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ISSUE 4
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THE GAMEROOM BLITZ



VERA STACDKI RETURNS IN...

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Super Spectacular Saturn Reviews!
Ten Reasons Why The Saturn Failed
(and why the Playstation should have)
Wacky GameBoy Product Ideas!
The SMS Test (with apologies to Chris K.)
lotsa great taste and a whole lot more...

A stylized signature that reads "Jess Creations".

Das JessCREATIONS*, Co.
Publication



THE GAMEROOM BLITZ #4
The Spectacular Sega Sucks Special
Spring 1998

THAT WACKY EDITOR:

Jess Ragan

WITH ARTWORK BY:

Jess Ragan (who'd have thunk?)

MANIACAL RANTS COURTESY OF:

Tad Ghostal
Josh Lesnick
Ed Villalpando
Todd Lintner
Alan Lanoie
Bill Suszynski
Russ Perry, Jr.
Nate Hinline

SOFTWARE HELD HOSTAGE:

Microsoft Publisher 95
Student Writing Center
WordPad
various emulators

SPECIAL THANKS:

Ed Villalpando and Chris Kohler

BIRD GUANO GENEROUSLY SUPPLIED BY:

Molotov, the GRB Cockatiel

What's With The Cover?

Oh, that's just Ediot's bimbo d'jour, Vera Stacdcki from the recently released action adventure title "Boobs Raider 2". Note the slight alteration which wormed itself into the print ad just before it went to press.



Lettitor From The Editor

The Sega Saturn. Why is it that every time I pick up the system, I feel like reciting a few melodramatic lines from the Shakespeare play Hamlet? Alas, poor readers, I think nobody really knew the system well. It was this way right from the very beginning, when pro'zines ranging from the (thankfully) defunct "VideoGames" to "Die Hard Game Fan" heaped dozens of complaints on the Saturn before it was even released. There wasn't an single issue of "Next Generation" that went by that didn't question the system's ability to do 3D before "Virtua Fighter 2" proved the magazine wrong. But by then, it was already too late. The pro rags had made up peoples' minds up about the Saturn before they'd even had the chance to play it, and nobody in their right minds would even think about buying it before picking up a Playstation first. And even Sega itself didn't seem to know what to do with its creation... their ads (starring theatre-hopping brain cells who looked surprisingly like Ku Klux Klan members) did more to make the Saturn look foolish than anything Sony could dish out. But I'm here to tell you that, despite what you've heard, the Saturn is a truly worthwhile system with loads of (largely untapped) potential. Its 3D capabilities, as "Sonic R" and "Duke Nukem 3D" have proved, are nothing to scoff at, and side-scrollers of all kinds which weren't done justice on the Playstation are on the Saturn. This issue is devoted to putting the Saturn in a positive light... it may be shunned by third parties and ignored by the press, but with so many great games available for it at such cheap prices, there's no good reason for you to turn your back on it.

Regarding the issue itself, you've probably noticed that GRB hasn't changed much from the last three editions (which, of course, prompts cries of hypocrisy from Rick Florey and a negative review in "Above & Beyond"). I have dinked around with the layout a bit, though, and the result is most noticable in the miscellaneous pages as well as "'Zina: Warrior Newsletters". The various articles in the former have been arranged less predictably, and 'Zina now has addresses right next to the titles of each fanzine for easier ordering and trading. You'll probably also notice a slight change in the fanzine rating system... in addition to using stars to gauge each publication's overall quality (the more points the star has, the better. This, of course, was inspired by Mike Burns' fanzine [all together now! "Groan..."]), there's also a small button placed next to the reviews of the raunchier 'zines. 'ZINE 13 indicates that the fanzine has adult themes which may not be for the weak of heart. 'ZINE 18 is for the raciest 'zines that have no qualms about using profanity, adult themes, and even nudity to get their points across. Is it a helpful guide for you more conserative readers, or a playful stab at the TV ratings system that anti-gamer Joseph Liebermann helped pioneer? You make the call.

Actually, consider this issue's 'Zina a testing ground for the ratings system that'll appear in the On-File website. In case you haven't heard, I plan to archive the best articles from fanzines past and present and offer them to anyone who hasn't had the opportunity to read them. Think of it as a museum of EG fandom history, if you will. I have preliminary support from Russ Perry, Jr. (natch) as well as Eric Longdin, Al Riccitelli, Tom Donoho, and Jared Jones, but for On-File to work, I need permission from as many fan-ed's as possible to reprint articles from their 'zines on the website. If you'd be interested in helping me out, or just want more information on the project, by all means write or Email me right away! I guess that's it. Suit up, buckle in, and sit tight, gentlemen. It's a long, long way to Saturn...

Jessileo, Gaming Astronomer

Ten Reasons The Saturn Failed

(And Why The Playstation SHOULD Have)

INITIAL PRICE

At \$400 in 1995, when the Super NES and Genesis were still relatively popular and the 3DO's price had been hacked down to a manageable \$300, the Saturn doomed itself to a long, dusty life on store shelves. It's not that the Playstation, at \$300, was a much better deal, but every penny counts to the consumer, and Sony's system was much more anticipated by the public (see "The Media" for the reason why).

THE LOUSIEST OF LAUNCHES

Sega's been pretty cocky since their surprise upset of the NES back in the early '90s. It was obvious that they seriously underestimated Sony's presence in the industry, because they'd introduced the Saturn at a bad time, with a bad pack-in, with a bad price, and hyped it to death with bad advertising (see "Sega!!!"). A similar misfire on Sega's part was "Daytona USA", one of the system's initial releases. While hardly a bad game, its low frame rate made it look like quite the joke in comparison to "WipE'ouT" and "Ridge Racer".

THE MEDIA

The Sendai-era EGM and its evil cohorts in the professional video game magazine circuit were so blatantly and shamelessly biased against the Saturn it was absurd. Remember the issue of "VideoGames" with its "Ten Reasons Why The Playstation is the System To Beat"? Or the issues of EGM and "Die Hard Game Fan" which claimed that the Playstation version of "Street Fighter Alpha" was superior to its Saturn counterpart, when in fact the opposite was true? Nick Rox used piddly excuses like "it's too hard to taunt" and "the super combo colors are wrong" (oh, come ON!!!) to denigrate the Saturn version of Alpha, whereas EGM, true to form, didn't even have the guts to come right out and lie about the game. Instead, they implied that Alpha was innovative on the Playstation but old and tired on the Saturn when the basic concept of the game was identical on both systems. I've made the accusation before, and I'll do it again: if that ain't media bias, I don't know what is.

NAMCO

This company didn't seem like much of a player at first... Namco was considered by most to be a has-been after the immense failure of the cheesy side-scrolling platformer "Pac-Land", and it and Hometek never really made much of a splash in the Genesis and Super NES markets. However, they'd set a dangerous precedent by announcing that they would design games for the Playstation only, and rubbed cyanide into the wound by releasing high-quality games that were similar enough to Virtua Fighter, Cop, and Racing to make those Saturn releases seem less exclusive than Sega had hoped they'd be.

"SEGA!!!"

This was the company's surprisingly effective rallying cry for most of the 90's, but eventually it got to the point where Sega had screamed its name into gamers' ears so often that they were beginning to go deaf. And those ads! Who was the genius that thought optic nerves disguised as Ku Klux Klan members would actually sell Saturns!? Similarly grating was the "Fighting Vipers" ad where heavy metal morons screamed "We won't do what you want us to!" (that just about says it all with regards to that game's unintuitive control...) and the Sega "Choice Cuts" CD, where a creepy Uncle Fester lookalike introduced an amalgam of grainy video game clips, drowned out by

some of the worst speed metal tunes ever devised.

NIGHTS

When gamers bought a Saturn, they naturally expected Sega to introduce a unique new Sonic game which took advantage of the system's capabilities, just as they had the Genesis, Sega CD, Game Gear, and even the 32X (if you count "Knuckles Chaotix", which was the finished version of "Sonic Crackers"). What they got instead was an androgynous purple jester thrust into a beautiful but shallow "Looping" derivative. The game wasn't bad by any stretch of the imagination, and was met with critical praise, but it couldn't satisfy American Saturn owners' thirst for a real Sonic game. This dream delight turned out to be Sega of America's worst nightmare.

UNRULY HARDWARE

It's not that the Saturn is inferior to the Playstation... it's just that very few programmers (aside from the AM R&D departments of Sega, of course) know how to exploit its strengths. "Virtua Fighter 2", "Sonic R", and "NIGHTS" prove more than anything else that the Saturn can hold its own against its competition, but does it matter when the power of its two processors is so hard to harness? Compare this to the Playstation, which with Yaroze can be programmed by anyone with a personal computer and a working knowledge of C.

NIPPONOPHOBIA

You'd think it was 1943, the way Sega of America tries to hide its Japanese roots. This is most evident in its ad campaigns, which patronize American gamers to the utmost extreme with "hip" settings, mohawk-topped toungue-pierced airheads, and (of course) tiresome heavy metal music. For further proof of SOA's apparent Nipponophobia, check out- if you dare- the Sega Choice Cuts CD. Absolutely painful.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT?

That's using the term loosely. In reality, Sega has never taken its customers seriously since the breakout success of the Genesis. Anyone who owns a Game Gear (screwed over), Sega CD (screwed over), 32X (REALLY screwed over), or even a Genesis (surprise! Screwed over) will attest to that. And the people who refused to be screwed over with Sega's systems (the 32X in specific) were openly attacked in a Sega press release that was reprinted in "GamePro" and "Game Players" magazines! Well, at least they received some sort of response. After complaining to both the Japanese and American branches of Sega about the premature abandonment of the Saturn, I'd gotten NO RESPONSE in return. I guess Sonic isn't the only Sega employee famous for flipping people off...

FEAR OF COMMITMENT

And last, but far from least, is Sega's annoying tendency to release the "greatest, most advanced" systems ever, then dumping them like hot rocks when the competition rears its ugly head. Example: the Genesis. Sega released not one, but TWO worthless upgrades to try to keep up with the Joneses when all they really needed to do was put more research & development into the Genesis software (as "Gunstar Heroes" and "Ranger-X", which shattered the system's 64 color limitation, proved). A better example: Sega's licensing of games to its competition. Not only can PC owners buy "Sonic" games (released by Sega itself), but so can owners of the portable debacle game.com (uh, remember that one handheld system you used to make, guys?). It's a wonder that Sega remembers it makes its own systems at all!

I don't have much more room so I'll make this brief... here are the five reasons why the Playstation should have failed: Crash Bandicoot (a mascot worse than NIGHTS!), Sony's Industry Inexperience, Lousy Joysticks, Sony's 2D Phobia, and Flimsy Break-A-Minute Hardware.

Arcade Squeezins

Welcome to the first in what will hopefully be a series of arcade features in "The Gameroom Blitz". Without further delay...

...I wish I'd had the chance to try "Rampage: World Tour" before the last issue of GRB went to press. It would have fit perfectly with the classic remakes theme, as it's a wonderful step up from the popular original. I was initially scared off by World Tour's cheesy computer generated graphics, but they do grow on you if you give them the chance. Moreover, the gameplay is terrific, although the new kick button tends to make things a tad more confusing than they needed to be. Like the first "Rampage", it's a notorious quarter eater, so be thankful the home versions are out now.

Then there's "Time Crisis", or as I like to call it, "Virtua Cop Rip-off Supreme". The pedal feature which allows you to hide behind barriers is the only real difference between Crisis and its obvious inspiration, but strangely, this alone is enough to make it unique and surprisingly intense. Playstation owners who've been hungering for a first-person perspective shooter (and have been stuck with "Area 51" and "Horned Owl" for the last two years... yeech!) should jump all over this one, especially since the game and included light gun are so

darned cheap.

This brings to mind another Namco coin-op which shamelessly borrows from one of Sega's flagship titles. Of course, I'm talking about "Tekken 3"... I was never particularly fond of the series to begin with, but must grudgingly admit that the third installment is very well done, with terrific graphics and less ridiculous characters. Of note is the Caporia master Eddie Gordo and the devastatingly powerful Forest Law (who cleaned the floor with me more quickly than the actual Bruce Lee could have... oy). The gameplay is still classic "Tekken", but if you're into mindlessly mashing buttons, this game's for you.

Somewhat more standardized in its use of half circle and dragon punch motions is Atari's "Mace: The Dark Age". Like the failed "Mortal Kombat" clone "Way of the Warrior", Mace tries too hard... there are a lot of cool features that you won't find in most 3D fighting games, but the glitzy graphics and fatalities seem to come at a price to its gameplay. "Tekken" fans will find Mace much too shallow for their tastes, and "Street Fighter 2" enthusiasts won't like its unreliable control. Mind you, Mace isn't bad, but it could have been better.

"Mortal Kombat 4" really surprised me, though. I was expecting it to be much too hard, but

from what I'd played, I was very pleased with the classic MK control and somewhat merciful computer opponents. The characters aren't huge, but seem just as detailed and much sharper than their somewhat indistinct digitized counterparts. As for the weapons and new fatalities, I'd wasn't able to use either, although the weapons in particular seem to add depth to an otherwise shallow series. I'm not holding my breath for a Saturn version, but if "Virtua Fighter 2" is any indication it does seem theoretically possible.

Next on the list is "Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter", a marked improvement over last year's contrived "X-Men vs. Street Fighter". Actually, the new cast of characters is a step down from that game, but the slower, less spastic pace makes it easier to enjoy, and I really like what they've done with Sakura (who's no longer just a cheesy Ryu clone) and especially Dan. His opening pic, post-fight comments, and autograph attack are all laugh riots! And oh, although Cyber-Akuma isn't particularly inventive, the gigantic next-to-last boss is... he's the closest we've seen to a bonus round in the "Street Fighter" series since Super SF2 Turbo eliminated them so very long ago.

Gee, I don't have enough room to discuss the newest coin-ops I've played... I'll tell you what. Meet me on another page (near the back) and we'll pick up the conversation from there. ►



BOY, OH BOY OH BOY!

Has anyone caught those crazy ads starring Nintendo's new GameBoy Pocket? I tell you, I liked them so much that they inspired me to think up a whole line of GameBoy™ brand products! First is the GameBoy Green, at the forefront of ecologically sound electronic gam-

ing. Just stick a lemon on the prongs located conveniently at the top of the system and you've got over an hour of princess stomping, mushroom rescuing fun! Just be sure to fold the prongs back before sliding it into your pocket... A similar but more controversial concept has been adopted in the GameBoy Probe, the only game system that's fueled by the power of your own colon! If this doesn't get your kids to eat their beans, nothing will! It also includes a Rumble Pack... for those of you into that kind of thing. Of course, who could forget about the Super Duper GameBoy, a peripheral which hooks up to your Nintendo64! Just plug in your favorite game and it's texture-mapped to a cube floating aimlessly in space, for no other reason than to show off the power of Nintendo's fabulous 64-bit system! For those of you with a taste for the finer things in life, but want a GameBoy anyways, how 'bout a 24 Karat version in a platinum casing? Last (and definitely least) is game.boy. It has limited Internet capabilities, plus the gratuitous use of speech and the ability to play all existing GameBoy games at roughly half their original frame rates!



