

Electronic Entertainment Expo: The Fun Starts Here

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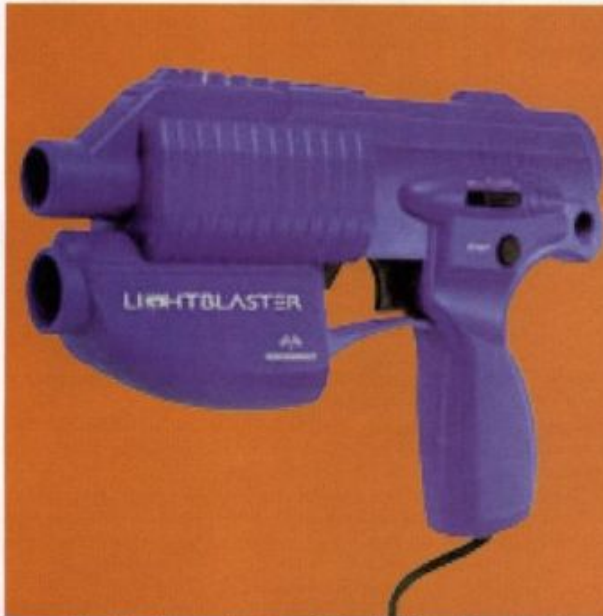
ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT THE EXPO FUN STARTS HERE

This year's E3 at Atlanta was possibly the best ever for Nintendo. While other companies were speaking of new hardware, or boasting their large user base as a way to attract attention in the stalls on the E3's floor, Nintendo's words were spoken through one thing — quality software and lots of it.

Their aim of focusing on producing the best game software available this year appears to be paying off. Arguably the biggest game of the year is Nintendo's own *Zelda 64*, and the crowds it attracted far outweighed everything else on display at the E3. The head honchos at Nintendo are expecting *Zelda* to be the best game ever for Nintendo and if the recent screen shots and nearly completed version seen at the E3 are anything to go by then they could be absolutely right. The sequel to *Goldeneye*, named *Perfect Dark*, also made its first public appearance at the E3 and is looking to be an even stronger title than the original, with a better graphics engine and more refined gameplay. More and more 3rd party software developers had titles on display, from Capcom and Psygnosis to Titus, Konami and Electronic Arts. All in all, the list of N64 titles is growing every day, but one thing was strangely absent from the floors of the E3, the one thing that many N64 owners had been waiting to see — the 64DD.

In a pre-E3 conference a few days before the big event, Nintendo of America's Chairman, Howard Lincoln, made an announcement that the 64DD would not see the light of day in North America in 1998. When questioned on reasons for the decision he explained that the size of current cartridges, like *Zelda 64* (which is 32 megabytes), had reduced the need for an add-on device for extra storage. He went on to add that in future Nintendo would encourage developers to use cartridges with larger capacities for games rather than the 64DD itself. The unit is still said to be launching in Japan before the end of '98, but the Chairman went on to say that the 64DD probably won't appear at all in the US, even in 1999. He cited the lack of killer software specifically designed to use the 64DD's abilities as the probable reason for the 64DD never being released.

Indeed, considering the size of cartridges like *Zelda*, and the falling price of ram, Nintendo may have made the best decision possible for the future of the N64. Without the need to worry about a market that could possibly be split by two programming formats, Nintendo can now continue to focus on creating great games for the N64. This is, after all, what Nintendo appear to have achieved with their presence at this year's E3. Sadly, some of the features that the 64DD promised will be missed, but the games are flowing thick and fast, so sit back and read up on all the great games we will be playing from now until the new year.



LIGHTBLASTER 64

Interact have just announced a light gun for the N64, named Lightblaster 64. The gun is quite similar in design to the 'Performance brand' Playstation light gun, which is a good thing as the gun looks quite stylish and has quite a few great features. These features include:

- Auto-Fire: Fires continuous shots at a rate of 16 per second
- Auto-Reload: Automatically reloads when firing has ceased
- Intelligent Reload: Reloads when clip is empty
- Special Reload Knob
- Set Mode: Customize clip for 6 to 33 bullets
- Hyper button: For firing special weapons in most shooting games
- Memory Card Slot

The features like Intelligent reload and Hyper button are sure to be great additions to the shooting game genre but one question still remains for N64 owning shooting game freaks – When is a light gun game going to be released? The answer is still uncertain at the moment, and Kemco's Knife Edge is the only game that looks like it may be able to fit the bill.

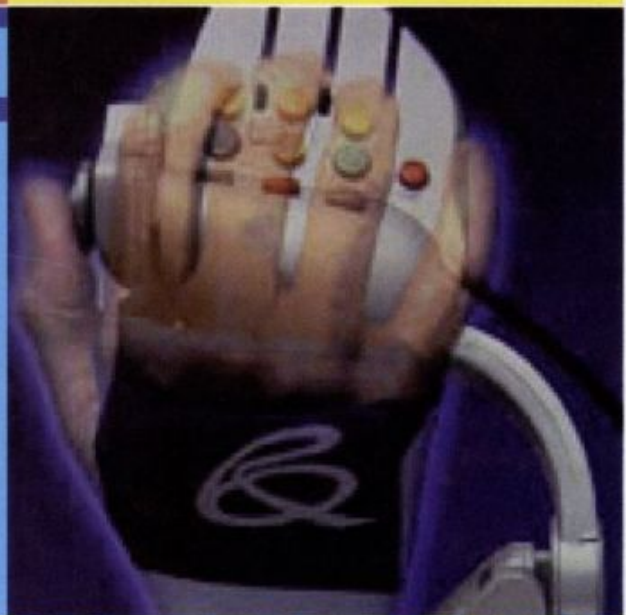
Still, the appearance of such guns on the market can only encourage developers to make gun-based games, so I guess it's just up to us to sit back and wait for something to come along.

