METROID
Prime 2 tipped &
Metroid DS rated!

MARIO
Dual screen Super
Mario 64 reviewed!

ZELDA
Four Swords. Six
pages. One verdict.

NEW SHOTS!
‘Realistic’ Zelda
Mario Baseball
Resi Evil 4

World Exclusive Preview of 2005’s Hottest Shooter!

TIMESPLITTERS
FUTURE PERFECT

REVIEWED!
VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 • MADDEN DS
FEEL THE MAGIC • CALL OF DUTY
PRINCE OF PERSIA...
Brand new series weekends at 9.30am and 4.00pm from 01.01.05
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IT'S HERE!

Without wishing to steal thunder from our new section dedicated to Nintendo’s handheld consoles — NSC POCKET — first impressions of DS aren’t overwhelmingly great. After the solid, rounded, satisfying snap of GBA SP, in places the finish of DS feels a little… cheap? There again, for a dual-screen system with touch-screen technology, wireless connectivity and a built-in microphone, Nintendo have done a remarkable job to keep the system affordable for the masses (UK pricing and launch date to be confirmed in a matter of weeks, by the way — hey, maybe we’ll be eating our words). It’s once you start interacting with a game that makes creative use of these features (something like Feel the Magic) that you understand what DS is all about, why it just works, why Nintendo are on to a winner.

The first thing we did with our three systems? Fire up the in-built messaging service PicoChat and send each other sketches of grotesquely oversized man-pipes.

Happy New Year.

Team NGC

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NGC’s the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you’re the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.
METROID PRIME 2
TIPPED! Get every missile in the game with our no-nonsense guide.

ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS
HANG ON Link’s been drawn and quartered. Neat.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
MOVIE MADNESS Joe’s already saved the girl – but can they have a happy ending?

WHAT’S IN NGC?
Enough to keep you busy for weeks...

PREVIEWS
Amazing new games coming your way

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT
Our reporter infiltrates Free Radical’s studio for a look at the Future...

FIGHT NIGHT 2005
For everyone who can’t slug like Amir Khan – the chance to do it virtually.

RESIDENT EVIL 4
Confirmed! The true identity of the mysterious lady in red.

DONKEY KONGA JUNGLE BEAT
Bash your way through this adventure with those bongos.

PREVIEW ROUND-UP
Hulk 2, Dragon Ball Z Budokai 2, a new Kirby adventure (oh joy!), FIFA Street, NFL Street 2, Mario Party 6 and a few little snippets besides.

NEWS
The latest rumours, truths and goings-on

NEWS
New Zelda shots, Star Fox details... this is all good stuff.

RELEASE LIST
Every forthcoming UK title, plus the biggest US and Japanese ones.

 NGC POCKET
DS and GBA, packed away in their own handy section.

REVIEWS
Ways to blow your hard-earned cash

DS REVIEWS

GBA REVIEWS
Lord of the Rings: The Third Age, Ty 2: Bush Rescue, The Urbz, Shrek 2: Beg For Mercy (you will!), Shark Tale, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: Battle Nexus, Ms Pac-Man, Pac-Man World and WWE Survivor Series.

LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES
More Link than any other game. In fact, four Links for four players.

KING ARTHUR
The only thing legendary about this is its legendary badness. Ho ho.

CALL OF DUTY FINEST HOUR
Fight on all fronts, from the deserts of North Africa to frozen Stalingrad.

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN
A more mature prince? That’ll be hair, ‘attitude’ and bad rock music, then...

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
Behind every successful man there’s a good woman. With a mean high kick.
NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

ACT YOUR AGE, LINK!

BRAND-NEW SHOTS OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME...

Here are some sharp new Zelda shots to take away with you before we shut up shop for the rest of the year and gorge ourselves on the spoils of the holiday season. Just look at them – stunning one and all. What’s more, if Shigeru Miyamoto is to be believed (and we reckon you can pretty much trust him on this one), we’ll have just five more months to wait before its final unveiling. Speaking to Japanese publication Famitsu he stated that progress on Link’s stunning new adventure was coming along very well, and that Nintendo plan to have a final, playable version of the game ready in time for £3.

It may also interest you to know that Treehouse, Nintendo of America’s localisation and product development team, are already working on the title. Treehouse are responsible for, among other things, translating and evaluating Japanese games so that they can be prepared for western markets. This also includes establishing the correct ESRB rating (the US equivalent of PEGI ratings) like the ‘E’ for Everyone, ‘T’ for Teen, and ‘M’ for Mature, which find their way onto US game boxes.

Currently Treehouse predict that, unlike Wind Walker, which was assigned an E rating and could be played by all and sundry, the new Zelda will be in line for a slightly more mature Teen Rating. As a point of comparison, the rather dark, and often genuinely disturbing Majora’s Mask received an E.

△ Link looking moody on his horse. But he can do more than just ride it...

△ We can’t wait to try our hand at fighting on horseback. It’s got to be better than King Arthur’s horseplotation.

1 MILLION
DS SALES GO NUTS!

AND MORE...
MORE FROM MIYAMOTO...

Other than the new Zelda, the game everyone really wants to see is Mario 123. According to Miyamoto, the game is still very much in development and Nintendo are currently going working on a number of 'experiments' with Mario – suggesting that it's still a long way from being a finished game. He also explained that the title Mario 123 is still a tentative title, and one that's based on the overall theme of the game. Quite what that means is anyone's guess, but we can't help being reminded of the old Gamecube demo that showed 128 little Marios running around a circular arena. Could we soon be controlling a little army of Marios Pikmin-style? Will we actually see it before we're 50?

NEW POKÉMON FOR GAMECUBE
LIKE SLASHER MOVIE VILLAINS, THEY KEEP COMING BACK

Miyamoto recently revealed that, with Gamecube's successor (Revolution) being over a year away, Nintendo are already working on another Gamecube Pokemon title. There are no real details, but we can't help but wonder whether or not this will finally be the 'proper' Pokemon RPG that every man and his 'Mon has been waiting for. Sure, Colosseum's story mode was okay, but it was pretty basic and extremely linear. Nintendo are already on their way to delivering the Zelda that everyone wanted - it's not unlikely that they're planning the same with this. We'll have an in-depth investigation into Pokemon's future next issue...

...AT A CINEMA NEAR YOU

NINTENDO FINALISE PLANS FOR THEIR CINEMATIC VENTURE

His won't happen until 2006 - but Nintendo have finally announced their plan to move into the animated film business. They've made the odd excursion into film before, with Pokemon and the quite, quite awful Mario Bros being just two examples. They have also had many TV series based on some of their best-loved game characters and franchises, from Kirby to F-Zero - however, these have all been either licensed films or work given to external studios to produce. This time around, though, all aspects of film making, from planning through to production, will be handled at Nintendo, who are building their own in-house studios to create content. Exactly what this content will be, we don't know. Will we see films based on big games like Zelda and Metroid or will Nintendo create something entirely new and original? We think it would be wonderful to see Nintendo making heartwarming and visually stunning animated films like Studio Ghibli (responsible for Spirited Away and Princess Mononoke) do, but that may be asking for too much.

They've already said that they're looking at ways of combining the theatre experience with gaming, with their forthcoming Pokemon movie offering new, wirelessly downloadable game content for DS owners sitting in the theatre. It seems likely that Nintendo will want to exploit such connectivity with their films. Whatever they plan, we hope they don't go the way of Square, whose Spirit's Within lost a great deal of money during its theatrical release and actually resulted in the closure of the Hawaii studio where the $135 million film was made.

SHORT CUTS

N64 PLAYER?

Nothing's confirmed, but a recent poll on Nintendo Insider's readers if they'd like an N64 player for Gamecube have gone, and how much they'd be willing to pay for it. It's a strange thing to ask if Nintendo have no plans to release such a device, but you have to wonder how it's responded to work. Where would it fit? Would it be an external deck? Is it supposed to squeeze under the Gamecube and GBA player? And why wouldn't it appeal to Beyond Minnie's hardcore fans, its appeal would be limited unless, as if by magic, the player could make old N64 games look fresh again. Otherwise, why not just play the games on your old kit? If you ask us, this is highly unlikely to see the light of day.

NINTENDO PLAYS BALL

You may already know that Hiroshi Yamauchi owns a substantial share of the Seattle Mariners, the city's baseball team. Nintendo of America have announced $47 million to buy the Mariners a ticket, so they now own over 50% of the team. The Mariners are one of the most popular teams in Japan, mainly thanks to a player called Ichiro Sumbi, who, at the time of writing, has the 'hit record' for a single season. With Mariner's games being shown regularly in Japan, the acquisition ensures plenty of prominent advertising for Nintendo.

JANUARY 2005 NGC
STARFOX DETAILS FINALISED

AND WITH THEM, A SCREENSHOT TSUNAMI IS UNLEASHED...

Saucy new box art? Check. 14th of February US release date? Check. Screenshots dumped on our desk a few minutes before deadline? Check! Nintendo had some demo pods of the near-completed StarFox at their Nintendo World Touch! DS events in Japan back in November, and it’s undergone some distinct changes since we saw it at E3. The screen furniture has been altered slightly, with crisper readings for energy levels, weapons and so on. That’s purely cosmetic, but it’s more polished than when we last saw it.

The biggest change (and the most disappointing one) is the move away from FPS-style controls for the on-foot sections. While Fox can still move around via the analogue stick, the C-stick is used for quick weapon selection. The pay-off is that, in order to look around freely, you have to hold the Right trigger, rooting old Foxy to the spot. Not what you want in the middle of a shoot-out with your mates. Hopefully there’ll be an option to customise the controls because the new system seems rather restrictive.

On a more cheerful note, the Arwing sections look incredible and promise plenty of ‘classic’ StarFox action alongside the arena battling. There are still on-rails sections to look forward to – in particular a run through a forest planet that was reminiscent of Panzer Dragoon Orta – and a battle through an armada orbiting a planet that’s bustling with so much activity you’ll be able to smell your Gamecube melting under the strain. All of a sudden we’re quivering with excitement.

△ Krystal will always be on hand to give advice.

△ The Landmaster is extremely agile and versatile for a tank, letting you roll and hover in the air.

△ How will the changes to the controls affect the multiplayer?
Mario? Playing a sport? What will they think of next? Should be good, though.

Mario! Playing a sport? What will they think of next? Should be good, though.

MARIO BASEBALL

NAMCO HIT ANOTHER HOME RUN…

Another Mario, another sports sim. While many have been critical about the fact this is another Mushroom Kingdom re-branded sporting sim, we’re secretly looking forward to it. Maybe it’s because it’ll make an inaccessible US sport a little bit easier for us European simpletons. Or maybe it’s because our multiplayer senses are still tingling after the excellent Golf and Tennis. Whatever, it’s good to see Nintendo’s strong ties with Namco continuing to bear fruit.

Unfortunately we don’t have any concrete gameplay details as yet. We know that the game will include some kind of Challenge mode but that’s about it. It’s a pretty safe bet to assume it’ll be another quality title packed to the rafters with superbly playable minigames. All that remains to be seen now is whether Europe shows any interest in it.

More on this in the coming months – it’s definitely one to watch.

These battles are incredibly hectic and busy with enemy crafts.

ONE IN A MILLION

Just before going to press we learned that DS has sold 500,000 units in Japan. Combined with US sales, this now makes a million units sold.

Oh, and if you’re looking for DS news this month, you’ll find it in our new section, ‘NGC Pocket’ starting on p.33. Many thanks to the good helpful importers ‘Skill’, who supplied us with our early DS unit. You can find them at www.skill2k.com.
January 2005

6 King Arthur Konami
7 The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures Nintendo
7 NES Classics: Castlevania Nintendo
7 NES Classicis: Dr Mario (GBA) Nintendo
7 NES Classicis: Metroid (GBA) Nintendo
7 NES Classics: Zelda II The Adventure of Link (GBA) Nintendo

February 2005

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TBC Shaman King: Master of Spirits (GBA) Konami

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4 Ghost Recon 2 UBISOFT
11 Robots Vivendi
11 Robots (GBA) Vivendi

11 Timesplices Future Perfect MOST WANTED EA
18 Mario Party 6 Nintendo
23 Fairy Odd Parents: Shadow Showdown THQ
23 Fairy Odd Parents: Shadow Showdown (GBA) THQ
23 Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories (GBA) Nintendo

30 Resident Evil 4 MOST WANTED Capcom

TBC Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams THQ
TBC Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams (GBA) THQ
30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: BattleNexus Konami
TBC Viewtiful Joe 2 Capcom

May 2005

TBC Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith (DS) UBISOFT
TBC Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith (GBA) UBISOFT

Spring 2005

Advance Guardian Heroes (GBA) UBISOFT
Asphalt Urban GT (DS) UBISOFT
Bokai 2: Solar Boy D Angelo (GBA) Konami
Killler 7 Capcom

Medium of Honor: Dogs of War EA
Metroid Prime Hunters: First Hunt (DS) Nintendo
NBA Street V3 EA
Nintendo DS (Hardware) Nintendo
Rayman DS UBISOFT
Sprung (DS) (working title) UBISOFT
Super Mario 64 DS (DS) Nintendo

Winnie the Pooh Rumbly Tumbly Adventure UBISOFT
Winnie the Pooh Rumbly Tumbly Adventure (GBA) UBISOFT
Zoo Keeper (DS) Ignition

Summer 2005

Batman Begins EA
Batman Begins (GBA) EA

TBC 2005

Advance Wars DS (working title) (DS) Nintendo
Advance Wars: Under Fire Nintendo
Allan Hamolin Ubisoft

Animal Crossing (DS) MOST WANTED Nintendo
Another (working title) (DS) Nintendo
Atari Classics (DS) Atari
Baten Kaitos Namco
Bionicle 2 (GBA) THQ
Bokai (working title) (DS) Konami
Bombaman (DS) Hudson
Cave Excellence (DS) Atlus
Castlevania (working title) (DS) Konami
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Custom Robo Nintendo
Dr. King of Swing (GBA) Nintendo
Dora The Explorer: Super Star Adventures (DS) Table 2
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Nintendo
Dragon Booster Konami
Dragon Booster (DS) Konami
Dragon Quest Monsters (working title) (DS) Square Enix
Dynasty Warriors (DS) Koei
Egg Monster Heroes (DS) Square Enix
Fantastic Four Activision
Feel the Magic: XY/XX (DS) Sega

FIFA Street MOST WANTED EA
Final Fantasy III (DS) Square Enix
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles (working title) (DS) Square Enix

Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn (DS) Nintendo
Fredder 2005 Nintendo
Fredder 2005 (DS) Nintendo

Fresh tittle Zinna

Game Zero (working title) Zonami
Genbare Goemon (DS) Konami
Geist Nintendo
The Godfather EA
GoldEye: Rogue Agent (DS) EA

Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland Avanlon
Harvest Moon (DS) Natsume

Jam with the Band (working title) (DS) Nintendo
Lamborghini FX Avalanche

The Legend of Zelda MOST WANTED Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda DS (working title) (DS) Nintendo

Madden NFL 2005 (DS) EA
Mario Kart (DS) MOST WANTED Nintendo

Mario Party Advance (GBA) Nintendo
Mega Man Battle Network (DS) Capcom
Meteos (DS) Bandai
Mr. Driller: Drill Spirits (DS) Namco

Mobile Suit Gundam Seed (DS) Bandai
Monster Rancher (DS) Tecmo
Moonlight Fables (DS) Majesco

The Movies Activision
Nonstoppy (DS) Majesco
Need for Speed Underground (DS) EA
NEW Super Mario Bros (GBA) Nintendo

Nightmare Before Christmas: The Pumpkin King (GBA) Nintendo

Nintendo Puzzle Collection Nintendo
Odama MOST WANTED Nintendo
Oggy and the Cockroaches (GBA) Telgames
One Line: Puzzle (working title) (DS) Nintendo
One Piece (DS) Bandai
Pac'n Roll (DS) Namco
Pac-Pix (DS) Namco
Pingo Pals (DS) THQ
Pokémon Dash (DS) Nintendo
Pokémon Diamond (DS) Nintendo
Pokémon Pearl (DS) Nintendo
Pupee Times (working title) (DS) Nintendo
Puyo Puyo Tetris (DS) Sega
Rave Master: Special Attack Force (GBA) Konami
Ridge Racer (DS) Namco
Robots (DS) Vivendi
RoboP Zoom: Race for Impact Sega
Secret of Mana (DS) Square Enix
Snowboard Kids DS Atlus
Sonic DS (working title) (DS) Sega
Space Raiders Taito
Spider-Man 2 (DS) Activision
SpongeBob SquarePants (DS) THQ
SRS: Street Racing Syndicate Namco
Stargate: Ghost Vivendi

Star Fox Assault MOST WANTED Nintendo
Super Princess Peach (DS) Nintendo
Survival Kids (DS) Konami
Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf 2005 (DS) EA
Touch! Kirby’s Magic Paintbrush (DS) Nintendo
Ultimate Brain Games (DS) Telegames
Ultimate Card Games (DS) Telegames
Ultimate Pocket Games (DS) Telegames
Unity Lionhead

The Urba: Sims in the City (DS) EA
Vanda! Harleys (working title) (DS) Konami
Viewsiful Joe (DS) Capcom
Virtue Quest Sega

WarioWare Inc DS (DS) MOST WANTED Nintendo
WINX (working title) (DS) Konami
World Championship Pool 2004 Jaleco
World Soccer Winning Eleven Series (working title) (DS) Konami

Yoshi's Universal Gravitation (GBA) Konami
Yoshi's Touch and Go (working title) (DS) Nintendo
Yu-Gi-Oh! Destiny Board Traveller (GBA) Konami
Yu-Gi-Oh! Nightmare Troubadour (DS) Konami
Zoids (DS) Tomy
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<td>Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town for Girls (GBA)</td>
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<td>Virtua Quest</td>
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<td>NBA Street Vol. 3</td>
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<td>WarioWare Touched! (DS)</td>
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<td>Mortal Kombat: Deception</td>
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<td>TBC Chaos Field</td>
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<td>Pokomon Dash (DS)</td>
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<td>Advance Wars: Under Fire</td>
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<td>Fire Emblem</td>
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<td>Puyo Pop Fever (DS)</td>
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<td>Tempest no Ouji-sama 2002 Crystal Drive (DS)</td>
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<td>Yu-Gi-Oh! Duell Monsters International 2 (GBA)</td>
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<td>Cambare! Dodge Fighters (GBA)</td>
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<td>Snowboard Kids DS</td>
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<td>Choro Q DS</td>
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<td>Touch! Kirby Maho no Fuande! (Touch! Kirby Magic Paintbrush)</td>
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<td>Chibi Rob! (new)</td>
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<td>The Legend of Zelda</td>
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###的时代

**1. Legend of Zelda**

Game: One of the most popular games of all time, the Legend of Zelda series is a classic adventure game that has been beloved by generations of gamers. The game features a unique and engaging storyline, well-designed gameplay, and stunning graphics that have set the standard for the fantasy genre.

**2. Resident Evil 4**

Game: A survival horror game that combines tense gameplay with jump scares to create a terrifying experience. The game has a well-written narrative and a variety of enemy types, making it a true masterpiece of the genre.

**3. Timesplitters Future Perfect**

Game: A hack-and-slash action game that combines a high-energy combat system with a unique storyline that takes place in a post-apocalyptic world. The game has a fast-paced pace and a variety of weapons and abilities to explore.

**4. Star Fox Assault**

Game: A 3D shooter that combines classic gameplay mechanics with a modern, high-tech aesthetic. The game has a variety of enemy types and weapon options to choose from, making it a thrilling and addictive experience.

**5. WarioWare Inc: DS**

Game: A collection of bite-sized minigames that are designed to be short and sweet. The game has a diverse range of gameplay styles, from puzzle to action, to keep players engaged and entertained.

**6. Mario Kart DS**

Game: A classic kart racing game that has been updated for the DS platform. The game has a variety of characters and courses to choose from, making it a fun and engaging experience for players of all ages.

**7. New Entry**

**FIFA Street**

Game: A sports game that combines elements of football and trick shots to create a unique and engaging experience. The game has a variety of gameplay modes and a customizable character creator, allowing players to create and customize their own player.

**8. New Entry**

**Animal Crossing (DS)**

Game: A simulation game that combines elements of a virtual pet game with a social aspect. The game has a variety of activities and activities to choose from, making it a fun and engaging experience for players of all ages.

**9. New Entry**

**Chibi Robo! Bandai/Nintendo**

Game: A platformer that combines elements of action and puzzle-solving. The game has a variety of enemies and obstacles to overcome, making it a challenging and rewarding experience.

**10. Odama**

Game: A puzzle game that combines elements of puzzle-solving with a humorous and quirky aesthetic. The game has a variety of puzzles to solve, making it a fun and engaging experience for players of all ages.
Close and personal with the game that’s got 2005 all sewn up for you...

Take Metroid Prime’s exploration-based adventure out of the equation and Free Radical’s TimeSplitters 2 stands head and shoulders above the rest to walk away with our very own preview copy of TimeSplitters Future Perfect, we pondered the offer for all of ten seconds before hopping in a car and zooming up the M5 in search of Nottingham.

After a couple of days searching for the place, we got lucky. And we reckon with this game, Free Radical have hit a rich seam of gameplay gold. Here’s why the future really will be perfect...

THE BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER ON GAMECUBE

as the very best first-person shooter on Gamecube.

Naturally, every Nintendo fan is looking forward to the sequel, and when we got the chance not simply to visit Free Radical HQ but
SPECIAL INVESTIGATION
“Cortez is an identifiable action hero”

BIGGER, BETTER, MORE...
Just a small selection of the game’s new, improved goodies.

MATES Here’s Harry Taper, a funky private eye from 1940, using laser goggles to zoom through some pretty brings for you. Every level has friendly characters of one sort or another, and you’ll often need to protect them to make progress.

COMPUTERS Locked areas may be controlled by terminals. You can also access the guards’ personal emails and turn their own auto guns on them.

GORE Although the numbers-style creatures are still the only ones that you can actually decapitate, every other enemy has plenty of juice to soak as you whenever you shoot them. It’s not a bloodless Evil of a splashier game but it’s fairly bloody.

TELEKINESIS Just thing on your wrist is a holographic map that doubles as a gravity weapon. Simply point at something you want to pick up and press the trigger. You can throw things, or keep health packs hovering until you need them.

PUZZLES There are plenty of the familiar switch-flipping, time-pulling puzzles to be found, plus some interesting physical challenges. In this one you have to operate a crane to remove the gun turret from a tethered boat.
TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT
The future’s bright... bright... with sticky bits

OR DOAK SPEAKS
We met up with Free Radical co-founder and GoldenEye legend David Doak to talk TimeSplitters and chat about the company’s new relationship with Electronic Arts...

What do you see as the main advantages of having the game published by EA?
TimeSplitters 2 scored tremendously well across the board. Free, we don’t need much help to make the game. We want to be confident, it’s going to be brought to market properly, and you can’t question EA’s ability to do that.

How does helping Free Radical in any aspect of development benefit you?
It’s purely down to us. There’s obviously collaboration on it, but TimeSplitters has a fairly well established identity. Part of it has been trying to make it more accessible to the mainstream. I think our British-ness has maybe hampered us slightly in America, and it’s about making parts of the game accessible. So, for instance, the whole body-jumping discontinuity in TimeSplitters, we’ve explained that in this one.

Also, the single-player game, you play through it as Cortez all the time, and Cortez is an identifiable action hero. He’s still funny, and there’s quirkiness about it, but he’s a bloke who dresses primarily in black, with a gun, and I think that’s important. Whatever kind of fanciful ideas we might have for marketing and achieving prominence in the market are absolutely critical. It’s become so competitive, if you have something which is seen as a fault or a flaw compared to other games then you need to do better.

Now have you changed Free Radical in any way?
He’s a fuller character now. He was a bit of a mindless ox before. I think he’s a fun character because he’s a bit of a tongue-in-cheek action hero. He likes big guns, he likes shooting things, but he also gets in funny situations. There’s a lot of funny stuff in the cut-scenes where he plays straight man while other people mess around. We’ve made him look a bit darker, he’s got this dark body armour.

All that kind of stuff is just about being careful not to turn the mainstream away. The economics of making games now means you really have to try and target that audience. The other people won’t mind if he’s maybe a bit more action hero looking. We had early concept stuff where he was wearing a lighter uniform. We’ve kept that character in the multiplayer game, but that’s the only time we’ve consciously tried to shape a character. All the others are as wacky and, some of them, as unmarketable as ever. There are things more that are just completely off the wall but that’s always been part of it.

JANUARY 2005 NSC 17
Special Investigation
“Electrocuting cyborg chimps to make them disco’dance”

More Oddak...

Each new splatter zone is the main difference between this and the previous game. The main difference, really, or the main topics of our attention, has been the story. Looking at TimeSplitters 2, the one thing people criticised about it was that the story wasn’t really a story. It was a lot of set pieces and it had no explanation. What we’ve done in this is take Cortez as the main character and build the story around him. It also allows us to have some sensible character development – you get to know him better as you go through. Also, in terms of the quality of what people are doing, we had to raise our game.

