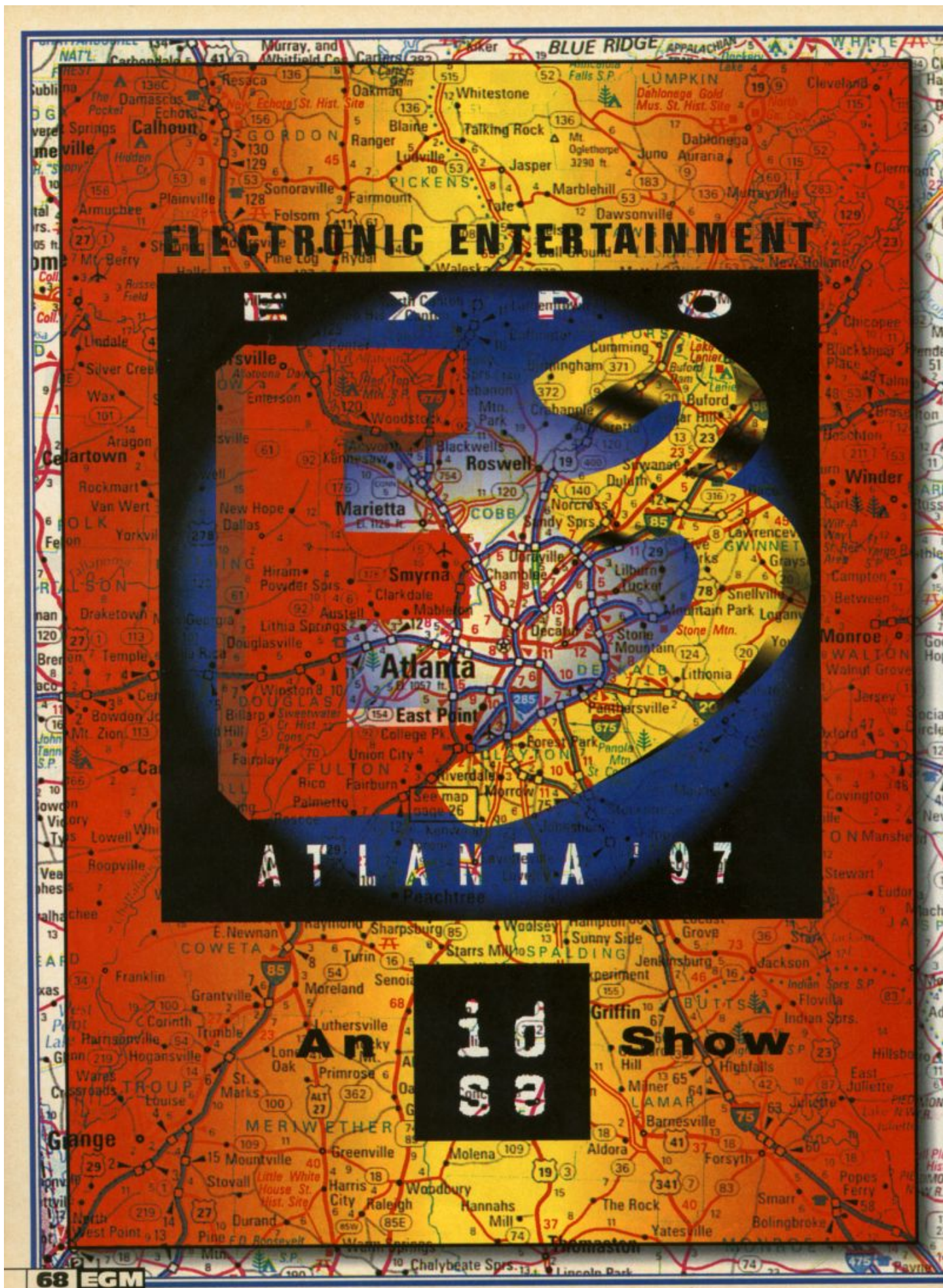


## E3 1997

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# E3 WRAPS UP

## The Most Exciting "Boring" Show Ever?

**N**

ow that the glamour and excitement of E<sup>3</sup> has subsided, it's time for all of the journalists to give their editorial comments about the show. The early reviews we have seen are surprisingly negative.

Statements like "nothing new or 'boring' are commonplace. We don't think that is entirely true. Granted, the show didn't have many surprises, but there are good reasons why.