THE GLOVE

Another accessory announced at the E3 was Reality Quest's 'The Glove'. Intended for younger gamers, The Glove straps onto your right hand, with movement on-screen responding to the movement of your hand while the glove is active. The Glove has special sensory devices that can determine the position of your hand and it relays this information into the N64 so your character can be moved according to the glove's position. Sound a little silly? Well the possibilities for the glove may outweigh the ridiculous appearance of the device. Imagine a N64 version of the SNES and NES classic 'Punch Out', where your fist could actually be used to land blows on an computer opponent. Games with these advancements could be possible with the glove. Even better though, is that the Glove has a rumble action that delivers a jolt to the players hand letting them know when they have been hit – most useful for a boxing game like Punch Out.

The Glove has its own set of buttons that can be calibrated to suit different actions in games that would usually be assigned to the standard N64 pad. Furthermore, the Glove has a memory function that remembers these button allocations permanently, so that you never have to spend time assigning buttons again.

An Australian release date is yet to be made public, but N64 Gamer will keep you up to date on any developments with the Glove



ALL STAR TENNIS

Well, finally a tennis game makes it to the N64! Ubi Soft showed up at the E3 with a version of one of the world's most popular sport games in All Star Tennis. Promising a remarkable physics engine that will leave other tennis games for dead, Ubisoft's game uses realistic motion capture for the player's movements as they run around the court. You'll be able to play on realistic digitised courts in England, California, France, Italy and other locations. You'll marvel at the game's true-to-life ball motion which will ensure some of the best in-depth gameplay yet seen in a tennis console game. Expect to see more on this game in the next issue.



BODY HARVEST

It's looking pretty grim for the human race. After spending more than a century as an intergalactic snack food for a race of insect-like aliens, the human race is nearing extinction. Unhappy with our fast-food status, a bunch of rebels have genetically engineered a bad-ass mother to eradicate all the alien scum. Graphically the game is quite reminiscent of Pilotwings. It uses the same style of realistic textures to create a great atmosphere. Entire cities and rolling countryside are re-created in stunning detail while maintaining a smooth frame-rate. The game places you in the role of the hero who must wander around the planet completing tasks like putting out fires and fixing machinery to help the survivors. Every so often another wave of aliens will attack. The two main types of aliens are: winged aliens that fly around dropping death-from-above and flesh-less rejects that wander around herding up the remaining humans. Your fellow humans are normally cowering in their houses which the flying aliens are busily destroying so that the flesh-less ones can get inside. Therefore, your best bet is to concentrate your efforts on the flying aliens first then worry about the others later. Those rebels are quite clever because they also managed to whip up a time machine for our hero to use. This means you get to splatter alien scum's brains all the way through time periods from Greece in 1916 to the Alien homeworld in 2046. Another unique feature of Body Harvest's is that your character can take control of every single vehicle he comes across (over sixty in all). The range of vehicles available includes: planes, trucks, motorcycles, boats, spaceships and even an icecream van. One particularly amusing scene showed the character using one of the game's trucks to turn some of the aliens into some sloppy road-kill. Body Harvest is definitely the most original title on show at the E3 and is shaping up to be a very promising game indeed.



RUSH 2

Midway turned up with various games at the E3. One of the most anticipated was surely Rush 2: Extreme Racing. Like the first game, Rush 2 is more about finding the most wicked shortcuts you possibly can from one side of a city to the other. Jumping over buildings, rivers, driving through secret underground tunnels and burning up long highway straights are just some of the things you'll be able to do in Rush 2.

The action takes place in three new cities: Manhattan, Seattle and on the island of Alcatraz. Twice as many cars will be included in the final version of the game, with really crazy vehicles like a golf cart said to be in the game. These, obviously, will be hidden as they were in the first game, with players having to make insane jumps and practically drive up the side of buildings to find the keys on each course needed to unlock the hidden tracks.

The graphics appear to be remarkably similar to those in the first game, not that this is a bad thing, as the visuals in the first game contain a huge amount of geometry on-screen and an impressively smooth frame-rate. The car's control though, has had a major re-vamp, with more realistic steering and better control which was a little lacking in the first game.



ROADSTERS '98

Titus just unveiled the sequel to their successful Automobili Lamborghini to an eager audience. Roadsters '98 looks like the most impressive racer to hit the N64 so far. It promises to offer better gameplay and features than its predecessor, with a new multiplayer option added in as well.

The game at its 40% completed stage is already looking very impressive. It's using an advanced version of the graphic engine seen in Automobili Lamborghini but it's been tweaked resulting in a smoother frame-rate. The game is also much faster, as the cars can now hurtle along at great speed, giving a more realistic sensation of speed than the first game ever did. Special effects like light-sourcing and lens flare are currently missing from the version seen but Titus promise that they will be included in the finished game.

Gameplay wise, the game now supports a much more refined driving engine and the cars can now take corners very smoothly, without any of the overly responsive steering that was seen in the original. Powerslides are now much easier to control and become an essential part of the gameplay.

Ten cars are selectable, with ten tracks of varying difficulty available. The four player version in the original has also been carried over into Roadsters with a new multiplayer mode that Titus were unwilling to comment on.

With the refinements already made to the game at its 40% stage, Roadsters '98 looks to be everything that Automobili Lamborghini should have been and more. Look out for a release this October.



