dialogue becomes. I still can't believe Sony was able to take a could-be classic moment like Cloud's being forced to cross dress to sneak into a fortress and make it so boring. There were moments in the Japanese version of Grandia that were much funnier, even though I wasn't sure exactly what the characters were saying (for a guaranteed chuckle, rent the Playstation version of Grandia and cast Sue's healing spell).

I don't know what happened to the Color GameBoy. It seemed so promising at last year's E3, but now, half its library is split between lame movie licenses and mindboggling conversions of Playstation games (who was the nutjob that thought Vigilante 8 and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater would work well on the Color GameBoy, anyway?!). I thought the Neo-Geo Pocket would become popular with adults more interested in actual games than Pokemon hype, but the Color GameBoy crushed it just one year after its release. I'm starting to get the feeling that the portable game market is fueled almost entirely by brats who will swallow any pabulum Nintendo feeds them, as long as it's generously sprinkled with hype and cute characters. The big N has promised that the upcoming GameBoy Advance will have more cross-demographic appeal, and that they'll T*HQ proof the system by quality checking each game before it's released, but I strongly doubt this will happen. After all, there's little motivation in creating quality products when your user base is too young to appreciate them or even distinguish them from the crap you've been selling for the last eleven years.

Pat-Master B...

Hey Jess,

Thanks for the issue of The Gameroom Blitz. As usual, great, entertaining stuff. Here's a brief breakdown:

Loved the cover. Who would win that one? My money's on Sinistar, and I'm pretty sure the bear in the corner is dead meat any way you play it out.

The editorial was good, although I think your complaints about MAME may stem more from your system than the emulator itself. Satan's Hollow ran silky smooth on the 150MHz machine that I tried it on. The only games I had a hard time with were more recent titles like Strider and Bad Dudes [huh... Callus95 plays Strider perfectly on my older Pentium... -ed.]. Still, even those titles ran perfectly on another

PC, this time a P400.

The Captain Commando pics were pretty cool, but it would have been better had you included the origins of each one. I liked the bios on the contributors. The musical taste theme was a good idea.

Destroy All Monsters: Great idea, wished it was longer, glad I could help out with it. I liked the contradictions between Final Fantasy bosses, with Pacula swearing by ExDeath and blasting Sephiroth and Kefka, which in turn were nominated by both Kohler and myself.

Great content in the letters page... I loved the letter from the DS9 producer. Who was "the cynic", though? No name followed "The Cynic's Guide to Fanzine Dissection", although from the style, I'd guess it was the long-lost Pettibone.

Thanks for the concession in Sweet Dreams. I'm glad you tried the system out a little before jumping headfirst into a rash judgment you may have had to eat later. I have a similar article in my next issue although I must say you are more forgiving toward Sega for some of the apparent mistakes they've already made with the Dreamcast.

'Zina was pretty cool although I have to question the concept of listing the top ten fanzines of all time. Yes, the fanzines listed were all good, but half of them are deceased and any new readers you may have will probably never get to see them. And while I certainly can't fault your bashing of Mega(lo)mania, was it really worth dragging that particular piece of fandom garbage out of the closet again?

The reviews were as usual a good mix of old and new titles, written with the usual dramatic flair. Glad to see that (A) you found a copy of Panzer Dragoon Saga and (B) you liked it.

I loved Samus' appearance in Half-Ass. Clever. I still like The Simpsons, though.

The Bieniek interview was good stuff, although the part where you start criticizing his judgment for bringing David Hunt onboard and bashing Hunt's lost-dead fanzine is a little awkward and bitter. Otherwise, the questions were insightful and cut to the point. I dug the stuff about Chris Gore and Bieniek's revelations about the "holy trinity" and their relationship to Video Games & Computer Entertainment.

Of course all those game.com quotes were made up... which one of us would actually confess to owning one?

As for Game Over, well... those Sony guys have to sit at a phone and put up with people calling in all day long, and they probably deal with a lot of crap. Their job isn't to defend Sony or the merits of the Playstation vs. the Saturn, it's to help Sony customers with their problems. So if you call and start harassing the guy about Sony's 2D policy, or pointing out the irrefutable truism that many games are better on the Saturn, of course he's going to sound annoyed. Put yourself in his place, but imagine that you're a Sega operator and you have to deal with kids calling you all day telling you how the Playstation has kicked your system's ass. You'd probably be grumpy, too.

Loved the Lara Croft gravesite... I guess no matter how deep they dig, it wouldn't be deep enough, huh? That picture of you on the back cover is hilarious too.

Overall, a great issue. I was just a little disappointed that the boss theme only played out in the opening article, but it was one great article that took a lot of work, so it was worth it. I enjoyed the issue, as I always do.

Pat

I've never had much luck with MAME... out of the thousands of games it can play, I was only able to get two or three to run at an acceptable speed on my old 486. And while its performance did get a nice boost when I upgraded to this P166, any game this side of 1988 has to be run with severe compromises (no sound, frame skipping, etc.) to make it even slightly enjoyable. Some people (mostly those with lightning fast PCs) are willing to accept this, but I just can't... I've tried emulators that run circles around MAME, including Fellow, KGEN, and Neo-RAGE, and they all mimic the 68000 processor that's used in many of the arcade games MAME supports (and runs oh-so-slowly).

Besides, why bother downloading enormous arcade ROMs for the mercilessly slow, inefficient, and memory-hungry MAME when you could get dead-on translations of those games for your favorite Super NES, TurboDuo, or Genesis emulator? Mortal Kombat 2 is a perfect example... sure, the Super NES version may be missing a few colors (boo hoo), but at least it'll run at full speed on my computer, and won't occupy dozens of megs of my precious hard drive space. That's why I consider MAME my last resort emulator... if I absolutely, positively cannot play a certain game anywhere else, I'll grudgingly open my MAME folder and try it there. I may not enjoy myself much, but at least I'll have a working familiarity with the game.

For the record, I didn't call Sony's tech support line to pick a fight with its not-so-smooth operators... things just turned out that way. I was trying to find out why my Playstation refused to work properly with the television I had. This wasn't entirely Sony's fault- most of my other systems didn't agree with the TV set, either- but I was curious as the picture bounced whenever I used those systems but remained stable when I plugged in my Saturn. So I called Sony's support line, hoping to get, um, support, and got some disgruntled jerk instead. He insisted on knowing my address and every last bit of information about my Playstation before he would offer me assistance (wait a minute here... I'm supposed to be asking the questions, right?), and impatiently grumbled, "Go get your system" when I was left without an answer to one of the questions in his rude interrogation. When I came back, he offered this helpful advice... "Either send the system to us for rechipping, or get a different television set... we personally recommend a Sony™ brand monitor". Y'know, jackass, it's going to be awfully hard to get the most out of my Playstation when it's being bounced from post office to post office. And as for your other suggestion, I sure as hell won't be buying another Sony product after discovering how "well" your company treats its customers. Let's see how well that high-definition monitor fits up your...

OK, OK, I'm done. It just bothers me that the more successful a game company is, the worst its technical support line becomes. I can still remember when the 1-800-USA-SEGA hotline could be used for just about anything, when Nintendo of America's game counselors were the company's pride and joy, and when Sony had customer representatives that weren't possessed by Satan. Now, all that's changed. Perhaps it's time for a dark horse to enter the console wars and put the big three back in their place.

Oh, crap... you're right! I did forget to credit the author of that letter, didn't I? Well, that's easily remedied... read on!

The Secret Identity of the Critic Revealed!

(hint: it's not Jay Sherman)

I just checked out On-File, and man, it was groovy. No: it was far out. Can I thank you for pulling that stuff together? I'll want to show that to my fourteen adopted Laotian children someday. Thank you. On-File was rad.

And I used to write that all the fuckin' time, huh? Unbelievable. So, like I was saying, I saw The Phantom Menace last night. All week I've been reading horrible reviews, pronouncing it a tremendous disappointment, the worst film of all time, a turd, etc; each blessed with the reviewer's self-indulgent comments about how unpopular the reviews may make them, how they who dare say the Emperor has no clothes will be marginalized and written off as contrary naysayers; with ill-concealed rushes of self-righteous joy at being so urbane and iconoclastic as to pan the most hyped movie of the present age; and having seem it I can say with a dopey grin, yep, they can look forward to that marginalization and unpopularity pretty soon! I LOVED the movie. Everyone who saw it with me loved it. The audience was making LOVE sounds throughout the whole movie. Jar Jar Binks got a laugh on almost every gag (every critic dubbed this character irritating. Not to be

undone, some called his Jamaican accent "offensive"), old characters always got applause on their reentrances, cheers when bad guys got whacked and battleships blew up, sympathetic gasps during the action sequences, laughs for numerous throwaway and sight gags. I know I sound like I'm indulging in a leetle too much mawkish fandom glee, but seriously man I've never been to a movie where such an atmosphere of complete audience satisfaction has been exuded. I felt like Roberto Benigni when I left the theatre ("I luff the moovie! I luff you! I luff ev-a-rybody!"), and as follows such a feeling, I made some silly comments to some TV people who were sloughing sound bites off the departing attendees. It was cool. Fuckin' Phantom Menace, man.

Splaying GRB open now. I like R-Type and I especially like R-Type's traditional first boss. I like the cover. The Lettitor: I hear 'ya on the violent and sexist thing. Video games seem to be hovering at the same point of psychosexual tension as comic books right now: in the mainstream trade, no real sex or nudity is kosher, but since their core consumer group is hormonally predisposed to zealously seek out all things sexual or nude, you have rail-thin athletes with 36DD breasts straining against spaghetti strap tank tops and- um... oh yeah: it's a big exaggeration of sexuality and sexually appealing images that batters itself completely against the thin red line of what is and isn't taboo. No, you can't see Witchblade or Lara Croft naked [then you haven't been looking hard enough! -ed.], but here's some strategically placed wisps of steam for this completely gratuitous shower scene, and enjoy your sports bra, Ms. Croft. The excess sexual tension is funnelled into equally overblown and cockamamie violence. What you're left with are images and characters that are a great deal more likely to warp young minds than, say, a real actual naked person. Hell, let's not mince words: give the fifteen year olds something healthy, honest, and realistic they can masturbate to! Then we call all play Madden '99 together and *chill*.

I quit smoking after one year.

I'm used to cringing at my contributed works when I read them weeks later, but I was pleasantly surprised with the quality of my work in this issue. Kudos to me!

Bass chick Samus was intriguing... can I commission a Bob Masse style full sized artwork poster? No? How about you JessCreate™ a comic strip with old video game characters in a Monkees style rock band and comedy team and- no? Gotcha.

The Chris Bieniek interview was very interesting and informative and cool and I'm not very good at being non-smarmy when I gave praise, so let's leave it at that.

Game Gear and Lynx had an autistic baby and they named it game.com.

When did you take up karate?
And when's the next GRB due?

B.
(as in Brian Pacula)
(that's P-A-C-U-L-A)

Yup, the critic is none other than Brian Pacula, the former editor of The Good, The Bad, and The Eight-Bit. You folks would have known that a lot sooner if I hadn't screwed up and left Brian's (rather minimalist) signature off the end of his letter. Chalk it up to massive mental flatulence on my part.