If you've had the extreme misfortune to read the last few issues of "Die Hard Game Fan", you've probably noticed that respected "Digital Anime" editor Eric Patterson has been writing far fewer game reviews, with Nick "Rox" DesBarres picking up most of the slack. It's anyone's guess as to why even Dave Halverson would allow the steadily declining Game Fan to become a forum for DesBarres' ignorant ramblings. Worse yet is that this mistake of nature writes reviews under not one, not two, but a total of three lame pseudonyms, including Shin Rox (a reference to the absurdly powerful version of Akuma in "Street Fighter Alpha 2"). Oh, puhleeaze! If anything, DesBarres should refer to himself as Dan Rox, since he's a conceited braggart who tries to act cool but ends up looking incredibly pathetic.

Sonic D. Hedgehog
86 Bottom-of-the-Barrel Lane
Killanights, NJ 30000



Post Office Paranoia!

The Ghost With The Most...

CONGRATULATIONS, CITIZEN!

You're one of our first-prize winners! You must have been very glib and clever to have won our contest! They are the trickiest kind of poem to write, you know.

For your efforts you've won my new CD sampler "Space Ghost's Musical Bar-B-Que". I can only hope that it will inspire you to write more beautiful poetry.

Ciao, Baby!

Space Ghost

Hey, thanks, bullethead! I have to wonder why you'd given out samplers of the Musical Bar-B-Que album to first prize winners instead of the real thing, though... I guess the producers of "Space Ghost Coast to Coast" needed to save that money to add those five new frames of animation planned for the show's next season...

What? You want to read the prize-winning haiku I'd sent Space Ghost? No, you don't. Trust me.

Crossing That Himeline...

Dear Mr. Ragan

(Do you like jelly beans?)

Your letter about the problems [in "Dominion"] disturbed me. Once again, another foolish human makes a judgement before it knew the full story. To fully understand what makes "Dominion" the way it is, one must know how we do things around here [poorly, judging from the issue I'd received... -ed.].

First off Mark [Cullison]. Wanna know why all his reviews are so full "useless

banter"? It's because he doesn't write them. In fact, he doesn't write any of his reviews? Confused?

Well, you see, instead of having him write a review, both of us play the game while tape recording his comments about it. More often than not, these conversations stray way, way off course. I'd end up with only two or three paragraphs about the game, since I used to just cut all the extraneous stuff out, but then I had to write more about the games in his pace. Mark didn't particularly like me putting words in his mouth, so I decided to allow all the other stuff in his reviews. So Mark isn't doing this 'cuz he thinks he'll look cool, it's just the way he talks and thinks.

He's fairly sane for someone who just got out of Rehab. So if you're gonna bitch, complain to me for allowing that stuff to be put in print [funny, I thought I did... -ed.]. I'm fairly tolerant to criticism [in that case, don't you mean "tolerant OF criticism"? -anal ed.]. Mark on the other hand won't take this very lightly. He'll read your letter, torture the address out of me, hunt you down (he's got a lot of spare time), and beat you within an inch of your life, 'cuz he's that kind of dude (just ask Eric Longdin).

Next, Andrew Romano. Andrew has been with me since my meager beginnings in fandom with his mini-zine/newsletter, "Feedback". He supports my work, and I support his. I'll support him with his prozine, his web site (soon), his video game, and his comics. I think it's great he's turned his fandom experience into something that may become a career. Besides, "The Angry Beholder" has the best damn RPG coverage I've seen anywhere! Know why he doesn't like fandom anymore? 'Cuz whenever anyone tries something new and different, it gets criticism, and it's very discouraging. For this reason, fan-ed's either leave fandom or don't change anything. All the 'zines stay the same and nothing diverse branches out. That's why fandom is in a rut. It's criticism like yours that prevents fandom from evolving. So knock it off!

And as for Cory You, he may seem a bit eccentric, but he takes pride in his work. If the foundation for his 'zine happened to be

set in selling MK2 codes, well that's just the way his path went. Besides, Cory introduced me to fandom, so I'll stand by whatever he does.

Well, Mr. Ragan, it would appear that you made several enemies today. I and many of my colleagues agree that your letter was most uncalled for. Your angry namecalling was very immature and could have been handled in a more professional manner (Bunghole!) [yup, that's Nate Himeline, hypocrite supreme... -ed.]. So be nice from now on or I'll sic the Dark Jedi Exar Kun on you!

Corkscrew,
Nate Himeline

Gee, a death threat! After having looked through my old issues of "Project: Ignition", I'm just surprised that it's taken this long for me to get one. Thanks for the warning... I'll be sure to greet your psychotic friend at the door with a baseball bat when he drops by.

For the record, I'd just like my readers to know that my "immature, namecalling" letter to Nate Himeline was merely a response in kind to his own request for "The Gameroom Blitz", which had made a sophomoric reference to Beavis & Butthead and told me that I had to appear in public in a dress to recover a cat Nate claimed to have taken hostage. And yes, I had criticized some of the articles in "Dominion", and had taken shots at Cory You, Andrew Romano, and Mark Cullison. But aside from my slams on Cory You (which I admit were unfair, especially since I've never read an issue of "Ultra Bit Magazine"), I stand behind everything I'd said in that letter.

Take, for instance, Mark Cullison's transcribed reviews of "Turok: Dinosaur Hunter" and "Super Mario Kart 64". I myself have screamed countless death threats at my television set while playing such frustrating games as "Bust-A-Move 2" and "Panzer Dragoon Zwei", but I know better than to print them as a review in my fanzine. You've even admitted to editing out the less pleasant portions of Mark's commentaries... why you failed to do so in the latest issue of "Dominion", where Cullison offers up disturbing and completely pointless anecdotes about sodomy and vehicular homicide, is anyone's guess.

Andrew Romano's opinion that "the EG fanzine community doesn't mean shit to us here at Arkon" reveals himself to be a self-absorbed traitor to the hobby which made his success possible. I have no idea why you feel it's necessary to defend the man when he even treats you like garbage (to paraphrase his comment in "Dominion": "I can't do issues of 'The Angry Beholder' every other month just to please you"), but I suppose that's your prerogative.

Finally, your opinion that "criticism... prevents fandom from evolving" is the most ridiculous thing I've ever read... and after receiving "Dominion", that's saying a lot. If

approached with tact and humility, constructive criticism can do wonders for the evolution of a fanzine. Conversely, by lashing out at anyone with opinions as to how a fanzine can be improved, an otherwise promising publication like "Dominion" will only worsen with age. In any event, thanks for the, um, amusing letter.

Time Warp

(an excerpt from Alan Lanoie's letter)

I hear all this talk about Dural and PSX2 and it just makes me want to hit a wall. The systems are just now getting cheap enough for the mass market (if they go down to \$99, that is), the games are cheap, the systems are fairly powerful (how much power do you NEED in a console?), and damnit, they're trying to force another generation of systems down our throats already. I see no point in this five year cycle of new systems. If a system can hang for 10-15 years, so be it! Just look at the GameBoy! STILL selling strong! Not as strong as it used to, but better than any other portable, including (I'd bet money on it) the "game.com" (***)... I hate that name). By the time I gather enough money to buy a PSX, it won't be supported anymore. I know this means cheap games in "the bin", but it would be nice to have a steady flow of new releases when I do get to buy the thing. I'm not just complaining about another generation of system because I can't afford to keep up, though. Everything is just moving too fast! Someone would have a very hard time trying to prove to me that the potential of the PSX has been maxxed out. I understand Sony wants to play catch up with the N64, but... sigh. If people would just calm down, we could all get more for our money. If PSXs were in production in the year 2000 [in the year 2000... in the year 2000... -La Bomba], we'd probably be able to pick up a system for fifty bucks! How could that possibly be bad? Sure, it wouldn't be the most cutting edge system on the planet, far from it... but well, I guess I long for another NES. The NES was mainstram for what, 8-10 years? I suppose I just don't call it progress when you have to spend more and more on your hobby if you want a supported system.

Alan Lanoie

I wholeheartedly agree. It's plainly obvious that the new game systems could take us into the next century, but rest assured, Sega's too greedy to let that happen. The Playstation, however, has the potential to be the next NES... it's got a huge library of software, and like Nintendo, I feel that Sony will play it smart and squeeze every drop of power out of their system before releasing the PS-X Model 2... and even then, I'm almost certain that it will be compatible with the older Playstation. Alan does bring up an excellent point, though... does anyone else

care to comment on the steadily decreasing downtime between system releases?

Potpourri A'la Russ...

Jess:

As you can see, I've finally gotten a new issue out, and I **did** use the penguin graphic you sent, though it didn't turn out perfectly (I highlighted "beer" and it's still hard to read; oh well). Thanks for sending it.

As to "The Gameroom Blitz", I might very well have responded eventually, as it was on the 'respond to' pile rather than the 'zines to put away' pile...

Was that supposed to be Josh as a contestant on "Starcade" on the cover? [Lef's see... the name "Josh" is directly below him... I could be mistaken, but I think so... -obnoxious ed.] And was "The Gameroom Blitz" always a Sweet reference, or just for this cover ("It's... it's...")? Also, the Tempest claw pic makes me think I should try to make claw-shaped earrings out of "lisa" plastic (you know, the stuff that "glows" on the edges, giving it a vector graphic look) and see how well they sell.

I can tell you one thing right off the bat that I have a small pet peeve about... "Issues 02 & 03". Ack! It's just one issue, not two!

I can understand how the lack of response can be frustrating. I certainly don't get much feedback either, and it's usually just "I liked it" or "it was okay" or "not really my thing". Hell, there are a few people on my mailing list who've never sent me anything (I've just been too lazy to double check and cull them), but who I put on as fellow fan-eds to trade with after seeing reviews of their stuff. I think that will only go on for another issue or two, after warning people to respond or stop getting SD.

I liked reading about the various emulators, as it's something I haven't been able to keep up with myself. I'm surprised you didn't at least mention Genecyst, by the same people who did NESTicle, if I recall... I've also seen a beta of a Bally Astrocade and arcade game emulator which is a little odd (and a little buggy yet), and I know a guy in Germany who thought it would be neat to emulate the old Interton (which was never sold here), though he probably won't actually get around to it.

So, was Mish-Mash Comics for real? Are you actually working on a comic book?

I just saw Game Gear "Sonic Drift 2" in the store the other day, and I didn't realize that it'd been released here. I take it the "finger" scene isn't in the US version? Wonder if Todd [Lintner] will appear again to sue Sega over stealing his concept...

Palisano's letter reminded me... I noticed that Patrick Reynolds got a little by-

line about the MK4 tour in one of the game mags. That was a bit of a shocker!

On to 'Zina and your review of SD6... you say "I get the distinct feeling that Russ' suggestion box has a pedal and a liptop lid", but as I mentioned above, I don't get much feedback, so it's closer to say that Russ' suggestion box is perpetually empty and so SD feels no need to change. Also, the Tid-Bits stuff didn't actually come out of interviews per se, so exact wordings would not have been much more interesting than the facts themselves. I'd also have had to change the name of the column...

Hey, I still haven't gotten "Super Pitfall" for the NES, but I did get the Famicom version. It would almost seem from the cart label itself that it's probably no better than what your opinion of the NES version would indicate. I also hate to say it, but I can't place "Pitfall: The Lost Adventures"- what system is this for and who made it? Or did you mean "Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure"?

Game Gear "Frogger"... I don't think I mentioned anything about Universal owning the rights now, as that doesn't ring a bell. Might explain why Sega knows absolutely nothing about it though... By the way, what do you think of the new version of "Frogger" that is supposedly coming out with little polygonal cars and trucks and frogs?

I actually did get "Word Chaos", though I haven't played it too much. It's a little less fun than the dice version of "Boggle" (I'd like to program a version of "Boggle" to get some more experience programming with Delphi, but first I'd want to find a public domain dictionary on-line that I could use...), but a worthy game I suppose. I *really* want "Lights Out" cube, but \$35?!? That's insane!

Chris Kohler seems to have found a book (in "El Libro 2") that I don't have! I can't find a book called "The Official Video Game Score Book" by Phil Gary, but I do have these similarly named books: "The Kid's Video Scorebook and Diary" by Weekly Reader Books/ProCorp and "The Video Game Scorebook" by Sally Williams which would seem to indicate that "a book with blanks for high scores" wasn't a stupid idea to everyone...

Well, anyway, guess it's time to close. Hope your new digs are all right and life is treating you well...

Russ

It could be worse. Your letter just about says it all, but I would like to touch upon some of your comments about "Super Pitfall" (natch) and "Frogger". Already the latter game's been bashed by the mainstream video game press, and my opinion of it isn't particularly high either... is it me, or does Hasbro's polygonal frog look like it's already been run over by a car? I much prefer Sega's own Game Gear version with its vibrant cartoony artwork... it makes the game feel more like a true continuation of

the series rather than a cheap attempt to combine the classic "Frogger" gameplay with primitive 3D graphics.

As for "Pitfall", you're right... the game I was talking about was "The Mayan Adventures". My mistake. Come to think of it, since that game's been on nearly as many systems as the original "Pitfall!" (let's see... the SNES, Genesis, 32X, Windows95, and... Jaguar? Now there's a healthy dose of irony for you!), how could I call the game "The Lost Adventures"? Seriously, though, by now just about everyone knows how much I dispise Activision's ill-conceived "Super Pitfall", but according to conversations I've had on Usenet, the Tandy Color Computer version is even worse... imagine the same game with blocky graphics and choppy scrolling. It makes you wonder why Tiger never made a handheld version... that way, "Super Pitfall" could have been brought to its logical conclusion as barnone, unequivocally, without a shadow of a doubt the crappiest game ever in the history of the hobby. Well, there's always game.com...

A Real Jackass...

I spy with my little eye... LAMERS! They're all around us! Comming from AOL and Prodigy! AAAA! (A string of nonsense follows here)

donkeypunch@ixmail2.ix.netcom.com

For no apparent reason, I received over three HUNDRED Email messages just like this one. You can only imagine how much FUN I had removing them from my Hotmail account... Thank you, whoever you are, for living up to your nickname and being a complete jackass.

You Fill Up My Senses...

Jess (witty name alternative excluded for fear of personal safety),

Thank you for both the latest issue (or, should I say, issues?) of "The Gameroom Blitz" and for the recent LoC regarding A&B #7. The remark that I preferred snail mail over Email I made in A&B #6 got way more attention than I ever thought it would have, or wanted it to. So far, I've gotten three full-fledged pen and ink LoCs (from yourself, Jon Ratcliffe, and Brandon Thurner) that I'm sure I'll have to manually type in for next issue's letters-to-the-editor column. Anyway... here's *my* LoC. I know how much you demand them from all readers [but really, can you blame me? -ed.], and in an attempt to get this done and off to you before I head off on a vacation to the Rockies (that John Denver's full of shit, man), it's likely gonna sound very rushed. But here goes...

Issue #2/#3 of GRB was FAB. The

cover was good and done in familiar Ragan "big hair" style. Now how about doing me one?

Uh... next... "Emulators" (wish I could come up with those stylish, original article titles!). I *still* haven't had time to do any experimenting with emulators as I've been meaning to do... your piece should serve me well as a beginning guide should I find the time sometime before the turn of the century.

I think I remember seeing the cover of "MASTERminds" in some 'zine reviews of the time, but never did get the actual issue. It's an interesting coincidence, but it just doesn't seem like it could be any more than that. How would an issue of "MASTERminds" ever make it over to Sega of Japan in the first place?

You're right- "Post Office Paranoia" *was* the best yet. Especially liked the letters from Chris Kohler, Mike, and, uh, M.J.