First, there were no major announcements. But then again, none were expected. The only item of consequence was Sega's price drop to \$149, and that was announced well before the show. There were no system price wars, no new breakthroughs in technology, no new anything. Rather boring from a journalistic point of view, huh?

Second, there was no new hardware. But that wasn't a surprise either. Sega wasn't ready with their new 64-Bit system; Nintendo's major presentations are only made at their Shoshinkai Show in Japan; there was no unveiling of Matsushita's M2 (the rumors were leaning toward a dead M2 rather than a launch); and Sony, with a record-breaking Christmas season coming up, certainly wasn't going to muddy

the waters with rumors of a new system or upgrade.

The third main complaint was that there were few software titles at the show that we haven't seen already. Sure, there actually were a lot of new, deep-in-development games, but this time all of the major companies had made road trips to the magazines well before the show and gave editors hands-on demonstrations of almost all of the new products.

So why did the companies tip their hands so early? Time at the show is valuable and companies only get a few minutes to demo their games and talk about future coverage with the press. On the other hand, if the software companies come to the magazines early, they get hours of preview time with the editors and more space in the pre-E<sup>3</sup> issues of the magazines. That's a heck of a lot better than after-show coverage, where each game gets the obligatory two-sentence summary and one small picture in a magazine's E<sup>3</sup> wrap-up issue.

Also, this year's E<sup>3</sup> was scheduled one month later than in previous years. The extra month this late in a game's development cycle can mean the difference between a "watch-only" demo and a playable beta version. When the game is playable, companies can get important feedback from the editors as to what they think about the product.

Finally, there were fewer innovative games

at this show, but it's tough for companies to bet the farm on something that may try to be revolutionary, yet not end up that way (Bubsy 3D, anybody). Sequels are generally easier and cheaper to create and safer bets in terms of name recognition when there are hundreds of other new games on the store shelves. Plus, with so many new systems being sold this year, slightly modified versions of games (Resident Evil Director's Cut) or budget-priced reissues of older games are going to appeal to new system owners and guarantee sales (and more profit) to the game companies.

While the show itself may have drawn mixed reviews from the press, game players will have the best holiday season ever, not only by being able to choose from three great game systems—each at its lowest price in years—but also by being able to choose from the widest variety of new and classic games to play also at their best prices in years.

Of course, if you read our 16-page E<sup>3</sup> supplement last month, you already knew that. Still, 16 pages is hardly enough to cover the year's biggest show, so this month we thought we'd revisit E<sup>3</sup> and analyze the top stories, the top games and everything else that made this so-called "uneventful" show so darn exciting.

—EGM Chief Correspondent Ed Semrad



## WORST GAME OF THE SHOW

**Censored!!  
Censored!!**

Clearly the worst game at E<sup>3</sup> was the one that Virgin was showing behind closed doors (thank heavens!).

Tentatively going under the name of S&M (Slaughter and Mutilation), this game takes place in hell, and it seems to fall best in the fighting game category, although the amount of gratuitous violence goes beyond anything we've ever seen to date—hence the name. In an interview, the programmers, stated that this game was designed from the beginning to "push the envelope" and to be the most gruesome and goriest game ever. In fact, their press release states "...decapitations, amputations and disemboweling are the order of the day."

Now we are not ones who get squeamish with seeing blood, violence, mutilation, gore and the like, but the line has to be drawn somewhere. Doing gore without purpose is not appropriate. If the game is to be a fighting game, we believe that you should create a "kick ass" fighting engine to show the Capcoms, or Midways that they aren't the only companies that can design a well-balanced fighter. After this is done, then add the features which would make your game memorable.

Anyway, in their defense, S&M was still early in development and things could change in the future. More as it develops.

## E<sup>3</sup>'s Got A Big, Ol' Booth, Aw Yeah...

If it wasn't apparent in the coverage of this year's show, some of the booths were monsters. Sony's booth in particular made some of us dizzy, while Nintendo's great expanse left most of us in awe. Sega's area, which was one of the biggest booths at the show, was more or less what we're used to here in the "plains state" (you know, kinda flat like Illinois).

Square footage-wise, some of the booths had numbers like these (remember that the area of a NFL-sized football field is 57,600 sq. ft.):

- Sony: approx. 40,000 sq. ft.
- Nintendo: approx. 40,000 sq.
- Sega: approx. 40,000 sq.ft.
- Acclaim: approx. 12,000
- Activision: approx. 6,000 sq. ft.
- Ziff-Davis Inc.: 1,600 sq. ft.