GLOVER

Glover definitely attracted a lot of attention at the show because of its highly original, yet polished, platform fun. You control Glover (the white glove from the pics in case you couldn't figure it out) on his mission to save the world from his evil twin brother (a green glove - go figure). The basic aim of the game is to collect and save the power crystals scattered throughout each level. The way that Glover does this is the really cool part. Once he collects a crystal it transforms into a ball that he can carry, run on, dribble, juggle and throw. Because of the ball's vulnerable status it must be protected at all costs. So if you come across a bad guy you have to either juggle the ball, keeping it out of reach of the enemy, while you pound them, or for tougher baddies, you can throw the ball onto a safe part of the environment while you fight it out. There is also lots of really tricky scenery that forces you to use the balls in some really weird ways. In one scene Glover comes up to a wide river that can only be crossed by chucking the ball in the water, jumping on it and running on the spot to get across to the other side. It's gameplay like this that makes Glover a refreshing change of pace compared to all the standard 'Mario clones' that are popping up lately.

Escape : F
MISSION



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Mission Impossible looked fantastic in its near-finished form at the E3. The game was totally playable and showed Ethan performing all sorts of cool covert activities. One scene showed the famous sequence in the computer room where you get to control Ethan as he is lowered down to the computer. The only problem is that the room is criss-crossed with infra-red beams that you cannot touch. In another level you have to scale your way to the top of a building and then use the lights on the heli-pad to contact your associates. The graphics in this section showed silky smooth animation for Ethan and also impressed us with detailed textures and a huge amount of geometry on-screen. The best thing is that the game uses very realistic textures so that you really feel like you're playing the movie. The dynamic camera angles were shown off in scenes where Ethan comes across an enemy. The camera shifts from a 3rd-person view to right up behind Ethan, who turns transparent and can use a goldeneye-like zoom feature to shoot the bad guys. The explosive gum from the movie was used when Ethan was trapped in an interrogation room. He placed the gum on the glass and then stood back as the gum shattered the window, which he then jumped through. The ability to change identities was seen in a stunning real-time scene. You see two characters talking and then as one walks away the camera lingers on the other as he whips off his skin to reveal Ethan underneath the disguise. Mission Impossible is looking like a very revolutionary piece of software. It concentrates on the stealth and objective based gameplay similar to Goldeneye's and is easily the closest thing to an interactive movie we've seen so far.



NFL BLITZ

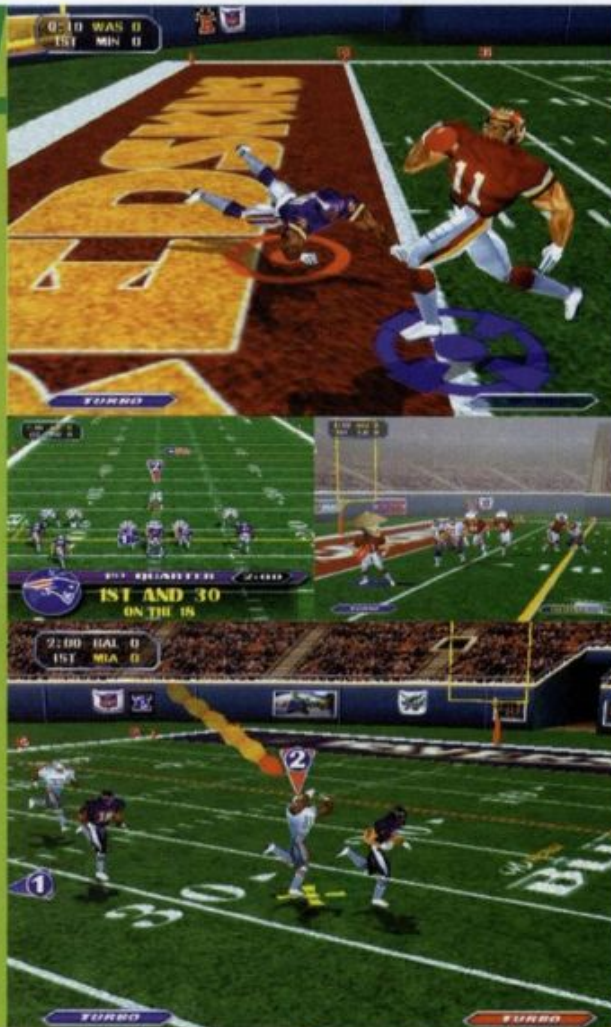
Midway had their first public display of the N64 version of NFL Blitz on the floor at the E3. The game will be the third home conversion from Midway's 3DFX based arcade system (after Mace and San Francisco Rush).

Being an arcade game, NFL Blitz's gameplay is more a mix of high speed football action rather than a technical simulation along the lines of NFL Quarterback Club '98.

The arcade version of the game runs at an impressive 60 frames-per-second, and the folks at Midway are promising similar results on the N64.

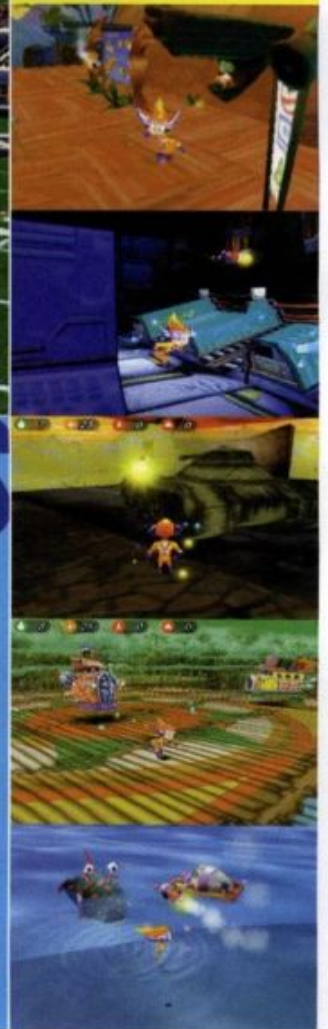
The game will include an arcade mode for straight up football; a tournament mode where you can play all the teams in the licensed National League and a game editor where you can construct your own individual players.