In the story, it’s all about improving the look and feel of the thing and the emotional experience. There are lots more set pieces, interaction with the backgrounds, physics going on, and generally building on what we have. It’s something that, hand on heart, I’d say is a good story. It’s a good time-travel yarn, with all the things you would expect from that, such as meeting yourself, and some paradox stuff. You know, verging on the Bill & Ted or Back to the Future gags. The whole idea of a time-travel lends itself to ludicrous situations, so that’s all tied up in the story. It was a bit galling for us for people to say we couldn’t do a decent story and it was nice with Second Sight to say, yes, we can do a good story.

How does Second Sight impact you in any way? Yes, because it’s all a learning experience. If you look at T3, it had no cut-scenes, T2 had cut-scene animation but a only ran to about 20 minutes or something in the whole game. Also, they were quite simple situations. With Second Sight, because we had to script and manage an entire screenplay, effectively, extra experience was gained in screen direction and the techniques of managing that kind of project. All of our animation team who were working on Second Sight came directly to TimeSplitters.

Have you kept the same visual aesthetics as T2? Yeah. It’s story, art, and the league stuff. We’ve rolled up the menu flow and the front end. There are always a few quirky things you look back on and think ‘that should have been before’. We’re also pushing the challenges because there was a lot of single-player gameplay in the game and a lot of fun to be had with it, and we made it (not entirely) obvious from the front screen that there was stuff to go and play with. Likewise: the map maker – we’ve keen to push that. We’ve made it better in the after each time we’ve revised it.

The immediate striking about Future Perfect is the game’s gore level. “If TimeSplitters 2 was rated today, it would be an 18,” explains Free Radical’s Karl Hilton. “Since we’re going to be competing in that market, we had to increase our splatter content accordingly.” It still looks stylised and cartoon, but unlike the previous installments, there’s plenty of blood spraying around, and enemies meet some comically gruesome fates. Gunshots produce a puff of blood vapour and leave a sticky mess on the walls. Zombie heads can be blown clean off, and you can see bits of spine poking out of the wounds.

There’s an area in the game: during the 1990s haunted mansion level, where previous, less fortunate explorers are suspended from the ceiling, having stepped into noise traps or fallen foul of the house’s evil denizens. You can shoot them up, demonstrating the game’s rag doll physics, but them down and watch the bodies fall, or decapitate them as you see fit. And yes, you can grab hold of severed heads using the gravity gun and fling them around the place. The violence is done with wit and imagination. One impressive sequence sees you enter a mortuary room with three autopsy tables, each with a chute leading up from it. The door locks, zombies start sliding down the chutes, and as you get to grips with the gravity gun you just picked up, the room becomes crowded with the shambling undead, most of them stumbling around with harpoons stuck...
The future's bright... bright red, with sticky bits

TANKED UP
This futuristic battle tank handles in a completely different way to any other vehicle we've found so far (such as the more common buggy on the right). You have to use the two analogue sticks to move each track forwards or backwards. Pushing up on the left and down on the right makes it spin clockwise on the spot, while leaving the right stick in the neutral position makes it turn in a slow arc to the right.

through various parts of their anatomy.

Zombies sometimes come equipped to get their own back, cloaked in cracking blue electricity that makes them deadly to the touch.

But they're not the most difficult enemies to tackle. A couple of levels later, in the U-Genix lab, you'll meet TimeSplitters mutants that are all but impervious to ordinary gunfire.

Pretty unpleasant to the beasts' internal chemistry, making them swell to enormous proportions, then explode. Violently. You can pick up the resulting meaty chunks using the gravity gun, although quite why you'd want to walk around with a dripping lump of TimeSplitter torso floating in the air in front of you is anyone's guess.

The combat is somewhat reminiscent of the Xbox game Halo, which used three attack buttons to shoot a weapon, throw a grenade and smash somebody in the face with the butt of a gun. Even Halo's sticky plasma grenade feature has been appropriated, allowing you to attach a buzzing block of explosive to a bit of scenery or an enemy's head.

The use of vehicles is also Halo-esque. You can jump

OKEY DOKEY...

is it on? Gamers have been foiled and now guiding players through the game and its various levels...

When we were talking to people about what they like about TSx, we would ask things like did you like the monkeys, and they'd say 'what monkeys?' Then you'd explain to them that the monkeys were in the challenges, and if you did this, then this, and unlocked this, then you could play the monkey maze challenge. And they'd say, 'well that sounds like a really cool thing, why did you hide it away?' I think it's because the original founders of the company came from the GoldenEye team, and GoldenEye had some pretty hard levels, such as the chaos. We came from an hardcore gaming background and we thought you must have these things that are pretty hard to unlock. I think you do need to have them but you need to be careful that you don't inappropriate put exciting content too deep, because people don't have the time to go looking for it.

Maybe that's to do with the way the market has changed, you know, the age demographic has gone up. You're talking about 20-somethings playing now, that probably being the biggest part of the market. They want to play it but they don't have 40 hours to sit and unlock something. They want to come back from the pub or whatever, or back from work and have a blast on it and feel that they're making some progress. It's just about trying to be more market-savy really.

Are there still lots of monkeys in there?

Yes. The monkeys have evolved slightly. We've got a cyborg monkey, a ninja monkey and a zombie monkey. It's one of those things - somebody just juxtaposes the two words one day and it has to happen, you can't shake it.

Have you come up with any challenges for the game?

I haven't personally because there's a team of perfectly creative people working on it, and it would be a concept for me to go and impose things on it. My role is more to try to be an objective voice and saying this isn't working, this isn't working. If you try this we won't have time to do that.

Do you have a logo?

There's a disco challenge which involves electrocuting cyborg chimps to make them dance. It's a kind of complicated plate-spinning arrangement.

How do the game's classic Cyberdyne style enemies work?

That kind of thing has always been part of the TimeSplitters brand, and that was what we set out to do at the start. We always look at GoldenEye and Perfect Dark. The multiplayer was constrained in terms of look by the characters, which were these military characters from a military game. When we started Free Radical, we wanted to do something that was bright and colourful and had variety in it, and that was how TimeSplitters was born. It was called MAX at the time - multiplayer game. We wanted to have a variety of locations, and our main way of explaining it was time travel. With this one we finally managed to justify that because the main story actually provides a good footing for it, but that was where it came from.

How has the main character changed?

It's flat blocks. The first thing we changed was the way the blocks fitted together, with two types of plugs. We noticed that when people built something with these, the shape was dictated by the blocks. You'd start out of them down and then realise there was only really...
DDOs AND DDAKs...

I don’t think we’ve ever hit the middle point yet. We’ve forced you to build a certain way. We’ve never really found a lot of plug-and-play freedom. Not for a single person, but for teams. But DDAK is a feature which we like a lot. TimeSplitters: Future Perfect will be our chance to find out if it’s a feature the market likes a lot. In TSA we had implemented it but it was a bit hidden away, a bit difficult to use because it was a bit programmer intensive. In the way it was presented. It had to be, because of the nature of what it is. Now we’ve extended the story line to allow you to build assault maps. An assault map is a team-based objective map, and all of the logic is there to do it. You can put your attacker and defender team stars, objectives like destroy an object or flip a switch. Open a door, neutralise some great big gun.

In TSAZ, people have worst 2d map-making levels that made us think twice. GoldenEye

Theoretically, if you design any of the 367 cars you can build the DDAK for any other DDAK game.

Just really. We tried to make them just...unplayable. from each other, so we’ve got the horror one, the Egyptian one, a virtual reality one this time, and this kind of scary-thing. The GoldenEye thing really interests me because those maps, things like Facility or whatever, you get people saying this was an absolutely fantastic map, and you must have put a lot of work into it. We didn’t put any work into it, that was just the way it was built. It’s funny how the familiarity with the thing in terms of the deathmatch layout is almost in peoples heads. It’s not flawed badly in some way, the familiarity with what makes it good – I like playing this map because I knew it was back to front, I know where all the spawners are, I can kill someone and from watching their screen tell where they are and start maneuvering to be there. I always find it really funny when people say those maps were amazing. With TSA we’ve got a thing with the Chinese level which was in the first one, came back in the second one, and we’re going to bring it back again because everyone I talk to say if we’re going to bring that one back. It’s a map which is probably intrinsically quite good but the familiarity thing gets the result.

More questions the new GoldenEye?

I’ve not seen it. We did say if they wanted to pay us we’d do really expensive consultants but we were never involved.

You really haven’t seen anything of it?

I don’t know. I don’t want to get in trouble. Let’s just say I wouldn’t like to be making GoldenEye 2 because it’s become such a rose-tinted, pedestal thing. It would be really difficult to do it. I think the Bond series are quite hard to work with because the Bond films are changing. At the time, MGM came along to look at GoldenEye and said it was too violent. We said to them, have you watched something like Die or No? No? Hats off, but somebody’s he’s talking to, and he just shouts there’s that’s what he does in the books, he can shoot innocent bystanders because, guess what, he’s a licence to kill. He’s allowed to kill people, with no repercussions, completely amorally. But they’ve changed it now because he’s tame to be careful.

A harpooned zombie. Incidentally, the zombies left emails on the computer terminals, the gist of most being: braaaains!

A Cortez’s girl’s friend’s skimpy attire is the butt (ahem) of many an upskirt gag. Well, one. Or two.

Cortez’s girl’s friend’s skimpy attire is the butt (ahem) of many an upskirt gag. Well, one. Or two.

into a number of different cars, trucks or buggies, and if the vehicle has a weapon mounted on the back, you can choose which seat you want to get in. That way it’s possible to have the computer or another player drive you around while you man the gun and blast at anything that moves. Vehicles tend to handle like cars in a driving game, except for certain special ones like the tank, which has separate analogue sticks for each track. The default first-person controls have abandoned the old GoldenEye scheme, whereby you had to hold a shoulder button to bring up the aiming target, in favour of the system used by most other videogames. Now the target reticule is fixed in the centre of the screen at all times. You can change it back to the old way if you prefer, as the controls can be totally customised. Customisation is a big part of the game, thanks to an astonishingly detailed mapmaker moq which allows you to do practically anything short of designing your own geometry and textures. You can now build vertically, stacking blocks up to five levels deep to create huge, open spaces with sniper hideouts at the top. And Free Radical are considering increasing the maximum height to seven for the finished game. The mapmaker tiles can be joined together in almost
**TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT**
The future’s bright... bright red, with sticky bits.

**DO IT YOURSELF**
The expanded mapmaker mode could potentially extend the game’s lifespan far beyond ordinary first-person shooters. When you run out of built-in challenges, designing a few of your own is a rewarding experience thanks to these flexible, user-friendly tools.

- Link up your tiles any way you like, add lighting, add game logic, add objectives...
- Add a radio controlled cat, if you want. Or a few barrels you can pick up and throw. Lovely.

**ONLY DOOKING...**
One thing I think is really strange about consoles: they all ship with the lowest quality AV connections. I don’t know if it was my business I’d probably ship it with a low quality connection anyway, then sell a better one for 25 quid. But from a development point of view that does actually create a real problem. With on-screen text and stuff, your clarity is always limited by the lowest quality connections. Even on the N64, we had it hooked up with something quite good but someone would tell us, ‘That sort of looks too small!’. I could read it, but then they’d plug it into the other thing at the back of the TV and they’d be right: we couldn’t ship it like that. I continually have people asking if we’ll be supporting all these fancy HDTV modes. We’ll support what we consider to be the most important thing. We have finite resources and we don’t want to divert resources into the wrong thing.

**FUTURE PERFECT**
Digital distribution is the future. One of the great untold things about this industry is that the retailers have a disproportionate amount of power. They make a lot of money and they don’t seem to take a lot of risk. As a consumer it’s great when you see something so counted in the first week, but the reality of that is that the loss goes straight back to the developer. I don’t see what their risk is because they have everything on sale-or-return. They also double in the second-hand market, which undermines everything. If you look back to the 80s and the retail price of games compared to the cost of development, you could probably say those guys weren’t doing much work and they were driving Ferraris. The developers were getting away with it. But now it costs a lot to run a 40- or 50-person team for a couple of years to make something. Take Second Sight, for example. I’m very proud of the game but it’s certainly not 152 in terms of sales.

any way you see fit, and the software is smart enough to convert a cluster of multiple identical blocks into one enormous room. You can even take the roof off, exposing parts of your map to whatever weather conditions you want to apply. It will still have walls, but the open-top feel adds welcome variety.

There are six themed tile sets to choose from: Abstract, Egyptian, Laboratory, Military, Horror, and Virtual Reality. Some sets are more detailed than others, and if you’ve used one of the more elaborate themes in a very large map containing too many objects, it might start to slow down a bit. Switching to a simpler theme will fix the problem. When you’ve created a basic space, you can populate it with weapons, toys, vehicles and computer-controlled bots. Add an enemy soldier, give him a gun, set a few waypoints... and you’ve got a guard-patrolling part of your level. You can add a little message that pops up on the screen when you shoot him, and maybe unlock a door elsewhere in the level, or trigger more guards to spawn. Pretty soon you’ll have something approaching a single-player story level, complete with mission objectives. Game logic is programmed using a reasonably simple menu system, and as long as you can handle the concept of ‘if event X happens then trigger event Y’, you’ll have no trouble making something unique and entertaining. Ten example maps will be included with the game, demonstrating what’s possible. The team at Free Radical are currently having fun designing racing levels where players can tear around the course using remote-control cars, so there’s clearly much more to it than just shooting things.

**In the future they certainly know how to build scary gums. This one is slow to reload but packs an RPC90-style punch. Oh, yes:**

**This electric gun makes robots’ arms fall off. Yikes!**

**Three scenes from one of the Scottish levels set in 1924. Shooting the switch lowers a drawbridge, getting close to the castle gates in the back of a rickety old truck; more enjoyably random slaughter.**

**More bang action. You can just roll over enemies.**

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THE KNOWLEDGE

- Licensed boxer roster (this is an EA Sports game).
- Great Create-a-boxer mode.
- Detailed training options.
- 3D stick punching system.
- Sharp graphics.

FACTFILE

- Who's making it?
  EA Sports

- What have they done before?
  Knockout Kings 2003
  (NGC/75 79%) A much weightier, more dynamic package than Rocky.

△ Who needs a good clean right? Not us. Lamp-bing.
△ Ooh. Where am I? Everyfink’s gone razzberry. Tuesday. 333?
FIGHT NIGHT 2005

Eat my fist! EA’s new king of the ring packs more punch than a herd of Italian Stallions.

Gamecube isn’t exactly the system of choice for the boxing enthusiast. In fact, if you’re partial to a bit of sparring you’re better off with a GBA. But what the home system lacks in quantity, it makes up for in quality. Just, Rocky’s an entertaining arcade knockabout, while EA’s more sim-like Knockout Kings delivers realistic pain with all the force of an Amir Khan blow to the spuds.

Fight Night 2005 doesn’t break EA’s boxing mould; delivering bruising scraps in the ring, a solid Career mode and a stunning create-a-boxer mode. The latter feature really captures the imagination; with traditional sliders for the various attributes abandoned in favour of a system that uses the analogue sticks to manipulate the features of your fighter. It’s like shaping clay.

Elsewhere, the graphics don’t disappoint. The arenas – from the hicksville fairground you start out in to the voluminous Staples Center – are richly detailed, individual muscle groups on the boxers’ flex with margarine smoothness and facial damage is presented with Holby City A&E dept. levels of gore. There’s even a feature where you can treat your boxer’s wounds, rocking the analogue stick left and right in time with a moving bar in order to heal cuts and cool swellings.

If you’re to get anywhere in Fight Night though, you’ll need to begin a rigorous training regime. You can sculpt your upcoming star in a variety of ways – make them skinnier, more muscular, go for a more substantial fat to muscle ratio to make them a bloater with fists the size of udders... your route to stardom doesn’t have to be the traditional one. Crucially, by looking at the physical make up of an opponent before you somersault onto the canvas you can gauge their fighting style. It’s a much more realistic game.

Delivers realistic pain with the force of an Amir Khan blow to the spuds!

Tactical game than any of the others currently out there in this respect. Age even plays a substantial part, with you taking your character from a lean learner to bulked out pro, and on to burger-chugging has-been.

So far, we’re impressed by what Fight Night 2005 has to offer. Expect more coverage next issue.

ANTICIPATION RATING

A&G
RESIDENT EVIL 4

US gamers will be playing this in a matter of weeks. Lucky them, eh? Lucky. Old. Them.

If you've been following NBC's class-leading coverage of Resident Evil 4 so far, you'll know all about Leon Kennedy being sent to a remote village in a place that looks not too dissimilar to Spain, on the trail of Ashley Graham, missing daughter of the US President. You'll know that - yes - Leon does find her (and will end up being separated from her again). You'll know they meet up with an ex-cop (at least, that's what he tells you) called Luis, pictured left. They get hunted down by villagers intent on using their heads for meat stew and a bunch of mad monks - Los Iluminados - desperate to get Ashley back. You'll know just how absorbing this game is, and how it's going to change the face of survival horror. Again.

This month we've got hold of a fresh batch of shots from Capcom revealing more of how Leon and Ashley's relationship works (as well as one showing Leon face down in a smear of blood, which doesn't help at all). The key to to success is co-operation.

\[THE MYSTERY WOMAN, CLAD IN A TIGHT RED DRESS, IS ADA WONG\]

Once you've rescued Ashley, her health meter appears above Leon's. It's your job to make sure she stays healthy (even though she coughs up blood now and then). Wandering around the trap-filled castle level, you'll need to operate stealthily to protect the young girl. If the cloaked, mace-wielding members of Los Iluminados catch a whiff of her pure girl stink, they'll come running, hit you as a group and try and steal her away over a bony shoulder. Let them do this, and you lose, faster.

If Ashley sheds all her health it's also Game Over (man). As Leon, you've got your work cut out. Even when you break off to control Ashley as she explores the game's environments alone, we're sure she's stood tutting in the shadows.

Leon's not the only visitor to foreign shores either - we can confirm that the mystery woman, clad in a tight red dress, who we revealed a couple of issues ago, is indeed Ada Wong! The mighty Wong! Capcom have even issued a screenshot of Ada for issue 100 as part of the revelation.

Who's she working for? What are they after? Does that mean Wesker will turn up as well? Questions that'll be answered in just a few weeks...
One minute you’re holding hands, the next you’re torn apart...

PAIR RAGE

STICK TOGETHER

If Ashley gets snatched away, that’s it. You’ve failed in your mission to protect the President’s daughter and must face the consequences for maybe just hit Reset. It’ll be more stressful having to watch out for Ashley and take care of yourself, but sometimes Leon needs Ashley’s small stature to reach inaccessible areas...

I AM A LADY

We’ve yet to see Ashley with a weapon, so, during the levels where you control her alone, you have to make do with objects you find in the environment (presumably she’s going to hurt the straight in the face of the lumbering monk). We imagine things’ll be a bit less hectic when you’re playing as the lady...

OLD FRIENDS

Here’s Leon, off on his own again (Ashley’s probably painting her nails or looking for the loo or something). So it’s ‘proper’ Resi time. Even the typewriters are back – just like in previous Resis, you use them to save your game. Thankfully, you won’t need to find ink ribbons in order to record your progress for posterity.

WONG TURN

Offcial! Ada Wong is in Resi 4 (as we guessed in NGC/100)...

ADA ENOUGH YET?

Ada is one of the true Resi fan’s favourite characters – just ask Geraint. He just can’t get enough of her (ever since Wesker’s Reports revealed that he rescued her – another ‘eject’ from certain death at the end of Resi 2, he’s been gogging for her return...)

IF I ADA ‘AMMER

She’s looking good in Resi 4, although she hardly gives the man she shared a bit of sexual chemistry with a warm welcome. Gun in the back, is it? Give us your arm, you filthy mare...

△ Ashley’s face and health meter reveals her pain. If she gives up the ghost, that’s the end of your adventure. Best be a nice chap and stop shooting her, eh, Leon?

△ Did Leon drown in his own gore or die of shock from blood loss? Either way, it’s got to be a nasty way to go.

NGC VERDICT

Bloodier than any previous Resi, more action-packed and nerve-twangingly intense, this is a game which’ll raise the benchmark. We’ve tried coming up with possible problems, any features that’ll end up frustrating us – but it really is hard. It plays fluidly, packs plenty of replay value (always a concern) and shocks your brain to its nuts.

ANTICIPATION RATING

☆☆☆☆☆
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ON SALE:
Thursday 16th December
Donkey Kong
Jungle Beat

Recycle those bongos for a cross-country ape rescue.

You know, sometimes it's hard to keep an open mind. Over the years we've seen enough "me too" games to last a lifetime. Bandwagon jumpers cling to the hope of generating a few sales off the back of one innovative title. Sometimes playing games doesn't seem the rewarding pastime it should be.

Which is why we applaud Nintendo for breathing new life into a peripheral that seemed doomed to gather dust once you'd gone off Donkey Kong. Regular readers will know that you use the bongos to control Donkey Kong in this side-scrolling platformer. It's not as unwieldy as it sounds.

Hit the left or right skins to make DK move in the respective direction. Slapping them both together makes him jump, while clapping (or tapping the side of the drums) makes the stinking ape lash out with a punch. You'll soon work out combos where moves link together in one spectacular blur of sprints, leaps and spins - and these bring you the most points as well.

Boss encounters certainly give you a real workout. It's definitely the best way we've seen to keep fit with your Gamecube.

And it's a pleasing experience for your eyes as well. Beautifully rendered big enemies. A camera that zooms in and out to capture every last drop of detail. Lovely. Could be a sleeper hit, this...

The Know-Edge

- Controls designed around the Donkey Kong bongos.
- Chain together moves to create points-building combos.
- Collect bananas and baby apes.
- Ride other animals and vehicles.
- Really weak story: "Brave the dangers of the jungle to rescue DK's simian pals!"

Factfile

- Who's making it? Nintendo
- What have they done before? Mario Kart Double Dash!! (N64-98 93%)
- Recent winner of Gamecube game of the year at the Golden Joystick Awards: SkiII

Anticipation Rating

- It might seem a bit gimmicky, a cheap extra for those Konge drums, but it's actually much more fun and rewarding than you might expect. In fact, it's incredibly addictive. The tap-tap-tap-CLAP control system really captures the imagination and gives this routine platform romp a real edge. We're suckers for inventiveness like this...

Verdict

- UK
  - US
  - JAPAN
As you’d expect (and probably demand) you can pick up cars and throw them around as if they were as light as apples. Watch them crumble...

There’s no sign of David Banner in the 2005 sequel. Just 100% prime Hulk smashing all the way...

First of all, we need to make it clear that the Hulk 2 code Vivendi recently showed us was very, very early. That said, at the moment it’s bloody similar to Spider-Man 2. You can see from these first screenshots that it’s set in a free-roaming city full of towering skyscrapers and citizens looking for a pasing. Hell, there’s even a glimpse of Hulk climbing a building. But following the lead of one of the best superhero games in years is no bad thing.

The developers have set out to give you a real sense of Hulk’s power this time. The first Hulk title on Gamecube suffered from being a repetitive, relentless scraper that would have scored more highly if it had deviated at any point from the template laid down in its first level. Now, though, you’ll be swatting away enemies, leaping huge distances, tearing cars in half and using the two pieces as giant metal boxing gloves and ripping up lamp posts and using them as clubs, before taking your anger out on buildings and ‘sidewalks’. We even saw Hulk rip a missile launcher off the back of a lorry, sling it over his shoulder and proceed to hurl the explosives out himself. The fool.

Naturally, giving Hulk the run of a full city means that there are more options open to you at any one time, plus it allows you to revisit the destruction you’ve wreaked on the poor town (all the damage you cause stays in place).

All this seems to go some way to making Hulk a more rounded character. Vivendi are taking this idea further still, with the chance for you to upgrade the mean, green, fighting machine (yes, again, a bit like Spider-Man 2). You can improve areas like throwing, combos and movement abilities, allowing you to model your own particular breed of viridian man-ogre.
First looks 'n' fresh new pics

DRAGON BALL Z
BUDOKAI 2

Say that with a mouthful of fist.

If you're serious about your DBZ, well, you'll probably have already played this on a rival system. But - for the US at least - Atari have confirmed that, finally, Budokai 2 is going to be made available on Gamecube. As we go to press there's no confirmation of a UK release, and, being realistic, we're not sure it'll ever make it.

This sequel offers a new 'Dragon mode' single-player experience (featuring brand new matchups, missions and the like), plus the usual Vs and Tournament modes. It's supposed to be the most challenging DBZ in years, with a final showdown with Buu, toughest fighter of the lot.

To be honest, the majority of us aren't that taken with the current crop of DBZ titles, so it's hard to get too excited for this.

“Eat my dirty shoes, my friend!”
“Delicious! Kick me again... harder.”

Crispy anime cel-shaded looks, for sure.
But will this be a real heavyweight?
NEW KIRBY ADVENTURE

He's pink, he stinks, he's... ssshh, he's coming back...

Intendo have just released the first-ever shots of a brand new Kirby title for Gamecube. We were - how can we put it? - a little underwhelmed by HAL Laboratories' last Kirby game (Kirby Air Ride - 51% in NGC/85), and we went from accepting the pink one to wanting to pap his stupid punch-worthy face in. However, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt. This game'll feature support for up to four players - and perhaps it'll take a similar route as GBA's Kirby and the Amazing Mirror, which featured a four-Kirby system. Interesting. Expect a release later in 2005...