It's hard to believe "Video Magic" is *still* around. Strangely enough, I can vividly recall receiving my first issue the same day "Video Gaming Monthly", the predecessor to Alex Frias' "Viewpoint", came in the mail. "Video Views" can claim what it wants- I'm sure "Video Magic" is truly "fandom's longest-running fanzine". Anyway, for the most part, your 'zine reviews were right on target, albeit undercritical (I should be talking...).

One of GRB's highlight (if not the best) pieces this time around was Josh's "Now Playing". It combined the best of "Video Apocalypse"-style Lesnick with all the zaniness of one of those corny Imus in the Morning interview parodies. But anyway.

"Half-Ass" did indeed bring back memories of "Slap-Dash", issue #6 of which I oddly did not receive. You mentioned you were perplexed about Tiger's new game.com handheld; it made its big debut down at E3 in Atlanta and one could definitely tell it was not popularly received. I dunno... I've never been too wild about handhelds in the first place.

It's kinda hard to comment on your "Top 100 Games of all Time" piece, as we've only seen a third of your 100. I do wish that you would have included a numeral for each title designating their position in the list. I found it refreshing that the far majority of your picks *weren't* next-generation games (I only counted five).

Kohler's follow-up to "El Libro" was just as good as the first installment. How about making it a regular department in each GRB?

Welp, that more or less wraps up the issue and my time, and unfortunately, the letter. Keep up the great work with GRB.

-Tom

How's that for bad timing? Forget what you've heard in the news... John Denver died of a broken heart after Tom went to Colorado and told him off in person. For

shame, Tom! You should mellow out a bit... maybe buy a pipe and smoke some of Denver's ashes for a Rocky Mountain High.

Was that meanspirited or what? Maybe Nate was right... I really am a "bung-hole"! Oh well. I guess it's just my way of getting back at the man for all the times I had to listen to "Thank God I'm A Country Boy" and "Grandma's Featherbed" when I was a kid. Long story. Anyhow, you'll be happy to know that "El Libro" has indeed become a regular feature in "The Gameroom Blitz", and (to address your complaint in the prior issue) this issue's focus is Leonard Herman's "Phoenix" and "ABC to the VCS". "Phoenix" in particular is wonderful... Leonard could just as easily have called it "Everything You Wanted To Know About Video Games But Was Afraid To Ask (Russ Perry)". Thanks, as always, for the suggestion as well as the letter, Tom. Keep 'em coming!

Sega Returns Fire... (Sort Of)

I'm sorry that you don't agree with me about Sega, but they need a new system now more than ever. If they don't need a new system, then what do they need? A re-launch of the Saturn? Better marketing? Become more proud of their Japanese roots? [I'd be a start... -ed.] They are losing third-parties left and right... one reason is that the Saturn is VERY complicated to program with its 2 CPU set-up. This new system just might lure back most of the third-parties Sega lost. As far as lousy software support, are we still talking about Sega?? Starting with the Master System, then Genesis, then Saturn, Sega has produced some real gems, along with many other 'sleepers' titles that go unnoticed. The Saturn has more five-star games in "NEXT Generation" than the Playstation, and most of them are by Sega themselves.

I know you're saying... "What about the Sega CD and 32X? What about third parties?" The Sega CD and 32X are not systems, but are add-ons for the Genesis. But I'll go along with their being systems. The Sega CD was a success. It sold very well, with plenty of support from Sega and its third parties. The 32X sold OK for the first six months before Sega surprised everyone with the launch of the Saturn. It really was a great idea, but about two years too late. They needed something like this when the Sega CD was launched (instead of). The 32X has some good software, too. "Virtua Fighter" is cool (almost, but not quite, as good as the Saturn version), "Shadow Squadron", "Virtua Racing Deluxe" (which is in fact better than the Saturn version) and "WWF Wrestlemania" are a few of my favorites.

Lousy software support? Not Sega.

So for now, I'm going to enjoy the Saturn while it lasts, and eagerly await Sega's new system in late 1998. With the announce-

ment that the Playstation 2 is coming in 1999-2000, Sega needs their new system out as soon as possible.

Thanks,
EV

You make a strong argument for Sega, Ed, but to be perfectly honest most of your points are only partially correct and don't hold a lot of water. In the beginning, Sega did fiercely support the Saturn, but after 1996, most of this support had vanished entirely, and Sega of America didn't lift a finger to retrieve the licenses they'd hemorrhaged. The company has a great deal of influence... if they cared about their customers. SOA would have used it to entice or even threaten (hey, it worked for Nintendo...) third party software designers to continue supporting the Saturn. And while it's clear that the Saturn is difficult to program, this could easily have been rectified in the system's early design stages or even with a software package Sega could just as easily have sold to its third-party licensees. In Japan, there's a Saturn CD which lets novice programmers design games in BASIC. Why then, would it have been so difficult for Sega to have produced software libraries and other utilities for its licensees, the very lifeblood of any game system?

And yes, I do consider the Sega CD and 32X separate game systems, as they fragmented Sega's user base just as any rival game system had when the Genesis was still popular. I never liked either add-on because of this, but your comment that Sega should have released the 32X instead of the Sega CD strikes me as bizarre to say the very least. Aside from its infamously long access time and color limitations, the Sega CD is clearly the superior system. It can do everything the 32X can do, and in fact has done most things better, with its high memory capacity and far superior audio capabilities. For myself as well as many others, the 32X was the last straw in a long line of Sega screw-overs... savvy gamers knew well in advance that the Saturn was to be released just months after the 32X, creating a conflict of interest that even loyal Sega fans couldn't ignore. Even as they were telling 32X haters to "get a life" in both GamePro and Game Players' magazines, Sega knew just as well as they did that the system had no future.

Like yourself, I will most definitely get as much entertainment as possible out of my Saturn... I just can't help but think that the system could have done that much better if it had not been backed by a company as greedy and incompetent as Sega of America. However, you can bet that I won't be the first in line to buy Dural or whatever the hell it'll be called here. I've taken it up the tailpipe on Sega purchases too many times to make that mistake again. Coincidentally, Ed Villalpando supplied me with the lion's share of the games reviewed in this issue. If you'd like to order from him, the address is 13525 Ullica Dr., Whittier CA 90605.

32X-Tacy? Not Quite.

Yeah, this fucking 32X is a MAJOR pain in my ass. Not only did I drive all over Pittsburg to find one, but the one I found wasn't complete, so I had to take it back. Either that or I woulda had to pay \$2.00 a piece for those two "electro magnetic plate" things, plus, like, \$6.00 S&H from Sega. Anyhow, I ended up finding ONE left at Kay-Bee for \$29.99 with "Doom" and "Cosmic Carnage". Whew! As for the A/V portion of this "wonder of evolution", it sucks, BAD!!! Since I run everything through my VCR in LINE mode, I didn't need to get that RF you mentioned. But the sound coming out of my receiver through my speakers is AWFUL!!! It hisses, it cracks, it can make curly fries in minutes... whoops, wrong junky product! Anyhow, I did pick up "Star Wars: The Arcade Game" for it and given what Sega was trying to do with this game, I guess you could say it was a pretty decent attempt. "Doom" is pretty good, but the sound is outta whack on that one too. I dunno. You know how I feel about Sega, so I'll just end this paragraph now...

Getting High On Life,
Bill Suszynski

Aw, you're no fun! At least say that the American branch of the company is run by greedy vermin who like nothing more than to release \$400 doorstops they "graciously" support for just over a year!

Anyway, I too know the horrors of the 32X. My cousin owns the blasted thing, and I'm still not sure if it's worth setting those electro-popomatic plates into the Genesis' cartridge slot just for the "privilege" of playing pseudo 32-bit releases like "Cosmic Carnage" and "Knuckles Chaotix". It wouldn't be so bad if the 32X actually worked every time you turned it on, but you're lucky to get it to run at all even if the plates and A/V jacks are properly inserted. Ugh. But just look at the benefits! Genesis owners can finally play "Mortal Kombat 2" and "Primal Rage" with 64 extra colors! Ooooooh! Anyone who wouldn't buy a Super NES or Saturn to get the same benefit without constant game freezes has got to be nuts.



La Joshe Lesnicka...

Hey Jess!

Just thought you'd like a copy of this. It came out pretty nice, though it is the most lecherous episode of "Asylum" we'll ever see. ^_^ It's neat seeing the 'ol comic done with pro-quality artwork (yeah, it's a decidedly unmodest statement), though I'm not really as good at cartoon art as I used to be, which is to be expected since I spent the past couple years basically doing just manga art. Ryuken looks a hell of a lot better though... Oh, I changed her name to Miki, by the way, because... well, just because.

Hopefully, by now you've seen Pocket/Gem Fighter. Screw "Vampire Savior"!! This is the best fighting game ever!! There is nothing cuter than Chun Li's exploding love letter attack! Except maybe Felicia doing her Mega Man impression... or Sakura in a bunny suit. I love Morrigan's special attack where Lillith joins in and they beat the crap out of the player!

I haven't played anything else... I've played FF7 for about 30 minutes... I dunno, RPGs don't do it for me anymore, which I guess is a good thing since I don't have time for them. FF7 in general is too much fluff. It got a lot of hype, which isn't surprising, and it doesn't really deserve it, which also isn't surprising. It did have some cute animations though. But why is everyone falling in love with Aerith?! She's just a gal in a cute pink outfit who dies. Tasha Yar had more personality development than she did!

I rather like the DS9 plot (what happened to Nog, by the way?). It has a long way to go before it can set anime' ablaze with a blowtorch, though I don't blame you for feeling that way after witnessing crap like "Vampire Hunter D", "Golgo 13", "Odin", and the dubbed "Project A-KO". Hell, after that lineup, I don't see how anyone in their right mind could consider liking anime'... ^_^ I should send "Rayearth" one of these days... on the other hand, I've seen better stuff since then... like "Child's Toy". I should send "Child's Toy"! Maybe.

Soooo... Did 'ya see the "Xena" episode where Gabrielle-Chan had a kid? Wasn't it disturbing?

That's it for now. I'll mail more stuff soon! Oh- merry Christmas! ^_^

Josh

And a happy new year, bud! Thanks for the issue of "Asylum". I'm not sure if you wanted it reviewed but I did anyway, largely because it was the best underground publication I've gotten in months (sorry Chris...). Really, folks, if you were saving your lucre for something like "Spawn" (gag), send it to Josh instead.

I dunno... what disturbs me about the Xeneruces franchise is that Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert have run the whole evil

twin plot into the ground. For crying out loud, how many women on both shows just happen to look exactly like Lucy Lawless? Was incest ancient Greece's national pastime or something!? Look, the only time I want to see twins on "Xena" again is if they're the Olsen Twins, and they're on the receiving end of a thrown chakram. That, and the burning of every copy of that horrid "Hercules and Xena: The Animated Movie", isn't too much to ask, is it?

Aw, hell. Who really cares. At least it ain't the friggin' "Rosie O'Donnell" show. All this talk of low-grade TV is depressing me so I'll just answer the next letter...

Lintner Rises!

Jess,

It was good to receive your new work. Using MS Publisher and a better printer obviously makes "The Gameroom Blitz" look better than your previous 'zines, but I found the writing to be more coherent, better nuanced, and not so pun-riffic. TGB [er, the acronym is GRB. Long story... -ed.] also served to propel me towards a bit of gamer's nostalgia (in this case, a good thing). Even though I never owned a NES (or is it "a NES"- remember that debate, from the pages of "CyberBeat", maybe?), I remember looking at the pics of "Shadow of the Ninja" in EGM and thinking that it looked cool. The mere mention of "Shatterhand" is tantalizing, though agonizing to me; the game remains just beyond the reach of my recollection, but I remember being impressed by the pics.

I looked over "MASTERminds" #16 after our phone chat. Sure enough, there were no copies besides the master, so I guess no one saw it. The Tyrone Rodriguez cover of "Shining Force 2" is great; it's got to be Mm's best, but I found the content a little lacking. Of course, it might have something to do with the two pages I devoted to reviews of ska CDs and records, a musical genre which I have since renounced and continue to abhor. Ah, the foibles of youth! Bear in mind I didn't do side-by-side comparisons with other issues of Mm, so maybe it isn't all that bad, but I didn't see the creative spark that people always seemed to mention when they talked about Mm (when they had good things to say). So it's 16 pages. I don't know if I told you this, but there was also more material, also unreleased. Mm #16 1/2 is a four page filler/ad sheet, as the cover plainly states. Basically it's me trying to get rid of my SMS games, a few capsule reviews, and a form letter from Chris Gore. It seemed like a good idea at the time; a cheap way to announce disillusionment with gaming in general, which in turn was probably fueled by the usual end of high-school/pre-college confusion. In retrospect, however, the fact that it constitutes the last official output of Mm is

perhaps more than a little embarrassing, though probably fitting in some odd way.

Unfortunately, these items are no longer on my hard drive, and I left the originals down in Madison. Sorry, I had access to copies down there but in the usual rush of working/sleeping/living I kept forgetting about it. I didn't get to see everyone I wanted to either, so rest assured you're not the only person I screwed over in my three weeks in Madtown.

Hey, but I did get to play "Bushido Blade" on New Year's Eve. Nice work, Square Soft! But that "Star Wars" fighting game is a complete waste of the license. Was that the worst concept of '97 or what? No, really, I haven't been keeping up on gaming- was it?

All this talk about emulators... I picked up one off the Web last year (along with "Super Pac-Man"- good translation, guy! That was always an arcade favorite of mine) for the SMS/GG, MASSAGE version 0.72. Well, on my 486SX running at 25 MHz (same as ever), it runs the games SO slowly. Are the later versions faster? I gave "Ultima IV" a good whirl, and I can slog through "Bubble Bobble", but certain games are ridiculous (by this I don't mean "Dynamite Dux"), and none of the Game Gear ones I got work. It's frustrating; can you help me out here?

But back to "The Gameroom Blitz". It's a superlative effort [aw, shucks!-blushing ed.], better than I remember most 'zines being. The article on emulators was of special interest to me, though my computer won't allow such feats. It was nice hearing from Chris Bieniek; he always seemed like the coolest pro'ed out there, from his start in "Gaming on the Go" to a more central role in "VideoGames", which we all now know started to suck not because Katz, Kunkel, and Worley left, but because a certain "monkey-faced editor" ran it into the ground. Is this the same man I railed against in the pages of Mm? Presentiment, my friend, always goes unnoticed after the fact.

Anyway, it was nice looking at a new EG 'zine. I had the impression that nowadays EG fandom was all about sucking up and just plain sucking. Good to see that, at least in the case of "The Gameroom Blitz", it's not. Thanks for listening, and keep in touch.

Todd Lintner

Todd, my man, it certainly is good to hear from you! I was a little disappointed that you couldn't find the time to send me the last issue of "MASTERminds", but the letter more than made up for it. Keep sending 'em and you'll continue to receive "The Gameroom Blitz", free of charge.

Actually, the "Star Wars" game wasn't half bad. I don't like the gameplay (it's 100% "Tekken", a trademark of most fighters with polygonal graphics engines)

but the ability to draw a weapon in battle was very cool. Weapon sheathed, "Tekken"! Weapon drawn, "Soul Edge"! Of course, when playing as Luke Skywalker, who in their right minds would want to fight without a light saber? There's one other problem for me personally... not being a huge fan of the "Star Wars" films made it very difficult to understand Luke's oddball victory metaphors ("That was like shooting wharf rats back home!" What the hell...!?)...