In its current form the game looks very promising. It looks a little like Madden 64 (although it's running in a higher resolution mode) but seems to have faster and more action-based gameplay. A huge variety of offensive and defensive plays have already been implemented in the game and the opposition AI already looks to be very good. The game is set to appear in the U.S in July, so hopefully we can expect a release around August to September this year.



SPACE CIRCUS

Details about Infogrames' latest game were a little sketchy at the show but it sure looked impressive. Space Circus is yet another Nintendo platformer that's set in a 'wacky cartoon world'. You get to wander around a bunch of planets that each features a different Sci-Fi theme. The graphics are very colourful and the game was able to handle up to 10 characters on-screen without any slowdown. If the gameplay turns out to be as good as the graphics then Infogrames will be onto a winner.



SCARS

UBI Soft is hard at work on an original looking racer for the N64. SCARS has large 4-wheel-drive buggies that look sort of like the little remote-controlled cars we used to play with. These buggies are able to take advantage of their huge wheels to drive over all sorts of rough terrain. Any driver that decides to stick to the roads will have a very lonely race because the rest of the racers will be doing all sorts of mad jumps and flips over the off-road terrain. Ubi Soft have also spiced up the racing action with a range of nasty weapons like spiked mines, smoke bombs and missiles that up to four players can toast each other's butts with.

QUEST 64

Hot on the heels of *Zelda 64*, is another RPG that's set to turn a few N64 owner's heads. Using a fully 3D engine, just like *Zelda's*, *Quest 64* appears to have the depth in gameplay necessary to challenge *Zelda* as possibly the best RPG on the N64. The story revolves around a little town called Cetland, which has been cast into spiritual chaos due to the theft of a magical book. You take control of Brian, a wizard's apprentice, and you explore the huge world around Cetland in your quest to find the book. A huge 3D environment that includes seven cities and has landscapes ranging from coastal villages to mountain forests.

You have over 50 spells at your disposal including spells to manipulate the four elements of nature - earth, water, air and fire. THQ promises that there are over 100 characters to meet and interact with in your quest. As far as fighting is concerned, THQ has developed a unique battle engine where you can mix traditional dueling with weapons and all kinds of magic spells.

THQ says that the game is so long and involving that the cartridge includes a battery back up that actually keeps a real-time clock with sunrises and sunsets all beautifully rendered thanks to the power in the N64 chipset. Even the music is said to contain an impressive music score that will make your quest seem like an epic movie adventure.

So far the game looks incredibly promising and may even have what it takes to set the standard for 3D RPG games to come.

Again, the game is due out relatively soon, so expect some news in the next few months (possibly before *Zelda* arrives).



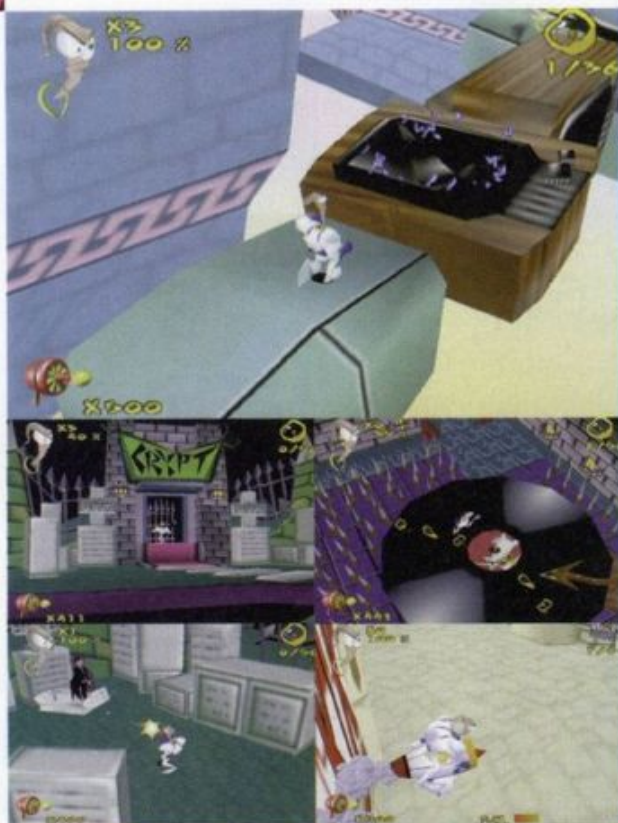
KNIFE EDGE

You can all stop writing in and asking if there are any 'gun games' in production because Kemco have announced *Knife Edge*. The game features a really original storyline - you're a soldier sent to Mars to wipe out a hostile alien colony. Well, okay, so it's not very original, but hey, it's fun to play. The game is a first-person shooter with 'on-rails' gameplay that provides you with a lot of cool weapons so you can splatter the aliens all over the planet. *Knife Edge* also features the ability to duck back behind scenery to reload and get out of the way of enemy fire (like *Time Crisis*). The game was only using a joypad at the show but Kemco assured us that they would include light gun support in the finished version.