I really shouldn't comment on The Phantom Menace... I'm not a Star Wars fan, and I haven't seen more than a few minutes of the film. Still, I talked with a friend of Pat's who had, and after some debate, he grudgingly admitted that it was a mass market product, designed to excite the audience rather than to stimulate them on an intellectual level. I don't have a problem with that, but I do think it's sad that both pompous film critics and geeky Star Wars fans who can rattle off all the names of the droids in the first three movies have gotten into a war of words, each trying their best to top the other's misrepresentation of the film. Let's put this debate to rest right now... The Phantom Menace isn't manna from the heavens, and it's not the worst science-fiction tale to ever stumble into theatres (I heard Mission

to Mars and Battlefield: Earth are duking it out for that "honor"). It's a fun, if somewhat silly, movie with slick special effects, some nice fight scenes, and a sidekick that's almost as obnoxious as he is ugly. Period, end of story, that's all she wrote.

I'd like to think that the pendulum is starting to swing back on tasteless content in video games. The last few Mortal Kombat releases were hammered hard by the mainstream press, and people are demanding more from the Tomb Raider series than new outfits for the main character and a handful of hastily added abilities. Most encouraging of all, Acclaim- a company notorious for cashing in on cheap gimmicks and popular film licenses- has lost enormous amounts of money on its awful South Park series and will continue to do so until they either wise up or go out of business (preferably the latter).

Ultimate Lesnick Attack!

Well, I don't really have anything particularly constructive or critical to say. Writing's solid as always, the layout's improved, dadadadada... Now here are my comments on the content:

Sinistar and Bydo look really cute on the cover. I'm not sure why... I think it's the eyes. ^_^

Though I think all your Lara Croft satires are hilarious, I must say that given the shitty control and appalling frustration factor in all of her games, her breast size is the LAST thing I would complain about. Actually, I do have one complaint: they're not as bouncy as Mai's. I'll think about trying Tomb Raider 4 if they fix this problem. Also, they should let her suffocate her foes with her breasts, just like Chesty Morgan.

Woo! Finally you're calling my web site by its correct name. You do realize ANePro stopped existing back in early 1998? I guess if I bothered keeping in touch once in a while, it'd be easier to notice. ^_^; Tan Flesh Studio is the name of my studio now [actually, it's Studio Zoe now, which should tell you how old this letter is... -ed.].

Looking back, there were better bosses than Robo-Z. I guess I was just really nuts about Bust A Groove at the time. ^^; The sequel was really fun, for a few weeks...

What DID happen at the end of Zelda II? Maybe Nintendo will explain this one of these days...

So you ask if any of us have good video game ideas. Well, I have a couple. You're familiar with Milk & Cheese, right? Todd and Brian [and Russ, of course...-ed.] talked about how cool it'd be for them to have a video game. I thought it'd be neat, too.. But recently, it struck me that Milk & Cheese would never allow themselves to be under the control of anyone else (except Evan Dorkin, which can't be helped). Therefore, the perfect M&C game would be one where they jump out of the computer screen and beat the shit out of the person who spent \$70 in the hopes of spending the next two weeks accomplishing nothing.

Along with this, I have a great idea for an RPG inspired by Final Fantasy VII and Xenogears. It's called "Walking To The Other Side of the Room". The object is for you and three other party members to find a way from one end of a room to another. The game promises fifteen seconds of gameplay and fourty hours of cinema scenes. It comes on twelve disks, with ten of them being demos for other spectacular games such as "Opening the Door", "Eating a Sandwich", and the epic "Ordering a Pizza From Papa John's".

Okay, this one's serious. I'd like to have a fighting game made featuring the cast of my Wendy comics. Now, you know how in Fighting Vipers, if you hit your opponent in the same place 400,000 times, a tiny piece of clothing will fall off? In this game, knocking off clothes will be MUCH easier. In fact, there will be no life bars. The first to have all their clothes knocked off loses. I'm 100% serious about this! The US needs to start making use of that AO rating!

I regret losing the 'ol Asylum RPG we worked on. That was a pretty cool piece of work. You like, did it perfectly, too, with all the lint and Steve Perry and other dangerous enemies. I also recall that spell

that turned enemies into Kevin Oleniacz, "a fate worse than death." Ha! Quite a funny, yet horrible bit of irony there...

I'm actually looking forward to the Dreamcast too, BUT... I'm not going to buy it if Sega of America still hasn't gotten over their Japanophobia. They simply do not deserve my money if they're going to continue committing atrocities like replacing all of Tsukasa Kotobuki's art in Toshinden. Surely, they've realized that most people do NOT throw up at the sight of anime' by NOW... ^^;

Marvel vs. Capcom looks perfect, as does House of the Dead 2 (and I wouldn't mind picking up that one... I'm sure the game would be a lot more fun when I'm not spending 25 cents every eighteen seconds).

I think an internal save unit was scrapped so Sega could keep the system under \$200, by the way. That's the breaks. And \$200 doesn't look bad at all compared to the Playstation 2's projected \$500.

Gran Turismo... I'm not sure if you know this, but this game is actually a couple years old, so it was VERY good for its time. Just now all the racing games are beginning to catch up to its visual quality. The sequel seems to be REALLY late. ^^;

Brave Fencer Musashi as a whole isn't that great. Both my roommates got tired of the irritating timed sequences pretty quickly, and never finished the game.

I think we're both becoming a little too obsessed with bad commercials. Maybe we should try to ignore them and start talking about ads by Volkswagen, Apple, or Geico.

And as much as I love porn, it IS a little unsettling the way it seems to have taken over the entire English-speaking Internet. We really DO need to put SOME kind of limit on it. Frankly, I'm getting tired of all the greedy fucks it's created, all wanting everything for free. It makes it SO easy to run a net-based sex comic business, let me tell 'ya...

Game Over pretty much hits the nail on the head all the way. This is what will cause the failure of the Playstation 2.

I dunno, I thought Gauntlet Legends retained the feel of the original considering the changed perspective. I curse that game for sucking away so much of my money.

Wow, someone else has played The Irritating Maze. One thing I'll give it is that at least it has an honest title. Other than that I fucking fucking fucking HATE that fucking game!

The end.

Capcom is actually named after the term "Captain in Command", used at NASA. That could very well be Mr. Commando was dressed as an astronaut that one time...

Joshua F. Lesnick

You know, I've been talking with some fan-ed's about this, and we've all decided that the next Tomb Raider could be a great game if Lara Croft used her titanic tatas for more than just window dressing. Instead of using a pair of pistols, for instance, she should be able to bounce enemies away simply by heaving her chest at them. All those wolves who constantly lunge for her throat could be knocked into orbit with a properly timed thrust! And if you fall off a cliff, hey, no problem... Lara's breasts could act like cushions and keep her from sustaining any serious injuries. Heck, they'd probably bounce her right back onto the cliff! Maybe Eidos could even give her upgrades after defeating certain enemies, like Mega Man. If there's a river that's too wide to cross, just hunt down a boss, smack him around a bit, and presto! LARA GOT BOUYANT BOOBIES!

Well, Josh, somebody up there likes you. The Pokemon fad has made the major television networks (except ABC, which insists on running nothing but cartoons about badly drawn pre-teens) a lot more open to the idea of running Japanese animation every Saturday morning. Not all of it is good, of course, but there are a few decent shows, like Escaflowne and the very Sailor Moon-esque Card Captors, mixed in with the thirty minute virtual pet ads. Best of all, this has left almost no room for the Power Rangers clones that used to be everywhere on Fox... only the real thing is left, and even it's just three steps away from the guillotine. Let 'er drop, boys!

Michael, I appear to be stuck in reverse. I strongly recommend use of...

THE RE-VIEW MIRROR

Hey, KITT, is it me, or do you sound just like the snooty principal on "Boy Meets World"?



DREAMCAST EDITION

SAMBA DE AMIGO

Sega (Sonic Team)

Music

"Shake your monkey maker, baby!"

I'll admit it... when I first heard about Parappa the Rapper, I thought it was a pretty dumb idea. But when I played the sequel, Um Jammer Lammy, at E3, and tried the original game shortly after that, I started to understand the draw to this new genre of games. Unfortunately, while I really liked the vivid cartoony graphics and catchy tunes in Parappa and Lammy, I never got used to the gameplay in either title, which was akin to Simon but with twice the buttons and a lot more confusion.

Konami tried to fix this problem with the Beatmania series, replacing the Playstation's obnoxious controllers with more natural peripherals like turntables, drum sets, and keyboards. They make skilled players feel like they were creating the music instead of just following along, but if you couldn't get used to the complex instruments, the only enjoyment you'd get from the games is from letting a more talented friend play, then listening to the music and watching the freaky Beatmania™ brand slideshows. I never touched Pat Reynolds' personal favorite in the series, Guitar Freaks, after playing it twice and doing just as poorly the second time as I had with the guitar upsidedown. In contrast, Pat can nail three hundred note combos and finish some of the tunes with a perfect rating. There's no way I could even hope to compete with that!

Lucky for me, Sega created a Beatmania derivative with controllers so easy to use that even I can play the game without driving my performance gauge into the floor in the first ten seconds. Instead of rapidly pressing combinations of buttons while scratching a record or strumming a guitar, all you've got to do in Samba de Amigo is pick up a pair of maracas and point 'n shake as directed. It's still challenging, but it's not confusing like most music games... one of the reasons I avoided Parappa the Rapper for so long was because I knew I'd have to memorize and repeat long strings of those horrible little hieroglyphics Sony used to label the buttons on the Playstation controller.

The maracas themselves aren't perfect either... you can't just plug them in like a controller or one of Konami's Bemani instruments. Even when you've got the floor mat, sensor, and maracas set up, you have to pick from a list of height measurements before you begin the game to make sure that everything works properly. Moreover, the maracas are large and heavy, so if you play the game with a friend, be sure he's as far away from you as possible... otherwise, someone's going to get clobbered when things heat up and both players swing the maracas like crazed Vikings rather than Latin dancers.

But what the heck... Samba de Amigo is worth the risk of taking a plastic gourd to the groin, and here's why. First, the maracas are the most involving and intense controllers since Robotron's two joysticks, and you can both hear and feel their response to every shake. This tactile response gives Samba a more authentic feel than Guitar Freaks, whose controllers looked more like something you'd find in a child's toy box rather than in the hands of a rock star. Secondly, the

music is fantastic! Unlike the tracks in Guitar Freaks, most of the tunes in Samba de Amigo are from film soundtracks and pop albums. Unfortunately, some of the songs, like Tubthumping and the Macarena, have been overplayed... er, make that beaten so far into the ground that they're half way to the Earth's core. Fortunately, Sega pepped up Tubthumping a bit, and, um, you can always skip Macarena. Finally, the graphics are muy fabuloso... all the characters look like they snuck out of a second hand stuffed animal store on the border of Mexico, and if you can hold on to an A rating, the demented monkey that's running the show gets stars in his eyes while more colors and shapes than anyone could possibly count float by.