Kirby appears to do his usual things in this new title - opening his fat mouth, gliding with an umbrella, swimming, assaulting anyone who gets in his way...

FIFA STREET

The biggest football franchise gets down with the kids...

revealed this last issue, and we've managed to secure a couple of exclusive new shots for you this month (it's amazing what a slab of lard, EA HQ's air vents and Geraint in his stinking undercrackers can 'secure'). This is one FIFA game we're really looking forward to, thanks to the fact that the big glossy brute's being stripped down to its bare essentials, it's got a rethinked control system and the fact that the other titles in the Street range have gone spuds-out to entertain. Oh, who are we trying to kid? Look - it's Wayne Rooney! On the dusty streets of Rio and everything! The release date's to be confirmed, but we'd reckon a late spring release won't be out of the question...
NFL STREET 2
Yo! Pass me the ball you mother before I break yo’ ass! (Cheers!)

It's the NFL Street 2 that has EA's presenting NFL Street 2 have that the first game didn't. It features NFL Star Jeremy Shockey and hip-hop star Xzibit on the cover, for a kick off. Which sounds very cool and urban and that. Gameplay-wise it's as you'd expect – a few tweaks to the formula cooked up at the beginning of this year. You can run off the walls (which sounds a little unfair) and make use of 'eye-popping' wall jumps and new hurdles. "Once you own the walls, you will own the city," say EA. Right on! Er. You'll need to make the most of the ten new Bay City environments in order to build up your team and, of course, your rep. If EA get any more down with the kids, they'll be eating jello and getting pickles round the back of the skateboard park.

As we're going to press we've just got a preview build in. Looks very smooth, we have to say. It's out at the end of January...

DONKEY KONGA 3
A bongo too far? They must be scraping the barrel (heh-heh) for the third instalment (due out in Japan in '05). And guess who’s joining Donkey and Diddy this time? Yes, your Friend and ours, Funky Kong. Expect him to star in a few of the new minigames as well as making an appearance in the main game itself. Likelihood of making it out over here? Flimsy.

MARIO PARTY 6
You know the score by now.
Let's say 74%, eh? Ha-hah.

The main reason to get involved with this Mario Party, ignoring the new Gamecube mic it's compatible with for a second, is the selection of new minigames it offers. There are around 70 fresh ones here, ranging from building a robot to dodging a ray of light. It's typical Mario Party stuff and, looking at the screenshots Nintendo have dished out, you could be forgiven for thinking you were seeing last year's version, or the year before that, or the year before... you get the picture. But yes, at least Nintendo are giving away a free microphone with the sixth Party. Trouble is, we're really unconvinced it's going to add anything new – a control system that could quite happily sit on a pad? Hmm. Early reports from the US where it's on sale now aren't good. But, like with Kirby's new game, we'll give it the benefit of the doubt. It's the season to be jolly, after all. Expect us to return to normal whining next issue in the review...

TAK 2
This time round, Tak gets to explore a game spread across two 'worlds' – the real one and a dream one (picture above). It brings back some of the favourite features of the first game (interacting with the animals, mainly), as well as turning Tak's mentor into a flea who you can then use to help solve puzzles (making animals scratch, that kind of thing). Tak 2? Be out in March – and shouldn't be too bad, really...

SPONGEBOB THE MOVIE
We've got a copy of this in the office at the moment, but it's fair to say that it's hardly touched our Gamecubes. It's just a bit simple for our tastes. Run about, jump and collect stuff, help SpongeBob become more macho... It's tied in with the release of the film in February, and it's fair to say that we can wait.
Out Now!

PlayStation 2  GAME BOY ADVANCE  BUENA VISTA SOFTWARE  THQ
www.thq.co.uk
REVIEWED THIS ISSUE!

METROID HUNTERS
We rate the amazing demo you get free! P.48

FEEL THE MAGIC
The sauciest use of the touch screen so far: Rub away... P.49

IT’S-A-HIM!
Mario launches Nintendo DS in the US and Japan! Get our unrivalled verdict on the game that rewrites history...

PLUS!
- Your eight-page guide to the portable system everyone wants!
- The latest news on the incredible DS sales in the US.
- Reviews of Spider-Man 2, Asphalt GT, The Urbz and more!
- We take DS out on the streets to gauge the verdict of real gamers.
TOUCHDOWN!

Nintendo DS sells even faster than predicted — and GBA goes like hot cakes.

So it’s finally here then. In under a year, DS has gone from cryptic ‘third-pillar’ announcement to touchable, playable, boy-die hardware — surely a record turnaround for Nintendo. Best of all, the payoff has been even better than Nintendo originally anticipated. They’ve upped their world-wide sales expectations from an optimistic 3.5 million units shifted by March 2005 to a phenomenal 5 million. Early indications show that they’ll probably meet that target too.

In the first week of release in the US Nintendo sold an impressive 500,000 units, and with DS already three weeks old in Japan, they’ll far exceed the planned 1 million sales by the time the year’s out. (Stop Press: they just have.) Early predictions that DS would suffer the same fate as the unfortunate Virtual Boy, then, are unlikely to come true. Which is good news for Nintendo, and means we’ll have plenty to talk about for the next few years. As ever, Reggie Fils-Aime was on hand to deliver some choice words for the post US launch press release, stating that Nintendo ‘owns’ the handheld market and that the DS was both ‘hot’, and the ‘hit’ of the holiday season. Curiously, the same statement from Nintendo pointed out that it took Apple’s iPod 19 months to achieve similar sales — a truly daft comparison to make if ever we saw one (you didn’t need £1,000 worth of Mac computer to play DS at launch, for example) but there you go.

Oh, and it might also interest you to know that GBA, in the same week, racked up an even more impressive 800,000 sales. That makes 1.3 million handheld sales for Nintendo in the US alone. In just one week. They must be raking it in.

DS AD WATCH

United Screens of America.

Continuing our look at Nintendo’s worldwide DS marketing push we’ve got three of Nintendo of America’s TV commercials for your perusal. Made by the agency Leo Burnett USA, they’re more ‘mature’, classy and understated in flavour than the Japanese adverts — and they subtly demonstrate the wireless and touch and dual screen features of the unit. Our favourites show strangers challenging each other to a multiplayer game by drawing messages in their food (there are no Gordon Ramsay-style expletives, though), and a ghostly response appearing in the icy condensation on a window. Here’s hoping DS gets a similarly effective treatment in the UK.

You can watch all three US television ads at http://www. leoiburnett.com/broaking/ nintendo/ds.htm
DS ONLINE?

Why wait for Nintendo??

I t's the question that's been on everyone's lips - when, if ever, will DS go online? In a recent interview with Famitsu, Shigeru Miyamoto hinted that it may not be as long as we think. While talking about Nintendo's general online strategy, Miyamoto hinted that their plans will probably come to fruition within the next three to four years. However, he then went on to predict that DS will be on online far sooner than that.

Miyamoto also implied that Square-Enix may be one of the parties involved in establishing DS's online presence. It's worth pointing out that Square-Enix were partly responsible for Sony's PlayOnline service and so it's not unlikely that Square are already working on a similar service with Nintendo. According to Miyamoto, there'll be some kind of hint as to how this will work in the forthcoming Animal Crossing DS.

GET ON WITH IT!

It seems that many DS owners are impatient to get the online ball rolling and aren't waiting for Nintendo to do it. Spicetown.com, Darkain.com and the forum community at Gabdev.org have managed to intercept and capture data packets between two communicating DSs and are currently working towards a solution to get DS online. Also, Warppipe.com, the folk behind the Gamecube's tunneling software - a means of getting LAN-enabled GC games online - have another, DS-related project in the works.

Apparently, this won't be a tunneling project like Warp Pipe, but something else going under the codename 'Demasked'. Try googling for it and you'll find a bewildering amount of surreal clues to decipher.

FAULTY DS SCREENS

Covered by the guarantee in the US. Importers beware!

A number of DS adopters in the US have reportedly discovered, to their horror, that some DS screens have dead pixels in them - dots on the screen that are frozen on a particular colour. It's a common problem with LCD screens, but on a mobile phone or handheld the problem sticks out like a sore thumb and really ruins your enjoyment of the hardware. Nintendo commented that the problem won't get any worse - that is, your DS won't suddenly start developing dead pixels - and if you do happen to have a unit with the problem, your one-year guarantee will cover the problem.

Unfortunately, fixing the problem may not be so easy for importers as Nintendo of America 'are only able to repair products for residents of the US and Canada.' You could try to return the unit to the retailer you bought it from - but if they can't help you, you may be out of luck.

DS TV TUNER

Peripheral lunacy ahoy!

A ccording to Japanese publication Nintendo Dream, Agatsum Entertainment will be producing a TV tuner peripheral for DS. Scheduled for release in Japan early next year, the device will work with both GBA and DS, attaching itself to the handhelds via the GBA cartridge slot. We'd be lying if we said we were excited, to be honest - the device is pretty hefty and requires a four AAA batteries to work. In our experience, these things never actually pan out particularly well. Sega's Game Gear had a similar device that worked okay, but Blaze's GBA TV tuner was absolute rubbish. So rubbish in fact that we couldn't get a picture out of it at all. Maybe we'll be proved wrong with this one - but we're not holding our breath.

IN BRIEF

ANIMAL MAGIC

We've run a few shots of Zookeeper in the past, but we never imagined just how good it really was. In fact, it's so good that we wanted an entire page playing it in full. It was originally discovered. Vaguely reminiscent of Tetris Attack, you have to shift blocks of strings to match three or more animal icons in horizontal or vertical lines. It's unbelievably addictive and has ended up being everyone's Japanese launch line up order. If you want to sample the game for yourself head over to www.gamenet.co.uk/zookeeper.htm to play an online version. Min currently holds the office record at a whopping 19,850...

THE NEW BLACK

It's come as no surprise that the new DS colour to be made available is black - although we imagine Nintendo names something more 'catchy' like Onyx, Nightshade or something equally exotic. Apparently Nintendo limited DS to silver for launch so they could maximise production of the units. Whether any more colours will be on the horizon soon is anyone's guess, but they normally do. We're secretly hoping that a pearl white one, like the limited edition SH rear its head at some point...

NAMCO RPGS

Namco have not one but two RPGs in the works. Both were Korea DS and another instalment in the hugely popular Play Station RPG series, Xillions, are currently in production by Monolith Software - adding to the handheld's growing list of quality RPGs.

JANUARY 2006 NGC 36
OPEN UP!

A revolution in the palm of your hand...

Cut through the plastic seal guarding the box's flaps, plunge your nose into the inviting cardboard opening and suck in a good, long, lung-filling sniff. Come on – you won’t get the chance again – have a good whiff of it. Inhale it right up the old plastic seal guarding the box’s flaps, plunge your nose into the inviting cardboard opening and suck in a good, long, lung-filling sniff. Come on – you won’t get the chance again – have a good whiff of it. Inhale it right up the old plasticy newness tickling the back of your tongue before ‘doing the crazy’ in the back of your brain. Smell it? That’s the honk of pristine handheld heaven, that is. Believe it, because it’s finally here.

First impressions, then? To be honest, not particularly good. Everyone seems to comment that, build-quality wise, it feels a bit cheap. It’s not built using the sexiest plastic we’ve ever felt (Nintendo have got to keep the cost down so that everyone can afford it though) and it is fairly large. It’s certainly not trouser pocket-portable, more coat pocket- or handbag-portable. It’s like GBA’s slightly ganglier big brother.

But you know what they say, ‘every cloud...’ and all that. If you were lucky enough to import a US DS, everything you needed to be entertained was already in the box. Metroid Prime Hunters, which you’ll find reviewed on p.48, comes bundled with the machine, which was a godsend when we picked up our units from Nintendo HQ because it meant we had something to play on the two-hour journey home. Crucially, it lets you test out the wireless features straight away (along with the built-in PictoChat messaging service). So long as you have other friends with DSs, that is.

Anyway, a few childish rude messages over PictoChat and a couple of Metroid deathmatches later it’s safe to say that any disappointment with DS eventually faded as we familiarised ourselves with this quite remarkable piece of hardware.

GERAINT EVANS
THE HARDWARE

A revolution in the palm of your hand...

SETTING UP

Open up the lid and turn the power on. You’ll be greeted by DS’s warm welcome theme, while the bottom – touch – screen displays a health and safety warning. You’ll see this every time you turn the DS on. Tap the touch screen and you’re invited to set the time and date, your nickname, favourite colour and your birthday. From this menu you can also change your personal messages (viewed by others in PictoChat), language settings, alarm clock (which will only function if your DS is in sleep mode) and touch screen calibration. Each stab of the stylus is accompanied by a series of chirpy sounds.

On this opening menu you’ll also find the option for ‘DS Download play’. Hitting this will make your DS scan the area for any downloadable game content (like the Mario DS multi-player). If it finds anything it will automatically download content for you to play. There is one annoying thing about the main menu and set up screens, though, and this applies to PictoChat too: quitting out automatically turns off your DS, presumably to save your batteries. It only takes three seconds to get back into action, but still...

BACKWARD COMPATIBILITY

Yup, as we’ve said, you can play all your existing GBA games on DS. You can’t use their multiplayer features with DS, though, which is a shame. From the main menu you can choose which screen you want to display your GBA games on. Whichever you choose, it’s fair to say that the games look better on DS’s backlit screen than they do on GBA. Colours are more vivid and certainly crisper. They don’t take full advantage of the extra screen size, though, with a black border appearing around a smaller GBA-resolution viewing area.

In a rather clever twist, both DS and GBA carts can interact with each other. In Sega’s Feel the Magic XY-XX for example, inserting the Sega GBA games Sonic The Hedgehog 3 or Space Channel 5 unlocks extra costumes for the game’s silhouetted lady.

THE GAME SLOTS

You have two of these, one for your GBA games at the front and another for DS games at the back. Apart from the touch screen, the DS card loading bay is probably the classiest-feeling bit of the hardware. It’s spring-loaded and offers satisfying resistance as you push the cards in. To eject them, gently push the card back inside the device and it slides back out at you. Nice and smooth, like. From the DS’s main menu screen you can choose to have the DS boot up straight into any inserted DS game card or, if you prefer, you can opt to choose to load the game manually from the main menu screen.

The GBA slot, while used mainly for GBA games, also has another function in that it’s the primary expansion port. Nintendo have a number of DS hardware add-ons in the pipeline, many of which will accessed via the GBA slot. The TV tuner featured in this month’s Pocket news (see p.35) is one example of this use. If you ask us, don’t be surprised to see some kind of DS camera device slipping into this handy hole in the near future...

PICTOCHAT

Chances are the first thing you’ll want to do is have a crack at PictoChat, which is visible from the main menu. There are four chat rooms available for use, each capable of holding up to 16 people. The top screen displays sent messages and the bottom screen allows you to draw on the top half and type via a qwerty-style keyboard. You can clear the drawing area and retrieve any messages from the top screen to edit, as well as use all manner of symbols, punctuation, accents – even Japanese Hiragana and Katakana symbols to get your messages across. Our only major gripe with the program is that there’s no visible cursor, which makes typing into strange spaces between your scrawls a trial-and-error process of stabbing at the return and space bar in hope that eventually you’ve in the right place to type. Other than that, it’s an amusing little bonus...
THE HARDWARE...

Getting to grips with those intriguing controls.

THE BUTTONS

The buttons don’t exude quality, we have to say. The D-pad is bigger than the one on an SP, which we suppose makes it a little more comfortable, but the four-button layout isn’t as nice as we’d hoped it would be. In a strange turn of events the buttons themselves are actually smaller than the ones on an SP. This may sound like a silly criticism, but they just don’t sit right under the thumb. Granted, they’re not too bad for moving and strafing while playing Metroid Hunters, but despite DS having the SNES’ Street Fighter-friendly button configuration (it’s got shoulder buttons too, see) we can’t exactly see ourselves intuitively throwing out combos on the 11:15 to Paddington. Put it that way.

THE SCREENS

TOP SCREEN

This is the main viewing area, especially for Mario and Metroid. The screen quality is excellent; we’re really quite impressed. You can turn the backlight off via the main menu screen – but what’s the point? It’s gorgeous. Colours are vivid, the high resolution gives a clean crisp look to edges (there’s none of your N64-blurr-o-vision here, thank you very much) and it’s perfectly playable in pretty much all lighting conditions. Direct light and reflections can sometimes pose a problem, but it’s nothing that can’t be handled by simply moving either yourself of the position of the screens.

TOUCH SCREEN

Perhaps DS’s biggest draw, the touch screen works like an absolute dream. There’s a little bit of ‘give’ to the plastic, making it feel satisfactorily soft, even when you use the stylus. It’s robust too, and even the most frantic stabbing and rubbing doesn’t seem to bother the surface one bit, which is a good job seeing as you sometimes have to press fairly hard for the screen to register. Nintendo have announced that they’re releasing peelable plastic screen protectors for the DS, something that’s comforting to know.

So how well does it work for actual gameplay? Brilliantly. Just one go on the bottom screen with a stylus is enough to convince anyone of DS’s charms. It’s beautifully intuitive to use and unlike anything you’ll have experienced before. Feel the Magic and the minigames in Mario 64 DS’s ‘Rec Room’ are the best early examples of touch screen play. Stretching elastic to launch Bob-ombs is as frighteningly satisfying as wheeling a unicycle along a treacherously thin path is strangely unnerving. Everything about it feels so natural, so right. Maybe we’re not convinced about its use as a complete replacement for an analogue stick, but slowly, but surely, we are getting used to it. And anyway, who’s to say it won’t be second nature in a couple of months’ time? We wouldn’t be surprised...

CONTROL

There are two main control options on offer. You have the stylus (which slots neatly away in the back of the DS) and the ‘thumb shoe’. Thumb shoe? See that picture of the black strap? You attach it to the back of the DS and then wrap it around your thumb. Threaded onto the strap is a little pad of plastic that acts as a plastic shoe under your thumb. (See where we’re going with this?) You use the plastic noble to skate over the surface of the touch screen. Sounds weird, but it works – and is an essential part of playing Mario 64 DS, at least in so far as it’s better than both the stylus and D-pad for manoeuvring the small rogue one.

The important thing here is for developers to really look at the different control options available – including the microphone – and really work around them and with them. This machine needs games that work with the hardware, not against it. Shoehorning game ideas onto DS and hoping the controls will somehow work simply won’t cut it – and Mario 64, as nice as it is, is a prime example of how this approach doesn’t really work. An uncharacteristic blooper on Nintendo’s part, then. Feel the Magic, or something like Mario Ware, are the opposite of this. They both work so well because they were designed to work with the control system, elevating them from normal or conventional games to something altogether unique and special.
THE HARDWARE...

Plays well with others. Without wires, too...

WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY

Wireless connectivity is yet another feature that works faultlessly. The manual says you need to be within 30ft of each other with the DSs facing each other for it to work best: (preferably without too many walls, people, and interfering hardware like computers nearby), but it seems to work perfectly from double the recommended distance and in an office block full of just about every interfering device you can think of.

We had great fun sending rude messages to the staff on GamesMaster magazine, across a busy, high-tech office. It can sometimes take a little while for the DSs to find each other, but the wait is never more than a minute.

As far as actually playing goes, we couldn’t be happier. Linking up is easy and play is fast and smooth. Just like the Wavebird did for Gamecube controllers before it, you’ll never accept wires between handhelds ever again. One thing we did notice, though, is that playing wireless did seem to drain the batteries a little more quickly – not significantly, but noticeably so. We suppose that’s to be expected.

One thing that did take us by surprise was the seeming disappearance of one of Nintendo’s promised features, namely ‘In Sleep mode, players can stop and resume game play whenever they like. If the user receives a message from a friend or user nearby, DS activates itself from Standby mode’. Thing is, we’ve found ‘sleep mode’ – you just close the lid for that – but we’re damned if we can get the thing to wake up after being sent a message. We’re hoping that this is a software issue and that the line-up doesn’t support this feature yet. We’ll let you know when we find out more...
SOUND

The two speakers either side of the screen make a massive difference compared to SP's little centrally mounted one. At full volume DS is pretty loud, with plenty of clarity at high- to mid-range – more than enough to iritate anyone sitting next to you on the bus, at any rate.

Slip on some headphones, though, and it's a whole kettle of much more enjoyable fish. With these hooked up, DS does a nifty approximation of surround sound - fading sounds in and out from left to right and back to front. With a decent set of headphones on you can genuinely tell the position of things from the sounds they make. Even better is the fact that you don't have to buy a stupid adaptor to use them either as the DS has a standard 3.5 jack.

SIDE BY SIDE

Just to give you an idea of the physical size of the machine, we've taken some comparison pics for you. The game cards themselves are tiny – not slim card small but still very slim. Significantly dinkier than an After Eight mint, anyway, and we can envisage plenty of lost card situations over time. The exposed contacts on the cards themselves is a little worrying, too, so don't expect to salvage them if you drop them in your tea or something. Our fave picture here has to be the N64 Mario cart against the new, slimline DS Card. If you'd told us eight years ago that we'd be playing Mario 64 off a cartridge small enough to fit under your tongue we'd have laughed you out of the office. That's progress for you.

MICROPHONE

Only one of the US launch games uses this. It’s that tiny little hole you see in the front of your DS (with the word Mic next to it). It's pretty sensitive too – sensitive enough to be able to gauge how hard you're blowing (even subtle breath can be picked up by the mic if you’ve got your kisser right up against it). The other small hole (the one next to the headphone socket) is, as we predicted, meant to be used for a microphone headset. Quite what uses Nintendo has in store for this is anyone’s guess, but we wouldn’t be surprised if voice messaging came up at some point. Also, games like Jam with the Band allow you to record your voice for use in the game’s tunes.
Four players can fight in four bonus areas.

The map is just there to fill the screen.

Pixelated and unlit, but it still looks nice.

There are a few touch screen bonus games, which you unlock by using each character to find rabbits dotted around the castle. While these aren't as good as the bonus games in Mawaru: Made In Wario, they hint at what can be done with the touch screen. Best of all is the little drawing program that replaces the NES's rubber Mario face on the title screen, and converts your sketch into wobbly string so you can stretch and distort the results.
SUPER MARIO 64

FROM: NINTENDO
MICROPHONE: NO
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW (US AND JAP)
SINGLE CART LINK: YES
COST: £30 (IMPORT)

It's a him, Mario! But the touch screen does few favours to the best game on DS.

Hands up, everyone who hasn't played this. There must be a few people out there who haven't experienced Mario's finest moment on its native N64 format, and if you're one of them, you'll love this. There's even more to do than there was before, with an extra 30 stars, new levels and new characters.

That we have any reservation at all is entirely due to the control system. Mario 64 was less designed with the N64's three-pronged controller in mind than the controller was created specifically for the game. It wouldn't work the same with an Xbox or PS2 pad, and it's no surprise to find it doesn't work all that well with a touch screen.

Precise movements are very hard. You have to keep lifting your thumb and recentering it on the screen to get Mario to run at full speed. You can't do the useful side-flip move very easily. You'll never get Mario moving as fluidly as you could with an N64 pad, and the game suffers because of it. The option for D-pad control is a backwards step barely worth considering. But despite this, Super Mario 64 DS is more than playable. It holds its own against more recent games, even with the control problems, and the new stuff is well worth seeing.

Chief among the new additions is the inclusion of Yoshi, Luigi and best playgrounds in any game ever, offering limitless ways to get to a goal, explore secrets, or simply have fun. The game dates back to 1996, but no platformer since has come close. It's a work of genius.

Which is reason enough to buy it. It's the cartridge that has done about ten times as much service in our DS as every other US launch title combined, and if you never played it all those years ago, you might not be disappointed by the controls. If only the machine's best game actually showed off the possibilities of the touch screen rather than highlighting its lack of an analogue stick.

MARIO FINDS A FLOWER THAT BLOWS HIM UP LIKE A BALLOON

Wario. The latter two replace the old metal cap and vanish cap – you have to play as them to collect certain stars. Where these caps used to be, Mario finds a special flower that blows him up like a balloon and lets him float over the difficult bits. Whatever they've done to the control system, and the associated dumbing down of certain objectives (specifically the flower and the star-revealing map), the quality of the level design still shines. They're the

BAD LAKITU
Camera problems? Blame the gimp in the cloud.

In the N64 game, this was Lakitu's moment of glory. The tricky cameraman was controlled by the four-Cortoons, and he stayed exactly where you put him. This enabled side-on views of difficult jumps, like a 2D Mario game, which was much easier than viewing the action from behind. On the DS, Lakitu is much less obedient, always floating around to settle for a view of Mario's back.
ASPHALT URBAN GT

Players: 1-4
Cost: £30 (import)

while The Urtu and Spider-Man don't exactly light up the US launch line-up, they at least show some modicum of competence – unlike this. Asphalt Urban GT really is quite, quite tragic. While it's a perfectly playable racer in many ways - the frame rate is smooth and there's a decent sense of speed and challenge - it reeks of a game rushed out to make the launch date. To begin with, the pop-up is glaringly obvious, the handling feels stiff and unsatisfying and the crash routines feel horribly unconnected to the way you're driving and prove wholly inconsistent, stopping you dead when you brush past a vehicle one time and launching you into a nastily scripted 360° spin the next.