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB '99

Quarterback '99 uses Iguana's All Star Baseball '99 graphics engine except that they have somehow managed to tweak even more performance out of it. The result is that the characters look absolutely incredible. The high resolution (640 by 480) really lets you appreciate the stunning detail that has gone into these characters. The animation has also been improved to include things like player-specific celebration animations when they make a touchdown. The only criticism that could be leveled at Iguana's earlier effort was that the computer AI was about as sophisticated as Homer Simpson after a case of Duff beer. Iguana have taken this to heart and employed New York Jets' offensive coordinator Charlie Weiss to help them overhaul the players' AI. The now standard team management option is included so that you can handle all the drafting, signing, releasing and creation of players. The game even includes a cool historic simulation mode that lets you replay key moments in 32 famous Super Bowls. *Quarterback '99* is looking like a truly awesome sports game that will undoubtedly have all sports fans drooling over these pics as they wait for the September release.





EARTHWORM JIM 3D

That silly worm that we all hate to love is finally making his debut in the fully 3D world of Interplay's second N64 game, *Earthworm Jim 3D*. As far as the story is concerned - Jim is out taking a stroll one day and while dodging dive bomb attacks from the local starving crows he is hit on the head by a falling cow (yes, they have learn't to fly recently - didn't you know?). He is knocked unconscious and finds himself in the madcap world of his own mind. Jim must now battle through his subconscious to try and wake up to get back to the real world. A weird setting for a weird game is what many people would say but *Earthworm Jim* looks set to be a groundbreaking title in many ways on the N64 (apart from most original, yet ridiculously retarded storyline).

EWJ3D has, as you could have guessed, an assortment of really weird and silly characters but it all seems to fit well into the game's theme and on a whole it makes a very humorous game. Jim is equipped with many humorous animations that are guaranteed to get you laughing. These include back-flips, whips, a helicopter head move, rocket pocket (don't even ask...) and pig snowboarding! Over eighty different characters are included in the game, all with different animations and totally laughable names (how about 'professor monkey-for-a-head!'). The game has six huge levels where you are allowed total freedom of movement ala *Mario 64*. Interplay say that Jim will be able to interact with any object that he comes across and the emphasis on exploration and experimentation in the game will be very high. This will be a change from the usual 'straight out shooting game' that *EWJ* has been on past systems and could see the start of a whole new line of games about the old Jimster.

Set for a September release, *EWJ 3D* looks interesting, if not a little wacky to say the least. Still, this type of refreshing gameplay and humour could be just what N64 gamers need.

BUCK BUMBLE

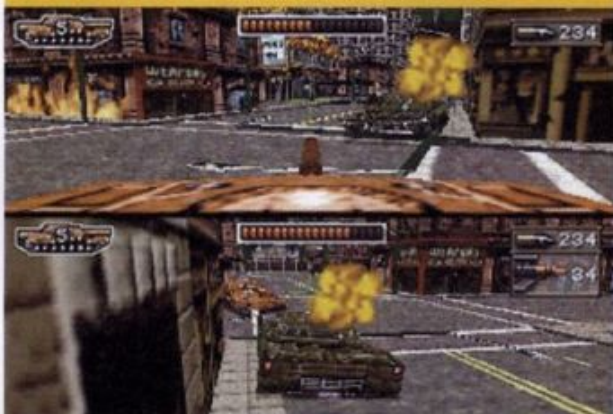
If you thought there were enough Bio Freaks in the mag this moth then you were wrong. Buck Bumble is the latest dude to get the chop-shop operation where he walked out of the operating theatre with 2 guns and a chainsaw attached to his limbs. Buck Bumble's a full 3D shoot-'em-up where you fly around and shoot the crap out of everything. The game is nearing completion and currently has a very impressive 3D environment much like what's seen in *Lylat Wars*, except you have full 3D movement. The action spans over 20 totally different 3D worlds that display some of the best graphics yet seen on the N64. Multiplayer options are also said to be included in the final version of the game, so you can expect the excellent dog-fight battles that made *Lylat Wars* such a good multiplayer game.

Currently scheduled for a September release, expect to see more on this title in the next issue.



BATTLETANX

For those of you that really loved the tank levels in Goldeneye you'll be overjoyed to hear that 3DO have just announced a cool looking game in which you get to jump in a tank and drive around cities destroying anything you see. Battletanx presents the player with extremely large environments in which you must seek out the opposing team's captain and destroy their base. Getting there is half the fun though, because you will have to take care of tons of gun turrets, enemy tanks, entire office blocks and even the odd defenseless bystander (If you have a sadistic nature like me).



F-ZERO X

The early version of F-Zero X that N64 Gamer managed to see has an incredible sensation of speed present. The cars flew along the courses at incredible speed and what was even more impressive was the game often had over 20 different cars on-screen at the one time. The courses appeared similar in style to the SNES version of F-Zero, with long sweeping corners and wide straights that allow plenty of room to fight for position. It did, like the SNES version, appear a little sparse in terms of background scenery, but at the speed and fluidity the game was moving, that fact was quickly forgotten.

One of the game's tracks was on a huge, and I mean huge, cylinder. The cars raced along the curved surface of the cylinder and it often changed direction from left and right to up and down, the effect and the game's speed, provided some incredibly impressive visuals.

Look out for a full preview in the next issue of N64 Gamer.



FIGHTING FORCE

Fighting Force is a scrolling beat-'em-up along the lines of Capcom's legendary Final Fight. You can choose from four different characters to play a one or two-player simultaneous game. The characters include typical beat-'em-up guys like Smasher (the big lumbering bloke that splits the skull of anyone he gets his hands on) and Alana (the standard female character that relies on fast spin kicks and a cool move where she jumps on an enemy's shoulders and repeatedly scons them on the head). Fighting Force won't be winning any originality awards but the good old fashioned gameplay has been updated with cool 3D graphics and it's sure to be popular with beat-'em-up fans (Robert's been drooling over the shots for the last week).