I've heard reviews claiming that Samba de Amigo isn't for everyone... well, I'd hate to think that there's someone out there who wouldn't enjoy it. Trust me... you'll want the game if you can afford the maracas.

SHENMUE

Sega

Adventure

"Virtual reality makes a comeback. Darn, and me without my U-Force..."

I won't insult the intelligence of the readers reading this fine fanzine ("The Laser") by assuming that they, meaning you, have never heard of Shenmue before. But I'm going to assume that, if you have any questions about Shenmue at this point, it would be "What the hell IS it, anyway?" It's not an RPG, as everyone seems to think. No, Shenmue, the massive three-GD-ROM adventure scripted by Yu Suzuki of Virtua Fighter fame, is in fact just that: an adventure game, much like all those 16-color "King's Quest" (oh, okay, "Leisure Suit Larry") games you (okay, "I") played back in the day. Talk to person, get item, give item to person, repeat a hundred times, win.

At least, that's the MAIN game. You're Ryo Hazuki, your dad's dead, and this is the first chapter in your quest to find out the circumstances behind his death (the proper title of this game is "Shenmue Chapter 1: Yokosuka"). Your investigation will eventually lead you out of the country, but this chapter is set entirely in the small mountain town of Yokosuka, in the Japanese countryside. Even for a small mountain town, Yokosuka and its outskirts are rather tiny. But what Shenmue's world lacks in size it makes up for in detail. Every person has a different voice, every convenience store sells all sorts of different items (few of which do anything vital to your progress), and (here's the fun part) there are hundreds of random things to do. But you know this; you've read all about how you can clip your toenails in full 128-bit splendor.

More stuff pops up as you play through: an arcade with full versions of Hang-On and Space Harrier (kickass), Dragon's Lairy Quick Time Events, and fighting sequences that play like crappy versions of Virtua Fighter (sorry, crappiER). Later in the game, you get more of an agenda. By the third disc, once you've explored enough, messed about enough, and solved most of the game's puzzles, you get a job driving a forklift. You've heard about this. But is it fun? Yes, yes, yes. In fact, I actually enjoyed driving (and racing) the forklift more than anything else. But you don't HAVE to drive the forklift that much (there honestly weren't enough hours in the day to satisfy me), so even if you're not fond of one of Shenmue's minigames, there's always the chance you'll like the next one.

I would typically end a piece about Shenmue by telling you not to buy it, because the Japanese language barrier rends it basically unplayable. But the English version should be out very soon, and... hell, if you have a DC you'd better have already pre-ordered this one. Shenmue is nothing less than yet another spectacular first-party Sega title. Any flaws? Well, if you can get over the fact that it is, at its core, a rather linear adventure game, you won't find much else to complain about. Hey... nothing's perfect, right? CK

SONIC ADVENTURE

Sega (Sonic Team)

3D Action/Platform

"If it's all the same to you, Gamma, I'd rather give that stupid purple cat the bird instead."

Sonic 3-D Blast was the first Sonic game where the hedgehog was not confined to a 2-D universe, and this is the second. Needless to say, there are a lot of differences between the two, the most prominent being that Sonic Adventure doesn't suck goat come. The play mechanics in this game aren't perfect, but I'm surprised it came out as good as it did, given the play mechanics the Sonic series has. It's actually much better than Mario Fuckin' 64 in a lot of ways. For one thing, it's a lot less FRUSTRATING than Mario's Penis 64, for one simple reason: continue points. The lovable Sonic Team seems to be fully aware that players don't enjoy being punished for making miniscule mistakes in a world of no depth perception by forcing them to redo everything they spent the last 15 minutes doing (not to make Nintendo look like total goat-humpers... they DID correct this mistake in Zelda 64, but anyway...). I also liked the way the story was done... not that it was a great story, but the way you could play it from the viewpoint of six different characters, each with their own set of play mechanics, was pretty neat. I can't believe I've said "play mechanics" three times in this review... four times. Where was I? Well, anyway, the game was surprisingly fun, and a more than welcome addition for what was truly a mediocre series. Also, the option to go with the Japanese voices kick ass. The Japanese actors actually talk like real people! If you like play mechanics, you should definitely give the play mechanics of Sonic Adventure a try, because the play mechanics are real... play mechanic-ey... *JBL*

STREET FIGHTER 3: DOUBLE IMPACT

Capcom

Tournament Fighting

"Urien, you idiot! You're not supposed to get back into the ring with Depends!!!"

Capcom brings home a somewhat dated but none the less well done port of both Street Fighter III and its sequel, Second Impact: Giant Attack. Although the DC version offers little more than the arcade versions did themselves, it's still an enticing package that any SF3 fan will want to pick up. The SF3 series was heavily criticized when it came out, and two sequels did little to change the player's minds. Looking at it from that viewpoint, W Impact is a perfect port of two flawed games, complete with character imbalances, dial-a-combo characters, and over-powered parrying tactics. On the other hand, if you like the SF3 games, you'll have no reason not to like the Dreamcast port. In terms of bringing the arcade experience home, Capcom has done a great job. The characters and stages are as richly animated as they were in the

arcade, with no loss of frames; pretty amazing when you consider the insane amount of animation in this game. The original music scores for both games will keep you boppin' in your seat while you play, too, and the sound effects also remain unchanged, so you can enjoy the crunch of Sean's fist breaking Hugo's leg, or the metallic clink of Urien's metal skin being dented by a powerful combo.

If there is a fault with playing W Impact on the Dreamcast, it's the Satan-spawned DC controller, which makes even performing the simplest of special moves a chore. With a more fighting-oriented controller, though (like the Ascii FT pad), moves come out easily. You'll be chain-comboing with Yang and parrying Sean's basketballs in no time. Although I personally find the controls to be a touch floaty in some situations (moves not always coming out, for example), I had the same complaint playing the SF3 games in the arcades.

Usually Capcom's home ports are loaded with options, and here W Impact falters a step or two. It's nice enough to get two games on one disc, but beyond that there is nothing revolutionary in the modes of play aside from a bonus round practice mode for 2nd Impact, and a Training Mode for both games. Some sort of Survival Mode offering would have added to the replayability factor, but it's understandable. At least Capcom had the foresight to give you the option of having a different Super Art in each round of a VS. game, so if you get tired of always using the Hyper Bomb against your opponent, you can use it for the first round, Boomerang Raid for the second, and then Stun Gun Headbutt for the third round. This makes VS. play a blast, and W Impact is definitely a lot more fun when you have a friend to battle against. Other goodies include the addition of Gill and Shin Gouki as playable (albeit hidden) characters, and a set of unlockable EX options-- nothing special here, but there is the usual fun stuff like infinite power gauges, one-button Super Arts, and so on.

All in all, W Impact is a superior port of both SF3 games, and while the rather poor offering of bonus goodies detracts from the fun factor (never mind that it's been a few years since both games came out, and that Capcom could have put the already aging SF3: Third Strike in here as well), anyone who got a kick out of these games in their local arcade has no reason not to find a copy of this game. *KM*

SEAMAN

Sega

Virtual Pet Simulation

"No comment."

It's hard to justify reviewing this in The Gamerom Blitz, because, well, Seaman isn't a game. You won't even find many of the things that make video games appealing here... for graphics, you get a fishtank sitting in the middle of nowhere, filled with detailed but downright creepy creatures. For sound, you get the logical combination of Leonard Nimoy and a guy who does a mean George Takei impression. For gameplay, well, there isn't any. You never have direct control

ZOO LOGIC

I REALLY AM THIS BAD AT TONY HAWK. JUST ASK PAT.

by Jess Ragan



over the Seamen, unless picking them up counts... and they really hate that.

Trust me, though, none of this is important. Seaman's the first virtual pet simulator with advanced interaction between the user and the animals he's raising, and the quality of this interaction is what matters most. For instance, the game comes with a microphone that lets you talk to and eventually with the Seaman, but how well does it work? If you talk to Seaman just like you would one of your friends, will it understand you, or DO...YOU...HAVE...TO...TALK...LIKE...THIS? And even if your speech does come through loud and clear, will the Seaman be able to comprehend what you've said and provide intelligent responses to your queries?

I wish I could give definite answers to all of these questions, but all I can come up with are wishy-washy "kindas" and "maybes". Video game technology has made great strides in a lot of areas over the past two decades, but artificial intelligence hasn't evolved much since the days when "adventure game" meant typing in two word commands to move your character from room to room. Seaman can handle full sentences, but its vocabulary is somewhat limited, so you'd be better off letting it lead the conversation.

This is when Seaman is most entertaining... it asked me what kind of movies I liked best, offering two examples. I went outside the boundaries it set and answered "comedy". Surprisingly, it not only had a reply but a witty joke as well. This not only proved that the game engine has some flexibility but that Sega did a great job translating and rewriting the game for Americans. The new dialogue by You Don't Know Jack creators Jellyvision is the game's best asset... anyone who's convinced that localization only ruins Japanese software needs to forget about Street Combat and play Seaman for a while.

Seaman is best suited to the scientifically curious, who can experiment all they like with the creatures in the game and never have to worry about messy post-dissection cleanups or protests from PeTA. And while even they might get tired of their pets' smarmy and sometimes repetitive comments, they'll agree that Seaman is (long overdue) proof that the Dreamcast is thinking.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2

Capcom

Tournament Fighting

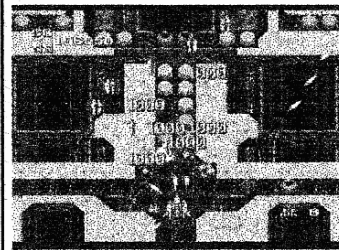
"Too many characters.... brain... overloading!"

Remember when Street Fighter 2: Champion Edition was released? 12, yes, 12 playable characters. Everyone was going nuts. Look at all the choices. So many fighters to learn. Lots of time will be logged into this bad boy. Well, fast forward 7 years and we have Marvel

ALZADICK

アルザディック

I thought I'd break up the monotony of all these 128-bit game reviews by looking at an obscure Japanese TurboDuo shooter called Alzadick. Yes, that's right... Alzadick. One thing I can tell you for sure, Alzadick is hard. It's definitely not for pussies... it takes a real man to appreciate Alzadick, no buts about it. Still, even though Alzadick isn't very long and things can get hairy right from the beginning, Alzadick is worth a look, if you can find it. You may find yourself bending over backwards just to get one, though... I saw Alzadick selling on eBay for over \$100, which I think is an inflated price for something so short.



vs. Capcom 2. 56 playable characters. You'd better quit your day job.

Of course, when the game starts off you don't get all 56. As you go through the game and gain experience points, you can add new characters to the game, and if you went to the arcade in Japan, you could get some new ones logged onto your memory card. OR, just go to gamefaqs.com and download the whole darn file. He he. Isn't technology great!?