It just doesn't feel right at all. The AI of the opposing race cars is laughable (they often get flummoxed by simple things like passing other vehicles), as is the behaviour of the real traffic, with vehicles seemingly stranded in the middle of the road.

And it gets worse. The turbo boost system, for instance, is awful, requiring you to take your finger off the accelerator and re-apply it. The trouble is, if you just want to lose some momentum and then accelerate, you know, to slow the car down, more often than not your vehicle will accelerate to twice the speed as the game thinks you want to boost. Yeah, really nice, that.

And it gets worse. The replay function, for some strange reason, removes all the other cars from the track. Any collisions you made with other vehicles are still in the replay, so you watch in stupefied awe as the replay shows you smashing into invisible traffic and stopping dead. Lord have mercy.

If there's one game you'd do well to avoid come launch day, this has to be it. Given the current opposition, Namco's forthcoming Ridge Racer will be best DS driving game for quite some time to come.

GERAINT EVANS

DUAL TOUCH ★★★★★

SPIDER-MAN 2

It certainly looks the part, we'll give it that. Spider-Man 2's smooth, it's crisp, and it certainly couldn't have been pulled off on GBA, so in that respect it does go some way to using some of the grunt under DS's bonnet. But looks, as our mothers always tell us, aren't everything...

The 3D environments and beautifully animated polygonal characters impress to a point, the way the game runs at a constantly slick frame rate as Spidey swings past the detailed environments is pleasing, and the way the camera tracks him on his 2D plane of movement around corridors and buildings and so on is striking for the first half an hour or so of play. And after that initial 30 minutes it all goes a bit downhill.

For all its 3D pretensions, this is still a very basic side-scrolling platforming affair. It has nothing particularly new to offer anyone and doesn't really do anything spectacular to showcase the unique features of DS. The touch screen, for example, is primarily used to switch between Spider-Man's various abilities, and this changes during key events like boss battles, where you tap the screen to defend Spidey against incoming attacks.

Aside from this and some other mini-events like flipping switches, it's all pretty uninspiring stuff. The microphone doesn't get used at all, and the wireless networking doesn't get mode use of.

What you're left with is a fairly enjoyable action platformer marred by some silly flaws, like woefully unfocused level design (which is all the more frustrating when you consider just how big some of the locations are) and combat that's as repetitive as it is depressingly unambitious. Don't get us wrong, though, this isn't a terrible game - and it's certainly nowhere near as bad as the recent Spider-Man 2 on GBA - but in the grand scheme of things it's pretty forgettable stuff and will (deservedly) be forgotten once the better DS-focused games start rolling out.

GERAINT EVANS

DUAL TOUCH ★★★★☆
THE URBZ

Okay, so the differences between this and the GBA version, then. To start off with, visually, it's slightly better - but only slightly. The resolution is a little higher and DS's superior backlit screen helps to make things feel a little sharper. Next, the menu screens that you access in the GBA version by hitting Start or Select have now been shifted to DS's bottom screen - hardly groundbreaking but, practically speaking, it does make things flow a little smoother, allowing you to multi-task while, for example, you wait for your Sim to finish taking a shower, cook his dinner or sleep or complete whatever other tedious task he's in the middle of.

Aside from these menu changes, the only other major difference is that some of the minigames you encounter further into the game also use the touch screen. It's blatantly obvious that these are additions that have been hurriedly bolted onto the existing game's framework. It's a pretty poor show, to say the least. DS is a powerful piece of kit, with some

MADDEN NFL 2005

Unfortunately, this is yet another title that feels rushed. There's a distinctly 'bare-bones' feel to it all, especially in terms of the game's presentation and DS-specific features. The faceless character models, looking like mechanised gorillas in spandex, shuffle around the field like identikit drones. The menu system and in-game play selection screens look like they were bunged out in an hour's lunch break, and the sound throughout is minimal and, well, barely satisfactory given the power of the hardware.

It's a shame, because underneath it all is a fairly solid game of American football - albeit a stripped-down one compared to its bigger console counterparts - with the only major gameplay gripe being that it can get a little difficult to see when the camera is panning out on the action. On the whole, this is decent enough to satisfy the small number of gridiron fans among importers, but it's not exactly a recommended purchase. It's perhaps best seen as a glimpse of what could be done on DS later on. The touch screen showing a bird's-eye view, for example, is a smart addition that could be used to better tactical advantage in later Madden games. And the chunky play selection buttons are easy to navigate and intuitive to use. A fair effort, then, but still a long way from being accomplished enough to convince anyone but fans of the sport...

△ It plays a decent enough game but could do so much more on DS.

△ It's a shame, because underneath it all is a fairly solid game of American football - albeit a stripped-down one compared to its bigger console counterparts - with the only major gameplay gripe being that it can get a little difficult to see when the camera is panning out on the action. On the whole, this is decent enough to satisfy the small number of gridiron fans among importers, but it's not exactly a recommended purchase. It's perhaps best seen as a glimpse of what could be done on DS later on. The touch screen showing a bird's-eye view, for example, is a smart addition that could be used to better tactical advantage in later Madden games. And the chunky play selection buttons are easy to navigate and intuitive to use. A fair effort, then, but still a long way from being accomplished enough to convince anyone but fans of the sport...

△ The map and touch-screen play section points the way forward for Madden.

△ Visuals, it's not a huge departure from the GBA version. Disappointing.

△ This touch-screen minigame is one of too few uses for the bottom screen.

△ Touch-controlled replays are probably the best use of the hardware.
key, this isn't exactly a full game but you still get a First Hunt demo free in your DS box (if you imported from the US), so we reckon it deserves an appraisal.

The game has two modes; there's a Training game and a multiplayer mode. The latter is perhaps the one you'll get the most enjoyment out of, allowing up to four DSs to go head-to-head in three different arenas. It's surprisingly accomplished for a handheld. The visuals are crisp – if perhaps a little blocky – and, crucially, it runs at a perfectly smooth frame rate throughout.

Our original control worries have been quashed too. The game allows you to switch between using the D-pad and the buttons to move, strafe and look. You're also able to use the touch screen as an analogue control method that works similarly to a mouse and keyboard. The game even supports both left and right-handed controls for each configuration, dispelling our fear that "left-handed players would be screwed", voiced a couple of issues back. The only major problem we have with the controls is the worrying lack of an 'invert look' option, which could prove annoying to a great many people, but it's nothing that you can't get used to after a few minutes' practice.

Despite only having three different arenas to fight in, there's plenty of enjoyment on offer here as long as you have three friends to fight against. There's only one arena that'll confidently support just two players, while the third arena is quite large and not at all suited to any less than four. On the whole, though, this is solid stuff, and given that it's free there's nothing to complain about.

The Training mode in the demo isn't too shabby either. There's a time trial that sees you exterminating bugs through a mini-level before facing off against a green Samus-like boss, a Survival section where you just keep shooting at metroids until you eventually die and a Morph ball section that lets you race around a circuit collecting orbs against the clock. Training is probably the weaker of the two modes, but there's some enjoyment to be had in trying to improve your scores for each section.

All in all it's not a bad little giveaway. It's a fine showcase for demonstrating what the hardware is capable of; it allows wireless multiplayer games from the word go and will undoubtedly whet your appetite for when the 'proper' version eventually emerges soon.

GERAINT EVANS

YOU JUST KEEP SHOOTING AT METROIDS UNTIL YOU DIE

METROID PRIME HUNTERS: FIRST HUNT

FROM: NINTENDO
MICROPHONE: NO
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW (US)
SINGLE CART LINK: NO
COST: FREE (IMPORT)

One of the best demonstrations of the power of DS - a fully-3D-wireless-deathmatching freebie!

Δ Four people can play wirelessly.
Δ Expect more in the final game.
It’s the classic tale of boy-meets-girl-meets-Wario Ware in Sonic Team’s innovative love story…

To be honest, apart from Mario 64 DS this is the only US launch title you should seriously consider importing, and out of all the launch games it’s the only one which is truly dependent on the DS hardware, using the touch screen, dual screens and microphone to great effect.

The game revolves around a clumsy hero trying to win the affection of a girl. In order to impress her, he teams up with a bunch of performance artists called the ‘Rub Rabbits’ and participates in a number of insane stunts to get himself noticed. Feel the Magic is broken up into a number of scenes, preceded by some animated and still comic-style panels that explain a little of the story. Each scene holds one, two or three minigames that you have to beat in order to fill up a heart meter. Once the heart fills to 100% you can move on to the next scene.

The minigames vary wildly and involve some quite bizarre scenarios. From guiding the game’s hero through the intestines of a giant snake and catapulting pedestrians at an escaping vehicle to regurgitating goldfish from your stomach. The vast majority of them require you to use the touch screen in various ways, such as using your steady hand to guide a unicycle down a narrow pathway, rubbing the screen to help people escape from quicksand or using the stylus to paint shapes on the wall. Sonic Team have really used their imagination to demonstrate the huge number of ways in which the touch screen can be used. Stabbing, rubbing, drawing – whatever, the result is always pleasing and refreshing to play. It’s not just the touch screen that gets taken advantage of, either. The microphone is used in a number of smart ways, from simply shouting into it to get the girl’s attention to blowing into it to power a sailboat or extinguish candles. The microphone is even sensitive enough to tell just how hard you’re blowing.

It’s a unique game, and the sort of experience that only DS can provide, so top marks to Sega for their efforts on that front. Unfortunately, a couple of things let the side down. First, the balance of the minigames is a tad irritating. Many of them go on for just a touch too long and for the harder games this can be frustrating. Second, the game itself is a bit short, something that’s made worse by Sonic Team (rather cheaply) repeating some of the longer ‘boss’ games.

Still, there’s no doubting that the game is both remarkable and enjoyable, and it will doubtless earn itself plenty of fans. It’s stylish, inventive and, perhaps most importantly, won’t fail to put a beaming smile on your face.

GERAIN EVANS

**DUAL**

**TOUCH**

**4**
Don’t know if it’s just us but we’d have loved to have seen a bit more grey in this scene. Maybe a touch of brown?

**LORD OF THE RINGS**
**THE THIRD AGE**

FROM: EA  PLAYERS: 1  SINGLE CART LINK: NO
SAVE: ON CART  OUT: NOW  COST: £30

EA do GBA strategy with predictable results...

Think *Fire Emblem* and you’ve got the gist of this strategy game. You have a set number of units to a party, which you manoeuvre around a battlefield seen from a bird’s eye view. Once units are in attacking range, the perspective changes to a side-on view and you watch your unit whittle away a target unit’s health.

First impressions are poor, if only because everything is so muddy. Greys, browns and blacks dominate and, at a glance, it’s not easy to see which unit is which. We appreciate that it’s trying to be faithful to Middle Earth, but some clarity could have been injected with a better colour palette. Things improve when you’re battling in brighter territories, but even then it’s difficult to get a feel for the bigger picture of a battle.

The result is a game that lacks the charisma and energy of one like *Fire Emblem*. We didn’t really care about the units under our command. They’re just faceless knights assisted by companion heroes, none of whom inspire any will to complete the game. It’s bland – even the basic battle strategy seems watered down. The ‘scissors, paper, stone’ dynamics of superior games doesn’t seem as strong, and you rarely get a rewarding sense of why you won a battle or why you lost.

That’s not to say the strategy isn’t there. If you look hard enough and scour the in-game glossary, there are plenty of point advantages and specific unit strengths to help plan out courses of action, but in light of the poor presentation, it’s hard to see why anyone other than Rings fans and strategy veterans will be patient enough to bother. If you can stick with it, though, there’s a fair amount of satisfaction to be had.

GERAINT EVANS
TY 2: BUSH RESCUE

Consider this in the same league as you would, say, Crash Bandicoot or Spyro - while it’s entertaining in its own right, it rarely delivers a truly engaging experience. The enemies get repetitive and the power-ups are unremarkable and do little to really change the overall experience. In fact there’s nothing particularly new in here to spur you on.

On a console that already has its fair share of top-grade platformers, there isn’t much of an incentive to give it a second thought. Unless of course you’ve exhausted GBA’s platformers - which is unlikely when there are so many.

GERAINT EVANS

THE URBZ

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GERAINT EVANS

The URBZ that makes us feel a little more comfortable playing it. To start with, the game seems better focused, with a shopping list of objectives to follow, errands to run and, perhaps more importantly, some semblance of a plot, helping to give the impression that there’s some kind of purpose behind it all. Unlike the GC version, there’s also more flexibility in the way of ‘Sims meters’. You need to maintain your hygiene, comfort, fun, hunger, bladder and social meters, but they aren’t so intrusive that they hamper your progress through the more interesting task of fulfilling your objectives and opening up more of the game.

The only thing we didn’t like was the repetitive and shallow nature of the social side of the game, but on the whole this is a fairly decent effort for a handheld Sims.

GERAINT EVANS
SHREK 2
BEG FOR MERCY

It's worth pointing out, however, that we downloaded a revamped version of Chuckie Egg for free that proved far more fun than this. Maybe developers Vicarious Visions should have had a look at that (and some other freeware) before they decided this kind of tosh was acceptable entertainment.

Anyway, the point of all that was to highlight the words ‘Free’ and ‘Entertaining’ – hopefully that’ll give you some indication as to whether or not to part hard cash for this ugly little stain of a game.

GERAINT EVANS

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2
BATTLE NEXUS

...is about as exciting as things get.

There are three modes on offer – one’s this weird hover-board racing game. It disturbed Marcus so much he didn't speak for two days.

There’s just nothing immediate about it. At all. It’s as though Konami had a bunch of game ideas entirely unconnected to the Turtles and then just decided to folst the shelly ones into the game last minute. It’s all, very, very strange...

GERAINT EVANS
**MS PAC-MAN MAZE MADNESS**

ou know what? We actually like this. Not that it’s particularly good, but for some inexplicable reason it makes us smile. Which is a good start.

It’s a pretty basic game. There are the usual Pac-Man trappings with pellets that you have to collect and power pills that give you the ability to chomp back at pursuing enemies. Along the way you have to navigate basic 3D-ish levels, hopping over bumpers, pushing crates and TNT to clear the way forward and... well, that’s basically it. Like we said, it’s not actually very good but it has a palatable cheekiness that, at the very least, doesn’t make us hate it. The sound effects and music are happy, bouncy and brash and, despite the fact that it’s ultimately pretty tedious, it’s all quite solidly designed and at least mildly diverting. Not totally awful then – but you’re hardly missing out if you never happen to come across it.

GERAINT EVANS

△ Ah, some classic Pac-action.
△ Some not-so-classic TNT pushing.

**PAC-MAN WORLD**

Another Pac-Man game – and another one that’s managed to put a smile on our face. This one’s slightly different, though. There are still pellets and Pac-phantom stuff, but this is more of an out and out platformer. Pac-Man can climb up ledges, has a variety of different jumping moves and can ‘rev himself up’ for a rolling attack or to launch himself over ramps. Presentation-wise it’s not too shabby; everything is bright, clear, colourful and cheerful enough. The music, however, is a touch on the distorted side.

Still, there’s no hiding the fact that there’s nothing new on offer. All the platforming challenges you face, you’ll have seen a thousand times over. It’s not exactly difficult either (although finding all the collectables could prove fairly taxing we suppose), and experienced gamers will see it off inside a day. Which would only make this a good purchase if it was for someone only just old enough to pick up a C64.

GERAINT EVANS

△ It’s simple platforming fun...
△ ...and too easy for our tastes.

**WWE: SURVIVOR SERIES**

owice, the last time we reviewed this we weren’t supposed to. It was preview code and, as a result, was unfinished. However, we’d be lying if we told you that the time between reviews had been used to improve things. It hasn’t – and our original misgivings about the game remain.

The main problem is that it’s just so painfully sluggish. The time it takes from button press to the desired action feels like an age. There’s no immediacy here at all and consequently, it’s frustrating, unsatisfying and very rarely (if at all) gets your pulse racing. In any way. Visually too, it’s all very bland. There’s nothing particularlyRambo about it – something that’s essential (surely) for a wrestling game.

True, this is a grappier and so should be a slower, more ponderous affair, but by Peache’s pastes, surely they could have made it just a little more exciting. You never feel as though your hits are doing damage. Every battle always feels too similar to the previous one, and even the multiplier can’t offer much in the way of thrills.

Suffice to say, then, we still don’t like Survivor Series very much. Yes, this is still the most comprehensive wrestling game you can get for the small screen, but that’s not really saying much and while devotees may find some entertainment in here, be warned that – as we stated last time – the game does nothing to capture the spectacle of the real thing. In this respect, it’s something of a failure.

GERAINT EVANS

△ It’s so slow and so ponderous that the thrill of ‘real’ wrestling isn’t captured. Still, at least the crowd don’t seem to mind – look at all those angry fists.
△ There are plenty of moves on offer.
△ But the moves never feel satisfying.
We’ve got it and we love it – but what about everyone else? We took the DS out into the big freezing city to see what some strangers thought...

Andrew Kerr
Age 17
You know what this is? It’s a DS.
Planning on buying one?
Yeah, probably... [plays Mario 64]
What do you think of the controls?
It’s quite tricky to get used to actually. There’s no reason why I won’t get used to it after a while, though – it plays okay.
What do you think of the design?
I like it, it looks smart and it’s a decent enough size, I suppose.

Patrick Bergstroem
Age 18
Do you know what this is?
Er... Is it a Nintendo DS?
Do you want to try one?
Yes please, I’ve been looking at importing one – but I’d rather wait until it comes down in price. At £200 it’s a bit expensive for me right now.
You should be able to find one on sale for closer to £150...
Really? I’ll probably buy one eventually then. I’d rather wait for something like Mario Kort to come out on it first though. Wireless multiplayer on that would be great...

Brendan Evry
Laurence Thomas
Rick Wilson
Age 15
Age 15
Age 16
Hello there. Do you know what this is?
LT: Yeah, it’s a Nintendo DS.
You planning on getting one?
BE: Yes, definitely.
LT: Maybe.
RW: I’ll probably get one when it comes out over here...
This [Feel the Magic] is mad.
Any games in mind?
RW: This [Feel the Magic] one... I love using this stick instead of the buttons... It’s amazing.
LT: I’ll probably go for Mario 64...
What do you think of the design?
LT: I like the two screens. It looks a bit bare around the top screen with all that flat silver – and it’s a bit big maybe, but it doesn’t really matter...
RW: I think it’s the Magic... Heehee... He he...
REHEH!... this is amazing...

Gideon Potter
Age 26
Do you know what this is? It’s a DS.
You getting one?
I’d imagine so.
Any games in mind?
It’s got to be Mario Ware first and then, maybe Mario 64...
How are you finding the controls for that [Mario 64]?
It’s okay. I’ve been using the D-pad and it holds up fairly well – not too bad.
What do you make of the design of the unit?
It’s nice – much better than the earlier one Nintendo showed. It’s got a nice weight to it, and the button layout is all right. The dual screen and touch screen thing’s great – I just hope developers actually embrace them. Hopefully games like this [Feel the Magic] will get people who don’t normally like games interested too...

Kelvin Harnden
Age 20
Do you know what this is?
Yeah, it’s a Nintendo DS – I played one my mate had imported yesterday.
You getting one?
Yes, definitely.
What do you think of the design?
It’s not bad, quite nice really. I like it.
Got your eye on any games?
Mario and Wario Ware probably...
In issue 145:

Mario: still Super?

Eight years on, what has Mario 64 on Nintendo DS got to offer videogaming?

On sale now
LEGEND OF ZELDA
FOUR SWORDS
A smorgasbord of Links in tasty action to get your gaming appetite up. P58

WARNING!
SPOILERS AHOY!
OUR REVIEWS CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFO!

AND...
ALL THE LATEST DS GAME REVIEWS, INCLUDING MARIO 64 DS, BEGIN ON P44
ALL THE LATEST GAME BOY GAME REVIEWS, INCLUDING KING ARTHUR, BEGIN ON P50
TOP 100 GAMES BEGIN ON P106

KING ARTHUR
Romano-British butchery with Ray Winstone. P65

SUPER MARIO 64 DS
We’ve had a lot to say in the past about companies rehashing classic games... how will this one fare? P44

LORD OF THE RINGS
THE THIRD AGE
Talk about beating the brouns out of an orc – it looks like they've been beaten all over the game. With some tasteful grey for variety... P50
How it Works...

Our reviews are the most comprehensive on Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you loads of detail. We don't rest until we've played a game enough to dispense all of its strengths and weaknesses, and be able to deliver the most honest, no-nonsense verdicts around.

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN

He's cheated death once — but now his fate's catching up with him, in the shape of the lethal Dahaka. Only time-tweaking and murderising can save him now.

P 70

CALL OF DUTY FINEST HOUR

Experience different types of World War II warfare as you snipe at Stalingrad, battle in North Africa and even trundle around in a tank. Variety is the spice of... death.

P 66

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24

- Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this game is crud.

25-49

- A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74

- Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89

- Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+

- Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

THE SCORE BAR

PROS AND CONS

Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with some quick plus and minus points.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) — so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suitable suggestions here.

VISUALS AND SOUNDS

Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY

How well does the game make use of the Gamecube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN

Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? This is where you'll find out for sure...

VERDICT

We don't throw scores around — we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict as to whether you should bother purchasing a game.

THE NGC TEAM

Never travel in time. A fatal case of death will be the result.

MARCUS

Marcus returned with a pair of dinosaurs. "They're endangered," he cried, as Paul unclamped their jaws from his tarsa...

PAUL

Paul's rifts introduced rack 'n' roll to 1950's LA. Sadly, his new actor pal James Dean then offered to drive him to the beach...

KITTSY

Hanging out with Vlad the Impaler was a barrel of laughs, but being buried alive by resentful peasants ruined everything.

GERAINT

Being underfed and boyish, Gerald's Victorian Christmas ended when he was shoved up a chimney and choked on soot.

MIM

Went to Rome. Unluckily, resembling a woody-covered Britan was not a good look in Caesar's city. One trip to the Circus followed...

DAN

Bucked the trend and went forward in time — to when his grandchildren worked out what he's been doing. We haven't seen him since.

NGC

91

January 2005 NGC 57
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES

Are four Links better than one? They ought to be, for over £400...

With DS riding high on Nintendo’s ‘To Do...’ list, the once-trumpeted GBA-Gamecube Link has fallen down Nintendo’s agenda, destined to languish in obscurity – where most of us reckon it belongs. As a result, the late arrival of Four Swords and its heavy hardware requirements (one GBA and link cable each) feels a bit strange, like a reminder of one of Nintendo’s more wayward ideas. But that’s not to say it should be dismissed easily – far from it. We first reviewed it back in April and we loved it (even if it is a polemic in 2010). And we suppose you want to know why? So let’s get that ‘omission’ out the way first. Called Terra’s Trackers, it was a
ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS
Four Link's a jolly good fellow
One of the earliest pick-ups, and one you’ll all be fighting over, the Fire Rod delivers one of the most satisfying effects ever. Aim it at a patch of grass and watch the fire spread, revealing hoards of gems. Probably better in single-player, the ability to level up your items at fairy pools is wonderful, turning items like the humble catapult into a weapon that spews bullet hell in three different directions.

Picking up a rock or slashing away a bush – but usually beating a mini-boss or solving a puzzle – will shower the screen with hundreds of gems, sending everyone into a viciously greedy fighting frenzy. Get your team up to 2,000 gems and your sword will gain the power to repel evil. This sword has two levels of charge; the second sends your posse of Links into a spin-spanning fury of destruction.

△ Line up your Links and watch as your charged catapult shots annihilate anything stupid enough to get in their way...

△ Link can’t survive under water for long.

△ This fairy will upgrade your weapons.

△ One thing you’ll notice is the proliferation of Wind Wakery (is that a word? It is now) effects. Defeated enemies disappear in a puff of swirling smoke, bombs blast with an equally tasty swirl of oranges and reds. In fact, many of the bosses you face will be familiar...

△ GONE WITH THE WIND

from the classic top-down perspective. Visually, it’s not exactly life-changing, but it has a visual style that’s quite endearing. The levels look almost painted at times, with streaks of subtle pastel shades

shaken off trees, fire shimmers and heat-haze distorts while water shimmers and casts rainbows as it falls – and these are just the minor effects that you’ll be treated to throughout the adventure. Suffice

△ multiplayer minigame hosted by Wind Water’s cheeky pirate-ez. In it, Che guided players on the TV map screen to waypoints that you had to navigate to on the GBA. Basically, it was an overblown race-cum-treasure-hunt, and it was absolutely blinding.

Back when we reviewed the Japanese version, for weeks you could hear Tetra wailing commands from the television screen, punctuated with rude words that Kitsy had spelled out in Katakana, interrupted further by colourful expletives yelled by the NSE team as we out-paced each other to reach the goals. It was damn fine entertainment, so much so this was originally planned as a standalone game. It’s therefore maddening to find it doesn’t exist any more. It leaves a gaping hole behind it and we’ve decided to drop the original percentage score somewhat...