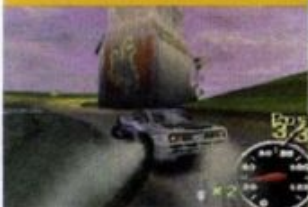
WCW v NWO REVENGE

For all of you wrestling freaks out there - you'll be pleased to know that THQ are hard at work on a sequel to WCW v. NWO. The new game is twice the size and includes tons more moves and wrestlers (there are now a staggering 80 to choose from). In the first game a favourite tactic of mine was to belt the crap out of the others with the bats and chairs you could get from the audience. Obviously I wasn't the only one to enjoy this because THQ have now added trash cans, metal pipes and chains - "let's get ready to rumble".



TOP GEAR OVERDRIVE

Kemco's sequel to Top Gear Rally was still in quite an early form but it's already looking very promising. The graphics have been polished up a bit but it's the new gameplay innovations that really sound cool. The new game will be four player split-screen and will feature on-track power-ups like turbos and money to buy better cars (there's eight to choose from, ranging from V8's to European sports cars). There are now seven different tracks (compared to Top Gear's Five) and there will be a much greater emphasis on taking sneaky short-cuts involving off-road driving. Look forward to seeing this game on the shelves around November/December.



MADDEN '99

EA were being very tight lipped about their new Madden game. The only detail they announced was that the game will include a play editor that will let you construct and execute your own plays. The most notable improvement was the graphics. EA was well aware that their earlier effort looked like the ugly sister compared to NFL Quarterback. In response EA have constructed large, detailed characters with beautiful animation. One scene I saw involved one of the players getting tackled as he was jumping for the ball. He must have done at least three full flips in the air before he landed - bloody spectacular. The only problem with this game is that Iguana's have announced Quarterback '99 which will set even higher standards in graphic performance. Although Madden can't compete graphically its more polished gameplay may see it successfully tackling the opposition.



SPACE STATION SILICON VALLEY

DMA's Silicon Valley may lack the graphical appeal of many of the other games on show but it stood out because of its interesting storyline and original gameplay. You take control of a little computer chip - yes that's right a computer chip - and your mission is to save the world by taking control of a huge variety of animals. What you have to do is attach yourself to the necks of any animals you come across so that the spikes on the bottom of your computer chip can stick into the animal's spinal cord and then you can control all of their movements. The game is designed so that there are a number of specific tasks in each level that can only be completed by controlling a specific animal. These aren't your ordinary variety of fluffy bunnies either. They all come packing various weapons like rocket launchers and machine guns. I must say that it is an unusual feeling to be wandering in a cartoon environment with a cute little squirrel carrying a huge flame thrower under his arm, toasting anything that gets in his path. Keep an eye out for Silicon Valley in November.

SURVIVOR DAY ONE

Survivor Day One has a cool Sci-Fi theme that involves a unpopulated planet being colonised by a huge spaceship filled with every type of life-form imaginable. Unfortunately, disaster strikes as the ship is landing because the pilot gets killed and the ship plunges into an ocean. The game begins with water rushing into the room as the ship slowly but surely sinks into the ocean. You have to try and escape the ship before you drown. This is a difficult task since you have to contend with a ship full of hostile aliens and a girlfriend that can't swim. The game looked very smooth when it was shown at the show and the action involved you wandering around collecting various weapons to toast a variety of nasty looking aliens. The game still needs a bit of work but it has some good ideas and shows promise.



ZELDA

The biggest game of the show was definitely Zelda. Nintendo was mesmerizing the crowds with huge screens displaying their pride and joy. It's easy to see why the game was so popular - it's nothing short of amazing. Zelda sets new standards for graphics and gameplay that all later titles will be compared against. The game begins with Link (your character) standing outside a huge castle as the rain pounds down on him and lightning crashes in the distance, then a mysterious knight on horseback rides out of the castle and off into the distance with Zelda (your girlfriend). Link must then cautiously make his way around the outside of the castle (avoiding the gazes of the patrolling guards) until he can find a way to sneak quietly in. After exploring the castle a little bit Link comes across a large room with paintings hanging on all the walls. Just as he is about to leave the room a vortex opens in one of the paintings and the evil Ganondorf jumps out and swings his sword at Link. You must now use Link's bow to take shots at Ganondorf while avoiding his sword swings as he jumps in and out of the paintings. Watching this game you can't help but admire just how far games have come in the last few years. Zelda really is an example of next-generation software. The game places you in a totally interactive 3D environment in which you can explore and experience some truly amazing things. Zelda has so many things going for it that it's difficult to describe them all, but since it's my job, I may as well have a go. The bosses are definitely crowd pleasers. In one area Link must take on a dinosaur that is so big it makes Godzilla look like Pee-Wee Herman. The sight of the dinosaur rearing up on its hind legs and breathing huge clouds of fire really has to be seen to be believed. The way that Link must hurl lit bombs into the dinosaur's mouth at the precise instant before he breathes fire is an indication of the level of imagination that has gone into this game. Another, impressive boss scene featured Link gazing at his reflection in a pool of water when a freaky monster made up of rippling liquid forms itself out of the water in the pool (just like the T-1000 in T2).