"Clayfighter 63 1/3", however... now THAT was a bad idea. Not that a parody of fighting games couldn't be done well, but "Clayfighter" was never that great on the Super NES, and with the same choppy animation and even worse characters, it just stinks on the Nintendo64. Lemme get this straight... you can choose to fight as a ludicrously stereotyped medicine man and a buck-toothed, bowl-haired martial artist? Gee, I can't wait until "Tips & Tricks" reveals the code that lets you play as Amos and Andy...

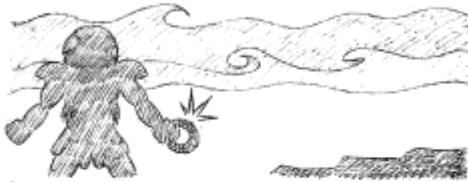
I think I can help you out with your struggles with MASSAGE. There are three things you can do, and they are 1. Suffer. 2. Download "Sparcade" and suffer just a little bit less (truth is, it's a pretty awful Game Gear and Master System emulator. It is a wee bit faster than MASSAGE, tho). 3. Press F1, then go down to the frame rate option and change it to, hrm... 1/5. The game in question will be much faster, but much choppier. That's the breaks. You're lucky, though... MASSAGE actually runs fairly quickly for a portable game system em. The vast majority of GameBoy emulators are even slower, which is nothing less than odd since the Geeb is far inferior to most handhelds on the market (with top honors for the worst system going to game.com, naturally).

And finally, not all of the new fanzines suck (give him a break guys; he's been out of the loop for a while). Give "Above & Beyond", "Video Zone", or "The Dark Side" a try and see for yourself. There's always "Digital Press", "Fanarchy", and "Slap-Dash", too, if you absolutely insist on reading new issues of otherwise familiar works. "Fantazine"'s rumored to be making a big comeback, too, but we've all heard that one before. When the next issue's in my hands, I'll believe it. And that's it!

IF YOU'VE GOT COMMENTS ABOUT THIS ISSUE, AND I KNOW YOU DO, SEND 'EM TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS...

POST OFFICE PARANOIA!

'Zina
Warrior Newsletters



HORRIFIC... ✦ ✧ ✨ ✨ ✨ ...CERRIPIC

Eric Longdin's personal fanzine, I'd broke down and sent him two stamps for issue #17, half worried that I'd end up hating it as I had the last 'zine I received from an ex-EG fan-ed. But lo and behold, "Splat" was a welcome surprise and a big improvement over the pretentious and self-absorbed stylings of Mike Histen's "Chrome". Although I personally feel that Eric's writing talents have been exaggerated by other fan-eds (he has a tendency to omit prepositions, especially in the fanzine reviews), he nevertheless does an excellent job of expressing his feelings in "Splat"'s more personal features, like the remarkably open "Paper Doll". Amy Frederico lends a hand with her controversial vampire epic "Blood Tastes Sweet", and while its analogy to lesbianism is rather obvious and mildly derivative of "Interview with the Vampire"'s effeminate male nosferatu, the story is well written and surprisingly unoffensive. Eric's CD reviews weren't of even remote interest to me, and the letters section was chock full of hostile criticism of the criticism "Splat"'s received in the past (led by, unsurprisingly, EG fandom's resident putz Nate Hinline), but complaints notwithstanding, this is the best personal fanzine I've received since Jak Bennett's "Nagaraja"... and that's saying a lot. *

Game Star

ISSUE #6
MIKE BURNS

\$1.00

Doesn't it sound as though you could pick up a copy of this fanzine with a 20 oz. drink and fries at your local Carl's Jr. restaurant? Feh, whatever. In any event, "Game Star" is a pleasant if unspectacular effort by Mike Burns. This issue's focus is the cheesy "Mortal Kombat 4" precursor "War Gods", which receives a (somewhat puzzling) thumbs-up from the editor as well as a strategy guide to the game which, oddly enough, is completely devoid of strategies and instead lists "War Gods" character biographies. Somewhat less pointless but similarly uninteresting are Mike's interviews with Macintosh shareware designers Ray Dunakin and Jeff Vogel. This would be a terrific feature if Mike had interviewed professional video game designers, but talking to hobbyists about their second-rate "Myst" clones designed in Hypercard just doesn't make sense. On the bright side, Mike describes in detail his own shareware creation, "Adventures on the Moon", and serves up some great fanzine reviews and a article about Sega's backing out of the 32-bit wars that's bound to provoke discussion amongst Saturn owners. Even without onion rings, "Game Star" is an interesting fanzine that with some maturation could prove quite promising. *

SPLAT

ISSUE #17
ERIC LONGDIN

two 32 cent stamps

After hearing endless praise of

THY HOLY HAND GRENADE!

ISSUE #1
LESTER WELSH

\$3.00 (ouch!)

Perfect for killing vorpal bunnies and a great fanzine besides, "Thy Holy Handgrenade" is perfect for those of you into cheeky pictures of Cammy, old pop-culture phenom cartoons, very illegal scams, or just good 'ol fashioned opinion about anything and everything, including videogames. The handwritten text is initially a turn-off, but you'll find much to like about "Thy Holy Handgrenade" once you adjust. Lester contemplates the current state of video games in a thoughtful article covering all the newer systems (even failures like the, ahem, 3DO), gives readers his favorite Internet cookie recipe (nope, not coconut silicon chip crunch... think of something more traditional), and lets contributor Senzuri horn in with a somewhat melodramatic Scooby-Doo tribute and a plethora of ways to rip off various established institutions. It's all

extremely well despite Lester's obvious lack of desktop publishing software, so if you think you can handle the penned text and don't mind the occasional grotesque photo of Tank Girl or anime babes in mortal combat, this handgrenade is definitely one you shouldn't throw away. *

SLAP-DASH

ISSUE #7
RUSS PERRY, JR.

\$1.50

The original nonconformist video game newsletter for adults is back (and after just seven months, too! Like I should talk...), and it's slappier and dashier than ever. Russ' obsession with axe-wielding heavy metal babes has gotten just this side of scary, as pictures of these bass.chix (as he calls 'em) literally take up over a fourth of the issue, but thankfully, there's plenty of content as well, including commentary on (get this!) new video games! They're not reviews, exactly, but it is nevertheless very interesting to hear what Russ has to say about "Tomb Raider" and "Resident Evil", games which he suggests may be an indication of where the hobby is going (I sure hope not... read my reviews of both games for more on that). Another plus is the dramatic lessening of the "Tid-Bits" that stunk up last issue, plus stories about Mardi Gras, Sony's Net Yarouze (the programmable black Playstation), and great conceptual artwork of 2600 "Doom" and 7800 "Mortal Kombat Trilogy". Even with the hordes of scary punk guitar babes, "Slap-Dash" #7 is an outstanding issue and one that no true Russophile should be without. *

DIGITAL PRESS

ISSUE #34
JOE SANTULLI

\$1.75

I'm not sure why Joe decided to depict Radar from M*A*S*H benchpressing an Atari 5200 on the cover of this issue, but this much is obvious: anyone who was a fan of Atari's own equivalent of the Saturn or will even freely admit to owning one will want to check out this Supersystem tribute issue. Although this really isn't on par with the last issue thanks to its somewhat limited scope, the reviews of 5200 games (and of "Rampage: World Tour"... yay!) are

varying degrees of good (with Keita Iida and Tony Bueno's reviews at the top of the heap). Joe's trademark style of humor is beginning to border on the stale (you should really consider giving the old B horror films a rest, bud), and I've never really understood the appeal of Clint Dyer, an ex-Sega employee who looks like the lovechild of Rowdy Roddy Piper and Macho Man Randy Savage, but what the hey. If you like DP, you'll want this issue. If not, forget about complaining, because Joe just doesn't seem to give a fuck about reader response. *



ISSUE #25
CHRIS KOHLER
\$1.00

Hey, I got the font right! Um, er, never mind. Anyway, this is the four year anniversary issue of "Video Zone", and it does an admirable job of living up to the occasion... the reviews in particular are magnifique, as CK1 packs as much information as humanly possible into his page-long dissections of both the big releases ("Final Fantasy 7") and the more obscure cult classics ("Mischief Makers"). Chris' constant interruptions of my "Night Warriors" review served no real purpose, and the cover illustration was pretty dull, but despite these flaws, this is one anniversary you're sure not to forget. *



ALIENS!
JOSH LESNICK
\$2.50

Revived from the popular comic in Josh's old 'zine "Video Apocalypse", "Asylum" is better than ever with stronger artwork and a hilarious plot which will keep you howling with laughter. There's so much going on in this comic that it's hard to keep up... you'll be wiping the tears from your eyes as a trio of weird space critters blow up New York, attempt to integrate into Earth society, and debrief (quite literally) the comic's resident anime' babe, only to have their butts kicked in a climactic battle with enough crazy pop culture references to make your head spin! If you were fond of "Video Apocalypse", Josh's fan comics, or humor in general, you absolutely MUST buy this. ●

THE TEST

Spring these questions on your favorite video game company (or more likely, your LEAST favorite game company) and see how they stack up! By the way, any resemblance this test has to Chris Kohler's GMS Test is strictly intentional...

- There's a new game out starring your company's popular mascot. It was released for...
 - Your newest and most powerful game system
 - The 16-bit system you'd abandoned years ago
 - game.com, a subpar portable you don't even manufacture
- Treasure, the programming team responsible for "Gunstar Heroes", has released an incredible game for your console that's sure to sell product. You...
 - Hype it incessantly and sell thousands of games and systems
 - Persuade Treasure to make an even better game which will turn owners of competing systems green with envy
 - Release it in very limited quantities, disavow any knowledge of its existence, then let a disgusted Treasure design blockbuster games for your competitors
- You finally release an original game for your flagship system starring your company's popular mascot. The game in question is...
 - An extremely impressive first-person action platformer that's on par with "Super Mario 64"
 - A scintillating RPG which would give even "Final Fantasy 7" a run for its money
 - A (gulp) racing game???
- The time period between game system releases for your company is...
 - Four years
 - Two years
 - Six months- and that's a conservative estimate
- You've asked Eidos, the designers of the wildly successful "Tomb Raider", to design a 32-bit version of your company's popular series of side-scrolling fighting games. You...
 - Release the game as "Streets of Rage 3D"
 - Let the design firm change its name to "Fighting Force" and allow it to be released for both your game system and a competitor's
 - Do the most incredibly stupid thing possible and let the design team make the game for the competitor's system ONLY
- It's said that "a house divided against itself cannot stand". With this in mind, you...
 - Solely devote yourself to making high quality games for your flagship system
 - Design games for computers as well
 - Ignore your flagship system, design PC games, and sell the rights to several of your strongest licenses to Tiger and Hasbro
- Your approach to customer service is...
 - "Do whatever is necessary to make them happy"
 - "Release high quality products so nobody has the chance to complain"
 - "We've got their money... screw 'em"
- Your flagship game system has failed miserably and has put your company in extreme financial danger. Your current frame of mind is...
 - "We've got to do something fast or we're all doomed!"
 - "Maybe we should take our customers more seriously from now on..."
 - "What would Sam Tramiel do in a situation like this?"

Add up the no. of times you answered C. If the number is eight, congratulations! It's gotta be Sega!

established genres won't find it as satisfying as a good RPG or first-person shooter. @

THE REVIEW MIRROR

Special Championship Saturn Edition

Marvel Super Heroes Capcom

GUARDIAN HEROES SEGA (TREASURE)

You've read the almost constant praise of 'Guardian Heroes' in the pro rags, but unlike Treasure's Genesis masterpieces, this doesn't entirely deserve the kudos it's received. Don't get me wrong... Heroes is a good- I dare say great-beat 'em up which really shows the Saturn in prime form, but it's got all the replay value of Steve Urkel's accordion. You take it home, play it religiously, beat the game a few times, then shelf it in the morgue section of your collection, never to be touched again. One reason for this is "Guardian Heroes" extremely repetitive nature... you spend a good 80% of the game beating up the same soldiers, and many characters are just thinly veiled clones of one another. Nevertheless, Heroes is one hell of a roller coaster ride while it lasts. It combines the play mechanics of "Golden Axe" and "Fatal Fury" with spectacular results, and adds a clever storyline, great animation, enough scaling to make "Samurai Shodown" queasy, and a wild six player versus mode for when friends drop by. In short, "Guardian Heroes" belongs in your collection... just don't be surprised if it sinks to the bottom of it after a few days. @

for this mess after watching "Dark Rift" strut its stuff on a Nintendo kiosk. How foolish of me to expect anything but complete incompetence from Kronos Entertainment, the morons responsible for those indescribably bad computer rendered backgrounds in the "Spiderman" animated series! Any keystone of a fighter game's success is the ability to relate to its cast of characters, and from the cover art alone, you can tell that "Criticom" will crumble like a macaroon. You're offered such gems as Morn, er, Gorm from "Deep Space Nine", a pike-wielding female pirate, a wrinkly nerd in a metal diaper, and an alien dominatrix (I won't even get into the implications of a fight between the last two...). They all have low polygon builds and some of the worst voices ever in a video game. You'll love "Resident Evil" acting after hearing Sonork squeal "That didn't hurt..." like the incontinent loser he is. If the characters are bad, the rest of the game is even worse. The graphics are barely acceptable, the music sounds like a failed collaborative effort between Yanni and John Williams, and the control... oh my. It makes even less sense than "Tekken", and as a result, the player is reduced to tricking his opponent off a ledge for a cheap win. Aside from some adequate computer rendered cinematics, "Criticom" is to 3D fighters what "Rise of the Robots" is to side-scrolling combat. Not worth a passing thought, even as a ten cent drink coaster. @

Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3 Midway (Eurocom)

There's nothing ultimate about this mercilessly rehased gimmickfest of a fighter, but the Saturn does handle the game extremely well; far better than the Genesis had. As arcade translations go, this is definitely one of the better ones... visually, UMK3 isn't spectacular, but the thin, anemic characters and sub-photorealistic backgrounds do match their coin-op counterparts' pixel for pixel. Even better, the little details that make or break an arcade conversion have all remained intact. Gone are the tiny pinwheels in the pit from the Genesis UMK3; in this, you're torn to shreds in style with menacing, razor-sharp blades that would make a three fingered shop teacher wince! However, MK3's one major shortcoming- fatalities- are made that much worse on the Saturn with uneven loading time. The multiple two second pauses throughout the duration of the fatality ruin the flow of the game and completely destroy any motivation players may have had to perform the ludicrous death blows. It all boils down to this: I would recommend this to anyone with a Moredull Kombat Jones (thank Galen Komatsu for the pun), but with "Mortal Kombat Trilogy" around, why bother? Buy that instead for a dose of all three MKs, complete with the cool backgrounds and characters of the original. @

CRITICOM VIE TOKAI (KRONOS)