The three biggies (Sega, Sony and Nintendo) had the biggest booths of course, but that's not to say the smaller companies had lame booths. In fact, some were quite large with



## E<sup>3</sup>; A SHOW OF SECRECY...

Although E<sup>3</sup> is a show where companies are supposed to strut their stuff, just the opposite is beginning to take place. Weary of competition getting glances at their products before their completion, companies are resorting to restricting access to part of, or even all of their booths.

Personifying this change was Virgin's large, green military tent that restricted access to all whose badge didn't have a red Virgin sticker on it. Inside was NHL Powerplay '98, Slaughter & Mutilation and Hercules. The front of Ocean's booth was a huge, imposing wall. Lined along it were frantic public relations people yanking unsuspecting press from the aisles and asking them to step inside. (I'm always weary of propositions like that.) Interplay had a small, appointment-only booth that

showed Powerboat Racing and Jimmy Johnson's VR Football among others.

Many companies let you think you were seeing everything, but only the "privileged" were allowed to see all. EA Sports had the most interesting type of setup, as many of their secret games were inside an armored Humvee limo (shouldn't that be in Virgin's military tent?) parked in front of their sports bar. Behind the bar was an entrance allowing access to Madden NFL 98, NBA Live 98 and NHL 98 (all were absent from the show floor). Acclaim

lots of neat flashy lights, cool music and beautiful (or sometimes frightening) women walking around in thong bikinis.

So how much does all this stuff cost? One exhibitor that had a booth in the main conference hall which was around 4,000 sq. ft. said, "We were lucky to keep our cost under \$1 million." This cost includes the floor space, kiosks, lights, etc. If we multiply that by who knows how much for the 40,000 sq. ft. booths, it's not hard to tell that they must've easily cost \$20 million or more. Obviously, a booth of any size is a pricey endeavor at E<sup>3</sup>.



Only prying eyes could spy EA's Madden 98 (left).



Stupid airport delays! I guess we'll just expense more ice cream.



And the sign said: NO CRISPINS OR CHIMPS ALLOWED!



What's up with all these pictures of Crispin? What a camera hog...



What? You're not allowed to take pictures before the show opens?



# WORKING DESIGNS TO END PUBLISHING FOR SEGA

Working Designs dropped one of the show's biggest bombshells when word got around that they would stop publishing games for the Saturn. The Redding, Calif.-based company has served as Sega's RPG workhorse since the days of the Sega CD, localizing and releasing classic Japanese titles such as the Lunar RPGs and more recently Iron Storm and Dragon Force for the Saturn. Now—following a tiff with Sega of America—Working Designs will publish only four more Saturn games: Albert Odyssey, Sega Ages, Magic Knight Rayearth and Lunar Silver Star Story Complete.

The split is undoubtedly bad news for Sega. Working Designs earned a sizeable following of Sega devotees, with award-winning titles like Dragon Force selling more than 150,000 copies. But it's perhaps even worse news for fans of the Lunar games. Since Working Designs owns the American rights to the popular RPG series, no more Sega titles means no more Lunar games in America, right?

Not necessarily. "Lunar Silver Star Story is absolutely our last Lunar that will be on the Saturn," said Working Designs president Victor Ireland. "Everything else will be on another platform, regardless of which platform it's

released for in Japan."

Ireland explained that porting future Saturn Lunar games to other platforms such as the PlayStation is not a technical impossibility. "Since the games are all generally 2-D, it's not a big deal," he said, adding that the main drawback would be the six months of extra time Working Designs would have to spend on each title.

Other games Saturn owners will miss are several Thunder Force shooter compilations that—along with Thunder Force 5—Working Designs had planned to bring to the Saturn under their Spaz label. Ireland added that his company's still-rosy relationship with Sega of Japan—who has been Working Design's main source of Japanese titles—could have yielded another two to three Saturn games, as well.

So why abandon these prospects and bring an end to what Ireland once called a family-like relationship with Sega? The outspoken Ireland said much of his ire is aimed at Sega of America's management, specifically Bernie Stolar, the chief operating officer of Sega's North American Consumer Business Operations. Ireland said he was unhappy with Stolar's comments to the press and others during the show that "the



Saturn is not (Sega's) future" (taken from our own interview with Stolar). Ireland said Sega of America's management was dishing out too much information about Sega's next system. "This had the effect of actively working to kill the Saturn market," Ireland said. "You just don't talk about new hardware that's at least 18 months away."