Zelda has also implemented an original new camera system to combat any of the problems presented with the 3D views in Mario. Now the camera follows from a small distance behind you until you come across an enemy or an object of interest. When this happens the camera swings in for a closer, side on, view to give you a clear shot of the action. This makes battle scenes very easy to control because your own character never gets in the way of your vision. In terms of control Zelda has many different sword swings he can use against the enemies including a stunning helicopter attack in which he spins around swinging his flaming sword. Link can also dodge to either side to avoid the enemy's attacks and put up his shield to block enemy blows. Other weapons besides the sword can be assigned to the four yellow buttons. These other weapons include things like his staff which has a longer reach and the boomerang which leaves an impressive transparent trail as it slices through anything in its path. Graphically speaking Zelda never fails to impress with its very smooth (30 frames-per-second) movement and a disappearing point that stretches for long distances. As far as effects go, Zelda has obviously seen what was done in Final Fantasy 7 because the game features some truly awesome scenes where multi-layered transparent magic effects swirl around the screen. The real-time lighting means that Link and the other characters always have realistic shadows and shading that respond to the particular environment they're in. An example of the level of detail that has gone into the animation is the way that, if you forget to put Link's sword away, he struggles to climb a mountainside with only one arm. Zelda is a strong contender for the game of the year and gamers all over the world (especially RPG fans - who have probably wet their pants by now) will be waiting eagerly for its appearance this November.





PENNY RACERS & DEVIL DICE

THQ have just announced two new games for the N64. The first, Penny Racers, is a driving game that appears to borrow heavily from the ideas seen in Mario Kart. Up to four players can race in a split screen mode in little penny racer-style cars that can corner very sharply and aren't restricted by normal physics, so expect big jumps and insane powerslides. A great feature that will be included in the final game is the ability to create your own courses, this feature alone could see it become one of the most popular racing games available on the N64 when it's released later this year.

The second title is a puzzle game in the same vein as Wetrix and Tetrisphere. Devil Dice has you turning over dice on a small 3D field. You must match dice with one another while trying to solve mathematical problems. The game may lack the action of many popular titles but like Wetrix, the game is highly addictive and is a must for N64 owning puzzle lovers. Look forward to a December release.

TWISTED EDGE

Twisted Edge Snow Boarding is another impressive looking title from the makers of Top Gear Rally (Boss Game Studios). Initially it may look quite similar to 1080 but Twisted Edge has its own unique style. The background graphics are a little smoother and more realistic than 1080's. Unfortunately, the character animations were a little stiff and awkward in comparison. As far as game options go, Twisted Edge goes into overdrive. There are six tracks but, depending on what difficulty you select, certain sections of the track will be closed off and obstacles such as trees and snowslides will cover the tracks on the harder difficulty settings. Twisted Edge also simplifies the controls for performing stunts. Now, instead of the near impossible triple revolutions and button press combo needed to pull off some of 1080's stunts, the controls focus on the four yellow buttons that are each assigned to a particular section of the board. Another bonus is that the game will feature a competition mode where you tackle all the tracks and must race against four other snowboarders to see who is the season's champ. We'll just have to see if this game can live up to the high standard set by 1080 when it arrives later in the year.



HARRIER 2000

Anyone itching to jump into a fighter jet and bomb the crap out of Saddam Hussain will be glad to hear that Paradigm's Harrier 2000 lets you take control of a Jump Jet (the mega cool fighter planes that are capable of stunning vertical take-offs). You keep increasing the throttle until you shoot straight up amidst a storm of exhaust fumes and scorched earth. Harrier 2000 is a serious flight simulation that lets you take total control of the jet (with its full compliment of over 30 different kinds of missiles, bombs, rockets and high-powered machine guns). Like Goldeneye, this game encourages you to plan your missions. If you rush in Rambo-style you can expect to be turned into swiss cheese before you know what's happened. Luckily Paradigm have also catered to action junkies as you can choose either an arcade or a simulation mode of gameplay. The graphics have an astounding realistic look to them. The plane itself looks awesome. The textures are very detailed with realistic shading and light-sourcing. The only bummer is going to be waiting 'till March '99 to see this baby.