Still, it’s not all bad news, because the game’s main mode, Hyrule Adventure, is astonishingly good in its own right. It’s viewed

△ ESSENTIALLY PLAYS OUT LIKE A BIG ZELDA DUNGEON

flicking the landscape. Hovering over the top are shadows of clouds, rolling mist and reflections to give the scene a sense of depth, while Nintendo have ensured there are also plenty of secondary effects to help breathe life into the proceedings. Waving ripples occur at points of impact, leaves
The balance between co-operation and treachery is a fine line. You have to work together to complete puzzles, but later you’ll betray your pals down pits and set them on fire—anything to get at those gems.

As it employs a 2D approach in the visuals, Four Swords can chuck hundreds of enemies at you at once. It’s truly satisfying seeing them all reduced to plumes of smoke with one super-charged attack. Any indoor action, like in caves, is displayed on the TV. When only one player is indoors, the GBA screen is displayed on the TV for all to see. Expect plenty of jeering from any fellow players watching.

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Surprise is always an element in Zelda games. Here you’re required to use your Links to push a building around a field. As you do so, roof mounted flame throwers billow out, turning the screen into an inferno.

Many bosses are tailored around the dual-screen feature. Here, players on the TV overworld have to make a giant bird crash into buildings, while the others enter the houses on GBA to whack the bird. It’s a good way to say, it’s not an ugly game and it’s unfortunate that these screenshots won’t really do the game the justice it deserves. Hyrule Adventure itself is relatively simple. It’s divided into a series of regions in Hyrule, with each area further divided into three subsections and capped off by a boss. Each subsection essentially plays out like a big Zelda dungeon—a series of increasingly brain-teasing puzzles and testing enemy encounters that you have to overcome. There’s a catch, though: as the title suggests, the puzzles revolve around manoeuvring, and mastering the use of, Four Links at the same time. In a multiplayer game, each Link can be controlled independently via a player armed with a

△ You’ll never tire of watching a fully charged quartet of Links whirling across the screen.

**BATTLE MODE**

This isn’t as much fun as it should be. Fighting your mates, all ‘being’ Link and lobbing bombs at each other is a little unexciting. The main problem is that, in comparison to Hyrule Adventure’s near-perfect multiplayer, ‘Shadow Battle’ seems rather weak—a problem that isn’t helped by dull arenas.
In order to get past that glowing forcefield, you’ll need to find the two ugly halves of the great fairy hidden in Hyrule castle.

The boomerang can be used to fetch any gems out of arm’s reach.

Any fairies collected will revive you.

Keeping formation is the key to survival.

∆ Touches like this maze made entirely of flame never cease to amaze.

GBA and link cable. In single-player, one person controls all four Links simultaneously, a feat that’s made all the easier thanks to the handy formation system, allowing you to hold horizontal or vertical lines of Links, diamond formations (for when you’re surrounded on all sides) or a square formation. You can switch formation instantly with a quick flick of the C-stick.

As a single-player game it’s surprisingly good fun, and we’ll stand by the fact that it’s enjoyable enough in its own right to warrant buying it (we’ll get round to the exact reasons in a moment) but, as you’re no doubt aware by now, the game really comes into its own with three extra players. Without the constraints of the single-player formation system, four Links are free to roam as they please (as long as they stay within the confines of the screen). The majority of the puzzles and challenges require all four of you to organise yourselves into an efficient unit, pushing blocks, depressing switches and chucking each other over cliffs.

Communication is key, keeping your band of Links up to date with any discoveries or any ideas you have about how to progress. This in itself is enjoyable, but no sooner have you accomplished something together than Nintendo invite you to turn Judas, betraying your mates when it profits you the most. You see, each subsection of each area can be ‘won’ by an individual Link. Whoever has the most gems at the end wins — and this simple fact
It’s ‘save the girl’ time yet again – but this time around it’s with four Links and seven maidens… For the sweet, sweet love of Tingle, what is going on?

- ‘Shadow Link’ has sealed seven maidens in purple crystals and shut them in dungeons across Hyrule. You must get them back by...
- ...pulling out a sword that splits you into four Links. Each with a mostly coloured tunic. Time for classic top-down dungeon-mapping.
- There’s no real story. The ‘normal’ chatting and side quests between levels have been removed in favour of a level select.

△ Many of the puzzles are instantly recognisable from previous games.

△ Looks like Green Link’s last rip in the water yet again...

△ You really need to see the game in motion to do it any justice.

Nintendo invite you to betray your mates when it profits you the most

Utterly transforms the game into a laugh-a-minute riot. You’ll complete puzzles with your mates with one eye on the booty rewarded at the end. You’ll fight each other to claim the bigger gem prizes and moronically bash at each other in a vain attempt to gain the upper formation system brings with it its own little satisfactions. The leveling-up of weapons, for example, is tangibly more useful when you have a strict battle line of Links to maximise your power-up’s potential. The instability of your Links to move around independently and much, although there’s no denying you get more entertainment with the extra human players.

Four Swords is a strange game to have to score, really. In terms of the fundamentals of the game’s design, it’s one of the most well-crafted experiences we’ve played since Super Mario World, with Nintendo really showing off their skill at creating fun, amusing and unforgettable experiences. In our book, it’s worth splashing out for just for those moments. As a multiplayer game (albeit a rather expensive one with all those GBAs and cables) it’s probably one of the finest you’ll ever play, but if you want a true, single-player Zelda experience we’d advise planning twice before forking out.

Geraint Evans

Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles
Nintendo
NDS/GBA
The only other ‘big’ game that utilises the GBA-SC Link.

If you like this...

Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles
Nintendo
NDS/GBA
The only other ‘big’ game that utilises the GBA-SC Link.

Visuals

Not groundbreaking, but it’s big on style and special effects.

Sounds

Tunes you’ve known for over ten years. Nothing remarkable.

Mastery

The design of the puzzles and multiplayer dynamics is superb.

Lifespan

It’s missing Tetra’s Trackers, but with friends this will last.

Verdict

An obscure Zelda game that’s demanding on your pockets – but it’s one of the finest multiplayer games ever.
KING ARTHUR
Absolutely *artbreaking.*

Cavemen, Romans and horse-fighting — British mythology isn’t what is used to be...

The film ripped apart the greatest British legend of them all, by portraying King Arthur and his knights as Roman soldiers whose only concern was fighting Saxons while dreaming of retiring to Tuscany. That it was directed by a man called Antoine Fuqua says everything you need to know.

This dismal game rips apart the beat-'em-up genre by putting the combatants on horseback. Honestly — on certain levels you play Lancelot or some other Italian riding a stallion. And these horse-'em-up sections are so far beyond mere badness, they're almost physically painful to endure.

You sit on this lumbering beast that takes half the width of the screen just to turn around, while infinite caveman types spawn from nowhere and rush toward you. Then you horse them to death by making the animal rear up and flap its front legs in the air. You can also swipe at them with a sword. Most of the time this doesn't kill them outright, cavemen being hardly fellows who don't even need to wear clothes in the winter, so you manouevre the horse over to where they fell, position its hooves in exactly the right spot, then press the 'trample' button to stamp them into the mud.

There are men with spikes waiting to stab your trusty steed. To deal with these ones, you can lock on and strafe around them, which makes it look like you're entering a dancefloor contest, thereby putting an end to any noble Roman streets. You may once have had. There's more than just the horse scenes but all of it is mindless, tedious, button-mashing rubbish. You get different characters to control, including a lovely Guinevere who can shoot arrows at the infinitely spawning Saxon caveman warriors. You even get cut-scenes taken straight from the film, so you can see glimpses of what you and everyone else missed at the cinema. It isn't good.

MARTIN KITTS

It's Mindless, Tidious, Button-Mashing Rubbish!
CALL OF DUTY

You don’t play this game - you volunteer for it. Or is that a different World War II title? This one’s fairly similar anyway...

You may have been born too late to have taken part in World War II (the one with Hitler as the end-of-level boss) but as a gamer you have plenty of chances to claim your share of the 56 million kills chalked up in history’s nastiest conflict.

Two per cent of the world’s population was exterminated, and in Call of Duty: Finest Hour’s opening scene you get to witness a fair proportion of them getting chewed up by machine guns or crushed by falling masonry. You play a Soviet soldier attacking enemy positions in a ruined city. You don’t have a gun, which is no problem since bullets won’t stop those fiendish Nazis rolling huge metal pipes over your comrades.

After defying the odds in the Soviet army’s lemming-like assault on the German shooty holes, you lead a suicidal mission through first level is testament to the finely tuned pacing of this show-stopping encounter, but it probably isn’t the realistic portrayal of war that it

RATHER LIKE DOOM WITH OLD-FASHIONED GUNS AND NAZIS RUSHING AT YOU

trenches to destroy an enemy bunker. Your success and survival are made possible only through the availability of magical health packs and your soldier’s resistance to bullet wounds – eventually he’ll have so much lead in his body, he’ll keel over from the weight of it. That the rest of the game can’t quite match the intensity of the claims to be. When you’re not cowering in a shell crater, wondering where to flee next, it’s rather like Doom with old-fashioned guns and loads of Nazis running towards you.

The obligatory gun/grenade/melee control system gives you the power to inflict satisfyingly enormous damage on the enemy
forces. Lob a grenade, spray a few bullets into the smoke cloud, and if anybody's still moving after that, crack him in the nose with the fat end of your gun. Then shoot him. You can only carry two weapons at a time, so when you're faced with a choice of a sniper rifle, a rocket launcher and lovely machine gun, one of them will have to be left behind for the scavengers.

The X and Y buttons make your soldier switch between standing, crouching and crawling stances, which affect speed of movement and vulnerability. Even with the on-screen indicator showing which stance you're currently using, it's commonplace to select the wrong one without realising you've changed anything, and the extra controls are an unwelcome distraction in what is generally an relentlessly frantic game.

Taking multiple roles as you switch between Russians in Stalingrad, British in North Africa and Americans in Europe, there's never any emotional attachment to the characters or plot. At the end of each brief level, or even halfway through, you'll be whisked away to occupy a different body in a new campaign. Even if the characters you meet along the way actually survive, there's never any satisfactory resolution to the story.

Most of the time you'll be fighting alongside various helpful characters and a ready supply of expendable cannon fodder. In missions where you have to search buildings room by room, the artificial intelligence is good — your comrades will back you up if you want to kick down doors and go storming ahead. or they'll do the job themselves if you're running low on health. Eventually their luck runs out and they get gunned down, but you won't care because they're only drones anyway, and they'll be replaced as soon as a drone can be dispatched from HQ.

Despite its brevity, Call of Duty Finest Hour is not a particularly easy game, due in part to the lack of checkpoints. There are only one or two of these in each mission, so you'll often have to repeat an annoyingly large section when you succumb to the hundreds of Nazi bullets whizzing through the air. In general, you have to kill everything in order to make it safely to the next...
SHOOTERS

Hold the aiming button to lock directly down the barrel of your gun. If you have a sniper rifle (like you do in Stalingrad), you can look through the scope.

BIG GUNS

Look at this chunk of American steel – it makes the Nazi weapons look like the toys they are. In fact it makes us feel like Rambo. Invisic! Come get some, you sausage-eating mutts!

GAME OVER

In the name of historical accuracy, WWII’s facilities included: 12.7m Chinese (70m civilians); 6.2m Germans (2.7m civilians); 25.6m Soviets (16.9m civilians); 2m Japanese (0.7m civilians); 5.8m Polish (5.7m civilians); 274,000 Brits (92,000 civilians); 298,000 Americans (6,000 civilians).

FRIEND OR FOE

It’s reasonably clear which one is the good guy and which one is the evil German here, but try telling the two of them apart in the chaos of the battlefield.

GAME OVER

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VERDICT

The best World War II title on any console. Not perfect, but if waging war is your thing, Call of Duty is your game.

88 NGC ISSUE 102
Are you ready to duel?

FREE
CIVILISATION
GUIDE &
STICKERS
WITH
ISSUE FOUR!

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
ON SALE THURSDAY 16 DECEMBER
“Like a mediaeval Tony Hawk trick”

TOP CHOP
Here’s a dramatic (and very effective) combo in action – we activated this one by pressing some buttons. Couldn’t care less what it’s called, but the way the enemy’s body gets cleaved in two is dead nice.

PRINCE OF PERSIA
WARRIOR WITHIN

He’s back – bigger, badder and hairier. Get ready for a royal rumble with the original cliff-hanging hero.

INFO BURST
PUBLISHER UBI SOFT
DEVELOPER UBI SOFT
RELEASE DATE OUT NOW
PLAYERS 2
MEM. CARD PAGES 2
GBA LINK-UP NO
SURROUND SOUND NO
WIDESCREEN NO
COST £40

△ Having relieved one monster of its head, the Prince turns his attention to one of the elite female guards. It’s easiest just to knock them over a precipice.

ost of the way through the excellent Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, fighting the evil Vizier’s endlessly spawning minions was a fairly unwelcome distraction from the acrobatic exploration that was the game’s most appealing feature. We knew it, the developers knew it…

M
ost fight scenes into something as polished as the rest of the game, they’ve gone and put even more emphasis on swordplay. Not at the expense of the other stuff, because there’s more of everything here, but enough to make it more confusing and irritating than it needs to be.

It’s the combos that add an unnecessary layer of complexity to

YOUR FOES GET SLICED HORIZONTALLY, VERTICALLY AND EVERY WAY IN BETWEEN

Everyone who ever played it must have known the combat was a bit limp compared to the thrill of running along walls and leaping between flag poles hundreds of metres above the ground.

But instead of replacing quantity with quality, and really turning the what is essentially a simple fighting system. Tapping various buttons makes our hero vault off walls, spin around pillars, leapfrog enemies, steal weapons, and chop his foes in a variety of inventive ways. Remembering all that in the heat of battle – you’ve got to be kidding.
SPLITTING THE CURTAINS
And other funky techniques enjoyed by our Prince...

RIPPER
Leap into a curtain for a gentle ride to the ground. Unless the curtain stops 50 metres above the ground, in which case... jump!

ROPEY
You can climb these ropes or hold onto the end and run along the wall, which is great for getting good distance on your jump.

DRINKING
Water restores our man’s health, so drink from anything — puddle, barrel, whatever. Actually, the castle has no toilets.

SLOWDOWN
If you don’t mind wasting a bit of sand, you can slow everything while you walk around removing a few heads. Good for puzzles too.

POLE DANCE
Maria pioneered this technique, and the Prince does it exactly the same way. Now can he grip onto such fat pales? It’s like magic.

△ There he is, dangling on a crumbly old ledge like some sort of burglar.

△ Ride the walls to avoid getting your legs cut off by the blades.

△ Fortunately the game always lines you up in one of four basic directions on these poles, so you don’t miss your target. It would be hellish otherwise.

You’ve got six time powers and 13 movement techniques to learn. Easy enough. Whip out a sword and you get six right-handed moves, seven left-handed and six acrobatic attacks. Pick up a second sword and there’s a whole new set of 15 right-handed, 17 left-handed and five acrobatic.

When the difference between one move and the next is just a single button in a sequence of many, and each one has a poncey name that makes it sound like a medievies! Tony Hawk trick, it’s totally ridiculous. In fact it brings to mind memories of C-list titles such as Blood Royale or any number of 16-bit Final Fight clones.

Your payoff for learning the full list on, more likely, stumbling across a combo by button-bashing accident, is a slow-motion dismemberment animation. Your foes get sliced horizontally, vertically and every way in between. They melt away in a spray of blood and yellow light. It looks incredible.

If only the game didn’t make you jump through hoops to see it. After a while we found our preferred option was to use a throw to launch enemies over the edge of the nearest fatal drop, because whistling away their health to the point where we could actually activate a finishing move took far too long.

Anyway, the rest of it — fantastic. We just thought we might try getting our only serious complaint out of the way right at the start of this review. The darker theme and those worryingly gloomy red and black preview screens haven’t prevented the on-screen game world shimmering with the same kind of golden glow as its predecessor. It’s beautiful, and it begs to be explored.

The story is set some time after the events of the last game, in which the dim-witted Prince destroyed his entire kingdom and turned his dad into a hollow-eyed zombie. Of course, he fixed most of the damage by meddling further with the sands of time that were the source of the trouble in the first place, but his intervention in fate’s plan really got up somebody’s nose.

PRINCE TRICKY
The Prince might not even consider trying some of the jumps he has to pull off if it weren’t for his ability to reverse the flow of time when he makes a mess of it. Just make sure you rewound far enough, otherwise you’ll only get to watch him fall to his death again. When you run out of sand power, it’s for good.
Enemies are still filled with light but you don’t use a dagger to extract it. Shame, that.

Consequently our hero has spent years running away from the Dahaka, an unstoppable beast intent on ripping him a few new ones. His last chance is to visit the castle of the Empress of Time and travel back in history to prevent the sands ever being created.

Time has not been kind to the fresh-faced, naïve star of the last game. His boyish charm has vanished under a fuzz of hair and testosterone. He looks like he’s been dipped in a bucket of pubes.

But he’s still got the moves, and he’ll be needing all of those old wall-running, pole-swinging tricks to escape the Dahaka and seal up those pesky sands. Again.

The Empress’ castle is in a sorry state of repair at the start of the game, all grey and overgrown. Once the sands start flowing, stepping into the past restores crumbled brickwork and brings back that trademark Prince of Persia shine.

Nipping back in time also re-activates long-dead traps, some of
Prince of Persia
An edgier prince, a Dahaka tale...

High Times
This is a pure exploration room, but sometimes there are
enemies on the highest rollers. Knock them off by lobbing
your second sword at them, or just get stuck in as normal.

Vertigo
Switch to the fixed camera and you'll
appreciate the scale of the level design
here. In the shot below, the Prince is
standing in the giant hole in the wall.

The time-skipping altar,
present version. A bit mucky.

Vaulting off flagpoles is
ridiculously good fun.

Watch for the spinning blades,
then slide down the ladder.

This wooden beam won't
break, so you can hang forever.

Home Front
Give the place a kick of paint by stepping into the
time portal and visiting the past. It's much nicer
there, with golden wolfs to admire and deadly traps
around every corner.

Blood Bath
To fit the Prince's
new, darker image,
the game is very
bloody. There's blood
on the floors, blood
squirting out of
monsters... Even the
Game Over screen has
blood on, and
looks just like the
Red equilators. Heads get
cut off and bodies get
chopped in half too.
It's tamer with a
16 age rating.

Prince of Persia throw a little
backtracking into the mix.
There's more exploration than
last time, so taking a few minutes
to survey each room is a must.
Because there's never anything as
obvious as a Mario-style floating
platform, you'll be straining your
eyes and the game's quirky camera
to spot the tiny ledges and other
disguised environmental features
the Prince uses to get around.
Sometimes the exit to the next
room might be through a tiny hole
in the wall, tucked away almost out
of sight. Sometimes you'll have to
climb all the way to the top of a
huge tower, or descend into the
bowels of the castle. While it isn't
exactly a free-roaming adventure,
you're offered enough potential
routes to make navigation just a
ouch too frustrating, given that
the game's map is a barely
functional piece of artwork.
At its best, this is a stunning
platform game that offers more of
the same. We don't like the
combos, we don't like the Prince's
new habit of growing hair while
fighting, and we think the rock
soundtrack ought to be taken out
to a quiet field and shot. But we like
everything else about Warrior
Within. If the series continues to
develop in this manner, the next
one is going to be like Streets of
Rage with turbans. Catch it while it
still remembers who it is.

Martin Kitts

Turn over for the making of Prince of Persia
THE MAKING OF...

PRINCE OF PERSIA
WARRIOR WITHIN

Yannis Mallat is sitting in an empty room in Ubi Soft's Montreal offices. "One week ago this place was filled with energy and life," he tells NGC. "Now there's no-one sitting in the chairs and the desks have been left empty. It's kind of sad."
The reason for the solitude of Yannis Mallat is that the day we telephone him is the day that Ubi Soft announced they are ready to start its journey to the release of Prince of Persia: Warrior Within. The team is now unshackled from the game that's consumed their last 12 months, are off getting ready.

Meanwhile, Yannis, the softly-spoken 30-year-old producer on both Warrior Within and its prequel Sands of Time, chats to us about the year's hard graft that went into that gold master. He'll then head off for some hard partying, which began when a member of Yannis's team asked for his advice on some new, possibly controversial, ideas. "We had a small group of coders working on concepts for a Prince of Persia 2 before the first game was finished," remembers Yannis. "They'd had some ideas for altering the character of the Prince, and they sat me down to ask me what I thought. With that small group, I decided that the original Prince was good value, but just not interesting. Intriguing, but not interesting. We concluded we had to give him an 'edge' - a darker, more mature look. And we actually compared

\[Δ\text{Yup, he definitely looks a bit older and tougher.}\]
\[Δ\text{Water restores health - well, they didn't have medkits then.}\]

\[\text{TOUCH}\]

Yannis and team were determined to cram as much as possible into The Warrior Within, after being surprised that a last-minute addition to Sands of Time - the way the Prince Interrupts his narration to correct himself when you die ("No, no, that wasn't how it happened") - became one of the game's best-remembered bits. "Jordan Mechner, the original Prince of Persia author, suggested that," says Yannis. "It's the little things gamers seem to love."

\[\text{THE ORIGINAL PRINCE WAS JUST NOT INTERESTING. WE HAD TO GIVE HIM AN 'EDGE'.}\]

Soft issues a press release announcing that Prince of Persia: Warrior Within has "reached gold master status" - industry-speak for the final version of the game being ready to start its journey to the shops. There's a mass party in Montreal tonight to celebrate, and the Prince Of Persia team, finally unshackled from the game that's consumed their last 12 months, are off getting ready.

Intriguing, but not interesting. We concluded we had to give him an 'edge' - a darker, more mature look. And we actually compared

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: Ubi Soft
Release date: 3rd Dec '04
Reviewed: NGC/102, 88%
Montreal - see p.68 for the review.

Filed by: Mark Green

\[\text{SPEED PAINTING}\]

The artists on Warrior Within used this technique - a computer-based method of creating the environments and characters. You start with broad brushstrokes with your mouse, then gradually get down to the gritty. As you'd expect, it's quick.
him with other game characters to make sure we got it right."

From a 'branding' perspective, this shift towards an older, edgier lead character was ideal. The Ubi Soft marketing folk loved the idea of a more mature follow-up to the relatively 'bright' Sands of Time. But it also meant Yannis and the team again I'm sure we would have lost more than we'd have gained," Yannis says.

After a mammoth hiring process that saw 60 new people hopping on board the good ship Ubi Soft - most of whom were experienced coders from Canada and France - proper work began at the tail-end of 2003. Having had time to read their fill of reviews highlighting Sands of Time's flaws (most reviewers felt it had repetitive fights, shallow play and was a bit short) the team made fixing them a priority. Meanwhile, the storyline, which sees the Prince facing certain death at the hands of time monster Dahaka, was fleshed out, and not just in terms of cut-scenes, as Creative Director Jean-Christophe Guyot explains.

"We took a lot of inspiration from cloak-and-dagger spy movies," he says. "A lot of movement, and a lot of speech, went into the fighting. The idea is to develop the personality of the bad guys. Suddenly characters have more depth, their own goals and ideals, and it's not just good versus evil any more, it's two destinies colliding. We actually enlisted the help of..."

△ The fighting's been given a good tweaking, with new combos and move sequences added – not to mention the inclusion of buckets of gore when you pull off a successful combo.

**WE TOOK A LOT OF INSPIRATION FROM CLOAK-AND-DAGGER SPY MOVIES**

could surprise Prince of Persia fans with a non-indentikit sequel (everyone hates sequels that are more like rehashes), reach the kind of gamer who thought Sands of Time wasn't for them and, most importantly for Yannis, give the artists and coders the freedom to express themselves in a new way. "If we'd have done the same thing again I'm sure we would have lost more than we'd have gained," Yannis says.

After a mammoth hiring process that saw 60 new people hopping on board the good ship Ubi Soft - most of whom were experienced coders from Canada and France - proper work began at the tail-end

**FIGHTY**

back at E3, Jean-Christophe Guyot gave an insight into The Warrior Within's new 'freeform fighting'. "The Prince is acting with more strength and aggression - we paid special attention to the diversity and visual impact of finishing moves, and put a lot of effort into the richness of animation in moves like the double sword decapitation. We wanted to give players a new sense of power."

just in terms of cut-scenes, as Creative Director Jean-Christophe Guyot explains.

"We took a lot of inspiration from cloak-and-dagger spy movies," he says. "A lot of movement, and a lot of speech, went into the fighting. That's why we chose to have dialogue between the Prince and his enemies as they fight. The idea is to develop the personality of the bad guys. Suddenly characters have more depth, their own goals and ideals, and it's not just good versus evil any more, it's two destinies colliding. We actually enlisted the help of..."
TIME-TRAVELLING ALLOWED US TO CREATE A MIX OF GREEK AND PERSIAN CULTURES

drastic last-minute cuts that had threatened the first Prince of Persia work on Warrior Within went super-smoothly. The fighting was bloodied up with violent finishing moves and "freeform fighting", bosses chopped from the old game (such as the mighty Griffin) were brought back in, and the team prevented continuity problems within the complicated time-hopping platform by designing a unique online flowchart. With a single mouse-click coders could see the exact consequences of the player’s possible actions in each time zone.