OK, so now you have 56 characters. NOW WHAT?!?! So many choices that is very overwhelming. All your faves are in there along with some old returning combatants such as Dan, Felicia, Dhalsim and more! Of course, some of the characters are duplicates such as Iron Man/War Machine, 2 Wolverines, Guile/Charlie, Mega Man and his sister, and the 78 Ryu clones in the game. Even so, with 56 characters, you have more variety than you can shake a joystick at!

The game plays like a dream, with no loading time whatsoever. NO SLOWDOWN!! What's going on?!? Play with 3 on 3 Juggernauts! No slowdown!! Amazing!! Characters fly in and out of the action fluidly, which can add up to some NASTY combos! Every character has multiple special moves, some of which are quite amusing. Ruby Heart (sexy pirate chick) drops a barrel on the opponent, then plays an 'aim the knife' game, hitting the opponent through the barrel holes. Many extras like this add to this awesome game.

Even though the game keeps with its 2-D roots, the backgrounds almost appear to be in 3-D with dazzling effects, which will leave you speechless. The bell tower is especially cool in my opinion. On the downside, however, is the annoying music. Might be OK for the Japanese tastes, but it simply does NOT fit in the US fighting game market. Sets a weird tone for the game. Oh well, no game is perfect.

Finally, if you like fighting games at all, BUY THIS GAME. Trust me, it is the fighting game fan's true! 56 characters, amazing graphics and gameplay, and a hell of a lot of fun for 2 players! Go out and get your Dreamcast chipped, buy this import (or get the States version in a few months) and leave the other fighting games in the dust! **GW**

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

Crave (Neversoft, Treyarch)

Skateboarding

"Who says the 80's are dead? The skateboarding fad from that decade sure isn't."

For the longest time now I have wanted to try any version of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, but with the onset of adulthood comes responsibility and responsibility requires forsaking the game-playing habits of old. Frankly, I hadn't picked up a game controller in about six months. However, the prodigal son has returned. This game has made me want to quit school, tell my boss to go fuck himself and re-devote my life to gaming. Well, maybe that's a slight exaggeration, but it is a great game.

Having been away from gaming for such a time, I really haven't seen what the current cutting-edge in graphics is, but quite frankly I think that Tony Hawk is teetering on the brink. I have never seen anything so clear or crisp in my life. More than that, the graphics were as clean in the background as they were in the foreground. There was no need for fogging or other such nonsense to hide the limitations of a processor. The movements of the skaters are fluid and almost lifelike as you put them through the paces of grinding rails, curbs and...well pretty much everything you see is fair game. Almost every surface is skateable, which means you can put together some awesome combinations on multi-surfaced levels. With a few hours of play I was able to put together some basic tricks, so it's a major plus that the learning curve is set for someone like me, whose familiarity with combos is limited to only the drive-thru.

I really got into the music, being a punk rock fan. It may not be to everyone's tastes, however, so keep your hand on the mute button. For me, it was pretty awesome (and somewhat disturbing) to hear the

Dead Kennedy's Police Truck blasting from my speakers as I tear it up, grind and coast over ramps, ride walls and bail hard from serious heights. There are also ten real-life skaters, ten unlockable courses and plenty of carnage when you wipe out. I also took perverse pleasure in hearing my character cry in pain as I collide with concrete walls and crash through windows, which is just another cool element in a very fun game. Pirate it if you can, buy it if you must, but find some way to play this game. *BL*

TEST DRIVE 6

Infogrames

Racing

"I can't think of a better use for The Club than this game."

I hadn't played any really, REALLY crappy Dreamcast games in the six months I've had the system, which was almost disappointing because I didn't have anything I could really stomp to pieces in this issue. Even Slave Zero, which I'd played on one of the Official Dreamcast Magazine sampler discs, only rated a spastic colon on Jay Sherman's "Diseases I'd Prefer To This" scale. Maybe it was because I was used to Playstation and Saturn games, and hadn't yet been spoiled by the Dreamcast's great graphics, or perhaps it's that I just don't like first person shooters and couldn't really distinguish Slave Zero from any of the other ones I've played. In any case, the game was just too mediocre to be truly memorable, and it sure as heck didn't deserve the "zero" in its title.

So I borrowed Test Drive 6 from a guy who'd gotten a half-dozen Dreamcast games from a local thrift shop owner, who as I was told was this close to trading them for a handful of magic beans. I was assured by every review I'd read that the game was the worst thing

to happen to the automotive industry since the Yugo... and since I'm a particularly cynical person, I knew that it would give me plenty to bitch about.

My first complaint about Test Drive 6 is this: it's not bad enough! I popped it in my Dreamcast, expecting pure crapola, and was irritated to discover that the game had some redeeming values. Like the really cool cover of the 80's song Cars by Fear Factory... there's even a music video to go along with it, and although it's chock full of disturbing imagery, I watched it over and over just because it looked so wonderful. Forget the movies in Sonic Adventure and Mortal Kombat Gold... now THIS is broadcast quality!

Even the game itself isn't that horrible... darn it. The control is a lot better than Tokyo Xtreme Racer's, but the physics are out of whack... there's no sense of inertia, and when you turn slightly your car seems to jerk rather than slide into position. After you fly over a hill, you don't "feel" the car hit the ground, probably because the suspension doesn't seem to react, and if you collide with other vehicles, they'll flip over and instantly right themselves once they've stopped.

If that's not silly enough for you, just wait until you see the cars! It's a wonder the auto manufacturers who loaned their designs to this game allowed their products to be depicted this way... if I thought their vehicles really looked like this, I wouldn't drive a Ford lately, or ever. None of the cars have the sharply defined edges and contours of their real-life counterparts, and the convertibles even have- oh man, you're not going to believe this!- drivers with cube-shaped heads. Hello? I wouldn't have accepted this from my toys when I was six, and I sure as hell am not going to put up with it now.

Oh, yeah... then there's the music, provided by a half-dozen gutter bands, and the inconsistent track design that throws a few diamonds into a whole lot of rough. While this still doesn't make Test

HALF-TIME

(abbreviated Dreamcast reviews)

SOUL CALIBUR

NAMCO, FIGHTING

Remember what I said about Virtua Fighter 2 a few issues back? Well, multiply that by three and you've got my opinion of Soul Calibur. Although the level design isn't much better than in that Saturn game, the fighters are eye-bulgingly detailed and convincingly animated, even when they're spinning nunchucks around with their feet or getting up after an opponent buries a sword in their backs. Also, the mission mode is entertaining, partially because of the artwork you can unlock and partially because the missions themselves are so imaginative.

RAYMAN 2

UBI SOFT, ACTION

OK, fine. So the sequel to Rayman has great, cartoony graphics, new abilities for the main character, and blah blah blah blah. Look, none of that's important to me. The only thing I want to know is this... is it as hard as the first game? Thankfully, the answer is no... this time, Rayman can fire at his enemies repeatedly instead of relying on that blasted fist, and when he falls off cliffs or into ponds, it only damages him slightly rather than taking his life. This makes the game only occasionally frustrating (the forced scrolling scenes are still a bitch...) and a lot more fun than the original.

CARRIER

JALECO, ADVENTURE

Capcom must have taken all the

good ideas for enemies in the Resident Evil and Dino Crisis series, because the monsters in other survival horror games are usually kinda dumb. The ones in Carrier look human, but if you get within striking distance their heads open to reveal some kind of octopus/venus flytrap hybrid. Scary or stupid? You make the call. If that and the Resident Evil brand control doesn't make you run screaming from the room, you might enjoy this game... at the very least, I liked the idea of using infrared vision to track down enemies.

STREET FIGHTER 3: THIRD STRIKE

CAPCOM, FIGHTING

Your standard issue upgrade to a Capcom fighting game, with new backgrounds, characters, and a nifty game edit feature that among other things gives you full access to all the characters' super arts, not just one. Still, it's not the quantum leap ahead of the previous games in the series like Marvel vs. Capcom 2 was.

JET GRIND RADIO

SEGA, TAGGING?

People have already started bitching about this game's premise, but frankly, I'd much rather see drive-by sprayings than the kind of gang warfare we see in real life, where the walls are painted in crimson splatters. But anyways, Jet Grind gives you the chance to scoot around small towns on rollerblades, painting over the artwork of a rival gang and raising the blood pressure of law-abiding citizens. Eventually, you'll have

to finish your dirty work while inept cops chase you around... you start to feel like you're caught in a 21st century update to the Keystone Cops films. It's fun, although not quite as entertaining as Crazy Taxi was the first few times through.

MDK2

INTERPLAY, ACTION/SHOOTER

Stuffing wacky jokes and characters into this game's futuristic yet dark and haunting setting sounds like a square peg/round hole arrangement, but for some reason, I don't really mind that there's a canine Punisher blowing away a bunch of farting coneheads, or that a scatterbrained scientist is using an economy-sized leaf blower to push aliens into the jaws of a plant straight out of Little Shop of Horrors. I guess it's because MDK2 is so nicely designed, with detailed graphics and great voice overs (Ben Stein, is that you?!). The control's a bit friggly, though... maybe Sega should have released that Dreamcast mouse a year earlier.

TOKYO XTREME RACING

CRAVE (GENKI), RACING

I'd call this the poor man's Ridge Racer 4, but, well, R4 wasn't all that hot either. The level of realism in TXR is surprising- although its track is based on highways in Japan, there are a lot of freeways in Arizona that look just like this at night- but the concept of racing against single opponents doesn't really work. Maybe game companies should leave the night driving to the 2600.

Drive 6 as rotten as I'd hoped, Infogrames and the Pitbull Syndicate still deserve a salute for their efforts. Oh, wait, that was my middle finger! Well, whatever.

JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE

Capcom

Fighting

"Don't stand... don't stand so... don't stand so close to me..."

Man, them dang Japanese folks. Seem like the only times they ever do one a' them annie-may shows that ain't about porno and gals with big ol' hooters or Pokey-man, it's gotta be all crazy like ya won't even believe... dang Taco Bell dog's somewhere in there. Then they go an' make it in to a video game. Now, whose idea was it they're gonna be bringin' this over and sellin' it in a genuine American video game store? Not like I had any idea it was gonna be all this fruity shit, cause it was the damn Resident Evil company! Look at the box? Naw, I buy my games down at the pawn shop, an' they usually don't got the real boxes. This one was in an ol' Super Nintendo carryin case that Dean done cut the plastic out of cause then it'll fit CDs. Dean's real smart, that's why he got the pawn shop and all. Course he said I couldn't have the case with the game, that it was for security. Like I said, real smart.

So anyway, I start playin this thing and would you believe I liked it better than Capcom Marvel at first? Really, because they made it only three buttons. Never really could remember what all them dang things did. And then as I said, there's all these crazy guys in it, and a gal I could swear was nekkid. Then you'd hit a button and this big ol' mouth would open up and eat the other guy, or you'd do another move and she'd throw all these ol' cars. Classic cars, like the one up on blocks out back. I mean it, one of these days I'm getting myself some Bondo and fix her up real good. Now, I mean it.