RUGRATS

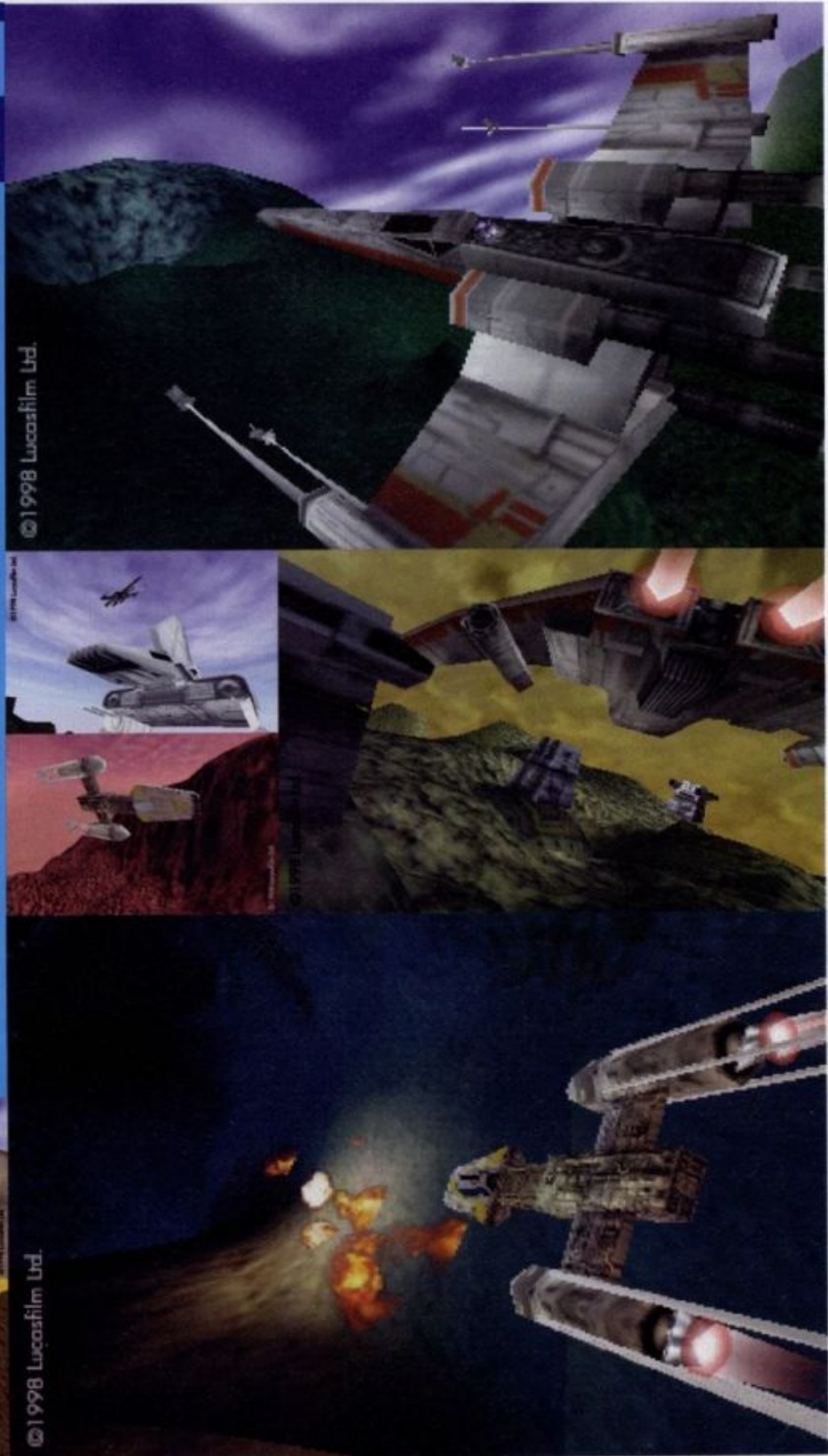
Anyone familiar with the Rugrats television show will welcome this game for the N64 based on the series. Players can control their favourite TV characters including Tommy, Chuckie, Angelica, Phil, and Lil as they go about their crazy adventures. The show, and game, revolves around these young Rugrats, their view on the world and people's behaviour in it. They get lost in their own imaginations and outlook on life and get involved in outlandish adventures that are a laugh-a-minute.

The game includes 20 levels that are based around popular episodes of the TV show and you get to control your Rugrat through the main character's real 3D home. Much like Mario 64, the goal is to fully explore the levels using the three different camera angles at your disposal. Nothing much is known about the game's plot at the moment, except that it's promised to keep the players on the edge of their seats with humorous and creative gameplay.



ROGUE SQUADRON

Ever since we heard that Lucas Arts were making a new Star Wars game we have been anxiously awaiting any news we could get our hands on. Rogue Squadron was in playable form at the E3 and man it looked good. You can control either X-wings or Y-wings in your mission against the Empire and there is no limit to where you can fly. You can fly in any direction and pull off plenty of cool tricks like loop-the-loops in dog fights. As we've already told you, the game is based around Wedge Antilles of Rogue Squadron and you even get to do some of the missions flying in formation with you rebel wingmen. The graphics are looking incredibly detailed and smooth—I just can't describe how cool it looks to be screaming around the Star Wars Universe blowing the crap out of Imperial scum. It's sort of like the first level in Shadows of the Empire except 10 times better. Rogue Squadron features the sharpest and clearest sound I've ever heard from the N64. The level of atmosphere that you get from R2-D2 making his trademark birps while laser fire strafes your butt and the rousing Star Wars music plays in the background is simply unbelievable. This is a game that will have even the most cynical N64 owners soiling his pants in anticipation. The vehicles are excellently detailed and feature moving X-wing formations, super cool textures, and an abundant amount of perspectives, selected by the C buttons. Gamers will shoot with Z, and use A and B to assist in moving and using other weapons.



PERFECT DARK

The most exciting game shown at the E3 was undoubtedly Rare's stunning follow-up to Goldeneye: 'Perfect Dark'. The game has been coded by the same team and uses an updated version of Goldeneye's graphic engine. The story of Perfect Dark concerns a secret agent named Joanna Dark who is sent on a mission to investigate the mysterious DataDyne Corporation. She discovers that the Corporation is involved in a huge conspiracy designed to cover up the existence of extra-terrestrial beings on Earth. The first mission sees her infiltrating this corporation where she meets both good and bad aliens (some of the tricky aliens will even dress up as humans to confuse you). In one amazing scene Agent Dark must save one of the good aliens by pushing it along on a stretcher, shooting any security personnel that get in her way. The basic gameplay is very similar to Goldeneye. The game is still a first-person shooter but now the objectives are much more difficult and complex and the game features many more gadgets and death animations for the enemies. Mines can now be used to blow away walls and objects so that you can gain access to new areas. The enemy Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been updated so that the baddies now decide if it is better to fight or to run away and they will not enter a room if they know you're ready to blow the crap out of them. The graphics have also been improved significantly. The game now features much more detailed and varied textures, advanced lighting, awesome reflections for water effects and generally more impressive landscapes. Perfect Dark is looking every bit as good as we all dreamed but unfortunately we're going to have to wait until early '99 for the game's release.