"It was important for us to break the linearity of Sands of Time," says Yannis. "But when you take two timelines – the past and present – and allow the player to switch between them pretty much at will, you’re looking at hell. Right up to the last two weeks before the gold master, we were still trying to make sure all the save points and checkpoints were working properly. But the result is an amazing level of immersion for the player."

For a game whose daddy had bowled over everyone with its stunning gold-tinged vision of 9th century Persia, visuals were crucial too, as Guyot explains.

"With Sands of Time we worked hard to bring out that dreamy, glowing Arabian Nights feeling," he says. "This time, we developed a new style, and the time-travelling plot allowed us to create a mix of Greek and Persian cultures. We tried to mimic the kind of colour tints they used in the The Lord of the Rings movies, worked hard on getting the camera angles right, and used blue as a focus rather than the golds and whites of the last game. It required a lot of direction to get right."

Everything was set for a spellbinding unveiling of the team’s work so far at the £3 expo in May 2004. But while Yannis was walking the showfloor to check out the competition ("lots of sequels – disappointing"), the Prince of Persia 2 demo – which saw the new, angry Prince sliding off heads on a
stormswept ship, showing off his new curtain-slide and pillar-swing moves and hammering a giant ogre on the back – was generating a rumble of discontent among Sons of Time fans. Some accused the team of 'selling out' with the darker, bloodier visuals.

This, and some less-than-brilliant review scores for the final game, got Yannis uncharacteristically frustrated. "I'm a little confused because the game is twice as long, the fighting much better, the game much deeper," he says. "We are expressing an art direction that if you don't like – well, that's your problem. But you shouldn't prioritise your subjective feelings over the quality of the game itself. Maybe certain people don't like dark games, don't like violence. But they have to accept that at least Warrior Within is different. That makes it good value for money."

You can now find out for yourself if Yannis and the rest of the team were right, because the game is in the shops. To ensure Warrior Within actually met its terrifyingly tight deadline and made it onto the shelves this month, a team of five of Ubi Soft Montreal's best testers were brought in to sit among the actual coders, playing the game intensively on development kits so that the team could fix any problems 'live' as they occurred. Despite Yannis's optimistic estimates, the game had as many last-minute bugs to iron out as its predecessor – leading to plenty of frustrated faces when the team worked until the early hours to get a 'final' version finished, only to have it boomerang straight back into their faces with a long list of problems attached.

To the relief of Yannis's bosses, though, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within met its deadline. And so it's party time. "It's like celebrating a birth," says Yannis, "and I think we've almost heard

ENDGAME

The core members of the Prince of Persia team "relaxed in an intimate way with champagne and bear" immediately after 'gold status' was achieved; but it's the party described in the main text that see the team really celebrating Warrior Within being done and dusted. Although it's a multi-purpose shindig that also celebrates the completion of other big Ubi Soft projects such as PC masstrada-adventure Myst 3, Yannis promises there'll be "VIP treatment" for the POP-WW team.

THE GAME IS TWICE AS LONG, THE FIGHTING MUCH BETTER, THE GAME MUCH DEEPER

adjusting his party bowtie. "But it's also a way of dealing with post-deadline trauma. My guys were working like hell for months, and now they're asking themselves 'who am I? What am I supposed to do? So a good party helps. I've got to give a speech, and I'll tell them this: go out and spend all that money you've earned!"
Capcom’s stylish scrapper still has plenty of viewtiful va va voom...

hen something like Viewtiful Joe sneaks up on you, dealing out the gaming equivalent of a stinging slap to the face, it’s hard not to feel invigorated. We’re talking about a game that’s so familiar, yet very different at the same time — the original Viewtiful Joe injected 550ml (or thereabouts) of pure ‘Zing’ (surely no other word can describe it) directly into our frontal lobe. On the week it arrived in the office it left us reeling. People stood and stared as we played non-stop. Joypads were hurled in frustration. Shrieks of delight at the game’s ingenious and exasperating puzzles filled the air with astonishing regularity. It was fresh.

It was exciting and it was so difficult that it stimulated parts of our brain that nothing had touched since Ikaruga.

The same can’t be said for Viewtiful Joe 2. It’s pretty much more of the same. Not necessarily a bad thing, but there’s no denying that the element of surprise is nowhere near as strong as it was for the boy superhero’s first outing. It’s hardly a breath of fresh air.

However, given that the original title was hardly Capcom’s best-selling game, it’s fair to say that anyone getting their first taste of Viewtiful Joe with this sequel has something special to look forward to. If you were one of the minority wise enough to pick up the first game, you can console yourself with the knowledge that you’re about to be treated to another brilliant romp.

You need to use special abilities to activate some switches – here we’re using a spinning kick that hits several times in succession.

**THE MORE STYLISHLY YOU FIGHT AND SOLVE PUZZLES, THE GREATER YOUR RANKING**

with the fact that, bar a few changes, you’re in for pretty much the same kind of high-quality experience found in the previous game. Excellent.

Structurally, VI2 follows the same formula as its predecessor. Levels consist of a series of separate sections. These take the form of environmental puzzles and encounters with a variety of enemies, from simple drones to airborne enemies and mini-bosses.

Complete a section and you’re graded from ‘C’ (Crappy) and ‘B’ (Bad) to ‘A’ (Awesome) and, the top rating, ‘V’ (Viewtiful).

You need to dispatch enemies as efficiently (or Viewtifully) as possible. The more stylishly you fight and solve puzzles, the greater your ranking and, ultimately, the more ‘Viewtifuls’ you’ll earn.

Viewtifuls serve as the game’s currency, which you can spend on character-enhancing upgrades like new moves, and these in turn allow you to battle with even more grace and flair.

Underpinning this basic structure are the characters’ VFX abilities (Yes, characters – Joe’s good lady Sylvia is now playable too.) These are special effects triggered by the two shoulder buttons and the C-stick. Slow, Mach Speed (or Replay for Sylvia) and Zoom make possible spectacular moves for each character, allowing them to do movie-style things like dodge bullets, knock enemies into each other in a chain reaction, start combos and dish out unholy amounts of damage. These VFX powers are finite, however, and you can only use them if there’s enough VFX.

△ Dodge, hit ‘Slow’ and then try to rack up the combos.
△ This is possibly the campest boss you’ll ever face.
△ On fire? Use Mach Speed to put out the flames.
△ You need to use special abilities to activate some switches – here we’re using a spinning kick that hits several times in succession.
shown in the meter at the top of the screen. Should you use this supply up entirely, each character reverts back to human form and becomes vulnerable until the meter recharges. Judicious use of VFX abilities, then, is not only the key to fighting Viewtifully but also the key to survival.

If you were a fan of the original game, it’ll come as no surprise to learn that puzzles play just as important a part this time around – and with them comes Viewtiful Joe’s own twisted sense of game logic. In the first game we found some sections pretty heavy going – the solutions to some puzzles proved bewilderingly obscure. However, if you have played though Joe’s previous adventure, you should feel more in tune with what’s expected from you this time around. For example, you can once again use the Slow VFX to build up pressure, slow down moving propeller blades, make explosions bigger and last longer or make heavy objects easier to punch into the air, while Mach speed enables you to do things like raise platforms, power machines and start fires.

As before, many of the puzzles also require you to use two or three of your VFX powers in conjunction in order to complete the increasingly surreal brain teasers – they should test the limits of your VFX meter.

It all works wonderfully and Viewtiful Joe 2 is a real pleasure to watch, let alone play. Despite our ever-so-slight misgivings about this being more of the same, it’s still superbly enjoyable stuff – and there are some significant differences here that manage to improve on the original.
This one’s slightly less pad-smashingly frustrating, for a start. It’s still not what you’d call an easy game, but it’s certainly more forgiving. Checkpoints are more evenly (and fairly) spaced, making failure a little easier to bear as you never have too far to go to replay a difficult section.

The addition of Sylvia as a playable character from the offset also adds to the experience. Tapping Z lets you swap between the two characters at any time, and using each character’s unique abilities is essential to solving some of the game’s puzzles. What’s more, Sylvia and Joe don’t just have individual VFX powers, there are other advantages to using both. Switching between the two offers you more freedom when it comes to tackling enemy encounters, because Sylvia has greater range using her guns whereas Joe’s particularly adept at dishing out massive damage to bosses.

This really is as good as over-the-top stylised violence gets. It’s never repetitive, thanks to the puzzles and huge variety of enemies, and it always manages to put a smile on your face – even when you’re being mercilessly pounded into the ground. Maybe it’s the fact that, unlike most fighting games, it doesn’t take itself too seriously, wearing its relentless silliness on its sleeve, that makes us love it. There’s lashings and lashings of nauseatingly cheesy dialogue in here – all of it completely intentional. There are film references, horribly overblown B-movie-style acting, hilariously stupid characters and a quite absurd plot that parodies anything and everything (including itself). It’s quite possibly the funniest game story we’ve come across. And despite this, it can’t hide the fact that it’s actually a much cleverer game than most – and it’s for this reason that we’re still very, very fond of the kind of experience Viewtiful Joe has to offer.

Capcom have done their bit. They’ve delivered another high-quality and original (compared to most other stuff) brawler, and all that remains now is for you to do your bit and go out and buy it when it comes out over here in March. Trust us, you won’t regret it for a second...

GERAINT EVANS
Aeons before the honking ape learnt to bongo, Nintendo gave him a musical twist with a rap contest, asking fans to yabber street-style over Donkey Kong 64’s appalling intro theme. Nintendo’s hopes of a street cred boost went folk-ward as it was treated to excruciating rhymes like “My fingers go snap and my toes don’t stop. It’s time to rap to the DK rap” (that from one of the winning entries), and at least one rap fan questioned whether it was “another form of hip-hop exploitation”.

Infamously enlightened Zelda: Ocarina of Time TV ad slogan that successfully alienated a nice healthy chunk of Nintendo’s audience. Over seventy complaints to the Independent Television Commission later (just over half the number received for the Halford’s bike-riding chimp ad from last year – interesting), Nintendo were presumably ready to repeatedly slam their marketing people’s heads in a vice. However, the ITC turned down the complaints, and GBA SP’s “For Men” tagline shows Nintendo are back on track. We’re told Revolution’s slogan will be “Girls smell”.

Why Nintendo should lock their mouths and throw away the key.
13 “Your guarantee of quality.”

Aiming to restore faith in its 80s console market ruined by unofficial, Nintendo appealed worried parents by slapping this Seal of Quality on every NES game box as a guarantee of its officiality. It worked, too. But the shiny spiky thing’s other job — fooling people into thinking every single game for every single Nintendo console met the company’s standards in entertainment value “most of all” — must have led to more than a few angry phone calls from mums and dads who bought, say, Donkey Kong Jr. Maths. Those three little words have since disappeared.

12 “Squaresoft will never work for Nintendo.”

A Yamauchi blast from March 2001, the Nintendo president yelling through a loudspeaker at trembling reporters that the Final Fantasy developers were “free to say whatever they want, but we have no intention of signing a contract, and there’s little chance of one being signed in the future.” Two years later, he was machine-gunning signature ink at any Square-related contract that passed his way, including one that saw him pumping his own cash into Square offshoot and Crystal Chronicles team Game Designers Studio. Hiroshi Yamauchi is 77.

11 “The 64DD is coming!”

Announced alongside the Nintendo 64 in 1995, the 64DD was a uniquely Nintendo face-stamp for anyone who moaned about the console’s restrictively small cartridges. This add-on disc drive promised big-scope concepts like downloadable games “from satellite sources”, worlds that continued to exist even when the machine was off, and — we’ve heard this before — online gaming. “Think about some of the possibilities!” said a Nintendo spokesperson. “Here’s a very slightly remixed Ocarina of Time!” said Shigeru Miyamoto.

By 1999, most planned 64DD games had already been switched to cart, and Shigs was muttering that he could not “always be optimistic about the launch of the 64DD”. It ended up on Japanese shop shelves eventually, though — a clunky slab of black plastic, only available through a strange rental agreement, with discs like Dashin the Goon that clunked and grinded like a WWII-era jetplane starting up. It died almost instantly, and thoughts about bringing it to the US and UK were unsurprisingly rethunk.

10 “Super Mario World has 96 levels!”

No, Super Mario World has 96 exits. There are 72 levels, and an extra 24 hidden routes to find. But Nintendo facts like this for breakfast, so the original promotional material and ads for the GBA remake have featured those two soaring digits of falsehood. As a result, Ninty’s only got itself to blame that “Where is level 96?” was the third most common question picked up the hallowed “Game Counselors” at Nintendo HQ in 1993. Fact!
9 “Please make a Mario movie, Mr Hollywood.”

Buena Vista fed 48 million dollars into the making of Super Mario Bros: The Movie. In the 11 years since the film’s release it’s recouped only $20 million of that – the same that fellow May ’93 opener Cliffhanger made in just it’s first weekend. Not surprising for a film that turned Yoshi into some kind of walking flame-grilled chicken, and boasted the tagline, “This Ain’t No Game – It’s a Live-Action Thrill Ride!”. Shigsy said at the time, “I’m pleased to hear that the director hasn’t distorted the Mario image.” That man, really...

8 “N64 is now £100 cheaper!”

Everyone and their wallet loves a console price cut. Except when that price cut comes just a few weeks after the machine was first launched. Upsetting tens of thousands of people who’d barely untied their shoelaces after coming back from the shops with a nice and spendy £250 console. The postie was soon lugging sacksfuls of angry letters through Nintendo’s door, and the company ended up cramming copies of Mario for £60 in the mouths of complainers to shut them up. Then cutting the price again in October just to ram the point home.

7 “We’re making a more mature Mario.”

Shigsy’s moment of maximum wrongness. Back when Gamecube was still just a few morsels of gossip pie, he told journalists that “it is time that [Mario and Luigi] became a bit more grown-up,” pointing expressly to Mario’s V sign which he described as “childish”. The Speculation Machine was running at full tilt over the wisdom of this bizarre turn – until Super Mario Sunshine came trundling down the Nintendo conveyor belt, complete with a Mario who was riding about on a dinosaur’s back and yelling ‘woof!’ and ‘hup!’ as though nothing had happened. Bewildering.

6 “We are a Kyoto developer.”

In an interview with NGC predecessor Super Play during the golden Super Mario World and Zelda: Link to the Past era, Shigsy said that the secret to Nintendo’s success was that they were based, not in Tokyo, but a three-hour bullet train ride away in the river, friendlier, relxier Kyoto area. “The taste of a Kyoto game is different from that of a Tokyo game,” he chuckled, stroking his banjo. “We Kyotoites... keep in mind that we should always make better games than ever [and] are proud of making people laugh.” Nice – except Nintendo have since decided to move right out of Kyoto and into an incomprehensibly sterile milk carton of an office in the cold, anonymous heart of Tokyo. Since when we’ve been given Pokémon Channel Mmm.

5 “We’re coming to America!”

Nintendo’s been here before. But they never quite took. This time they mean it. Mainly because of the N64, but also because of the Gamecube. Shigsy has even invited American gamers to his home in Kyoto. In fact, he’s been known to stay in the hotel across the street when he’s there. His only complaint is that the American hoteliers haven’t yet been able to understand the concept of clean sheets. We’re quite willing to bet that the Bed & Breakfast wave hits Japan before the bed-making wave hits America.
5 "Resident Evil 4 is Gamecube exclusive."

See last issue’s Newsdesk for the full horror—a Capcom-caused crisis that's given Nintendo fresh nightmares. The sunny, carefree days of Shini Miikami telling us that RE4 is ‘not on another console, and if it happens I will cut my head off!’ have given way to a ‘recent executive decision from Capcom Japan to begin development of the game for the PS2.’ Uvid Nintendo fans are already acting like the crazy-eyed frighten-o-villagers from the game, and that guy with the big chainsaw and a sack on his head is approaching Mr. Miikami’s office as we speak.

4 “Play our games the way we say.”

Nintendo have an almost obsessive hatred of cheats. To this day, you’re more likely to see Donald Rumsfeld in a Mario game than a button code. But Nintendo were diagnosed with lethally acute cheatoephobia in 1991, when US firm Galoob released the ‘Game Genie’ (the first device to let you get cheat effects by tapping codes into games) and were actually taken to court by the big red N. Nintendo’s claim, incredibly, was that the way the Game Genie changed a game’s play amounted to copyright infringement. Galoob, who had made unsuccessful attempts in the past to license the Game Genie as an official accessory, stopped Nintendo in the courts (on what we actually think is a slightly off point that their device only alters the “display” of the game), and the only “victory” for Nintendo was in giving the Game Genie (and the later Action Replay) free marketing in helped dessert spoonfuls.

3 “Mention our games and we’ll sue you.”

All publicity is good publicity? Nah. On an apparent drive to prevent websites with “questionable content” destroying Nintendo’s “kiddie” reputation, the company’s team of robotlawyers reportedly advised an adult game publisher to cease and desist from mentioning Nintendo’s copyright. The site’s crime? Publishing a page where a member of the site said he liked Metroid. After the whole “net-reading” world had been informed that Nintendo’s lawfolk were coming down hard, the company apparently apologised and offered the man in question a free console and game. Bet he loved all that attention.

2 “So long, Sony.”

A classic tale so packed with irony that you could package it up and sell it as irony cakes. 1990s-era Nintendo asked Sony to make a CD-ROM add-on for the SNES—then, successors of Sony’s motives, threw the whole thing right back in Sony’s face by announcing a similar deal with Philips just as Sony were unveiling the finished product. The result: Nintendo’s new-found enemy vowing to damage their dead son by building an entire console around their core technology. The codename: PlayStaion. The rest: history.

1 “We are a family-friendly company.”

“Our highest priority is to produce quality games that are both accessible to younger players and acceptable to the whole family.” Peter Main, Vice President of Nintendo, 1993. Next thing you know you get Cuddly Kittens at Nintendo are bringing us Conker’s Bad Fu**ing Day (a game so mature that Nintendo of Europe refused to release it as a first-party product). Tattooed Game Boy Advance SPS, Nintendo DS ad campaignSpoiler in Jackass (felaas) and laugh-out-loud gags (“Break a leg, Basset”)—and Mario punching Yoshi in the face in Super Smash Bros. We really don’t want to meet Peter Main’s family.

JANUARY 2005 NGC 85
Fancy a belated Christmas present? How about every missile in the game? We spoil you...

You need to be quick on the trigger if you’re going to get far in Metroid Prime 2: Echoes. Along with the puzzle-solving, world-swapping and exploration, there’s a wide range of monsters to meet and reduce to piles of jelly. That’s if they don’t reduce you to mush first – Gerant’s language when he faced moth-monster Chykka would’ve turned the air blue if he hadn’t been uttering his obscenities in Welsh (which turned the air green).

Of course, you don’t need lots of missiles in Echoes. Just like you don’t need weapon pick-ups in Mario Kart or lots of turnips and fruit trees in Harvest Moon, it’s reassuring to have them, and gives you an edge over the competition, but it’s not exactly essential. You do need some for opening red hatches, and they’re useful for taking down any particularly nasty bosses you encounter but that’s about it. (The aforementioned Chykka is vulnerable to Super Flissiles while it’s in its larval form.)

Still, when did need come into anything? You want all the missiles, you know you do. And that’s where this guide can help you out. We’ve found every single one of them, and we’ve taken notes on what equipment you need to get at them. Just follow our instructions and you’ll get the lot.

Some changes have been made to your ballistic beauties since the last game – for one thing, you can no longer keep pressing Y, A, Y to fire missiles constantly like you could in Prime. However, now you can charge them up so they’ll become more specialized weapons like Darkburst or Sonic Boom missiles, and you’ve plenty more options besides. There’s even one for rapid firing. We’ll tell you all about the changes you can apply once we’ve finished listing where all the missiles are located.

We’ll have even more Echoes tactics for you next issue, so if you’re still stuck on the game even with a plentiful supply of missiles at your fingertips, you know where to come. Just wait for the February issue, and another bundle of the game’s most useful secrets will be revealed...
TIPS EXTRA
- Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door, The Incredibles and the solutions to your problems. p94

NEXT MONTH
- 2005. And that means Zelda, yes... but there’s so much more! Can you wait 28 days? p103

GAME ON
- Send us your Game On Ideas and win a free game – but for now, try one of these. p98

DIRECTORY
- The top 100 titles for Gamecube, why they’re great and what issue we reviewed them in. p104

LETTERS
- Games ideas and sticky sweets – plus a challenge to see if you can be The Reg. p100

END GC
- To end our feast of fun, a waffer-thin sheet of humour to make you explode with happiness. p114

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?
When a girl’s shooting aliens and tackling huge bass-type monsters, there are some things she can’t afford to run out of, like missiles. And lippless (says Mmm), but we’re only concerned about the missiles. We’ll show you where to find every single one in the game.

WHAT WE SAID IN LAST ISSUE!
As the game progresses you get a gradual feel of empowerment as you become more familiar with your weapons, skills and the growing environment – and your pride swells as you overcome the game’s tougher mental challenges.
Find all the missiles in

**METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES**

**Location:** Temple Grounds, GFMC Compound
You need: Charge beam
To get it: This one’s no trouble – just shoot a charged beam shot at the yellow federation container to your left to reveal the missile launcher.

**Location:** Agon Wastes, Portal Access A
You need: Morph ball
To get it: When you land on the other side of the room, turn around and behind the dead Luminorth is the missile expansion. Morph and carefully roll to collect the missile.

**Location:** Temple Grounds, Transport to Agon Wastes
You need: Power beam
To get it: When you enter the room, go forward to the lift and then turn around. To your right is some webbing. Shoot the centre to get access to the missiles.

**Location:** Agon Wastes, Transport Center
You need: Space jump, Morph ball bombs
To get it: Once you have the Space Jump boots, head back into Light World and go to the newly accessible door in the portal room. Activate the bomb slot to claim the missiles.

**Location:** Agon Wastes, Command Center
You need: Morph ball
To get it: Pass the first two morph ball passage lasers, and take a right before the third. Go past the next laser to collect the missile near it.
METROID PRIME 2
Get every missile!

**8 Location:** Agon Wastes, Sand Cache
You need: Amber translator
To get it: Scan the Amber Luminoth door and then enter the room to claim your missiles.

**7 Location:** Temple Grounds, Temple Assembly Site
You need: Space jump
To get it: Go to the top-left area of the room and you’ll see a small brown statue below a ledge with some crates on it. Space jump onto the statue, then go to the ledge. Go left and morph into the tunnel to collect the missiles.

**8 Location:** Great Temple, Transport B Access
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: In the middle of the room to your left (if you came from Temple grounds), you should spot a morph ball section cut into the wall. Bomb jump up a few times and simply keep rolling until you collect the missiles.

**9 Location:** Torvus Bog, Forgotten Bridge
You need: n/a
To get it: Activate the bomb slot in Dark Aether’s version of the area, then return to Light Aether and walk across the bridge to the now-accessible missiles.

**10 Location:** Torvus Bog, Underground Tunnel
You need: Morph ball
To get it: As soon as you enter the room from the Torvus Temple side fall into the water, morph and roll behind you. Follow the path to collect the missiles.

**12 Location:** Temple Grounds, Hive Chamber A
You need: n/a
To get it: Move forward to face the Dark Missile Trooper. Simply charge a full dark beam blast, freeze it and missile it to claim your missiles.

**11 Location:** Temple Grounds, Hall of Honoured Dead
You need: Boost ball
To get it: Solve the spinner puzzle by boosting in each spinner, making each ringlet light up (which shows it’s in the correct spot). Boost in the purple spinner to light up the outer ring, then boost in the blue spinner to light up the next two rings, then the yellow spinner for two more rings and finally the red spinner to light up the middle ring. Collect the Seeker missiles.

**13 Location:** Temple Grounds, Hive Chamber B
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: Look for the morph ball entry with the cracked covering. Blow it up with a morph ball bomb, roll in and collect your missiles.
**14 Location:** Dark Agon Wastes, Crossroads
You need: Boost ball
To get it: In Transport Chamber, boost up the half pipe to the very top to the portal. Activate it and you’ll appear with the missiles right in front of you.

**15 Location:** Torvus Bog, Hydrodynamo Station
You need: Space jump boots
To get it: Once you’ve activated the first bridge and used the booster to get back to the top of the room, fall down to the purple Seeker door, where the missiles are sitting.

**16 Location:** Dark Torvus Bog, Undertransit One
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: On the bottom level head to the Crypt, on the right-hand side of the bottom level bomb jump up and left and then move left. Bomb jump to the right to collect the well-concealed missiles.

**17 Location:** Torvus Bog, Abandoned Work Site
You need: Grapple beam
To get it: From the water just after the Light door, turn around and look up to face the grapple point. Space jump up and to it and latch onto the grapple point. Swing across to grab the missiles.

**18 Location:** Torvus Bog, Portal Chamber
You need: Space jump
To get it: It’s in Dark Torvus Bog’s version of the room. Make your way to the end of the room, unmorph and look up behind you. Space jump up the two ledges and morph. Fall out and activate the Light portal. Collect the missiles and use the Dark transporter to go back to Dark Aether afterwards.

**19 Location:** Torvus Bog, Path of Roots
You need: Grapple beam
To get it: Simply grapple over to the missiles on the ledge.

**20 Location:** Torvus Bog, Torvus Lagoon
You need: Gravity boost
To get it: Take the right-hand path underwater (towards the elevator) and you’ll approach a high ledge with venomweed below. Simply use the boost to get to the missiles.