Then you got all these other guys, like what I was talking about before, a little dog jump up on ya and bite ya and stuff. Then everybody could just press this other button and out they come, these big monsters that fought for ya. And ya know what I was always sayin' about fightin' games? Right, right. Why didn't one of them fellers just bring a dang gun? Like ta see that shootin straight through yer hadoooken, ya little nip? Right, cause they done put it in. Musta been all those times I called 'em and told 'em to do that. Now I just play that one guy and shoot and shoot and shoot, and ain't nobody can touch ya. Told ya so. Shoot and shoot and shoot.

Sure, I got bored of it after a couple a days but once the power got shut off we aint needed to worry about what Sega games we're playin anymore. Ain't much to do for fun now except what don't require no electricity, heh heh. Right, Sis? *CK*

CAPCOM VS. SNK

Capcom

Fighting

"Mai brings a whole new meaning to the term 'punching bags!'"

Y'know, I could probably stay up all night counting the flaws in this game, but when that disc goes in the Dreamcast and I pick up a controller to play against a friend, it's like they all disappear... all that matters is the fight, and the fun I'm having.

That's saying a lot, because there are tons of flaws. The graphics are a confused jumble, suggesting that the designers either had no real artistic direction or just couldn't decide on one. Most of the characters, including all of SNK's, have a new, more realistic look that gives the game a serious edge that the Street Fighter Alpha games lacked. Unfortunately, not all of the fighters were redrawn, so the battles look as though they came straight out of MUGEN, with characters from two entirely different artistic styles clashing... in more ways than one. The backgrounds are attractive, and a few, like the rain-soaked crosswalk and Takuma Sakazaki's latest dojo (which isn't quite

GARBAGES'

Hey, at least we're not FuncoLand.™

presents...

THE YEAR'S TEN LEAST POPULAR VIDEO GAME RELATED PRODUCTS

10. The Game Informer Final Fantasy Collection Strategy Guide, neither sponsored, endorsed, or approved by... its author Chris Kohler
9. Konami's Orchestramania, the game that lets YOU become the leader of the band! (Ten piece instrument controller not included)
8. Tomb Raider VI: She's Not Really Dead!
7. The video game adaptation of Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda. And by "Gene Roddenberry" we really mean his greedy, opportunistic wife Majel
6. GamePro... well, GamePro anything, really
5. The official Pitbull Syndicate Car Rendering Toolkit, approved by Beaterz.com
4. The premiere issue of Daily Radar: The Magazine, including such eye-opening articles as "Reasons You Should Sell Your Soul To Own A Playstation 2"
3. Hoyle Casino, guaranteed to push your 2600, er, your Dreamcast to its limits!
2. The Nuon Pornographic Games Pack, including such exciting titles as Mr. Drill-her, Fukken Tag Tournament, & the Sydney 2000 Olimpdxicks
1. A one year, one issue subscription to The Gameroom Blitz

ready to house a fight, but hey, as long as you're there!), are fabulous, but none of them have the illusion of parallax that made Marvel vs. Capcom 2 (and truly 3D fighting games like Dead or Alive 2 and Soul Calibur) look so amazing. Finally, the character sketches in the select and win portrait screens are dark, dingy, and badly scanned, and look more like promotional artwork than something you'd expect in a video game.

The selection of characters could have been better as well. Although both companies' most recognizable (and marketable) characters are all here, I have to wonder about Capcom's choices for Ratio 1 and 2 fighters. Nobody really remembers Raiden/ Big Bear from the first two Fatal Fury games, and the few people who do aren't going to want to play as this fat Aussie slob. I feel the same way about E(normous) Honda, and both Vice and Blanka are just barely worth playing. Capcom also barred a lot of great characters from this tournament, like Fei Long (Capcom's Bruce Lee) and Hon-Fu (SNK's Jackie Chan), as well as Athena, Blue Mary, the Ikari Warriors team from King of Fighters, Dan, and Haggar from Final Fight (it's about time he replaced Zangief in the Street Fighter series, don't you think?). Worst of all, some of the fighters that did make it aren't as effective as they used to be. In my opinion, Capcom really put the screws to the once powerful Yamazaki, and Pat's friend Adrian was horrified by Sakura's awkward new moves. Each character does have an alternate version armed with different attacks, but they're usually not worth the zillions of points it takes to unlock them.

However... Capcom vs. SNK is fun and addictive, and if you've invited a few friends over to play it, trust me, that disc just won't stop spinning. The fights are quick, clean, and intense, because once a challenger is in the ring, they're on their own... they can't step out for a breather or rely on help of any kind from their teammates until they're knocked out. This format keeps things challenging for one player, who

can test his endurance with his favorite characters, makes battles between two players interesting because fighters from both teams are constantly replaced, and is great for parties since the speed of each match gives everyone a chance to play... even the guys without a controller in their hands will be too busy cheering on their friends to care. Finally, the ratio system lets you choose your favorite combination of characters without shifting the battles in you or your opponent's favor. Some people find the limitations of this system obnoxious, but trust me, the game is a whole lot worse with the feature turned off... just try to play against someone with a death squadron, er, team including Evil Ryu and Akuma and you'll probably agree.

It should be obvious to anyone that Capcom vs. SNK could have been a much better game. Still, even if some of the pieces of this puzzle are missing, what's left is still worth picking up.

MORTAL KOMBAT GOLD

Midway

Polygonal Fighting

"Finish... zzz..."

I can't believe Midway had the ping-pongs to release this. This not really new, not really enhanced Dreamcast edition of Mortal Kombat couldn't win gold at the Special Olympics, let alone in a competition against the two dozen fighting games available on the system. There's very little to distinguish it from Mortal Kombat 4 on the Playstation, except a few, ahem, "new" warriors (since this is Mortal Kombat, there are never any truly new characters), the ability to select your weapon, and oh yeah, lots of freaky bugs. My favorite happens a lot when you lose a match and start falling down the continue well... your fighter grows an extra polygon that shoots out of his foot and stretches to the edge of the screen. If you continue with the same character, the enormous splinter remains in his heel and stays there while you fight. Even more hilarious is the instruction booklet, which warns you not to save games even though you're given the option in the main menu. Now that's innovation... Gold is the first Mortal Kombat game that not only lets you perform fatalities on your opponents but also the Chao you've got tucked away in your VMU!

Since Midway didn't even bother to bug test the game before releasing it, you know there aren't any new features to keep the player entertained, or the Dreamcast challenged. There's no tag-team mode... the best you're going to get is a two on two fight with lots 'o load time and exploding character parts (because remember, boys and girls, according to Midway, blood and gore make up for the flaws in ANY game!). There's no character edit mode or even a color edit mode... apparently, Midway feels that only it has the right to palette swap a ninja, give him a few new attacks, and pass him off as an entirely new fighter. And there's no Soul Calibur-style missions with artwork and other goodies to unlock... which is fine, really, because if there were any Easter eggs in this game, I'd probably want to leave them hidden. The stuff you CAN find in the game without much trouble is bad enough... I mean, have you seen the endings? Oh... my... word. In addition to some of the crappiest voice overs ever, you've got blurry video quality, idiotic storylines that seem written just so the designers could make yet another character explode, badly rendered characters who move like they're on strings, and texture maps straight out of Rival Schools. When a cut scene from Soul Calibur or Dead or Alive 2 looks better IN DIRECT COMPARISON to the movies in Mortal Kombat Gold, it really makes you sit back and think. Specifically, it makes you wonder who's the biggest moron in the equation... Midway for making the game or you for playing it.

Calling this game a cure for insomnia is too kind... I'd say it's more like a cure for the will to live. If your craving for blood and gore is so strong that you'd consider buying this before Marvel vs. Capcom 2 or Soul Calibur, just slit your wrists... that way, you'll be doing both yourself AND the gene pool a favor.

BENDING THE RULES

TWINKLE STAR SPRITES
ADK, NEO-GEO



It's hard to find a good shooter with its own unique hook, which is probably why the genre fizzled out in the early 90's and has yet to make a comeback. Still, every once in a (great, great) while, a company will come up with a real keeper with the kinds of inventive ideas that kept players pounding away at their fire buttons in the eighties. Twinkle Star Sprites is one of these all-too rare games.

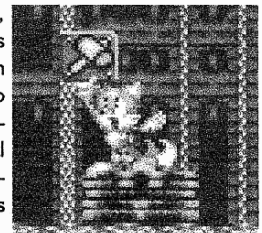
Sprites has all the elements of your ordinary, average vertically scrolling shooter, and would be pretty boring if it weren't for one thing... the screen is split in two to make room for another player, and whoever can survive the onslaught of enemies the longest wins. Like Bust-A-Move and other versus puzzle games, your successes make life even more miserable for your rival... every ship you blast gets ported over to his side of the screen as a stronger, deadlier fireball, and blasting the leader in a formation of baddies results in a chain reaction which could lay a special attack or even a nigh invincible boss at your opponent's front door. Of course, he can do the same thing to you, so you'll want to keep a few smart bombs handy in case you're overwhelmed with enemies and your trigger finger is about to give out. The head to head gameplay doesn't work as well here as it would in a great puzzler (you never have direct control over the way your opponent is attacked), but it's still a pretty novel idea, and the graphics are teddy bear squeezingly adorable.

TAILS' ADVENTURE
SEGA, GAME GEAR

Tails' Adventure for Game Gear, while not the greatest game of all time, is certainly enjoyable and possessing enough quality and features (such as passwords) to warrant picking it up. However it is important to note that this game isn't a traditional Sonic game. It is more action-adventure oriented than the straight action of Sonic, and is more slowly paced as well. You'll find yourself revisiting stages with newly-acquired items to accomplish things which were impossible on your first trip. The game's focus is more on exploration and using items than a straight run-through.

In this episode Tails has several moves and tools available to him, some of which are borrowed from previous Sonic games and some which are new. Perhaps the most striking difference is Tails no longer attacks bodily; rather he uses items to attack. He begins the game with bombs which he throws at enemies. Tails can fly, naturally, and can also climb. When in doubt he can additionally call upon various machines for aid including the widely-used remote controlled robot and a submarine/plane.

Tails' Adventure has good graphics and play control with a decent dose of charm. It's not as speedy as the Sonic games but it's entertaining in its own right. *MP*



2 LITTLE 2 SOON? (2 EXPENSIVE NOW, ANYWAY.)

CHRIS SOMEHOW MANAGES TO GET HIS MITTS ON A PLAYSTATION 2

To be totally honest, I never ever thought that I'd get to give the Playstation2 a spin before it got to the US or I got to Japan... whichever came first. But here it is, one week to the day after the PS2's March 8 launch, and I've just finished messing about with the latest and grea... well, the *latest* video game system, that's for damn sure. How did this opportunity come about? I'm currently teaching a class on the history of video games at Tufts University, and one of my students has a friend in Cambridge who apparently has way too much money, as he had just purchased the PS2 (\$750), the four standard launch games (\$80 a pop), and Konami's Drummania/controller combo (\$200). In retrospect, my student probably took me with him to suck up and get a better grade, and it definitely worked.