Unbelievably, I had a glimmer of hope

RESIDENT EVIL CAPCOM

Saturn owners have nothing to fear, as their version of the survival horror adventure is up to the standards of the PlayStation original. Compared to "Tomb Raider" and "Super Mario 64", however, Evil leaves much to be desired. Many reviewers have compared Evil to a good, scary film, and this works as much against the game as it helps it. The atmosphere is indeed very tense... like a horror movie, it knows just when to lull you into a false sense of security, only to shock the hell out of you with an unexpected and often fatal attack. I literally screamed when I'd walked by a window in a cramped hallway, only to have a rotting Rottweiler leap through it and lunge for my throat! Unfortunately, surprises like these aren't random and as such don't stay surprises for long. Evil's "puzzles" (if you can call them that) are about as hard to figure out as the next plot twist in a Freddy Kreuger film, and as you've heard, the acting is even worse. Watching Jill mime out such classic lines as "That's what I was going to say!" will either make you grimace or laugh out loud. One voice-over artist in particular sounds like he's trying his very hardest not to do the latter... Worst of all, the control is hideous... the characters move like the panzers in old 2600 games, making Jill quite literally a tank girl. Firing weapons is a dicey affair at best, you have to draw your gun by holding down a shoulder button, THEN aim with the D-pad, THEN fire. By then, you're meat on a stick. Um, Capcom... there's a neat new invention called a 3D controller. Try writing code for one sometime. Overall, "Resident Evil" is a fair rental, but fans of

TEMPEST 2000 INTERPLAY (HIGH VOLTAGE)

I actually kinda like this game... guess that makes me an "imbecile", huh, Josh? All ribbing aside, T2K looks, sounds, and feels JUST like its Jaguar counterpart, leading me to believe that it was a direct port as opposed to a conversion of the venerable Jeff Minter classic. Inexplicably, even the psychedelic Atari logo was left intact (that should be loads of fun for conspiracy buffs...). The special effects that stunned Jaguar owners are also exactly alike, and look sort of hokey on a system that can handle such visual dynamism as "NIGHTS", "Virtua Fighter 2", and "Sonic R". They're pleasant enough, though, and the enemies which explode into geometric patterns do add a sense of accomplishment... who doesn't appreciate a ticker tape parade, even if the confetti happens to be the shredded remains of your hated foes? Although it's played directly off the CD, the pulse-pounding techno soundtrack is still T2K's greatest asset... especially noteworthy is the first track, which is still more infectious than Ebola and sets the mood for blasting Flippers and Tankers perfectly. Of course, being a perfect translation of the Jaguar original means that there's plenty of irritating flaws, and contrary to popular misconception, both Jeff Minter and Dave Theurer are responsible for them. Many of the later rounds are absurdly designed, the other Tempest offerings don't stand up to extended play, and the new enemies are a mixed bag... the smarter, deadlier crystal Flippers are a great addition, but the others simply add to T2K's already high frustration level. It's similarly annoying that Interplay didn't just give Saturn owners "Tempest X", but no matter. Now all we

need are ports of "Defender 2000", "Alien vs. Predator", and "Ultra Vortek" and the Jaguar will be completely obsolete! ☹

BUBBLE BOBBLE WITH RAINBOW ISLANDS ACCLAIM (PROBE)

I was excited about finding this for a fiver at Wal-Mart, and why not? "Bubble Bobble" is one of my all-time favorite arcade games! Sure, it's cute as the dickens, but it's also jam-packed with over a hundred rounds, dozens of power-ups, and great two player simultaneous action. Who could ask for anything more from a classic? As it turns out, I could ask for a lot more from this collection. "Bubble Bobble" is not an emulation of the arcade original, or even programmed by Taito as one would expect. Instead, Probe, the Gomer Pyle of game design firms, stumbled through the translation with predictably disappointing results. I knew I was in for a heartbreak when I saw the Probe logo at the beginning of the full-motion video opener. Speaking of the opener... er, let's not. Getting back to "Bubble Bobble", it was a mediocre conversion at best, further proving that Probe can't be trusted to do anything right. There are all sorts of niggling errors that are sure to annoy long-standing BubBob fans and anal game reviewers (heh), including microscopic sprites, incorrect bubble physics, and an entirely changed game objective. Worse yet, some rounds are impossible to complete as you cannot create bubbles to float out of tight spaces. Brilliant. Just freaking brilliant. Mercifully, "Rainbow Islands" was brought to us by CraftGold, not Probe, and has that *jene se qua* that suggests that the programmers wanted to do the game complete justice. Sadly, Rainbow was never that great to begin with... I don't like the new rainbow attack, the controls are fudgy, and the human title character looks like he'd be right at home in "South Park" (oh shit! They killed Bubby! You bastards!!!). On the other side of the coin, the Enhanced version looks great, with CGI-rendered backdrops that are just this side of gorgeous. The big question is this: why not just emulate both games and throw in "Chak 'n Pop", the early Taito release that inspired "Bubble Bobble"? Unless you're a raving mad "Rainbow Islands" fan, you'd be wise to save your money and just ask a friend for the Master System ROMs of both games. ☹

Golden Axe: The Duel Sega (Axe Project)

Try "Samurai Shodown: The Rip-Off", "Golden Axe" has the infamous Death+Adder and descendants of the Amazon, barbarian, and dwarf who'd first slain him, but everything, and I mean everything, else about this game smacks of SamSho, right down to the hauntingly familiar sound effects and spatters of blood. About the only things missing are the death blows, and those are replaced with devastating magic attacks which are unleashed in a fashion similar to that of the first "Golden Axe". Simply carve up a few of the elves that run by, steal their potions, and when you've gathered enough, activate them and land an enhanced version of a normal special attack before your magic meter runs out. If successful, you'll suck your foe into a deadly super move which will sap them of roughly half their strength. These magic attacks are unique and help validate The Duel's otherwise questionable association with

the "Golden Axe" series. In a perfect world, Sega would have made a dead-on conversion of "Golden Axe 4" for the Saturn and released "Samurai Shodown 2" for fans of that series instead of trying to mix the two games together. Since things didn't work out that way, you'll have to settle for this and "Guardian Heroes" instead. ☹

Wip'Eout" Sega (Psygnosis and a cast of hundreds)

Ooooh yeah, brother! You'll probably remember from the premiere issue of GRB that I wasn't too fond of "Wip'Eout". Well, what was merely good (but extremely frustrating) on the Playstation is that much better on the Saturn. A laundry list of game design firms were responsible for the translation (honestly, there are more corporate logos here than in a bad Universal Studios cartoon! Yes, I'm talking about you, "Vertek"...), and it shows. Everything you wanted to love about the Playstation version is here, and the control is improved thanks largely to the always cool Saturn controllers. Even the speed has been bumped up a half-notch... the Rapier class in particular plays like it's on eight star turbo, with hovercrafts that bounce around the track like cocaine-crazed fleas. Graphically, "Wip'Eout" on the Saturn could be considered inferior to its Playstation counterpart, but with a high frame rate and sharp backgrounds like these, "inferior" is a very strong word. My biggest quibble with "Wip'Eout" is its incompatibility with anything even remotely analog. I mean, the control is better in this version, but not enough to forget something so blatantly obvious. Moreover, the 3D controller feels like it was made for this game; being forced to use its D-pad just doesn't make sense. Regardless, if you want a racing game that makes "Daytona USA" look like the animal waste product of your choice, "Wip'Eout" is worth a look. ☹

X-MEN ACCLAIM (CAPCOM)

This is a very early first-generation effort by Capcom, and it shows. Even they were so embarrassed by the results that they sold the distribution rights to Acclaim, who (as usual) thought they could make a quick buck from a game with a big license, designed by an even bigger programming firm. Big mistake. Actually, "X-Men" wasn't terrible when compared to Acclaim's other Saturn disasters, but after "Street Fighter Alpha" and "Night Warriors", even Capcom's most loyal devotees would have to concur that "X-Men" was a colossal disappointment. For starters, the animation is hideous. We're talking Playstation quality here, folks. Another monumental flaw is the game's extreme difficulty... if Marvel's super heroes were cream puffs, the X-Men have an uncanny knack for defeating you every time, in every situation, with every character. Couple this with the piss-poor animation and painfully long access times and you've got a release that, despite its association with Capcom, is pure X-crement. If you can't wait for "X-Men vs. Street Fighter", feel free to torture yourself with this instead. ☹

SOVIET ★ STRIKE ELECTRONIC ARTS

If "Soviet Strike" is memorable for just

one reason, it would have to be its intense difficulty. The first level alone contains not one, not two, but a total of seven missions, each of which must be completed with surgical precision amidst a battalion of heavily armed tanks and missile launchers. If you've finished six of the missions and botch the seventh, you get to repeat the entire level. Whoohoo! Furthermore, EA was, ahem, "kind" enough to throw enough caustic full-motion video and voice into the mix to give the average player ulcers. It just goes to show that realism is not always the best way to go when you're designing a video game... If you can handle the humbling difficulty, however, "Soviet Strike" is almost guaranteed to entertain you. The somewhat Implausible Russophobic plot is strengthened greatly with tons of well acted video clips, and it's quite satisfying to reduce large, heavily armed buildings to so much flaming debris. Slowdown rears its ugly head, the menu screen could have benefitted greatly from better organization, and having to use ALL of the buttons on a 3D controller is a pain, but if you appreciated the level of depth in previous "Strike"s, this game's added complexity, graphic splendor, and challenge make it a worthy purchase. ☹

Shining Wisdom Working Designs (Sonic Team)

Working Designs has more or less devoted itself to turning lackluster Japanese RPGs into slightly less banal American RPGs with plots so anachronistic and immature, they'd be right at home in an episode of "Hercules". This tradition continues with "Shining Wisdom", a spin-off of "Shining Force". That strategy/RPG series made Genesis owners just a little less jealous whenever a "Final Fantasy" game hit the Super NES, but it's doubtful at best that any sane Saturn owner will consider Wisdom an adequate substitute for "Zelda 3: A Link to the Past". It's more shameful than shining that this 1996 release doesn't scratch the surface of "Zelda 3"'s technique, and the graphics (heavily outlined computer generated Weebles running around a plain, highly repetitive landscape) do little to soften the blow. The plot is fairly amusing, but in the end, the townspeople's constant wisecracks make it hard to decide what to do next in an action adventure game that can only be described as cryptic. If Mars is so adored by its fellow countrymen, then WHY do they spend more time joking about a swan that follows him partway through the game than giving him any useful advice? If you liked "Crusader of Centy" for the Genesis and work the phones at the "Psychic Friends Network", you'll go nuts for this, but otherwise, stay far, far away. If this is what passes for Shining Wisdom, it's no wonder ignorance is bliss. ☹

Rayman Ubi Soft

"Oui, I am ze Rayman! Come wiz me to a land of beauty and maddening frustration, where I'm more prone to ze accidents than my idol Jerry Lewizz! Trust me, it will be much fun, at least for ze first few rounds..." And so begins "Rayman", the side-scrolling adventure with jaw-dropping backgrounds and a cliff-dropping hero. First, giving credit where credit is due, I must commend Ubi Soft for its hard work in creating a game that's absolutely breathtaking and (even more incredible) a mascot that isn't annoying,

Rayman is a cute lil anomaly with a deadly punch but no arms, a neckerchief but nothing to hold it there, and a funky Brad Pitt hairdo but without his sex appeal. To go with the character, there are five levels, each with over a dozen deviously designed stages. The first level is a lot of fun, but from there, "Rayman" goes downhill, with sadistic rounds that are filled with more holes than the plot to the next "Jurassic Park" film. And the bosses! Don't even get me started on the bosses! I wanted to like "Rayman" more than I did, but the extreme difficulty makes its qualities very hard to appreciate. Unless you're one of the few people who thought "Super Mario Bros: The Lost Levels" was a breeze, rent "Rayman" for the maximum possible enjoyment. ☹

Sega Rally Championship Sega

I didn't care for this at all on Sega's first "bootleg" sampler disc (oh, come on! Who do they think they're fooling!), but judging from the finished product, it's amazing what a little extra effort and an analog controller can do. "Sega Rally Championship" is my favorite Saturn racing game; it even edges out "WipEou" and "Sonic R" for the honor with a silky smooth frame rate, realistic courses, and a typically infectious Sega™ brand soundtrack, complete with the rockin' guitar riffs and synthesized horns that elevated Sega's Virtua series above the norm. Plus, there's the added challenge of having to steer your vehicle's front and back end. This added feature is a first in console racing games and helps keep things lively, even after you've raced through Rally's tracks dozens of times. There's only one real problem with the game... there's just not enough of it! Four tracks and three cars just aren't enough, especially when there are fourteen competitors, each with their own flat-shaded "Ridge Racer"-esque car. The thought of getting behind the wheel of one of those bad boys is enough to make me drool... "Sega Rally Championship" was already a tempting purchase at \$50; at five it's a foregone conclusion. If you bought it yesterday that wouldn't have been quickly enough. ☹

Battle Arena Toshinden Remix Sega (Takara)

Toshinden was a huge hit on the Playstation... its impressive 3D playfields and smoothly animated (if not entirely original) characters dropped the jaws of many gamers and made the system an instant success. Looking back, it's amazing that so many people were able to look past the game's unreliable control and almost nonexistent play technique. Little has changed with the Saturn version despite the "Remix" subtitle... "Toshinden" is still the cotton candy of next-wave fighting games. Sure, it looks pretty, and tastes great when you pop it in your mouth, but before you know it, it's gone, and no matter how much of it you devour, it never satisfies you. There are added features: The story mode features amusing conversations between the fighters, complete with humorously thick accents and a full-screen anime' depiction of each combatant, and there's a new character armed with a pike, but they do little more than add a sugary swirl to the same sweet nothing that failed to satiate fighting game experts two years ago.