**21 Location:** Great Temple, Transport & Access
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: To the right of the save station are some rocks. Bomb them and roll down the ramp to collect the missiles.

**22 Location:** Great Temple, GFMC Compound
You need: Space jump (Or Screw attack)
To get it: You can go to the entrance of the morph ball tunnel by the powerbomb door and do a long space jump from the corner to the top of the Federation ship. The missile is located at the back of the ship on the roof. Using Screw Attack makes the jump easier, but it’s not essential.

**23 Location:** Ing Hive, Hazing Cliff
You need: Light beam
To get it: Use a single charged Light beam shot on each of the Dark Diligence Drones to kill them. You can now collect the missiles.

**24 Location:** Sanctuary Fortress, Dynamo Works
You need: Spider ball
To get it: Once you’ve beaten the Spider ball boss, go to the exit by spiderballing to the top left corner of the arena and bomb jump up the gap and go left. The missile is just in front of the exit.
25 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Hall of Combat Mastery
You need: Spider ball, Morph ball bombs
To get it: Go to the tip of the west wall and look for the spider ball track. Go through the spider ball obstacle course by going into the morph ball slot to reverse the conveyor belt, then going past the flame jets (be careful at the moving laser bars). Move slowly with them and only bomb jump when you have the chance. Next up are horizontal lasers on timers. Bomb jump carefully onto the moving platforms and continue left. Be careful of the Phazon in this part.
Bomb jump onto the moving platform and when the magnetic bar passes overhead, hold R and bomb jump to it. Drop onto the other platform once over it and bomb jump to the spider track. Go right and spider ball over to the missile expansion.

26 Location: Torus Bug, Training Chamber
You need: Spider ball
To get it: Use the spider ball track underwater just to the left of the statue to boost across and up to the roof. Drop down, bomb the slot and the missiles are behind the statue.

27 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Main Research
You need: Spider ball
To get it: The left-hand wall has a spider ball track starting at the bottom. Carefully work your way around the track, avoiding the pincers. At the end is a set of missiles.

28 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Central Area Transport West
You need: Morph ball
To get it: From the top, drop down to the lift and look down at the corner. You should see three slots. Morph and roll into the left hole, then go right and right again to fall onto the missiles.

29 Location: Ing Hive, Aerial Training Site
You need: Screw attack
To get it: In front of and to the sides of the Light portal are wall jump surfaces. Simply wall jump up to the missiles.

30 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Sentinels Path
You need: Annihilator beam, Echo visor
To get it: Equip the Echo visor and use the Annihilator beam on the Echo door. Shoot the key on the right twice, then the key on the left once, then the key on the right once more. This will open the door to the missiles.

31 Location: Sanctuary Fortress, Temple Access
You need: Echo visor, Seeker missiles
To get it: Use your Seeker missiles on the four targets above the door leading to the temple. This will create a morph ball cannon silhouette. Now, go to the front of the main object in the room and switch on your Echo visor. Shoot the sonar device and then quickly jump into the morph ball cannon. Collect the missiles and use the spinner to create a gap.

32 Location: Agon Wastes, Ventilation Shaft A
You need: Morph ball bombs
To get it: When you get to the junction that allows you to go upward, go right to the next mound. It has a tunnel leading away up above it. Do two sets of double bomb jumps to the left and then do a single bomb jump over to the missiles.
36 **Location:** Agon Wastes, Sandprocessing  
**You need:** Boost ball  
**To get it:** Kill the turrets and then boost up the half pipe to the tunnel. Bomb jump in and then use the bomb slot to drain the sand from the area, revealing the missiles.

37 **Location:** Agon Wastes, Storage A  
**You need:** Power bombs, Light beam  
**To get it:** Break the denzium rubble in the corner and open the Light door to claim your missiles.

38 **Location:** Agon Wastes, Mining Station A  
**You need:** Power bombs, Spider ball  
**To get it:** Blow up the denzium with a power bomb and roll into the cannon. Latch onto the track with your spider ball and then work your way to the missiles on the left.

39 **Location:** Dark Agon Wastes, Warrior’s Walk  
**You need:** Morph ball bombs  
**To get it:** Bomb the middle flooring above the Phazon pool. Boost into the missile as the Phazon will damage Samus severely.

40 **Location:** Dark Agon Wastes, Junction Site  
**You need:** Spider ball  
**To get it:** Bomb jump onto the spider ball track. Bomb the bomb slot and drop onto the missiles.

41 **Where:** Dark Agon Wastes, Ing Cache 4  
**You need:** Dark beam  
**To get it:** Open the door with the Dark beam, drop down, morph and roll into the tunnel that doubles back towards the door.

42 **Location:** Dark Torvus Bog, Undertemple  
**You need:** Screw attack  
**To get it:** Go to the section with the spider ball tracks that lead up to the portal. On the walls are wall jump pads. Wall jump these to grab the missiles at the top.

43 **Location:** Torvus Bog, Gathering Hall  
**You need:** Powerbombs, Spider ball  
**To get it:** Powerbomb the case under the water and then powerbomb the middle section that’s left. Boost up the newly made half-pipe and latch onto the spider track. Go round and boost onto the rotating spider block. Boost into the bomb slot and bomb it. Repeat this for the other side. This will unlock the missiles.

44 **Where:** Torvus Bog, Torvus Grove  
**You need:** Powerbombs  
**To get it:** Find the two thick distorted tree legs and Powerbomb them both. The tree will collapse, revealing the missiles to you.

45 **Location:** Torvus Bog, Plaza Access  
**You need:** Morph ball bombs  
**To get it:** Use Bomb Jumps to navigate your way to two bomb slots. Activate each so you can access a new part of the area, and use another Bomb Jump to reach the tunnel atop the second ledge. Now roll down this new area and use the half-pipe to boost over to the missiles.
ND LOCATION: Temple Grounds, Phazon Grounds
You need: Screw Attack or Dark visor
To get it: You can either use your Dark visor to spot the invisible platforms, or take the safer option later on in the game and use the Screw Attack to get across to the missiles, while killing all Metroids in your way.

54 LOCATION: Torvus Bog, Transit Tunnel South
You need: Annihilator beam, Morph ball bombs
To get it: First activate the bottom-most bomb slot, then jump up so you’re above the yellow orb. Double Bomb Jump up and go right to reach another bomb slot. Activate it and use Bomb Jumps and the water current to reach the missiles.

50 LOCATION: Sky Temple Grounds, Plain of Dark Worship
You need: Light beam
To get it: Go into the Dark portal and trek across the vast plain to the Ingworm hive at the end of the area. Once you’re there, grab the Expansion just inside an alcove.

51 LOCATION: Sanctuary Fortress, Sanctuary Map Station
You need: Light suit
To get it: Step into the beam of light to be transported to the room that contains the missiles.

MISSILE UPGRADES
Missiles – now with added kaboom!

DARKBURST
Location: Argon Wastes, Mining Station B
You need: Seeker missiles
To get it: Open the Seeker door. Note the suspended blade. Go right to the half-pipe. Scan the switch for a morph ball cannon. Activate the bomb slot by the Luminoth. Boost back to the half-pipe, jump in the cannon, and boost to the bomb slot. Jump on the half-pipe and boost up, reaching the blade from above. Activate the Dark portal. Visit more rooms to activate a Light portal, then return for the Darkburst.

SUNBURST
Location: Torvus Bog, Grand Windchamber
You need: Grapple beam
To get it: Start from the far side and switch to Dark Torvus. Use the spinners to make the dots on the metal rings on the center platform rotate to face the wall portal. Each ring that faces this way should light up. Next, switch back to Light Torvus and grapple your way over to the morph ball cannon. Roll in the cannon to collect the Sunburst.

SONIC BOOM
Location: Dark Argon Wastes, Phazon Site
You need: Annihilator beam, Dark Visor
To get it: Use your Dark Visor to locate the hidden moving platforms within the area. Go to the middle platform and when it’s at its peak, Screw Attack over to the door. Use your Annihilator beam to open the door to claim the Sonic Boom.

NEXT MONTH
How to get all the other items – energy tanks, Light and Dark ammo expansion and more – plus secret techniques and sequence breaking!
THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU’RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA

PAPER MARIO
THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR

UNLOCKABLE GAMES
Complete Toadette's book side-mission to unlock the Boat game.

Complete Pine T Junior's dad-rescuing side-mission to unlock the Paper game.

Complete Kooplool's hide-and-seek side-mission to unlock the Plane game.

Finally, perform the Important Task for Frankie to unlock the Tube game.

MS MOWZ ON YOUR TEAM
Find the secret badge in Hooktail the Dragon's castle to complete the problem at the Trouble centre. Go to the top of Zess-T's shop and give the badge to the mouse, and she will join your band of adventurers.

TIPS EXTRAS

TERMINATOR 3: THE REDEMPTION

CODES
Go to the main menu and then input the following codes during the Credits movie.

All upgrades X + Y + L
All levels X + Z + Y
Invincibility X + Z + R

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

PASSWORDS
Enter the following codes at the password screen.

All accessories TIGERMOBILE
All courses THEWORLDISYOURS
All courses/golfers THEGIANTOYSTER
All in skill section NIGHTGOLFER

THE INCREDIBLES

INFINITE INCREDI-POWER
Enter the code FLEXIBLE to get infinite Incredipower for oh-so-flexible Elastigirl and use SHOWTIME to get infinite Incredi-power for Mr Incredible.
**READERS’ TOP TEN TIPS**

**Jiggytough**
If you’re playing as Jiggywuff on the Hyrule Temple stage, this trick could come in very useful. When you’re about to fall off the furthest-right platform, hit Left + B repeatedly to pound to the left and this will take you onto the lower platform so you’re still in the game.

**Josh Young, Preston**

**2. BURNOUT 2**
Gold standard
If you’re near the end of a race in Championship mode and you know you can’t win, turn the Gamecube off and then on again. The game saves at the start of each race, so you can try again without having to restart the championship.

**Nick Hawkins, Harlow**

**3. MARIO KART: DD**
Ooh baby baby!
Just before the hairpin turns on Baby Park there are several bushes. If you start your powerslide just as you get to the third bush from the end and push the c-stick to the top-right you’ll get round the bend really quickly.

**Michael Yeomans, Guildford**

**4. SUPER SMASH BROS.**
For yourself
In the middle of a multiplayer battle, use the c-stick to launch a fully powered smash attack without building your attacking power up.

**Richard Eagle, Orpington**

**5. ZELDA: DOT**
Going, going, gone
After entering the lost woods in Kokiri Village, turn right. There is a small gong there. As Child Link, hit three bull’s eyes in a row and a Deku shrub will appear and give you the medium bullet seed bag.

**Anonymous**

**6. TONY HAWK’S PS 3**
Because they ARRRRRR!
Go to the Skater Island level, then find the flags standing side-by-side and grind the Jolly Roger (that’s the one with the skull and crossbones on). Two doors will blow up, giving you access to a pirate ship.

**Justin Graham, Co Antrim**

**7. METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM**
Best friends and influence people
Find every single secret and speed chip in the game to unlock the skyscraper-sized General Corrosive for the multiplayer Coliseum map. Let the stomping commence!

**Jeff Calhoun, Dumfries**

**8. WARIO WARE INC**
Through the keyhole
There is something behind the final door in single-player mode – just get a rose on every minigame in Practice mode. The reward is a new mode: non-stop minigames till the weird space-cat comes home.

**Claire Higgins, Colchester**

**9. SKIES OF ARCADIA**
Artful dodging
Once you’ve got the upgrade that lets you fly at high or low altitude, you can avoid the random battles. Of course, if you avoid all battles you’ll be too weak for boss fights, so try to achieve a balance.

**Ed Kamaus, London**

**10. RESIDENT EVIL 0**
Leech hunting
Finish the game on Easy, Normal or Hard to unlock the leech hunter minigame. The more leeches you catch, the better the extra abilities unlocked in the main game.

**William Thompson, Margate**

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**DR KITTS’ GAME CLINIC**

**TIPS EXTRA**
The way to ensure gaming success

**1. SUPER SMASH BROS.**

See the doctor if you’re sick. He’s really twisted.

Dr Kitts,
I’ve heard that, in Super Monkey Ball, if you complete all 50 levels in Expert mode without a single failout, then you open Master mode. I’ve managed to complete Beginner and Advanced stages without a single failout, but I can’t for the life of me get through all 50 Expert Stages without Failouts. It’s almost impossible! I can’t find anything out about Master mode anywhere, other than the fact it exists, and it’s driving me crazy! Have you ever managed to unlock Master mode, and what exactly is it?

David Hurrell, Swindon

---

Dr Kitts, masters all.
Master mode is, as you’ve probably guessed, a stage of 10 levels even more tricky than the Expert one. You have to beat all the Expert and Extra Expert levels without a single failout to unlock them. You’re just going to have to keep trying Practice mode in order to perfect the Expert levels you’re having trouble with. It really is the only way. You’ll just have to live with the frustration until you can do it.

Dr Kitts,
In Eternal Darkness, I’m on Michael Edwards chapter and I can’t find the detonator to the C4 bomb, I’ve looked everywhere! Please help, I’ve been stuck on this part for months.

Daniel Jennings, Derbyshire

Dr Kitts has a big bang theory...
Okay, I’m assuming that you’ve already got the explosives. Return to the room where the obelisk was before you teleported it elsewhere. At the end of the room, use a Seven-Point Revealed Invisible or a Dominant alignment to reveal a door – you should remember it being here back when Roberto was here. Behind it, the detonators are on the floor near a dead bloke. Mix the explosives and detonators to create a working C4 bomb.

Dr Kitts,
In Stomving (if you can remember that far back), how do I unlock the “black hole” level I can see on map screen?

Greg O’Brien, via email

Do not mock the razor-sharp memory of Dr Kitts...
About halfway through the asteroid belt, level you’ll see a group of asteroids with an orange asteroid in the centre. Shoot the orange one and fly through the space it leaves. Repeat with two more of these asteroid formations, then shoot the laughing asteroid that appears.
Then you'll love

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Poster & Game inside!

Games!

EyeToy!

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On sale now!
Did you get something nice from Father Christmas? Something slivery and shiny to put in your Gamecube? Or just a lump of coal like Geraint got? If you got a game, show the festive codger some appreciation and make it last a little bit longer by making new challenges for it. Send your ideas to Game On, NGC, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. The best one each issue gets a lovely new Gamecube game. Not coal. No. Wwe Day of Reckoning

Roll up, roll up, for some frenzied grappling and grunting with the WWE's finest greasy fighting men. It's survival of the toughest for this challenge - and no girls allowed! You have to begin by setting the difficulty to Expert, then start a 30-man Battle Royal, with no female participants. You must be one of the two starting competitors, so no coming in halfway through when your opponent's worn out. There's one more limitation: you can use a maximum of five Specials in the fight, so keep count. And that's it - just see how many WWE superstars you can defeat during the Battle Royal. The more you're able to beat, the better your overall medal will be.

Royal Rumble
Stuart Hooper, Essex

MEN BEATEN
26-30
11-25
0-10

Hair Today
Hannah Shackleton, Colne

This one, Hannah tells us, applies only to gamers with long hair or Paul. (She's clearly worked out that Paul has yet to achieve the giddy heights of Gamer status.) Anyway, put as much of your hair in front of your eyes as possible without completely blinding yourself, then start playing Mario Kart's All Cup mode.

To find out what medal you deserve, just see how far you can get... The scoring system may seem a bit harsh, but we're assured that if you have enough hair you can blot out the blight that is Birdo, which should be incentive enough for anyone. We like this challenge because it makes Paul look even more like a muppet than normal.

Mario Kart: Double Dash

How Far Did You Get
WON ALL CUP MODE
ACTUALLY TRIED IT
READ THIS
Super Mario Sunshine

Kick It In
Jack Radcliffe, Whitchurch

A variation on kicking the durian, this – it’s a fun fruit to play with. However, the twist is that this minigame involves the police station. Start by using your turbo to break open the police station doors but don’t go inside. Now see how many kicks it takes to get the durian from the arch by the durian stand through the police station doors. More than five, and you don’t get a medal at all!

Freedom Fighters

Play Nice
Rob Turpin, Aldershot

Easy. What’s the point of it? We want challenges, not the ability to run through nuclear explosions unscathed and kill enemies with a single blow. However, that’s what you get in Freedom Fighters’ easiest mode, which allows you to run through the game with the minimum of Soviet skulls needing smacking. It’s so easy, in fact, that Ben has come up with the following challenge: see how few times you can die on a run-through of the game on Easy difficulty, without firing a single shot (unless the story dictates otherwise, of course). Medal qualifications below...

Now It’s Your Turn...

Have you discovered a weird and wonderful new way to play Nintendo games? Can you sum it all up in about 100 words? If you have a challenge you’d like to share with other NGC readers, then we want to hear about it. Jot down a quick explanation of what you’ve got to do on a piece of paper, set three suitable levels of achievement for gold, silver and bronze medals, stick it in an envelope, and send it to...

GAME ON, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Or email ngc@futurenet.co.uk, with Game On as the subject line.

We’ll take challenges for absolutely any game on the good ol’ Cube, but this month we’re particularly interested in...

The best get printed right here, and our favourite challenge will win a shiny new GameCube game. Deal?
STAR LETTER

The winner of the Star Letter receives a shiny new game from our stack of shiny new games – it’s pot luck. Which one will you receive?

’vegging’

With the current success of Donkey Kongo, I figure Nintendo should take this groundbreaking idea further. I think the next step should be a combination of the DK bongos and a dance mat. My working title is Super Mario Busker Bros and the game would revolve around a simulated crowd, which you must impress with your busking skills.

Gameplay is a mixture of your bongo playing ability combined with your juggling capabilities, as measured by the dance mat. Multiplayer features include competitions to gain the most coins or gather the largest crowds. Mini-games include seeing how long you can carry on busking while evading arrest for a public disturbance and busking while dodging thrown items.

You can pick from a variety of stages to busk in, including the London Underground, Oxford High Street, the park, outside the chip shop and many more.

Lester there will be an expansion pack allowing you to replace the bongos with a ukulele, banjo or one of those accordion things.

Please let me know what you think of this idea. Do you think there has been a better time to play games which involve pretending to have musical talent and incorporate juggling?

Mott Brown, Carrerton

I like the sound of that. Maybe you could make a tin whistle attachment, for playing a plaintive rendition of Greensleeves, and a plastic dog which grows at the audience while you shuffle on the spot until you win in your pants.

‘Small pistol’

I have to admit I never really got into Resident Evil 1 on Gamecube. This was mainly because I was expecting a cool shooting-zombies-with-shotguns game, and instead got a rather tedious game where saves were collected, ammo was in short supply and the puzzles were unnecessarily difficult. Because of this I haven’t really got excited about Resident Evil 4 yet.

However, when I read your preview in NGC/400 I was beginning to get my hopes up, after all it is clearly a game you are looking forward to a hell of a lot. I was particularly interested by the idea of having packs of villagers to gun down. But when I came across the Under Pressure section of the preview my worst fears about what is turning into the new reason to own a Gamecube had been confirmed: “The overriding feeling… is one of tension, pressure and panic.” I can accept that sometimes this kind of tension is good fun, but the problem is that I’m standing in front of a zombie that has five or six shots to kill, armed with a small pistol. I haven’t saved for an hour and I then run out of ammo, I will shortly hear the dick of my Gamecube being turned off and the sound of my controller being thrown across my room against a solid wall. I’m sure you can achieve tension without limiting ammo and saves, and after Eternal Darkness I’m sure you can have a fun, tense game as well, so why not sort some of this out?

Daniel Cohen, London

Resi 4 doesn’t have much in common with the previous games, and you can now save as many times as you like. Mind you, that doesn’t solve the problem of inadvertently soiling yourself while you play.

‘Poor plebs’

Why do you always tell us poor plebs to buy a game as if we’re multi-millionaires? I was looking through your mags and the total cost for all games scoring 80 or over on the day of release plus a Gamecube as its launch day would be in the region of £330.

As well as DVDs, CDs and other stuff we simply don’t have the money for all of them. And those 79 games add up to 3,160 hours (If each game takes 40 hours to finish) or 263 weeks, if someone plays 12 hours a week. And I haven’t even started with GBA games.

I bet you all get those games free, or don’t spend a penny on any other form of entertainment or social event.

Dominick Egon, Leigh on Sea

Actually, Gerard has his private sheep theme park to support, but still manages to spend the other half of his waking life playing impenetrable Japanese RPGs.

‘Sceptical’

Why should the games we buy be so bad in a few weeks/months time? For instance: Metroid Prime, Mario Sunshine and Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life. Another mind-numbingly dull piece of silicon humbug.” That just about describes Harvest Moon for me.

Most of the people who bought these games have probably (and hopefully) been wholly satisfied. But the remaining 20% of us, like...
myself, who have limited time to spend on games each night need to get immediate satisfaction otherwise it’s a waste.
I loved the Game Boy game and I rushed to get it after my exams in July. But about 11 days later by which time I couldn’t return it. I realized it would just go on with the daily routine of watering the farm and… yawn. I press the power button and leave unconvinced. I own seven of the games in your most recent N64 Essentials! list and I’ve become now sceptical over five of them. If that’s the best Gamecube has, I can’t hold much hope for the remaining games which have got a lower score.
Maybe I’ll play these games again, but most likely I won’t. What’s the point in buying a game that wasn’t last until the end of a single run through? And when I see Harvest Moon in the secondhand games section of my local shop, I sigh and think how many other gamers were lured into the same trap that I was. This is the end of the gaming industry if people repeatedly become doubtful or sceptical over the games, which have been called ‘absolutely wonderful.’
Tom Kikuchi, London

If you like quick gaming fixes, why did you spend your money on something we told you would take around 100 hours to finish? And it’s a farming sim; you should expect to spend that amount of time getting things. Most people won’t rush out to see every movie that got a good review, and with games being so much more expensive it’s prudent to consider whether a high-ranking title suits your personal taste before buying it.
Ed

‘Sweet’
I found this in a local sweet shop and thought you guys might enjoy it. It’s sweet (sickly) goodness!
Anna Glenfield, Abingdon

Haw thoughtful! It looks like the postman has punched half his face off though.
Ed

‘Harold S. Bloxham’
Many moons ago, back when I owned a Mega Drive and SNES, I entered a competition in Mega magazine. Way back in 1993-ish. Anyway, in this competition we were challenged to get a letter published in a paper. This letter had to be a complaint about computer games under the guise of Harold S. Bloxham, I managed this feat of getting my letter published as Harold, and complained that Mario collecting coins and Sonic collecting golden rings were the reason kids turned to theft. Well you can imagine the responses in the paper. He he.
As part of the compo (which went on for a few months) I cut out the article and sent it in to Mega to claim my prize (which was getting bigger every month). Alas, I never won but I did get a mention in the mag, sort of. It mentioned my letter but the Ed said that one of the guys in the office (Neil, I think) lost it. So I never won a single game. Sob! Nobody won, in fact. Now I know this is a long shot…
but can I claim my prize?
Rab Fice, Plymouth

Mega who? Tell you what – if you (or anyone else) can repeat the feat using the name Reginald Fils-Aime, I’ll send you a prize.
Honest Ed

‘Drew this’
I’m going to have to agree with the previous claims that not enough art is being sent in. So just for you I went and drew this. Dressing up my all time favourite game character as Pikachu was surprisingly fun… Feel free to question my sanity. Enjoy!
Monica Ion, London

That’s brilliant. Want a job? Ed

‘More of the same’
While pondering through N64/100 I came across John Muvelly’s letter about the ubiquitous companies relying on rehashes’ topic. I can’t help but disagree slightly.
I know companies have tendencies these days to release sequels, and EA’s yearly updates are unbelievably tiresome, but come on. If you play an absolute classic, a sequel is exactly what the doctor ordered. For example, I loved Prince of Persia and couldn’t believe my luck when a sequel was announced. Surely if you love a game that much then more of same is perfect. Also, unlike movie sequels, game sequels are almost always improved with new features bolted on and the legacy behind true classics remains for a lifetime.

My second gripe was that John describes the bare bones of Mario games to be, ‘collecting coins and saving princesses.’ Now this may be true but there is so much more to Mario games. The FLUDD, the gameplay and the level design is almost completely changed from the 80s so this statement is just too vague.

Even if Nintendo continue to release the same franchises over and over, they pack them with innovation and keep their games feeling fresh every time.
Alasdair Henry, Marphet

As long as it’s a proper sequel and not just the exact same thing as before but with better graphics and some stocky crates.
Ed

‘How stupid’
I was confused when I heard EA did not release Burnout 3 because they felt the game came too much without its online capabilities. True, online gaming is becoming more popular, but take this into account; what do you reckon the ratio of the number of people who play the game with friends in the same room is in comparison to the number of people who play the game online? I mean come on, EA, how stupid can you be?