So not only did I have the opportunity to see the PS2, I got to see and fondle each and every game and peripheral available. I won't fool you into thinking I spent much time with the games, only a few hours, so I can't say I've played them in depth. I do, however, have a solid first impression of the system and its offerings, and so I am reasonably confident in my opinions.

I'd seen so many pictures of the system itself that I wasn't exactly drooling all over it. The Dual Shock controller is lighter and the analog sticks firmer. Everything is black, from the system to the controllers to the game boxes. Sony is obviously going for a distinctive and very anti-Dreamcast line look, and it works pretty well. The game boxes are slick but also practical; everything has its place and there are firm clips to hold them there. The instruction books are large, even bigger than N64 booklets, a welcome change from the jewel case inserts of late. The first launch game that we put in was, of course, Street Fighter EX3.

Here began our descent into The Rushed Crappy Launch Games From Hell. SFEX3 was probably the best of the bunch in terms of it being, well, a Street Fighter game. But it's not like the EX series was ever that great anyway, and EX3 is no exception. Take EX2 and give it a tag-team feature and you've basically got EX3. The graphics, as you've probably heard by now, are actually worse than Soul Calibur's, displaying rough, jagged edges. In any case, we did suffer through a few matches before turning the system off and giving Eternal Ring, From Software's RPG entry, a go.

The opening to King's Fiel... uh... Eternal Ring was the first FMV we had seen for the system, and, to be honest, we attempted to delude ourselves into thinking that it was realtime and that the PS *was* as good as the DC. The difference was obvious, though, when we started playing. ER, probably the worst of the five, is a first-person perspective action/RPG in which battles take the form of stabbing identical enemies with your sword. Movement is *sloooooooow* and areas are unnecessarily difficult to navigate. Once we had played through the first dungeon and first town, we were basically ready to quit. I did get to impress my friends by reading the Japanese, though, and between their knowledge of Chinese and mine of Japanese, we were able to figure out most of the dialogue. We did spend a good deal of time (relatively) on ER, but we were soon ready to move on to Koei's strategy offering, Kessen.

We were again fooled into thinking that Kessen's opening sequences were realtime. As it turns out, they were just bad FMV. No harm done, though, we thought, at least until we saw the actual gameplay screens. All the actual play is done on an ugly top-down map with incredibly simple character icons. Once two units engage each other, you can zoom in and watch the battles take place, but you can't do a thing. It is more complicated than I'm making it sound (hint: if you can't read Japanese and can only buy one title, *don't* buy this one), but overall Kessen left the same disappointed feeling in our stomachs as Eternal Ring did. At this point, enticed by the aroma of the drum set and guitar in the corner of the room, I wanted to move on to Drummania, but we decided to take a look at Ridge Racer V, Namco's latest, first.

If I had to sum up RRV's graphics in one word, that word would be "shit." If I had to describe RRV's graphics in two words, those two words would both be "shit." Get the picture? While RRV is without a doubt a worthy successor to the Ridge Racer series, it is obvious that Namco had the most problems with the PS2 hardware. Sure, in comparison to the Playstation, RRV looks wonderful, but head-to-head against Sega GT, there is absolutely no comparison. Jagged polygons, pop-ups (weren't those supposed to be obsolete three years ago?), and a general blurry, unfinished feeling permeate this game. RRV *plays* well, if only as well as the Playstation games. But gleefully bashing away at RRV soon became tiresome, and we were itching to make some music.

If you're familiar with Konami's Bemani series, you've already guessed that Drummania doesn't feature any sort of flashy graphical effects. What you're doing is just playing the drums (six pads and a bass pedal) to the instructions onscreen. There are various songs you can play, only one of which is anywhere near easy. The rest take serious amounts of practice to learn, but when you finish, you'll actually know how to drum. Drummania also lets you plug in the Playstation guitar and jam, guitar and drums, with a friend. You can even use two guitars if you so desire. This, ultimately, was the most fun of the five games, but only because we had both peripherals and could jam together. I was pretty terrible on the drums, but I had the guitar down pretty quickly.

In any case, Drummania was a lot of fun. Of course, given the cost of the system and the add-ons, this begs the question: was it one thousand dollars worth of fun? The answer is no. If you're considering importing a PS2, at this point I would advise against it. The initial lineup of launch games is without any semblance of a killer app, and this is probably the first ever system launch *without* a first-party title. You can find better playing and better looking games right here for the Dreamcast.

The final question that this raises is, how will the PS2 fare at its US launch in September? One thing's for sure: Sony will need more and better games, and quickly. The Japanese launch games were all rushed out the door and suffered terribly because of it. All Sega will have to do to sweep Christmas 2000 is to set up Dead Or Alive 2 next to SFEX3 and note that DOA2 plays on a system that is \$200 cheaper. That is, if Sony doesn't get it act together; and they don't have very long to do so. Gran Turismo 2000 will sell a few systems, but Sony is still missing and probably won't have a Mario or Sonic to carry them. Don't get me wrong: they'll sell a lot of systems whenever they decide to put it out there, but unless the launch lineup changes dramatically, you won't see me in line.

ELLE LIBRO

Nope... contrary to popular belief, Byron and I aren't dead. It's a good thing, too, because Jess needed a book review for this issue and he didn't feel like doing it himself. So let's get right to it, huh?

VIDEO GAMES

LEN BUCKWALTER

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Yep, that's right. This book was written in 1977, a long, long time before I was born and just three years after Jess was. I didn't even know there were video games back in 1977, but I guess this book *proves* me wrong... if you consider those oh-so-boring Pong machines people were playing back then video games. I didn't really like this book, not because it was badly written or anything, but because there wasn't anything in it I found fun or interesting. The Atari 2600 hadn't even been invented when this book was written, which means the author spends half the time talking about dozens of kinds of Pong systems, and the other half talking about "great video game advances" like the Fairchild Channel F (I guess anything would look high-tech to you after spending hours batting a ball between two white lines... ugh...). I perked up a little when I reached a chapter about designing your own video games, but it turned out that they meant drawing a maze on a piece of plastic, sticking it on your TV set, and leading a little white dot through it without touching the sides. Gimme a break... I could do that with my Etch-A-Sketch!

I'd much rather talk about Kiki's Delivery Service, a Japanese cartoon they showed on Toon Disney a while back. Most of the stuff on that channel is pretty bad, but Kiki's is different... it's about a witch girl who rides around on a broom, bringing people fish pies and stuff. When she gets tired of flying, she loses her powers and starts to understand how important they really were. I know, that sounds boring, and the first part of the movie is, but it really gets exciting when Kiki's friend gets in trouble and she has to start flying again to rescue him. Unlike most Disney cartoons, she doesn't just get her powers back instantly when she needs them... she really has to work at flying, and nearly hits the ground a couple of times before she reaches her friend and just barely catches him after he falls off a blimp caught on a clock tower. The best part is that everything looks really nice, and there's a lot of detail you don't usually see in cartoons these days... even the voices are really good, although it's too bad Phil Hartman died before he could do all the voices for Kiki's black cat.

Well, Jess just told me that he's not going to do that Russ Perry-style column for this issue, so here's a picture of me with my L'il Stratocaster instead. The nice thing about being a bear is that you never need guitar picks... they're already built in! ♥





CUZINE

presents...

"SHEER ENERGY"

"POWER UP!"

Energy drinks. They're the biggest and most bizarre trend that has hit the beverage industry since clear colas ("mmm... invisible cola..."). They're ludicrously overpriced, taste disgusting, and have the most whacked out ingredients you'd ever expect to find in a soft drink. I mean, really... royal jelly? Bees might find dining on this a privilege, but anyone with an IQ you don't have to represent as a fraction isn't going to want this floating around in their juice. Despite all this, energy drinks have become the beverage of choice for Gen-Xers who no longer find much excitement in falling off a cliff with a can of Mountain Dew in one hand and a bicycle handle gripped tightly in another. And while I'm not one to chase fads, I figured that, since nobody this side of a flatline has less energy than I do, these drinks might be a worthwhile investment. I tried three of these turbocharged beverages, and here's what I discovered...

SNAPPLE RAIN: The nectar from the agave cactus seems harmless enough, but when you ferment it and throw in a worm, you've got a drink that's ignited more Southwestern barroom brawls than Clint Eastwood and John Wayne put together. Hoping to start the same kind of mad frenzy inside trendy juice bars, Snapple created Rain, a strange energy brew with a healthy dose of agave cactus nectar... and thankfully no worm. Having positive experiences with cactus coolers before, and getting tired of drinking nothing but Dr. Pepper and Coca-Cola, I decided to give Rain a shot, despite the inflated price tag affixed to most Snapple products. Unfortunately, while it looks damned cool inside the bottle, you don't want that thick, oily goo inside your mouth. I'd left the bottle in the car on my way home from work that day, and went to my parents' house only to discover that my mom had emptied it out and used it as a flower vase. I was a bit annoyed that my costly elixir had went down the drain, but after some contemplation I decided that was where it belonged.

JONES' WHOOP-ASS: It was only a matter of time before this tired cliché inspired an actual, (technically) consumable product. A drink with the words "Whoop Ass" prominently displayed on it is just too tempting to pass up, but after you drink it, it's obvious why the price (\$1.69 at my local supermarket) is so steep... there's no way anyone would buy this more than once. The soda has an unpleasant yellow color (I'm convinced the reference to "taurine" was a typo), and the flavor is just as repellant, tasting like an unholy marriage of 7-Up and stale Tang. Fortunately, you won't have to worry about it lasting long, because your dollar and a half only buys you eight ounces of product. My advice to you is this: keep the can and pour the contents down the sink, or else the only ass that's going to get whooped is your own.

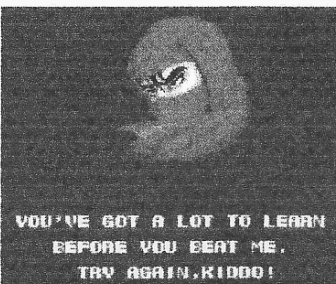
RC MAXIMUM EDGE COLA: Hey, it's the world's first energy cola! That's a pretty neat gimmick, and the soft drink ain't bad, either... although I didn't notice much of a difference between this and regular RC Cola, it's at least drinkable, and that's more than I can say for Snapple Rain and Whoop-Pee... er, Whoop-Ass, rather. The downside is that, like most carbonated beverages bottled in plastic, this gets flat pretty quickly... be sure to down it all in twenty minutes or you're not going to like the last few gulps.



I swear, I used to be such an idiot...

I always wondered why the original Street Fighter was such a closely guarded secret. I was never able to find the arcade version, and friends who had weren't especially willing to talk about it. Just mentioning Street Fighter without adding a II on the end was enough to make a crowded room of enthusiastic gamers fall silent, and I vowed to find out why. Finally, just before the year 2000, someone was brave enough to blow the whistle on Capcom by including a Street Fighter driver with MAME, and thousands of gamers like myself learned what few Street Fighter fans were willing to admit... the game that started it all kind of stinks. Capcom was wise to have buried this like so much cat poop in the darkest corner of the litter box... Street Fighter II would have been laughed right out of arcades and into the dumpsters out back if anyone had remembered the game that inspired it.