With "Virtua Fighter 2" and the Playstation version of "Street Fighter EX Plus" around, there's no reason to acknowledge that this even exists. ☹

VIRTUA COP SEGA (AM2)

Entertaining and realistic, "Virtua Cop" succeeds where the dozens of lame shooting galleries with digitized graphics fail. All of the scenery and characters in VC are, true to Sega's "Virtua" series, texture-mapped polygons, which mean that if you shoot at something, it reacts as if filled with real lead. Fuel tanks explode, windows shatter, and wooden boxes are reduced to a hail of splinters, and it's all in ultra-realistic, pull-no-punches 3D. In other first-person shooters, it's not uncommon to fire at an enemy, only to watch them flash and disappear. In "Virtua Cop", the bad guys double over, hold their wrists in pain, or are knocked head over heels depending on where they've been hit and whether or not they're standing on solid ground. Add to this an almost hilarious 70's meets 80's soundtrack and the fact that nobody ever really dies and you've got a video game that the old television show "Starsky and Hutch" would be proud to loan its license to... not that it would need to, of course. "Virtua Cop" easily stands on its own without cheesy TV or film tie-ins, a lesson Acclaim would do well to learn. ☹

Sonic R Sega (Traveller's Tales)

After test driving "Diddy Kong Racing", I couldn't possibly imagine how "Sonic R" could compare to it. It doesn't, but I will give Sega and its team of Rare-wannabees, Traveller's Tales, credit for trying. Visually, "Sonic R" is a masterpiece... it has a more coarse look than DKR, but the frame rate is noticeably higher and pop-in has been handled beautifully with twelve transparent layers that make distant scenery look as though it's obscured by a misty fog. I haven't seen this done quite so well since "Polar Rescue" lit up my Vectrex nearly three years ago! (And no, I'm not being sarcastic...) The control is, as Chris Kohler so eloquently put it, "rancid" with a standard Saturn joyypad, but (assumably) improves greatly with a 3D controller. The music is high-tech yet precocious, as was the case with previous "Sonic" titles, but the vocal accompaniment will literally make you shudder... if you value your sanity, be sure to shut it off before you play. Variety, or the extreme lack of it, is where "Sonic R" is hit the hardest... five courses, including one hidden area, just aren't enough, and although there are a total of ten characters, roughly half are beefed-up mech versions of the original "Sonic" cast. Comparing "Sonic R" to "Diddy Kong Racing" would be a lot like making the choice between Prime Rib and road kill burgers, but it's still good enough to give a spin even if you do already own an N64. ☹

TOMB RAIDER EIDOS (CORE)

Hey... here's a review you haven't seen over twelve thousand times before! Actually, in a way, it isn't, because I wasn't as fond of "Tomb Raider" as everyone else. In fact, I absolutely despised the game when I'd first played it... what

was the big deal about running what looked like a lactating Kate Moss around an endless stretch of craggy cliffs? I understand a little better why "Tomb Raider" was so popular now that I own it, but it's still not what I'd call my favorite Saturn game. Put simply, "Tomb Raider" is "Prince of Persia" in 3D. The play mechanics are largely the same, forcing you to make carefully planned jumps from one ledge to the next, and there's the same emphasis on animation, with the title character jumping, walking, running, and falling with the same fluid grace as her Arabic predecessor. True, Lara Croft is armed with a pair of pistols but like "Prince of Persia", the game's central focus is on exploration, not battling enemies (it's a good thing, too, because "Tomb Raider's" vertigo-inducing gun fights are most definitely NOT the game's strong point). And since Raider is in 3D, exploring the well-designed, surprisingly immersive stages is much more involving than it ever was in Jordan Mechner's groundbreaking classic. Confusion and some absurdly difficult tasks detract from the game's replay value, but it's hard to imagine anyone who was a fan of "Prince of Persia" not liking "Tomb Raider" as well. ☹

Galactic Attack Acclaim (Taito)

At first glance, "Galactic Attack" seems like just another vertically scrolling shooter, with Super NES quality graphics, unimpressive power-ups, and just enough gratuitous scaling thrown in to make you forget that you were playing this over ten years ago on your NES as "Zanac". On closer inspection, it turns out that there's one thing that separates "Galactic Attack" from the dozens of overhead view blasters that are already on the market... the ability to attack enemies on different planes of view. In a creative twist on the Namco classic "Xevious", you can lock on to enemies beneath your ship and let loose a deadly laser blast which rips apart gun placements, docking bays, rival ships, and just about anything else that poses an even remote threat to you. This play mechanic admittedly makes some battles more interesting; you can actually destroy the bridges between floating islands in one stage and watch with sadistic glee as the disconnected land masses hurtle toward Earth. In another round, there's a brief rendezvous with a massive star cruiser that's more than just slightly reminiscent of Activision's "The Dreadnaught Factor". These memorable moments aside, "Galactic Attack" is a pretty standard, paint-by-numbers shooter. There are better games like this in Japan; if you can afford it, import those instead. ☹

Bust-A-Move 2 Acclaim (Taito)

Now this is more like it! I was sorely disappointed with Probe's half-assed translation of "Bubble Bobble", but this little seen sequel to the popular Neo-Geo puzzler more than makes up for it with the classic Taito look and feel that made most of the games in the "Bubble Bobble" series bonafide classics. Here's the recipe for BAM's success: Take "Bubble Bobble", "Space Invaders", "Arkanoid", "Columns", and the time-honored game of billiards, stir well, and bake to a golden brown. It serves one, or two if you're willing to take on a friend in the heated versus mode. The sequel's not much different from the first, but it does add a versus mode for one player (very frustrating... do NOT play it if you're

in a sour mood, or you can kiss the CD, a controller, and possibly your Saturn goodbye) and an edit mode, perfect for springing your own sadistic creations on unsuspecting friends. "Bust-A-Move 2" is the best thing going for puzzle loving Saturnites next to "Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo", and is much cheaper, to boot. Go for it! ®

Panzer Dragoon Zwei Sega (Andromeda)

Right from the beginning, Sega has leeches from Nintendo's success with games just similar enough to their's to draw away customers. "Congo Bongo" is "Donkey Kong", as seen from an isometric perspective. "Sonic the Hedgehog" is a quicker, sleeker version of the "Super Mario Bros." games. And the "Panzer Dragoon" series is "StarFox", repackaged in a grittier fantasy setting. The plot is a weird amalgam of "Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome" and "Dragonriders of Pern"; as Lando, you must avenge the smoking remains of your village with, ironically enough, a pet dragon the superstitious townsfolk would have slaughtered if given the chance. Your faithful steed starts out looking like a cross between a salamander and a parakeet, and in a twist best appreciated by Tamagotchi owners, matures as the game progresses, eventually becoming an intimidating, armor-plated behemoth. Naturally, the rounds get harder as well, building to a climactic trench battle aboard a huge, biomechanical airship. Gameplay, graphics, and especially sound are all top of the line... Zwei looks almost as nice as "StarFox 64", and the music tests the very limits of the Saturn sound chip with rousing scores that couldn't have been done better if they had been played off the CD itself. There's no real freedom of flight, and later rounds become insanely frustrating (although once you've earned the right to open Pandora's Box, this is no longer a problem), but fans of "StarFox" or fast-action flight simulators in general will demand to have this in their collections. ®

Three Dirty Dwarves SegaSoft (Appaloosa)

Ed Annunziata attempts to make amends for his handful of Genesis bombs (let's face it, folks: Half of "Ecco the Dolphin's" sales were to hopeful oil drillers who wanted to use it as a boring mechanism) with this wacky side-scrolling brawler. Sort of America's answer to "Guardian Heroes", Dwarves is as drenched in our pop culture with grungy graphics, heavy metal music, and gross humor as Heroes was Japan's. Which style you'll prefer is entirely subjective, but one definite point in Dwarves' favor is that it's less repetitive and more imaginative than "Guardian Heroes". The boss fights in particular are really cool... you'll swat rabid dogs back at a crazed junkyard owner, take on an animated gymnasium filled to capacity with steroid-chucking muscle-heads, and (literally) bring down the house with a wrecking ball made for three. Adding to the already nutty experience are funny cartoon cinematics, apparently drawn in some Slavic country which has since split into a half million pieces. Like "Guardian Heroes", this won't hold your interest after you've beaten it, but "Three Dirty Dwarves" is fun the first few times through. For most title-starved Saturn owners, even a little fun will do. Just one thing, though... did Sega review the lyrics for the "House of Fire" track? The phrase "kick some shit" does seem a bit raw... ®

Street Fighter Alpha 2 Capcom

Since buying a Saturn, I've found it harder and harder to go back to playing my Genesis. It was a fine system for its time, but let's be honest, it wasn't exactly the preferred platform for game designers even when 16-bit systems were popular. Moreover, playing a conversion of a Neo-Geo hit like "Viewpoint" on a Genesis feels a great deal like performing the works of Beethoven on the kazoo you'd find inside specially marked boxes of "Lucky Charms". I feel much the same way about the Genesis version of "Super Street Fighter 2" now that I own "Street Fighter Alpha 2". When I can slide a little piece of heaven like SFA2 into my Saturn, why the heck would I want to go back to pitting a tiny E. Honda against an even smaller Cammy with laryngitis, pasted onto what looks like a water-damaged painting of a British castle? I don't, which is why my Genesis is gathering dust in a broom closet while "Street Fighter Alpha 2" is near the top of my teetering pile of Saturn games. Anyways, you've read about a million reviews of SFA2 already, so I'll just say that everyone else is right about the game and that, if you like the "Street Fighter" series, "Street Fighter Alpha 2" for the Saturn is a required purchase. ®

VIRTUAL ON SEGA (AM3)

Given all the ideas Namco stole from Sega, a Saturn clone of the intense first-person combat game "Cyber-Sled" was long overdue. On puts you in the cockpit of a mech, a faintly humanoid robotic soldier who stands over forty feet tall. It's your job to test this overgrown Go-Bot by battling the creations of eight other corporations, including the awe-inspiring city-sized Z-Gradt defense system. It's undeniably a great idea, but the execution is lacking. First, the control is confusing... you can edit it to your liking, but there are so many buttons you're required to use that it's easy to forget which one does what in the heat of battle. Furthermore, the CPU is next to impossible to beat. The game throws you two weaklings to boost your confidence, then ups the difficulty to unprecedented levels with a hammer-wielding oaf who'll crush your mech into a tin can more than once. Subsequent enemies will send you to the recycling yard with a few well-placed shots before you've even shifted your robot out of first gear. Two-player battles are much more fair, but due to the nature of the game, but contestants must view the action from a tiny split screen which begs to bring back unpleasant memories of "Faceball 2000" for the GameBoy. Like most Sega exclusives, "Virtual On" exploits the Saturn hardware well, but anyone looking for a one player contest with a reasonable progression of difficulty is advised to say, "ie domo argato, Mr. Roboto" and leave this one on the shelves. ®

STREET FIGHTER: THE MOVIE ACCLAIM (CAPCOM)

You've played the game, you've watched the movie based on the game (and deeply

regretted it...), and now you can play the game based on the movie that's based on the game! Perhaps the schmucks at Acclaim thought they could sell copies of Capcom's other throwaway Saturn release on confusion alone... In any event, The Movie plays a solid, if unspectacular, game of "Street Fighter"... the main differences are that the characters and backdrops are now digitized, and that complex combos have been made next to impossible thanks to the game's awkward animation. A few of the actors do a passable job of portraying "Street Fighter 2's" cast of characters... most notable is Ernie Reyes, Sr. as a surprisingly cool Akuma and singer/gay activist Kyle Minogue as Cammy (sorry to have to break it to you, Josh... she's real now, and you still don't have a chance with her!). However, Blanka and Zangief are much too thin and silly to be convincing as menacing brutes, and newcomer Sawada is just slightly less stereotyped than Kung Pow from the new "Clayfighter" games. Vocals are similarly ridiculous (is Ken screaming "Shoryureppa" or "Shoryu-health spa!?!") but the characters' parting comments when they end a round with a super combo finisher was a nice touch. The only real thing The Movie had going for it was the basic gameplay from "Super Street Fighter 2 Turbo", and with "Street Fighter Collection" around, its one advantage over other Capcom releases is long gone. Rent it and invite a devout SF2 disciple over for a good laugh. ®

Dark Savior Sega (Climax)

Don't you just hate long-awaited sequels to popular games that just don't measure up to their predecessors? There are so many of these disappointments that it's hard to keep track of them all, and "Dark Savior", a sort of spin-off of the cult Genesis hit "Landstalker", only adds to this leaning tower of duds. It's not that Savior is a bad game per se; but as the offspring of "Landstalker", it's only natural that I'd have high expectations for it, and this just comes up short. The two biggest reasons for this are the game's annoying isometric perspective (made even more irritating than "Landstalker's", since the designers thought it would be cute to hide items and platforms where the player can't see them) and the sticky control, which forces you to let go of the D-pad before changing directions (anyone having flashbacks of the first "Super Pac-Man"? I know I am...). There are pluses: "Dark Savior's" polygonal graphics engine pumps out some nice scenery (and more slowdown than in a first-generation Super NES game... oy), and enemies can be battled and even taken hostage in simplified versions of the three round battles in "Street Fighter 2", but the control, perspective, and ridiculously easy puzzles make Savior a hard sell for experienced RPG fans. Only for entry level adventurers with a high level of patience and no prior experience with "Landstalker". ®

Virtua Fighter 2 Sega (AM2)

As you know, I utterly despise fighting games with polygonal graphics... I'd rather rake my tongue across the floor of a Turkish prison than play "Tekken". So it's obvious that it takes something truly special to make me want to put up with the constantly changing viewpoints,

perplexing control, and forced close-quarters combat that are all trademarks of '3D' (yeah, right) tourney fighters. "Virtua Fighter 2" is that game. Visually, VF2 blows the drive door off the Saturn with large, fluidly animated characters and high definition backgrounds which put to rest, once and for all, the pro rags' misinformed conjecture that the system "couldn't handle 3D games". The audio is similarly top-flight, with clear voices and wonderfully orchestrated music that makes you think AM2 hired telepaths to determine, down to the very note, what gamers would want to listen to while driving their opponents head first into the tarmac. As far as control is concerned... it sucks, but it sucks far less than having to mindlessly mash buttons to get anywhere in "Tekken". So there you have it. If you love 3D fighting games, "Virtua Fighter 2" alone justifies the purchase of a Saturn. If not, and I don't blame you, blow the lettuce on a used copy anyways. You're sure to be impressed by its graphics and sound, if not its gameplay. ☺

Christmas NIGHTS Sega (Sonic Team)

It's anyone's guess as to why Sega released "NIGHTS", a next-generation derivative of the long-forgotten arcade game "Looping", instead of a full-fledged "Sonic the Hedgehog" sequel on the Saturn. Even more bizarre is the fact that the one round sampler "Christmas NIGHTS" outperforms the complete release with more options and better graphics. By "better graphics", I mean much better graphics... play the game in December or January (or set the Saturn's internal clock to those dates) and you're treated to a holiday-themed version of the first round from "NIGHTS" with an absolutely astounding winter motif. Other additions include a "Sonic The Hedgehog Into Dreams" mode, a way to keep track of the growth of those always funky Nightopians, tons of promotional artwork, and a time and link attack mode to test your flying skills. All this combines to create the best CD sampler ever, yet at the same time reflects very poorly on the original "NIGHTS". So, on one hand, "Christmas NIGHTS" is a steal for just \$2 at most Blockbuster retail chains, yet if you buy it, you'll probably look at the first game in a new, negative light. This makes buying the sampler a tough call, but if you didn't like the first "NIGHTS", go for it. It may change your mind about the series. ☺

Fighter's MegaMix Sega (AM2)

I didn't play this for very long, nor did I need to, because "Fighter's MegaMix" is the same 3D crapola that Sega's been feeding its customers since "Virtua Fighter" first debuted on the Saturn and 32X. The cast of "Virtua Fighter" and "Fighting Vipers" together at last... whoohoo! They're not exactly two great tastes that taste great together, and the graphics are well below VF2 standards, gravitating more towards the style of "Fighting Vipers" with what appear to be action figures duking it out against vast, desolate plains. Sounds are no big deal, either... they're recycled from Vipers just like the graphics, and are the typical ho-hum metal riffs you've heard in dozens of Saturn releases. And oh, half of those "new" characters bite. I'd have to say that "MegaMix" is a great game... for those of you crazy or just plain stupid enough to rebuy "Fighting Vipers". ☺

Off-World Interceptor EXTREME Crystal Dynamics

Funny... I always liked Crystal Dynamic's 3DO games. "Crash 'n Burn" was without a doubt the best racer of its time, "Total Eclipse" far surpassed "StarFox" visually, and "Off-World Interceptor", while not as fun as either game, seemed to have promise. For reasons unbeknownst to me, what was incredible on the 3DO just comes off limp and stale on the Saturn. I'm not sure why... has Crys Dy(er)?'s once astounding graphics engine gotten this outdated in three short years, or is the conversion from Panasonic's system to Sega's just not up to snuff? Either way, Off-World is simplistic, choppy, and ultimately unsatisfying... it's a lot like driving a four-wheeler through a stretch of Arizona desert while blinking your eyes really fast and chucking pebbles at the lizards that scurry by. Me thinks the MST3K rejects who heckle Off-World's full-motion video cinemas would have had a field day with the actual game... ☹

TUNNEL B-1 ACCLAIM (NE·O·N)

And to end the reviews, we have the obligatory "Doom" clone. Actually, "Tunnel B-1" is more of a blend of "Doom", "Descent", and oddly enough, "WipEoUT"... there's more than enough weapons and loud explosions for fans of the first two games, but since you're in the driver's seat of a hovercraft, the look and feel of Tunnel is eerily reminiscent of Psygnosis' futuristic racer. It's a kooky hybrid to be sure, but once you get used to the control, it works. Tunnel looks a heck of a lot better than "Doom", too... the silky smooth frame rate and almost constant "we love light-sourcing, can't you tell?" special effects make it easy to forget that this B-1 seriously frustrating game. If this and "Tomb Raider" are any indication, it's obvious that European game designers still can't tell the difference between a legitimate challenge and an exercise in aggravation. Still a fine game and a worthy rental. ☺

The Wanderers

October thru December, 1992



THE INSIDE STORY ON CAPCOM'S LONG-FORGOTTEN MASTERPIECE ON THE SEGA GENESIS

PLUS: AN OPEN LETTER TO SEGA OF AMERICA, 32X: PARASITE LOST, DIGITAL REGRESS, COMMENTARY AND OPINIONS ABOUT MORTAL KOMBAT 4, PLUS EVER SO MUCH MORE

<THE WANDERERS IS AN UNREGISTERED TRADEMARK OF JESS CREATIONS*, Co. publishing>

Here's the cover to "The Wanderers", a "Concept" supplement that, thanks to Chris Kohler, I never had to resort to publishing. Look with fear upon its terrifying countenance.