Sroebel, Rotterdam; Tim Lencov, Glasgow; Dan Palmer, Sunderland; James Rowntree, Aldershot; Edmund King, Wetherby; James Bowles, via email; Gareth Whistock, via email;

Samantha Lawrence, Buxton; Mike Bignall, Whitley; Llam McCaffrey, Sheffield; James Wright, Thornton Heath; Michael Fenton, Livingston; Stephen Ashby, Dorset; Sam Rose, Birmingham; Eoin Connolly, Ireland; Iain Dwendung, via email; Tom Brand, via email; Edward Husbroun, via email; Darren Raat, Plymouth; Graeme McNeddy, Peterborough; Jon Zaitz, Anglesley; Peter Hume, Bistol; Andrew Wyne, Banbury; Mark Chapman, Cardiff; Lee Horsman, Newheven; Marcus Canning Evans, Bath; Joshua Daly, Birmingham; Thanks, everyone.

JANUARY 2005 N64 101
SO TELL ME THIS...

The NGC Think-O-Tron knows all...

1. If Mario 64 is coming out on DS does this mean that Ocarina of Time and Majora’s Mask could be coming out?
2. Why does DS only have four buttons when it has the capabilities of an N64?
3. Jonathan Challinor, via email
   1. It seems pretty likely.
   2. Maybe it’s to prevent the fascia looking cluttered. Or because you’re supposed to use the little stylus to play most games.
   3. What happened to the Memory Card 1019 and when is it released?
   4. Can you customise your armour in Metroid Prime 2’s multiplayer?

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. BUT IF MR WHITE FAILS TO SEE THE FUNNY SIDES, THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY.

THIS MONTH: JOKE INFLECTED BY AMY OLIVER’S MUM.

You trying to confine us to our houses and play against people we have never met? I think most people would rather play games with friends than somebody on the other side of the Atlantic.

Adam Meredith, Stafford

You’re right, I couldn’t care less about the online mode (not that there’s any reason it couldn’t be done on Gamecube). Ed

‘Pneumatic’

I was playing Harvest Moon when a thought occurred – it was a sexist game. Why should the farmer be a man? He should be required to inherit the farm? Girls’ hands are better for sticking up sheep’s backsides (they’re smaller). So I sat down to write you a letter about the lack of “real” female characters in games and the lameness of games aimed at girls. I intended to cite such examples as ‘Mary-Kate and Ashley have a really fun time’ (Hey Mary-Kate, let’s apply our make-up with spatulas so the boys will like us), WIIE Day of Reckoning with its ‘Bra and Panties’ mode, and Tiki’s disturbingly puffy breasts in Soul Calibur 2. Then I had a look at my

△ Fed up of being treated like a shy girlie, Celia tarinac over the farm and leaves for the city.

own games collection and realised games have the same representations of women as any other form of modern media.

Beyond Good & Evil, Resident Evil and Metroid Prime are just three examples of games featuring female protagonists in a positive way. Okay, their clothing may be a little close-cut for the jobs in hand but it isn’t a big deal that they are women. I’m a little young to remember the original Metroid so I don’t really know about any fuss caused by the revelation of Samus as a chick, but right now I can’t think of any fuss regarding female computer game characters.

I first became hooked on videogames with the arcade version of Street Fighter 2 and I’ve been playing on consoles for the last 15 years, always Nintendo, and when I look at what other consoles have to offer me, as a girl gamer, it reaffirms that I have made the right choice in sticking by good old Ninly all these years.

The pick of Xbox and PS2 titles seem to consist largely of sports sims, racing games, war games and first-person shooters with more games in these genres flooding the market every week. I have little or no interest in these kinds of games unless they can offer me something different, like Metroid’s explore, scan and – gahhhhh, that big monster wasn’t there earlier – aspects.

The Nintendo difference is that they provide me with games that I want to play: intelligent games that aren’t just about large quantities of blood and violence or beating up prostitutes; games which appeal to people young and old, male and female. I’m never going to sit in a pub talking about what great games GTA or Burnout 3 are, but I will be chatting about Pokémon or Animal Crossing, and there will always be people to chat with me.

Theo Malings, Ireland

...{STICKER TIME, GUYS!}\n
FROM LAURENCE DUNN

THREE OF TOM NOON’S MAGNIFICENT NOODLES

FROM STEVE MULLIGAN

ANIMAL CROSSING!

FROM MATT BAXTER

HA HA HA HA HA!

WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NEC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NBC@FUTURENET.CO.UK
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**POKEMON**
Find out where the series *should* be heading next if it wants to stay on top...

**MARIO PARTY 6**
Roar power or careless whisper? Get our verdict on voice-controlled Mazza.

**BONUS!**
- Another stunning free gift!
- More Metroid Prime 2 pro tips!
- We reveal the best opening levels on Gamecube!
- Plus! The best handheld section in the world!

Don't settle for second best. Get it now. On sale: Thurs 20th January
Looking into the future through crossed eyes...

**THIS MONTH: EA’S 2005**

See EA? They’re the ones towering over the videogaming world like a giant robot made of games and money. Having practically turned the 2004 charts into a weekly advert for its own stuff, in what ways will EA be spending 2005 (whispers) challenging everything? Madame Greener asks an egg.

**AND THE PREDICTIONS...**

Company announces record profits in 2005: mathematicians announce new number, “an EAillion”. 

EA to join forces with a big-name Japanese developer to create something very, very profitable.

Influential independent developer – a woman? – to nestle under EA’s big wing.

New Del Jam Vendetta or other EA beat-’em-up to feature surprise cameo from rival company’s character.

EA dragged into the courts by somebloke claiming they stole his ideas about getting rich.

Madame Greener’s egg-fuelled brain-spurts will be scrutinised in a future issue.

**HOW IT WORKS**

Yes, an egg. You crack it open, then separate the yolk and white. Pour the white into a bowl of hot water – we’ve used a clear Pyrex lasagne dish for that touch of real class – and that’s Ovomancy. The resultant shapes are the Future. That’s incredible!
1. Shiggy to leave Nintendo. Was always going to be as likely as Reggie adopting a stray kitten.

2. New GBA Mario Ware to sell poorly in Japan. Way off. At number one, over 100,000 copies sold.

3. Miyamoto-developed puzzle game announced. ‘Intuitive Stroke’ on DS, and the Madame’s puzzle obsession pays off.

4. Last-minute nightmares for Nintendo DS. A little stage-managing of shortages, otherwise nyt.

5. News of a Shiggy-based court case to ‘break’. The only laws Miyamoto’s broken are those of fashion.

**TOTAL SCORE 1/3**

**YOUR INTERNET CORRESPONDENT**

The best of the net several weeks after it happens.

- Super Mario... on ice! Witness the truly laughable ice rink theatre from a weary corner of US TV history. Giant mario naco Gangbaa and Koopa Troopaa - shiiditye about on the shiird-furare a cute thing - but then an old man wearing a Bowser costume starts skating and there are suddenly children in sliding boxes everywhere. Best for shots of bewmused diseased audence members. And don’t watch it before bedtime. www.freenexmedia.com/files/yearmaroon.mov
- “UGH! FINALLY! My Mario is complete!” says internet resident ‘Emily’ of her hand-sewn non-crotch stitcher Baker. Says ‘now ready to go sew’ and men to be baffled with thoughtless connexions like: “It doesn’t look like Samus’s ensemble at all and your Bowser is not right.” See also: Eternal Darkness weapons that are “not actually from the same era” and Eternal Darkness. He wears a cap. Look at the effort that’s gone into it! Paul would try something similar but he’s still on Ocarina... www.nintendo.co.uk.
- NCG reader Michael Monti emails us: “often makes your extrememly cool ‘Pakco Mario 2: DO battle scene’ from NCG/05. I decided it would be cool if you could... mean really read... to walk some Mario moves. However, due to lack of inspiration, they’ve turned out really... and a bit random.” He think they’re strangely... homosexuality is believable, Maybe we’re biased: but we can’t help watching the controller fall over and over. Take a look for yourself... www.daiwco.co.uk/bin/sellerv.php?
- “In kg want a link?/?” Get a Nintendo-related link for free! Go on, you’re waiting for? Email it to ntrice@nintendo.com

**TOP 10: NINTENDO NAMES**

...and what they actually mean.

1. **YOSHI** The Japanese word for ‘goodness’ - fire - but it also means ‘respectful’, which is a nice surprise for a character who happily tongue-grab your dinner and then circumstance it straight back out through his dirty dino-hole.

2. **LUIGI** The Italian version of the not-so-friendly German name ‘Muddy’, which means ‘naturally that Mario’s brother is ‘famous in battle’. Right - famous for not being there.

3. **DAISY** Simply refers to the name of the flower, leads and purpose for the - it’s face it - less masculine of Nintendo’s two princesses, but it does have the advantage of making you don’t get people called Sunflower or Thudomater. Or Old Mario’s beard.

4. **MARIO** Our expensive five-minute research sees Mario’s name being linked to everything from ‘birdiness’ and ‘bellbottoms’ to ‘vitality’ and ‘a sailor’. He truly is the man for all people, Especialy sailors.

5. **REGGIE** Shortened form of Reginald, self-appointed from Reginald, in turn a Latinized form of Reginald, which means ‘a rule and advice’. We turn this into that kick ass and save names in fewer than five starts.

6. **ZELDA** Name your dog Lucky, and it’s certain to fall out of a building or eat a light bulb. Name your royal daughter after the Yiddish word for ‘fox’, and you’re asking to wake up in the morning with Ganon’s footsteps all over the carpet and a distinct lack of princesses.

7. **JOE** Mr Wario’s real name comes from a Hebrew title ‘Joseph’ - which means, confusingly, ‘God will add’. Add what? Maybe that co-operative two-player mode that Capcom took out of WarioWare: Joe’d Like God then.

8. **LEON** Aka ‘the hero’ is named after the Greek for ‘lion’ - presumably because he sports hair that would see a lion pride instantly accepting him as one of their own. Also, suggests ‘strength’, but, really, you should see the way he screams when there’s a chasm sliding into his neck.

9. **ASH** Short for Ashley, which, it helpfully tells us, means ‘ash’. Which is short for... ‘Oh, that’s enough of that.

10. **KIRBY** So you thought Kirby was named after the cute, clean cleaner? In fact, his moniker originally stems from the name of a church town in Old France. Or maybe he’s just named after the floover.
THE BEST GAMECUBE GAMES YOUR MONEY CAN BUY...

1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER 97

NINTENDO • NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It’s as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film, and doesn’t lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, and it’s pretty short, but this is as close to ‘art’ as ‘games’ have been yet.

2 METROID PRIME 97

NINTENDO • NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible, and there’s no slow down at all, despite the fact that the environments are huge and detailed. The action’s varied, with a broad range of bosses, and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you’ll ever play – on any system.

3 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96

NINTENDO • NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform ‘heroes’ how it’s really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those...
4. **METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES**

NINTENDO & NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the legs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren’t as varied and awe-inspiring as Prime’s, but that’s our one complaint.

5. **MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH!!**

NINTENDO & NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pickup boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells and giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninjy faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI is a bit cheapy (a shell just as we’re about to win? Hmm...) but it’s a whole lot of fun.

6. **F-ZERO GX**

NINTENDO & NGC/85

Blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep the pace up without getting the frame rate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would’ve been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?

7. **PIKMIN 2**

NINTENDO & NGC/99

Louie, Olimar’s assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they’ve had to return to earth for a longer session of collecting ‘treasure’. They’ve got two new types of Pikmin to help them out, too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.

8. **SOUL CALIBUR 2**

NAMCO & NGC/85

Excellent fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the three hidden characters – but the real star of the show’s not hidden! For the Gamecube version, Namco have dropped in Link, complete with bow and arrow. It’s the best fighting game on any system.

9. **TIMESPLITTERS 2**

NINTENDO & NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious ‘Splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate and you’ll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. And you will love every minute. The multiplayer’s the icing on the cake.

10. **SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE**

NINTENDO & NGC/88

All your Nintendo favourites (and a few Nin-non-entities) get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglyputs are better than one Link? You’ll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.
The GameCube games around

11 HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Nintendo

12 HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN
Eidos

13 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
Ubisoft

14 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR
Nintendo

15 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM
Nintendo

16 VIEWTIFUL JOE
Capcom

17 SECOND SIGHT
Codemasters

18 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES
Konami

19 BURNOUT 2
Acclaim

20 WARIO WARE INC.: MEGA PARTY GAMES
Nintendo

21 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE II: Z
Atari

22 IDOL AVALANCHE
Nintendo

23 ANIMAL CROSSING
Nintendo

24 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
Atari

25 CONFLICT DESERT STORM
Sci

26 WORMS 3D
Sega

27 NINTENDO: THOUSAND-YEAR QUEST
Nintendo

28 RESIDENT EVIL
Capcom

29 SPLINTER CELL
Ubisoft

30 DONKEY KONG
Nintendo

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57 EA "N64/79 85
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59 ACTIVISION "N64/86 87
Every Gamecube game ever... rated!

57 JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH
58 UXE NNK/59
59 MEGA CITY ONE comes to life. Sadly, it's not an emanation of the pop culture heists and caper movies that make up the all part play as of chucking himself, solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually trading down the Dark Judges. The setting and story line are just ok. Ayon Echeverria's tough, the fiddler controls are the other highlight.
60 POKEMON COLOSSEM
The Pokemon series gains an RPG. Your task is to save the world from various threats. It's a lot of fun from Darkness and to destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters! Awes. Really, though, it's an awful lot of fighting.
61 NINTENDO / NC/93
A 'traditional' RPG, and good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the specific locations you enter throughout the adventure are stunning. The only downside in the visual stakes is the relatively outdoorsy unworlded. The robots, clichéd dialogues irritate though.
62 RAYMAN 3 HIGHLAND HAVOC
Raven is a man. He is based on a dream. The game is a perfect, and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right. When you've played all the Mani you can handle, give Ray 2 a go.
63 ISS2
While a great game, but we expected much more of it. However, it's MUCH better than ISS.
64 ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE
Don't let the name of this game turn you off. It's very well done. The game is a bit and has some neat little touches. You're not just flying in a wing smuggling drugs, you're also in a massive battle against a massive threat. The graphics are great, and it includes a lot of the first three games - wit symphony.
65 ACTIVISION / NC/ND
Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire. If fighters and Star Destroyers, not pouncing around on feet. So, whether you're playing Luke Skywalker's storyline or Wedge Antilles, the flight portion runs the risk. Which is a shame, because it looks and sounds near-perfect, and the two-player Rogue Leader modes rates.
66 TAKE 2 / NC/ND
Don't let the name of this game turn you off, it's very well done. You can spend hours running down wave after wave of brightly coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the game can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!
67 FREEDOM FIGHTERS
Less serious than the Desert Storm series, this squad-based real-time/reaction-style scenario is nothing more than a competitive real-time strategy game. The graphics are slick, the game does offer a lot of fun.
68 TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND 2
Tony Hawk rumbles on. This time the graphics have a more polished sheen, and the controls are very easy to get the hang of. Bone Marauder. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. These bits aren't as good, and includes chunks of the first three games - with tons of fun.
69 ACTIVISION / NC/100
This is exactly how - and the controls are perfect. You are the real life Tony Hawk, and includes chunks of the first three games - with tons of fun.
70 NINTENDO / NC/88
The Pokemon series gained a RPG. Your task is to save the world from various threats. It's a lot of fun from Darkness and to destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters! Awes. Really, though, it's an awful lot of fighting.
71 METAL ARMS GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM
VIVENDI / NC/88
Hard - like Ray Winstone in a stoned top hat. This robot shoot-'em-up is right from the delirious training level. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, but you need to be accurate and quick. The game can be awkward, and some of the enemy's movements and over 100 levels to roll your improvised simian around.
72 SEGA / NC/94
A new style of gameplay for Phantom Star - card-based battles. Set your years after the events in PSX. If you're allowed to choose a side (Artes or Arkeide) and do battle by rolling dice and selecting cards from the deck. It can be quite complex, and you really need to be familiar with the other Phantom Star games to get the most of it, so it's not for newcomers. You'll also require one of those elaborate game boards adapters...
73 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III
VIVENDI / NC/88
This game's already gained a RPG. It's a number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of a hand.关键。
74 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If you're a fan of RPGs and your boy, this boy'll be a stick of joy.
75 LOST KINGDOMS II
Polished RPG with card collecting elements. Neat.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE / RPGS

68 THE SIMS Bustin' Out
EA / NC/89
This is the third game in the long-running life-sim series. The game is about taking care of your household and raising your children. The graphics are great, and it includes chunks of the first three games - with tons of fun.
76 HITS MANII Combat-plague-sim that kills the competition dead.
77 SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-len-up from the Splinter 2 team.
78 ETERNAL DARKNESS Another Nintendo exclusive that never fails to entertain.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE

69 THE SIMS
EA / NC/89
This is the third game in the long-running life-sim series. The game is about taking care of your household and raising your children. The graphics are great, and it includes chunks of the first three games - with tons of fun.
70 NINTENDO / NC/88
Free with Wii Game! You may have played the beauty back in the days of the 3D version, and it still looks pretty much the same, although the Master Quest version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles. Forget the copy-graphics and immerse yourself in Kiskabek's earlier outings.
71 AGGRESSIVE Inline
ACTIVISION / NC/72
This is the third game in the long-running life-sim series. The game is about taking care of your household and raising your children. The graphics are great, and it includes chunks of the first three games - with tons of fun.
72 THE SIMS
EA / NC/78
Life: Jim, but not as we know it. Your Sim has to do all the usual stuff, and it's a real life. Add a pet, find friends, have a partner, eat, sleep and go to the loo. Yet it's all done in a brilliantly addictive way. Like Animated Crossing, there's no point to it, but that's life for you: meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE

73 ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own Gamecube itself.
74 METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure. Again.
75 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
NAMCO / NC/89
More fighting style! More style! It's only if you! Get the frame rate right. Yes, this is actually much better than Def Jam Vendetta, with a great fighting system and brilliant gameplay. The only downside is the graphics... the game is a bit too dark.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE

76 NHL 2005
EA / NC/89
This is the third game in the long-running life-sim series. The game is about taking care of your household and raising your children. The graphics are great, and it includes chunks of the first three games - with tons of fun.
77 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE
Midway / NC/77
The fighting system has been vastly overhauled from earlier MKs. It's a bit too easy to get an 'infinite' by button mashing. The lack of story beats and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got these fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of fun. Feast with two players.

BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE

A small game of hockey that'll restore the fight of anyone who invested in last year's sluggish, jerky version. If you genuinely dislike the sport, you'll be convinced. But as a videogame, hockey works well enough to handle a few transmogrifying scoring barriers -- it's quick, easy to learn and high scoring.

VIVENDI / NC/87
After a succession of stinkers, the Simpsons take a trip from Apu's tenement to the U.S. capital, taking in stinkers, and even dishing out a bit of violence. There are even racing and team-building side missions, fun with both. But funny in the long run. You won't expect depth, you'll have fun with this.

VIVENDI / NC/87
Four generic race elements on one tricky package! Makes a difference that 'yearly update' malarky, eh? What's more, the first year's is 1999, when Ferrari weren't guaranteed to win everything. It's a good, sensible, deep Formula 1 sim. The down side is, it's not exactly a barrel of laughs...
The NGC/9D

It adds game!

A down by started is than radical Puyo

Not nice console.

oF everyone's fair

in gaming get least of

Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems addresses.

mice... and than this thin storyline.

The contrast, are a bit silly, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.

Beach Spikers

Not to everyone's taste -- although developers AM2 have at least abandoned the 'headed' and

concentrated on making a proper sports sim. You'll need lightening-pick robots and good team control to succeed. In single-player appeal is limited, so you'll need to play with friends to get the most from it.

Paul's Sense Talk

IGNITION ★ NGC/82

Not just UK pool - pole your one at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too, if that's what fits your

triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and Draynor feature as

minigames. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and

playable, as you'd expect.

SEGA ★ NGC/91

Pong Parlor if you've never heard of it, you must have started gaming all a week ago. It's quite simple:

match coloured blocks that drop from the top of the screen. And - hey presto - they disappear. How radical is that? Two-player's a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

EA ★ NGC/80

NFL Street

American Football isn't quite brought to the masses by NFL Street. Even though the strategy's dumbed down it's still very steepy-starter and so can be slightly down a turn. We'd also like a better

playable or a whacky training mode to help

players get to grips with the basic plays.

EA ★ NGC/85

Harry Potter & The Prisoner of Azkaban

A perfect title that actually works pretty well as a game whatever you say. The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds greatly to the game and other thin storyline.

The contrast, are a bit silly, but the atmosphere's spot-on, Not just for Potter fans.

BE HEARD VENDETTA

VIVENDI ★ NGC/74

WARNING: Do not play this in each of old people or your mum. We're sure The Lion King's Disney porn quite live this. We've never encountered such a potomboozled game on a Nintendo console before - but rather a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces

and some magnificent sound effects. It's been

plenty of all, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections. Yoppy yoppy, madman farmer. As he doesn't say.

BUDGET CHIC

I made a great lava lamp last night. Well, it was more of a 'raillins in a glass of lemonade on a

touch lamp, but it still rockled all the same. Then you can drink it. Gogids!

NHS 'ROCK 'N' ROLL'

WARNING: Going to the barbers can seriously shorten your hair.

"I'M NOT A CARNIVAL!"

...anyway, if people were supposed to be

vegetarian, animals wouldn't be made of meat - or taste nice for that matter. I love animals..."

READER SENSE:

If you were told to expect the unexpected you would not expect the expected, and the unexpected would become the expected and the expected would become the unexpected. So what would you expect?!

George Armstrong

Email: (You'd expect to disappear up your own backside, I'd say - PE)

Do you have more 'sense' than one Sense-

swapping Art markery? More than Billy! So go on, send 'em in. The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you a plum tomato, in an old sock.

Send them to him at good.sense@futurenet.co.uk or Ed Some talk at the usual address.

8 BALL

Trust the Magic 8 Ball. I know it's just a bit of plastic filled with oil and stuff, but there's something in there that knew

you more than you or me.

ACCLAIM ★ NGC/80

Two problems with this it's basically one big time trial game and the main mode in any racing game and there aren't any real opponents. The handling of your vehicle and the varied courses being much better than the NES version or V-Rod Line 2004 would be our preferred choices.

NINTENDO ★ NGC/88

There's a wealth of basketball games available for your Gamecube, and this is far from the worst, with all the passing, dunking and other ball-handling you could ask for. However, it's not the best or most realistic either. NBA Street V2 or NBA Live 2004 would be our preferred choices.

NHL HITZ 20-02

Ice hockey's probably the most British-friendly of North American sports - no slowing down, fewer strange

scoring terms to get used to - and this is a fair, stick

game. NHL 2005 is more recent and slightly better, but if you can't get that, NHL Hitz 20-02 is going to be your best ice hockey option.

KNOCKOUT KINGDOMS

Decent boxer. Slightly better than - and very different from - Rocky. The camera's really dynamic, and the control system can feel disorientating at first. There are plenty of modes, and you can build your own boxer to punch his way through Career Mode. Look's nice as well.

SPINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

Ubisoft ★ NGC/97

Sam Fisher returns for more silent sneaking and skulking around in the dark - but his first adventure

was far superior. The quality of the conversion's not great and some serious gameplay flaws from the

Xbox original haven't been addressed, but we kept coming back. Until the ghastly last level, anyway.

HARRY POTTER & THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

EA ★ NGC/76

A competent and attractive adaptation of the second film, but not too challenging either. Experienced

gamers will be flinging spells around and getting through it in no time, so Harry's brief exciting escape is best left for Potter fans or the very young. Better than Philosopher's Stone, though...

RAGE ★ NGC/74

Five洛克ies for the price of one as you fight your way through all the films, complete with all the great

opponents. Are you ready to take on Mr. T? Fool! Then this solid fighter will let you do it. It's not exactly imaginative, but it's plenty of fun, and the two-player's good fun.

Evolution Skateboarding

KONAMI ★ NGC/79

This sneaky-looking Tony Hawk's clone should keep you happy but it's a bit too going to see in your happy

impostor when the King's in town while the real thing's available and is of a higher quality, that's what you're best off with. Happily, unlike Tony's later excursions, this features no walking or driving.

SMUGGLERS RUN WARZONES

ROCKSTAR ★ NGC/73

The landscapes are absolutely enormous, so you'll have great fun walking around them in your happy

avoiding the Law, who wants to put your illegal trading out of action. Unfortunately, the repetitive gameplay and aweful music are more likely to teach you the error of your ways.

P.N.03

ROBOTECH BATTLECRY

TOK ★ NGC/77

Games about stompy robots always let us down in some way. In this case, it's a little too repetitive and

both down to letting real dots on your radar and

blasting at them. Nonetheless, it's true to the anime

and the story seems terrific, despite the clergingoony voice acting.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

NINTENDO ★ NGC/68

The graphics really let this one down - it gets disturbingly jerky at points and at others it can be hard to see what's going on. It's a silly the lack of attention spoils it, because there are loads of races (111, in fact) and it's pleasingly fast with a decent

number of cars. Better than MP202.

TRUE CRIME: THE STREETS OF LA

ACTIVISION ★ NGC/88

As the only free-running crime title on Gamecube, this doesn't have a lot of competition, but the fiddy

gameplay and annoying Good Cop/ Bad Cop matter mean it'll often frustrate you. There's also rather too much loading going on between the too short missions. But it's as close as you'll get to GTi on GC.
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