Street Fighter doesn't seem all that bad at first (of course, neither does a stubbed toe, until a half second later when that sensation of incredible pain finally hits you). In fact, the graphics are downright impressive by 1987 standards. Although the style of artwork is noticeably different from Street Fighter II's, the characters are just as detailed and well shaded. Even a few of the backgrounds are nice (particularly Retsu's dojo), and they all make good use of parallax, usually by having clouds float lazily behind the battlefields. Past that, though, both you and your onscreen persona are in for a world of hurt. That, of course, would be Ryu, because he's the only character you're allowed to use. OK, no problem... I can live with that.



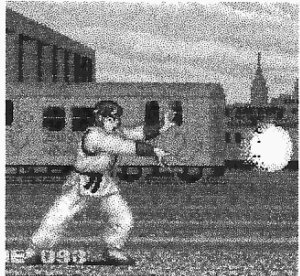
Clever line, huh? Everyone in the game seems to think so.

After all, whenever I first try out a Street Fighter game, I usually pick Ryu or one of his many clones (preferably Dan) anyways. His moves are pretty straightforward and effective and... wait, I can't make him DO any of his moves. Let me try this again. Oh, crap, still no luck. Maybe if I repeat it a half dozen times, THEN press a button... ah, there we go! And hey, look at that... my fireball just sapped 35% of my opponent's life bar! Cool! Too bad he got in a bunch of hits and took away twice as much of my energy while I was struggling with the controls.

That's right, folks, a Street Fighter game with horrible controls does exist, and this is it. It also has horrible gameplay, so if you're expecting to just jump in and clean up by using the skills and strategies you've learned playing Street Fighter II for the last nine years, well, think again. Instead of walking, Ryu hops awkwardly toward his enemies, and his jumps are even worse, lacking the smooth, natural arc that you've come to expect from every video game since Donkey Kong. You get the three punches and three kicks that are a staple of the Street Fighter series, but none of them are especially effective... you're better off sticking with the special moves, which are powerful beyond belief. Realizing this, Capcom made them nearly impossible for players to perform, but let the computer opponents (including such uninspired characters as a fat Chinese kung fu master and a shirtless American) whip them out one after another, usually resulting in your getting pinned into a corner and struck down in a matter of seconds. Then comes the final insult... the cheap bastard gets to rub his victory in your face with an unbelievably corny taunt that sounds like it was performed by a Valium addict stuck in a drain pipe. Normally, I'd be impressed with a voice sample this long in a game this old, but hearing it repeated ad nauseum only adds more unwanted frustration to an already obnoxious game.

I'll say just two things in Street Fighter's defense... it did lay the groundwork (however shoddy it may be) for the far superior sequel, and Eagle, a stick wielding blond Brit with a scar on his face, just has to be Cammy's pop. Other than that, this game is an embarrassing look at the past that isn't worth sitting through... kind of like those home movies your parents used to make when you were still wetting your pants.

You're not witnessing the brutal beheading of Mike Bison, aka Balrog... that's just MAME acting up on me again. Ah, MAME... you can't live with it, you can't play most obscure arcade games at home without it. And if you can, let me know how so I can free up some hard drive space.



To perform Ryu's classic fireball, simply press D, DF, F and a punch button. Four or five times.





SUIT UP... UP GEAR

Look, I'm not heartless, despite what the title of this editorial may lead you to believe. I hung my head in shame just like the rest of you when I saw the footage of wounded teenagers being pulled from the windows of Columbine High School, staining the sides of the building with their blood. I was outraged that such carnage was ever allowed to take place, and I even gave the parents of the victims a little leeway should their incredible grief convince them to say or do something stupid. But then the media, politicians, and even some of the family members of the fallen exploited the Columbine tragedy for their own gain, and I stopped caring. And when they started blaming video games for the actions of two disturbed and unfortunately well armed young men, I wished that the whole ordeal hadn't happened, not because innocent lives would have been spared, but because my own rights had fallen under the crosshairs.

It doesn't surprise me that crackpot senators like Joseph "Stalin" Liebermann would try to pin the blame for the Columbine murders on video games, because they're the ones largely responsible for it. Somehow, they think it's quite all right to take our children and cram them by the thousands into underfunded and grossly inadequate public schools, usually helmed by indifferent teachers. Education in this country has become an uncaring machine into which students are fed, given the absolute minimum knowledge necessary to survive on their own, and spit out with a diploma that's barely worth the paper it's printed on. Adding to the futility of the public school system is the fact that the students themselves have mindboggling priorities... they consider their education secondary in comparison to mindless sports, and the funding needed to keep the school's academics at an adequate level instead goes to teach kids how to throw a ball around (a skill which nine times out of ten wouldn't land you a job at Burger King). The students who give a damn about their schoolwork are endlessly ridiculed, labelled "nerds", and in the black community are even branded as traitors to their own race. With this in mind, it's a wonder that shootings like the one in Columbine don't happen MORE often.

(Off the subject, I've watched some television footage of the Columbine incident that mentioned jocks and minorities in the same breath, as if athletes were some put upon segment of the school population. Yeah, when I was a senior in high school, I really felt sorry for the captain of the football team when he got tackled just before the goal line or get stuck dating the SECOND most beautiful girl in English class. There was an equally hilarious article in Newsweek that claimed one sign of having a potential psychopath is that "your son or daughter hates the school bully or popular classmates". Well, golly gee, maybe they should just grin happily when the school's resident thug grabs them by the ankles and shakes them for loose change. Provided, of course, that they still have enough teeth left to smile...)

But who gets blamed for the recent trend of violence in schools? The cretins in charge of these supposed halls of education? No. The assholes who torment their fellow students until they snap and lash out, usually with assault weapons? Hell, no. The parents too busy on their cell phones to notice the scent of gun powder wafting from their childrens' rooms? Nah. The shooters themselves? Well, sometimes. But in today's "if it feels good, do it... then blame someone else when you get caught" society, it's much more convenient to point fingers at what the shooter was watching, or listening to, or in this case, playing. Never mind the fact that their supposed influences were clearly marked as adult products and that they shouldn't have been allowed to have them in the first place... no sirree, the ratings don't matter anyways because video games are just "toys". Heaven forbid that any of them should have even a hint of realistic content, because as we all know, anyone under the age of eighteen just can't distinguish fantasy from reality. If you want proof, just look at all the kids who accidentally killed their friends by pulling off their heads or punching them off fifty story buildings. We won't even get into all that awful cannibalization that happened as a result of the Pac-Man fad twenty years ago.

Convinced that they can protect their children from such senseless carnage, parents' groups have pestered congressmen into passing bills limiting the amount of freedom video game designers have. Some of these laws, including one passed before the Kentucky legislature that would keep violent video games out of public areas, are ridiculous abuses of the first amendment. But what the heck... it's worth losing a little freedom to keep kids from slaying each other, right?

Wrong.

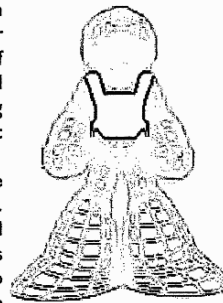
First of all, it just doesn't work. We've taken away Elmer Fudd's trademark shotgun, changed the color of Mortal Kombat's blood to every color in the rainbow but red, and given children a big purple dinosaur that wants to give the whole wide world a great big hug, and things have only gotten worse. In fact, the constant attempts by the left to shove politically correct BS down our throats has probably done more harm than good... people, especially kids, are tired of being socially reprogrammed and have rebelled against it, sometimes swinging the pendulum dangerously far in the other direction. The Trenchcoat Mafia didn't admire Hitler because he killed millions of people on the assumption that they were somehow inferior to Germans, but because the mere mention of his name pissed their teachers off. Secondly, where do we as a nation get off trying to protect our citizens by stealing their rights? Every war we've ever fought has been in the name of freedom... now we should feel compelled to take it away ater a few bloody but completely isolated incidents? What ever happened to dying to PROTECT the Constitution?

I just have this to say to everyone determined to make gamers suffer for the Columbine shooting:

To the parents of Columbine High School's victims: I'm sorry for your loss, but you can't take a black marker to everything you find offensive because you *suspect* that it *might* prevent incidents like the one that took your childrens' lives. Even if it did, undermining the first amendment with censorship laws would damage this country far more than any school shooting ever could.

To the supposed "journalists" at the major television networks: Your attempts to sabotage the video game industry prove that Hollywood is more frightened than ever of its success. Entertainment giants like Viacom, 20th Century Fox, and Warner Bros. have tried to snatch a piece of the video game market for themselves, and they've all failed miserably... it's no surprise that they'd exact revenge by having their news divisions constantly draw connections between tragedies like Columbine and the Playstation on top of most parents' television sets. After all, if you can't join 'em, beat 'em, right?

And to the politicians who take their fingers out of their asses just long enough to point them at video games every election year: either pass some meaningful laws, or let the bloodshed continue.



ITEM:
Aura's Interactor Vest
COMPATIBILITY:
Name it, and the vest will work with it
PRICE:
\$99 at launch, \$5 or less now
MANUFACTURER'S CLAIM:
"Feel punches, explosions, kicks, uppercuts, slam-dunks, crashes, bodyblows, and more!"

SET-UP

Because the Interactor is compatible with anything with an audio port, setting it up varies wildly from system to system, ranging from "OK, this is doable" to "What do I look like to you, a frickin' ITT graduate?!" The number of adaptors included with the vest will only add to your level of stress, but don't worry... you'll never need to use all of them for any one set-up. You will need the rather convoluted W adaptor to feed sound through both the vest and another source [say, your television's speaker], but since you can both hear and feel the Interactor at work, it really isn't necessary.

Once you have the vest hooked up to the included amplifier, the amp plugged into your system's sound source, the power supply plugged into a free outlet, and the leg bone connected to the thigh bone (wait, that's not right!), you're ready to rumble. Or ready for the vest to rumble, anyway. Now you just slip it on like a backpack, turn on the amp and your game system, and use the filter dial and volume to set the bass output to your liking.

THE PLAYSTATION TEST

There was only one Playstation game the Interactor really enhanced... Street Fighter EX. Its high-impact sound effects work wonderfully with the vest... every time you dish out some damage or are force fed a little yourself, the Interactor gives you a nice, solid thump in the back. Turn down the game's music a little and you'll swear that the vest was designed specifically for it. The Interactor didn't perform well with the other two fighting games I tried, however... Advanced VG and Marvel vs. Capcom just didn't have the crushing bass needed to bring the vest to life.

THE CD PLAYER TEST

If you can't afford to follow your favorite band on tour, the Interactor and a stack of CDs make a nice substitute for an actual concert experience. I tried Fleetwood Mac's Greatest Hits collection with the vest on my lap ("And I thought I was a fan!" Yeah... ha ha, Chris) and the already great songs were given more depth by the Interactor's subtle reactions to each of the instruments.