HALF ASS

Welcome to another in a series of attempts to squeeze the Russ Perry, Jr.TM brand stream-of-consciousness opinion column for every drop it's worth. I wonder how many times I'll be able to get away with this before Russ gets pissed and takes back his permission for me to do it...

I never realized just how hard the On-File project was going to be... I've got support from Todd Lintner, Jeremy Statz (he's working for a game company now! Is that cool or what!?!), Chris Dyer, Pat Reynolds, Chris Kohler, Brian Pacula, and Matt Lotti in addition to the fan-ed's mentioned in "Lettitor From The Editor", but after looking through my big box 'o 'zines, it seems as though I have a lot more work to do. I've done a little research and it turns out that there's been over 100 amateur publications devoted to video games (and I'm sure there are others I'd missed). I'd planned on adding a Who's Who list of fan-ed's and fanzine contributors to the site, with a brief description of each, and I believe I have a list of about 200 of these. This, of course, is just counting fandom's right hand men (no jokes, please) like Keith Previc, Bill Fasick, the late Kevin Oleniacz, and Joon Yee Chuah; not letter writers and one-time contributors. Don't get me wrong... I still want to do this! I'm just thankful that Tom Donoho has pledged OCR scans of fanzine articles to the project... I have enough typing to do on my own as it is!

Looking back, it's kind of ironic that most of the fanzines in my collection have only improved with age. Maybe it's nostalgia, maybe I've matured quite a bit since my last fanzine was still in print, or maybe my horizons have expanded since that time. It's tough to say, but it's amusing to leaf through a fanzine I never really cared for- like "Fanarchy", for instance- and find a lot of great articles that appeal much more to me now than they had when they were first printed. Others that I already had liked have gotten even better, although it's amazing how pronounced some of their respective editors' ideosyncrocies can be... some of Todd Lintner's reviews in "MASTERminds" are so sarcastic they're almost catty! On the other hand, most of the issues of my old fanzine, "Project:Ignition", are genuinely painful to read. There are some gems scattered amidst the rubble, like the top 10 lists, the Russ Perry-fied contest, and my "kill 'Entertainment Weekly'" rants, but most of the articles in P:I strike me as incredibly incoherent and juvenile. The last issues of both that fanzine and "Concept" are fairly impressive, though. "Concept" #5 in particular is arguably the best overview of the ancient GCE Vectrex ever written (my, that was modest...).

Can you believe it? Nintendo finally pulled their heads out of their butts and released a prototype version of "Yoshi's Story" for the Nintendo64! After a year and a half of development, I'd say it's long overdue... There's only one problem, though. The game, in its current, unfinished state, sucks dino eggs. The graphics and sound are both fine- although Yoshi's high-pitched voice is cute enough to sour the most iron-plated of stomachs- but the control is just hideous! Urf! Who's idea was it to make every damned game compatible with the analog stick in the center of the N64 controller, anyways? I wasn't as big on "Yoshi's Island" (the previous game on the Super NES) as everyone else, but I do give it credit for having the rock solid control that everyone expects from a Mario game. "Yoshi's Story", however, does not, and the graphics just aren't good enough to make you forget that. It's simple, really: if things aren't DRASTICALLY changed before the game's official release in March, you'd be better off picking up "Mischief Makers" instead.

I pored through the latest issue of "Pretentious 2D Haters' Monthly"- er, make that "NEXT Generation"- and found, in their assessment of the latest crop of Lara Croft wannabees, an interview with a female fan-ed! And no, I'm not talking about the one that was caught with Eddie Murphy last month. I wonder why Heather Daniels of "GirlGames" hasn't integrated herself into the mainstream EG fandom? (actually, now that I think about it, I don't wonder at all) I'm tempted to send for an issue; I just hope it doesn't bend over backwards to fill a niche...



Byron's

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

[Editor's Note: Byron J. Lisamen, a member of "The Gameroom Blitz"'s triumverate of mascots, had this to say about the crossover burgers which have popped up at Burger King and McDonald's]

I'm sure you've heard the big deal the fast food places have been making about their new burgers, the Big King and Big Extra. The funny thing is, they're not really new at all, but are big rip-offs of the sandwiches that made Micky Dee's and BK famous. I got a chance to try both and here's what I think of 'em...

The Big King: This is Burger King's Big Mac, but with a King on the end (wow, that's real original). It's not a bad burger at all... it's kind of small and squished down, but pretty yummy while it lasts. Because the meat is flame-broiled, it actually tastes a little better than a Big Mac. Greasier, too, which not everybody likes, but I don't mind that. The "special sauce" in the middle is a lot sweeter than that orange file grout they put in Big Macs, too. It's not as big or good as a Whopper, but I'd try it once. I'm sure Big Mac eaters will really love it. Oh, and one more thing... the new fries Burger King is selling are kinda crappy. They're so hard! It's almost like someone's been cutting up Mr. Potato Head toys and cooking them 'stead of real potatoes.

Big Extra: Gross. This thing is supposed to be a McDonald's Whopper, but it's sooooo icky. The mayo is runny, the tomato is mushy, and the lettuce is chopped up into tiny yucky bits. It's like they threw a Whopper into a blender or somethin'! After eating it, I kept burping up these wierd burps that tasted like rotten eggs. That lasted for the rest of the day. You don't even want to know what was coming out of the other end... McDonald's, please don't sell this anymore. Stick with the Arch Deluxe if you wanna make a decent burger.

I hope that helps you out. It's not about video games, but everybody has to eat, y'know. Bye!

... THE TOP 100 GAMES OF ALL TIME CONTINUES ... THE TOP 100 GAMES OF

Star Fox 64 (N64)

It's another in a series of N64 games that's just this close to being good enough to justify buying the system. Hugely improved over the original with graphics that surpass the equally amazing 3DO blaster "Total Eclipse", an extremely useful training mode, and best of all, a handful of rounds that aren't locked onto a rail as was the case with the first "StarFox".

Crystal Castles (2600, coin)

Games with an isometric viewpoint look great but can be a total pain to play (just look at "Dark Savior"!). This clever "Pac-Man"-inspired romp is one of the few that isn't, thanks largely to its trackball control and characters which are only partially obscured when behind walls.

Joust (7800, Atari 400, Saturn, Playstation, SNES)

This wonderfully conceived classic drops you into an alternate medieval world where ostriches fly and mighty pterodactyls threaten to make humans extinct! Loads of chaotic fun with two players, and the challenging round incentives will keep you entertained even if you're going solo.

Bust-A-Move (Neo-Geo, SNES, Game Gear, Saturn)

Play elements from such unlikely sources as "Space Invaders", "Arkanoid", the Turbograpfx-16 failure "Drop Off", and even billiards were recycled in this little gem; yet, for all its shameless borrowing of themes, "Bust-A-Move" is the most original concept to hit the puzzle genre in a long long time. You've got it all wrong, Tom; BAM completely blows "Tetris" out of the water!

Namco Collection Volume 1 (coin)

Two timeless classics- "Pac-Man" and "Dig Dug"- are made that much better in this incredibly fun arcade exclusive. There's "Rally-X", too, but, er, we'll forgive Namco for that.

River City Ransom (NES)

The unlikely combination of RPG and fighter was done even better in "River City Ransom" than it was in "Guardian Heroes"! If you still own an NES, you owe it to yourself to feed it a copy of this hilarious "Double Dragon" spin-off. Oh, and bring a friend along for the ride... he'll thank you later.

MK Trilogy (Saturn, Playstation, N64)

If you can only buy one "Mortal Kombat" game this year, why not make it all of them? MK Trilogy brings back the classic characters and incredible backgrounds from the original, making it hard for even devout MK haters to resist.

Space War (Vectrex)

Dubbed "the first video game in history", "Space War" still holds up well on the Vectrex, with an intense two player mode and a selectable gravity strength that helps keep things fresh.

Space Duel (coin)

A wacky, full-color version of the Atari classic "Asteroids", with much more to do and a weird space station mode that links two players together for some confusing as hell, cooperate-or-die action.

Yie-Ar Kung Fu (coin)

Forget what everyone else says... this, not Data East's flop "Kung Fu Master", is what inspired the incredibly popular "Street Fighter" series. Crisp graphics, basic but very well designed enemies, and a bevy of unique attacks help round out this fantastic experience.

Blaster Master (NES)

"Blaster Master"'s long, involved quest and incredibly detailed backgrounds helped the NES vault past its competition in the late 80's. I dare you to name me one Master System game that even comes close to "Blaster Master"'s level of technique.

Gorf (coin, VIC-20)

Forget what you've heard... "Gorf" is in actuality a terrific "Space Invaders" clone that was way ahead of its time. Five edge of your seat rounds + an innovative quark laser + great graphics + a talking Gorfian leader with an evil sense of humor = a bonafide classic you can't afford to miss. It is true, however, that most of the home versions bite.

Diddy Kong Racing (N64)

Loaded with personality, solid control, and splendid ultra-immersive graphics, DKR puts the otherwise lousy "Donkey Kong Country" franchise in a whole new light and leaves "Sonic R" in the dust. Highly recommended in a game library already filled with great racing games.

Bomb Jack (coin)

Arcade games don't get much more obscure- or fun- than this funky "Pac-Man"/"Donkey Kong" hybrid. The play mechanics take time getting used to but once you've learned to play it you won't be able to tear yourself away.

Mr. Do!'s Castle (coin, ColecoVision)

There's never been a game with an atmosphere as fun as this one. Even the bad guys seem to be having a ball... once you get your hands on this, you'll know why.

ALL TIME CONTINUES... THE TOP 100 GAMES OF ALL TIME CONTINUES... THE

Even More!

Arcade



Squeezins

Mmm... Juicy!

See, I told you I'd be back! Well, there's more coin-ops on the roster, so let's just jump in with both feet...

I didn't think I had a remote chance of finding Namco's new classic collection arcade games, so you could imagine my surprise when I'd spotted both of them in a Tucson mini golf palace. I've gotta tell you, I like the concept of offering players both classic and arranged (read: better) versions of oldies like "Pac-Man" and "Dig Dug" all in one machine. The game selection process involves using the joystick, which makes picking your favorites much easier than with the Neo-Geo, and the redeaux of classic Namco hits are, for the most part, more entertaining than their emulated counterparts and make the collections worthwhile to even the most hardened retro game hater.

Of the two, Namco Classic Collection Volume 1 is by far the best... I skipped over "Rally-X" (I was never a huge fan of this to begin with, and the arranged version didn't look that much different than the original aside from the spiced up graphics) and went straight for the new versions of "Pac-Man" and "Dig Dug". "Dig Dug" has a sort of "Bomberman"-esque feel... I'm not sure if it's the similar title character or the two player simultaneous gameplay, but it's definitely there. I really like how the new power-ups, enemies (including the crowd pleasin' exploding robots!), and gigantic rocks complement the old "Dig Dug" gameplay perfectly. Even better is "Pac-Man". It looks like a bad shareware version, but don't be fooled... it has the heart and soul of a true "Pac-Man" game. Pac's been given a whole new bag of tricks, which include a clone who takes on the opposite site of the maze for you and dash zippers which let you bowl over any monster stupid enough to get in your way. The bad guys are beefed-up as well; they can split apart or even meld into crazy creations with deadly new powers (ever wonder what Sue would look like if she worked in a Playboy lounge? Play this and wonder no more).

Namco's second collection is kind of a dud, however. Submitted for your disapproval are new versions of "Xevious" and "Mappy", the latter of which is actually less complex than the first game. There's a two-player mode, but screen height has been brutally sacrificed as a result, even if you're going it alone. The new "Xevious" is almost exactly like the first, albeit with one power-up (whoohoo!). Needless to say, it's not worth your time if your arcade's got "Striker: 1945" or the newest "Raiden" game. Oddly enough, the one gem in the collection, "Galaga", went unplayed. I'm still not sure why I avoided it; perhaps I was too distracted by...

..."Street Fighter EX". I've heard opinions about this ranging from "awesome" to "wretched", but I'm personally on the fence about it. On one hand, the polygonal graphics engine does pump out some nice eyecandy (although watch out for Zangeif! He's got Legomania!), and the gameplay is largely the same, but the new perspective does get confusing and the CPU is ludicrously cheap. The new characters are fine; not up to the standards of "Street Fighter Alpha 2" but close. My personal favorites of these EX-clusives are D. Geneser Dark (TV's favorite lesbian, armed with a jackknife, some explosives, and a trip rope), the dominatrix Blair, and C. Jack; not for his fighting ability but for the fact that he looks like the lead singer of Blues Traveler in the character select screen.

The Neo-Geos scattered around the arcade captured much of my attention as well. I finally had the chance to play the newest "King of Fighter" games, and both are very good... I prefer KOF '96 to the more current edition, largely because the latest revision includes crummy digitized graphics and an "only on pay-per-view!" subplot that makes me want to retch. When I saw big breasted girls prancing around with the round numbers on large cardboard placards, I kept wondering if Don King was going to jump out from behind a bush and offer my characters big bucks to throw the match... The only well endowed babe I want to see in KOF is Mai "boobs are big" Shiranui, who's still a lot of fun to play, and even bouncier than ever. I swear, one day SNK's programmers are going to commit mass suicide because they've run out of keen new ways to make her Jell-O jiggle... And then there's that new "Fatal Fury" game... uh, "Super Mega Mighty Fatal Fury Real Bout Special With Chocolate Sprinkles" or something like that. It's no "King of Fighters", and the button configuration is bound to confuse you, but it has Mai, and that's all it needs.