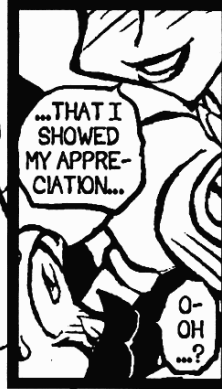
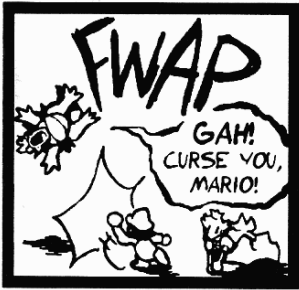
THE PERSONAL COMPUTER TEST

Currently, I'm using my Interactor as a surrogate PC speaker. Since it wasn't designed for this, its performance is a little flaky, and it seems to interfere with my microphone, but it gets the job done. A nice bonus is that the ground trembles slightly from the drum beats in Samurai Shodown whenever I play the game with Neo-Rage X. ^_^

OVERALL RATING

I'd give the Interactor a solid seven. It packs a nice, hefty punch, although it's a shame that it's not designed for today's true force-feedback games.

WOMEN... by Josh



GAME OVER

WELCOME TO...

E.M.U

I'd like to thank everyone who helped finish this issue, either with contributions or less direct forms of support. I've got to give a high five to Ben Leatherman and the folks at Game Zero for letting me tag along with them to last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo... I had a lot of fun, even when we were getting beaten down by the simian thugs promoting Fox's Planet of the Apes or putting up with the equally frightening E3 admission staff. A friendly word of advice to anyone planning to attend next year's show... GET YOUR BADGES IN ADVANCE. Russ Perry gets a thumbs up for meeting me in Chicago on my way back to Michigan... he took me to one of his favorite microbreweries for a few glasses of Honker's Ale, and we talked for hours about everything from prime time cartoons to nanoprobes to the bagel sandwiches at McDonald's (talk about a stream of consciousness conversation!). And we can't forget Pat Reynolds, who's invited me over several times, most recently for a gaming party with a half dozen other people. I had a jolly good time OD'ing on chili dogs, Coca-Cola, and of course Marvel vs. Capcom 2... I was even able to unlock the Servbot, which amused Pat with its taste testing, plate dropping, crotch clutching antics. I also want to thank everyone who sent in articles for this issue. It was tough to work up the motivation to finish this even with all of your contributions... I can honestly say that without your help, issue seven wouldn't have been possible. Finally, I've got to salute Al Riccitelli, who didn't lift a finger to help me out but was a good sport about the review of that TurboDuo game. I hope.

You can stick a fork in SNK... after ten years of supporting their Neo-Geo with arcade quality titles (and some real turds like Shinoken... but we won't go there), they've finally pulled the plug on their United States and European divisions. They've even gone so far as to recall all Neo-Geo Pocket merchandise from American retail outlets like Wal-Mart, just months after scoring huge licenses for the once promising system like Street Fighter, Sonic The Hedgehog, and Pac-Man. The home office in Japan is still intact, but it's rumored that the design team responsible for The King of Fighters will leave its former employers behind and start its own company. If this turns out to be true, it's almost inevitable that Aruze, one of Japan's leading pachinko machine manufacturers and the corporation that purchased SNK six months ago, will absorb the company completely. So while SNK's former executives will be justly punished for their premature abandonment of the Neo-Geo Pocket by being forced to sell the world's most boring "amusement" devices for the rest of their lives (whoo... let's shoot dozens of balls into a playfield full of pegs. Are we having fun yet?), this will offer little consolation to the people who purchased SNK's portable system, convinced that it would last a little longer than their Glade Plug-Ins air fresheners. Now I realize that SNK hasn't made much money since they released the dreadful Fatal Fury 3 five years ago, and that it's suicide to challenge Nintendo for control of the portable video game market, but by releasing its most popular titles for the Neo-Geo Pocket as well as those by other companies, SNK assured its customers that the system would be well supported for a long time. Pulling the rug from under the feet of Neo-Geo Pocket owners this soon after the unit's release is both dishonest and unfair, not to mention cruel... they'll be forced to buy a Color GameBoy just like everyone else!

It probably won't come as a surprise that SNK's death has convinced me to cancel the all portable issue of The Gameroom Blitz. I just don't see a point in comparing all the available handheld systems when only one of them has any hope of keeping an audience. As one astute Usenet poster put it, "We might as well get used to the fact that Nintendo will hold the portable market by the happy sack forever." I might put the coverage I intended for the issue on my web site instead, but right now, it's too early to say. It'd be nice to have a worthwhile Neo-Geo Pocket emulator to take snapshots with first... neither NG Pocket or the unfortunately named RAPE play all the system's games. There's a new emulator called Neo Pocott that's still in development, but I'm not the least bit impressed with early versions of it... the only thing you can coax it to play are demos and simple games designed by hobbyists.

While we're on the subject of my site, I guess I'd better let you know that it's going to be my main focus from now on, rather than this fanzine. I won't say that the print edition of The Gameroom Blitz is dead, because no matter how many times I make that claim, the fanzine just keeps rising from its grave like so many musclebound, shapeshifting Greek warriors. However, the web site is cheaper, more flexible, and a lot easier to update, so from now on, it will be the flagship of the JessCREATIONS*, Co. publishing empire. No, Byron, I said "flagship", not "garbage scow", and yes, you'll wish you hadn't said that the moment I'm finished with this editorial.

As for my other web site, On-File, well, I'm not sure what I want to do with it. It hasn't been updated for over a year now, and now that I have plenty of new members I really should take care of this. However, the kind of update I had in mind is rather massive, with submissions from no less than four and perhaps up to twelve fanzines. Should I take time out of all my other projects to do this? Should I improve the layout as well, or leave it as it is? Should I move the site from XOOM (now INBC) to a faster, more reliable server? And is On-File even worth this effort? Does anyone really care about it? Let me know.

Now if you'll excuse me, this copy of Shinoken has Byron's name written all over it...

I'll probably be expanding my emulator coverage to take the place of Arcade Squeezins in future issues of The Gameroom Blitz, because frankly, all the arcades in mid-Michigan have been squeezed out of existence. As a preview of coming attractions, here's a list of my five favorite emulators...

#5: MEKA

<http://www.emucamp.com/meka/>

I was pretty impressed with James McKay's MASSAGE back in 1996, but this wonderful Master System and Game Gear emulator completely crushes it. The slick user interface is the main reason why... it includes a television screen that shows static when you're not playing games and a wide variety of color schemes, including a tribute to the creators of Nestle which makes the cursor drip blood! And oh yeah, the emulation is pretty good, too, handling Master System, Game Gear, and even ColecoVision games beautifully.

#4: MAGIC ENGINE

<http://joyce.eng.yale.edu/~bt/turbo/emu>

It's odd... I never liked the TurboGrafx-16 much when the system was competing against the Genesis. Perhaps it had something to do with its moronic mascot Bonk, or those even more idiotic Johnny Turbo ads where a grossly overweight "superhero" beat the hell out of thinly disguised Sega employees... but I digress. I've been playing the system's games a whole lot more since I downloaded Magic Engine... there were a lot of quality TurboGrafx games that weren't released in America, and Magic Engine plays them all flawlessly.

#3: CALLUS 95

<http://cps2shock.retrogames.com/cls95p/>

Usually, I try to steer clear of emulators written specifically for Windows, but this port of Bloodlust Software's popular Callus is even better than the DOS original, with the same lightning fast performance and an easier to use interface. Best of all, even more of your favorite Capcom arcade games are supported, including Forgotten Worlds and (you'd better sit down for this!) Street Fighter Alpha. That alone is enough to make me forgive Bloodlust for all those Time Killers clones they absolutely insist on making...

#2: ZSNES

<http://www.zsnes.com>

You can pick yourself off the floor now. A Super NES emulator nearly topped my list of all-time favorites, and none of the Genesis ones even made the cut. There are two reasons why: the vibrant colors in most Super NES games look even better on a VGA monitor, and the one advantage the Genesis had over the SNES- superior play control- is negated when you're playing both systems' games with the same controller. Also, I have yet to find a Genesis emulator that compares favorably to ZSNES, although KGEN and Genecyst are impressive in their own right.

#1: NEO-RAGE X

<http://home5.swipnet.se/~w-50884>

At long last, the Neo-Geo comes home, without a ridiculous price tag attached. Neo-Rage X is this close to perfect... if only it weren't so memory hungry!



SPECIAL ISSUE, \$1.50
 RUSS PERRY, JR.

"Shall we play a game?"

We've come to associate this phrase (from the film WarGames) with interactive entertainment, dangerously sophisticated technology, and massive government conspiracies, but Slap-Dash editor Russ Perry, Jr. has written a short story that sums all these things up in one word: Shatterspace. Usually, I don't care for fan fiction, or fiction in general, but Russ' story about a group of arcade-hopping teenagers and their latest obsession kept me flipping pages until the eye-opening climax. The only real problem with Shatterspace is this: anyone who knows Russ knows that he's a stickler

for detail, and he has a tendency to overwhelm the reader with it, spending a little too much time describing flight formations, battle strategies, and squadron names. Russ should have given us more information about the main characters instead... aside from the narrator and Jens, very little is revealed about them, which is a shame because their unique personalities would have made the story even more entertaining if Russ had given them more (or any) dialogue. Still, the unique blend of science-fiction concepts and the terrific opening page (which perfectly captures the excitement of walking into your local arcade and finding a new game waiting for you) makes Shatterspace more than worth the six credits.

DSX

ISSUE #1, \$1.00
 CORY YOU

Cory's mass mail about his new fanzine gave me the impression that it was going to be entirely different from his last two. Well, as its title suggests, DSX isn't really new... it's got all the cyberpunk references and Muppet pictures (!) of its predecessor Digital Storm. However, DSX does address a lot of the complaints people had about Cory's previous work... the layout's a whole lot better (there's even an attractive grid background on some of the pages), there's more content,

including reviews of NARC and NinjaWarriors, and the comic is both clever and tasteful, unlike the ones in the last two issues of Digital Storm which were just plain disturbing. Best of all, there's a great counter to those obnoxious Truth ads, and with any luck it'll be followed up by even meaner satires of stupid commercials (can you put the Pepsi girl's head on a pike in the next issue, Cory? Pretty please?).

VIDEO UNIVERSE

ISSUE #14, \$1.50
 GEORGE WILSON

Whoa... this is definitely not the Video Universe you remembered from 1993. For the most part, it's better... George Wilson has a lot more fun with this incarnation of the fanzine, printing plenty of humor articles and nostalgic reviews, and dumbasses like Brent Hepner have been thrown overboard and replaced with much better writers, like Jon Trexler and Theresa Samons. However, there's at least two things from the old VU that I'd like to see in the new one. The layout isn't as imaginative as it used to be, and while the press artwork of Dead or Alive 2 on the cover does the job, something from George's old artists, like Eric Kincaid or Dave Blank, would have been ten times better. If I had to choose between Video Universes, though, I'd be all over this new and mostly improved version like honey glaze on a ham.



THE GAMEROOM BITZ



"So read it and catch what you need." - Action Replay manual