Somewhat perplexing were Capcom's SF3 upgrade and Midway's MK4 precursor "War Gods". I was shocked that none of "War Gods" characters were even remotely identifiable... the only one that came close was Warhead, who looks like a post-holocaust Johnny Cage. The graphics are fine (although the sound... ack! Who the heck decided to put in effects from the old "He-Man" cartoon series?) and the gameplay is classic MK, but with MK4 and especially "Street Fighter EX" around, why bother? "Street Fighter 3: Second Impact" is better, but its new characters aren't. Especially laughable is Urien, who'd I'd instantly renamed Jacques Strap thanks to his odd lack of apparel. Hugo's a little better, but Capcom: If you insist on recycling "Final Fight" villains in the "Street Fighter" series, please make sure they join Alcoholics Anonymous first. That's all I'm asking. And that's a wrap!

Oh, we've got quotes, all right!

"This frog would have been better off barbecued." -PSM Magazine, about the (poorly) revived classic "Frogger" by Hasbro Interactive

"What the hell is wrong with you?" - Arnie Katz, in an Email battle royale with the editor

"Finally! A group of new morons to draw attention away from us AOL users! Thank you Web TV!" - unknown Usenet poster

"Aquaman, you can't go into other rooms saying 'I'd think cockatiels taste like chicken'. THAT'S why you got banned last night." - unknown pet bird chat room patron

"It's darkly ironic that Ryu has the anatomy of a Ken doll..." - Jess, after beating "Street Fighter Alpha 2" with M. Bison. See the ending, trust me.

And now...

10 Things We Did NOT Need To See In 1997

10. "War Gods"
9. A character in "Street Fighter 3" who wears nothing but an uncomfortably tight loincloth (imagine the wedgies!)
8. Hundreds upon hundreds of pictures of Lara Croft in the pro rags, complete with breasts so large they have their own zip code
7. Bill Donohue's bloated head, floating like a deranged zeppelin through the pages of "Ultra Game Players"
6. "Marvel Super Heroes" on the Sony Playstation
5. Skullomania, the mighty morbid power deranger, on "Street Fighter EX"
4. Kung Pow in "Clayfighter 63 1/3" (or for that matter, the game itself)
3. "Star Wars" characters in a fighting game (as if the Special Edition box set wasn't overkill enough)
2. 700 million "Tekken" clones
1. The all-new, all-crappy "Frogger"

El Libro

JERRY
Springer

I was planning to put a rather vindictive review of Arnie Katz' book on game design here, but I'd lost the necessary information to do it, and needless to say, it wouldn't have been pleasant anyway. I'll just say that Arnie strikes me as an eloquent yet grossly misinformed man with a rather stretched definition of the term "game designer" (try "game supervisor", as in the guy who sits back with a lemonade while everyone else does all the work) and leave it at that. Instead, submitted for your approval are reviews of Leonard Herman's "Phoenix" and "ABC to the VCS"...

BASTARD OF THE MONTH

Phoenix: The Fall And Rise of Videogames

Just about everyone in fandom has reviewed this book, and after having read it, it's no wonder that fan-ed's have been unanimous in their approval of this intelligent, probing look at the history of video games. Leonard Herman leaves no stone unturned in his coverage of the hobby, as everything that can be remotely connected to videogames, from Babbage's Analytical Engine to Sega's Pods, are given their due in this book. And unlike David Sheff, Herman leaves his personal bias on the shelf and offers an untainted view of the industry, without the melodramatic drivel that poisoned Sheff's last book (you know, the one subtitled "How Nintendo Conquered An Industry, Zapped Your Dollars, and Enslaved Your Children"?). Instead, Herman lets the facts speak for themselves, but offers his readers just enough engrossing commentary to keep them entertained without telling them how they should feel about such issues as Nintendo's shady business practices and the infamous lawsuit over Magnavox's "Pac-Man" clone "KC Munchkin". Newbies aren't lost in the shuffle, either, as this second edition covers systems up to and including the Nintendo64. To sum, "Phoenix" is an invaluable reference guide to the history of the hobby and is highly entertaining to boot... no true fan of video games should be without it. (\$21.45 with S&H)

ABC To The VCS

Now ABC I wasn't so crazy about. Collectors will love its descriptions of obscurities like "Obelix" and "The Impossible Game", but anyone looking for hard-hitting reviews of these games (like myself) will be disappointed. Also, unlike "Phoenix", the book is unavoidably produced and sold at a low cost so mediocre print quality and typos are prevalent. It's a good resource for 2600 fanatics, but not a book you'd really need if you already read "Digital Press". (\$9.50 with S&H)

You can order both titles from Rolenta Press at: PO BOX 3814, UNION NJ 07083-1891.



BATTLE OF THE TIPS RAGS!

The professional game magazines, with the obvious exception of "Die Hard Game Fan", have gotten frighteningly good lately. EGM, once dubbed "the bloated, decadent king of EG pro'zines", has improved greatly under the leadership of new owners Ziff-Davis, and GamePro has become much more critical of even the most hyped games (in one instance, they'd lambasted "Clayfighter 63 1/3", calling it "not

very funny or much fun").

This strange new surge of quality has even trickled down to the video game tips magazines, thanks largely to the success of Tips & Tricks. Tips, edited by "Video Games & Computer Entertainment" writer Chris Bieniek, is the first tips-devoted video game magazine to have achieved true popularity amongst gamers, and it's not hard to understand why. Last year, T&T blew such hits as "King of Fighters '96" wide open with strategy guides that rivalled and even surpassed dedicated publications like those by Brady Games, and still gets its readers in on the action with a letters page that prominently shows pictures of avid T&T fans and a humble attitude quite unlike the "in your face" style of most pro rags. However, T&T has gone downhill as of late... the popular fanzine review section has disappeared (apparently Bieniek doesn't want to review new issues of 'zines he's already mentioned), and worse yet, it has stretched itself dangerously thin with over a dozen very small strategy guides, including a two page spread on "Clay Fighter 63 1/3" and a not-so in-depth look at "Street Fighter EX Plus", where no moves were revealed.

On the other hand, EGM² just keeps getting better and better. The layout still leaves much to be desired (it smacks

And the first GRB "Bastard of the Month" award goes to Jerry Springer, that callous, exploitative, shameless, grandstanding slime who hosts the sleazy talk show of the same name. I can't believe that the powers that be actually cancelled "NightStand With Dick Dietrick", a reasonably clever parody of these absurd afternoon talk shows, and left this cospie of humanity on the air. For an example of Springer's mad depravity, look no further than the "I'm Sleeping With Your Fiancee" episode, where Jerry tricked a couple into coming on the show and revealed to the man, in the most humiliating way possible on national television, that the woman who he'd planned to marry was having sex with his best man. And this isn't the worst part! After the man, whose spirit had clearly been crushed, went for the throat of his traitorous ex-friend, the Springer bouncers grabbed both men (but naturally af-ter the fight began and the two were all over each other) and Jerry had the audacity to joke, "If you only knew how much those chairs cost..." You callous freak. If the white trash on your show had the combined IQ of a radish, they'd beat the shit out of you for cruelly exploiting them in front of millions instead of each other. Enjoy your award, you bastard.

slightly of the miserable "Mega Play", Sendai's old throwaway guide to the Sega Genesis), but the strategy guides are a step above the more rushed ones in Tips & Tricks, and there's even trace amounts of humor sprinkled throughout the magazine (check out the fact boxes at the bottom of each guide to see what I mean). However, the lack of a complete codes list a'la "Tips & Tricks" does hurt it, as does the somewhat indifferent writing style. Good, but not great.

The big surprise in the tips 'zine wars is newcomer MegaFan. This magazine, originally designed as a guide to next generation systems like the Saturn and Playstation, is now more than competent as a tips rag and game spoiler, with huge, extremely detailed strategy guides to such titles as "Street Fighter EX Plus" that leave nothing to the imagination. The occasional looks at classic video games (an idea stolen from "Tips & Tricks") is a wonderful feature, and the typical DHGF crystal clear photos only add to this promising magazine's appeal. However, like DHGF, MegaFan has a tendency to be ill-informed and self-absorbed, so if you're buying a tips 'zine for its personality, leave this one on the shelves.

All three magazines are worth a look if you need cheats for your favorite games... I just hope T&T improves, & soon.

GAME OVER

What'd He Say?

I'd like to open this closer with some sad news... Gumppei Yokoi, designer of the Virtual Boy and GameBoy portable systems, has died, apparently the victim of a car accident (yes, that was not a typo. I said this was sad news...). I say "apparently" because it seems strikingly odd to me that Yokoi would just happen to kick the bucket one year after the colossal failure of the Virtual Boy. It's true that Yokoi had been muscled out of Nintendo after the Veeb had hit the clearance bins, but perhaps the company wasn't finished exacting its revenge on the man for humiliating them with his red-eyed pipe dream...? Hey, you never know. It happened to Vince Foster (well, at least according to "The American Spectator"...).

All imaginative conspiracy theories aside, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for reading, and for putting up with this issue's various quirks. I lost the use of my Humanist521 font (y'know, the one that looks vaguely like the typeset "Next Generation" uses), so GRB #4 probably doesn't look as professional as it could, or should be. Furthermore, I'm sure the fanzine content rating system won't sit well with many readers. Keep in mind that my choices were largely subjective, and based upon the "feel" of the fanzines in question as well as the amount of profanity they use. "Slap-Dash", for instance, got a 'Zine 13 because although it covered some adult topics, the entire 'zine had a lighter atmosphere than "Splat!", which received a 'Zine 18 label. Anyways, I'm still experimenting with the concept, so let me know how I'm doing (no pun intended, Rick).

After much research and coordination, I was able to enlist another handful of fan-ed's for the OnFile project. It was a lot of fun talking to some of the old-schoolers who've since defected from the hobby... like Todd Lintner, who was amused that Sega of Japan had taken his infamous "MASTERminds" cover one step further with "Sonic Drift 2" (in true Seinfeldian modesty, he replied, "It just goes to show how much influence I had..."). Matt Lotti (of "Hyper'zine") hasn't changed much, but Chris Dyer... wow! His life's gotten quite crazy since quitting "Sub-Zero", so much so that he's turned to religion as a source of strength (which, of course, is cool). Then there's Ben Leatherman... if you thought "Fanarchy" was intense, you'll be pleased (or frightened!) to know that he's much the same way over the phone. It's like talking to Sean Pettibone, except not quite as disturbing.

While I'm on the topic of resurrected obscurities, I may as well offer my two cents on the recent crop of emulators released for the Playstation and Saturn. I still haven't tried any of Midway's classics compilations... I desperately want to wrap my hands around a copy of their first (it's almost a guarantee that the arcade-perfect emulations of "Sinistar", "Joust", and "Robotron:2084" would keep me up into the wee hours of the night), but "The Atari Collection" looks pretty lame. The full-motion video interviews with long-forgotten game designers would be great for you Russ Perry types, but the titles themselves are lacking ("Super Breakout"? "Centipede"! My 2600 could do this crap!). Almost as perplexing is Volume 2 of the Midway collection... some of the games are indeed worth a look (ie "Joust 2", which I only played once in the arcades, and "Spy Hunter", which has always played better on home consoles anyway), but "Splat!"? Eek! That sucks! Um, the game, I mean, not the fanzine. Equally depressing is "Root Beer Tapper"... while essentially the same as the popular bar game, it's the kiddie-ized version without the Budweiser license, obviously thrown in to appease Joe Liebermann and frothing parents groups who can't seem to understand that adults play video games too. I won't hold my breath for it, but I'd personally like to see a Bally collection surface with the following games: "Omega Race", "Gorf" (bite me, Joe-boy; this game rocks!), the inimitable "Satan's Hollow", the incomprehensible "Blueprint" (just try to name one other game where you have to save your girlfriend from a crazed prune!), "Solar Fox", "Wizard of Wor" (this one begs for Saturn Netlink support!), and, if they can afford the licenses, "Tron" and "Journey". The latter in particular would be great if they'd play classic Journey tunes straight off the CD...

Well, I'm outta space so I'd better go. Seizure next issue!



The Next Exciting Edition of "The Gameroom Blitz" will be...

"Late. Very, very late."

"So, how does that make it any different from this one?"

"Shut up, Byron..."

"Anyways, Jess is right. Don't expect another issue of GRB for a while since he'll be devoting his time to college and hopefully the 'On-File' project."

"Yeah, what Jypsky said."

"Next issue has no set topic, either, as Ragan-san cannot decide if he wants to do the cute issue or work with Pakura-san to create one final issue of GB8B."

"Bashi speaks the truth. Anything you'd like to add, Molotov?"

"Twcet"

Jess

"Uh, yeah. See you next issue, whenever that is."

Sunrise... the Japanese Saturn Scene

The Saturn may be as good as dead here in the United States, but in the land of the rising sun, people know a good thing when they see it and continue to support Sega's 32-bit powerhouse with good software and even better hardware.

There are far more shooters in Japan than there are here in the States, but that's no big loss. "Blue Sky, Crimson Warriors" looks fine, but if you weren't fond of "Galactic Attack" (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) it's safe to pass it by. The same thing goes for "SteamGear Mash", a cutesy mech game which has been popping up in book stores around the Tucson area. "NEXT Generation" wasn't kind to this "Sonic 3D Blast" lookalike, and judging from the pictures I've seen, it's not hard to understand why. In a sea of mediocrity, Treasure is once again a shining beacon with "Silhouette Mirage". This "Gunstar Heroes" derivative is even fruitier than other Treasure titles, but still looks very promising. So does "Bomberman Fight!!", an inventive new 3D extension of the series with more chaos than even veteran Bomberman can handle.

I'm also crazy about side-scrolling brawlers. The most notable of these releases in the Saturn's fighting game canon is "X-Men Vs. Street Fighter". This sloppy crossover's spastic, uneven gameplay never did much for me, but its inclusion of a four meg RAM cartridge which promises a perfect translation makes it very hard for even me to ignore. More to my taste is SNK's dead-on conversion of "King of Fighters '96", the game which first explored the concepts later recycled in Capcom's Vs. games.

More Japanese but still... um, interesting is "Groove On Fight", a beat-'em-up with weird characters, devastating super moves, and a tag-team feature. It doesn't look terrific, but I'll try anything once. Well, except maybe "Anarchy in Nippon", a "Virtua Fighter" clone designed by "Virtua Fighter" fans. There's no chance this game will be released here in the States, and with "Fighter's Megamix" around, there's really no need for it to be. If it were, it'd probably be renamed "Japanarchy", much to Ben Leatherman's chagrin... It does prompt the question, "How the heck did amateur game designers whip up a polygonal fighter on the notoriously difficult to program Saturn?" The answer may be as simple as Saturn BASIC, a Yarouze-esque product which allows would-be programmers to create their own masterpieces quickly and painlessly, with commands that make even polygon manipulation a piece of cake. Add a Saturn disk drive and Phillips' RCD-ROM PC, and banzai! You're an unofficial licensee! Life just doesn't get any better than this...

HEY, KIDS!

Are you looking for a web site with a professional layout, that's updated weekly, with reviews of the hottest and coolest Playstation and N64 games? Oh. Well, when you're done looking for that magical spot on the Internet, take a look at "The Gameroom Blitz On-Line". It's chock full of all the wholesome goodies that you read "The Gameroom Blitz" for, plus exclusive articles on television shows and old personal computers like the Vic-20 that you just won't find anywhere else! OK, OK, so no one else would print them. They're still exclusive... So, check out "The Gameroom Blitz On-Line" at:

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(rough sketch of the old Ragan backyard)



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