But the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back came when Ireland and the rest of his staff arrived at the show and saw where Sega had placed Working Designs' booth—on an out-of-the-way patch of show floor adjoining the exterior of Sega's walled-off area. This locale was too far off the beaten path for Ireland's tastes.

Sega of America doesn't seem too concerned about the split. "The bottom line is we've got the games developed out of Japan that could be brought to the U.S. by any publisher," said Dan Stevens, Sega's director of public relations. "There are lots of other publishers who would be interested in licensing these properties and enhancing them for the U.S. market." Stevens added that he never heard any complaints from Ireland at the show. "If he had a problem, he should have come to us directly," Stevens said.

With the show behind them, Working Designs has now turned to the other guys—and has already announced one as-yet-unnamed PlayStation RPG is in the works.

## WHERE WAS THE M2?

Even though Panasonic had one of the largest booths at E3, the M2 game system was nowhere to be seen. We did run into Mr. Kenji Eno, president of Warp Inc., the Japanese developer that was creating D2 for the M2.



**EGM:** Do you think the M2 will ever come out?

**KENJI ENO:** No. It is too late to bring out a new game system.

**EGM:** Why did you decide to make D2 for the M2?

**KE:** The first game D was originally designed for the 3DO. We worked with 3DO and had a good relationship with them. They suggested that we do the sequel for the M2. Now Matsushita has decided that they won't bring out the M2.

**EGM:** Did you like the M2?

**KE:** The M2 is the most powerful of the next-generation game systems. It has features and capabilities that the current systems do not have.

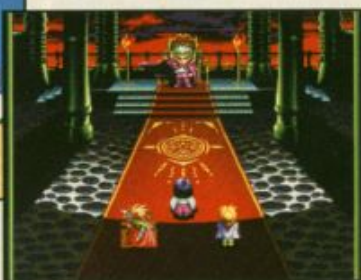
**EGM:** Will you convert D2 to another next-generation system such as the new Sega machine?

**KE:** We couldn't do D2 on any of the existing game systems because of the detail and complexity of our game.

*(Editor's Note: Matsushita president Yoichi Morishita announced just before press time that they will not bring out the M2 as a game machine.)*



Sega Ages (above), Albert Odyssey (right) and Lunar (top corner) will be WD's final titles for the Saturn.



Showgoers braved a potential cave-in for a peek at Crash 2.



"I just had to touch her once."  
—Art Director Cyril Wochok



Now we know why the power went out on the first day of E3...



Midway's booth was packed with shiny, happy, deadly MK people.



# EGM RATES THE SHOW!

## SHAWN

There were plenty of sequels at this year's show, but there were lots of originals, too. Now that I've seen these betas, let's start getting more finished products in. X-mas season should be a blast.

Favorite Games of E':

- 1) GoldenEye 007 (N64)
- 2) One (PS)
- 3) Crash 2 (PS)
- 4) Colony Wars (PS)
- 5) Bomberman 64 (N64)

## CRISPIN

OK, so I didn't see anything ground-breaking (except the tape of Metal Gear Solid—wow!), but there were plenty of fresh spins on old ideas. I just wish I had more time to play the games.

Favorite Games of E':

- 1) GoldenEye 007 (N64)
- 2) Metal Gear Solid (PS)
- 3) Final Fantasy VII (PS)
- 4) Banjo-Kazooie (N64)
- 5) Tomb Raider 2 (PS)

## DAN

By the last day, I was pretty much drained. I'm glad I had a pair of Vans (with double Dr. Scholl's padding!). Crisp and I had a lot of fun filming. As tiring as E' was, I cannot wait until next year's.

Favorite Games of E':

- 1) Metal Gear Solid (PS)
- 2) Lost World (Arcade)
- 3) WW Soccer '98 (Sat)
- 4) Point Blank (PS)
- 5) Marco Polo (Pool)

## SUSHI-X

This year's show just wasn't as big a deal as last year's was, but it was still decent. I just wish Metal Gear Solid would've been playable. And where's Street Fighter III for the consoles?

Favorite Games of E':

- 1) Metal Gear Solid (PS)
- 2) GoldenEye 007 (N64)
- 3) Final Fantasy VII (PS)
- 4) Zelda 64 (N64)
- 5) Street Fighter EX (PS)

# E3'S BEST DEAL: THE \$99 NETLINK BUNDLE

While it won't help Sega win the hardware wars, it certainly can't hurt. At E', Sega told us they are going to put out a special deal on the NetLink.

The NetLink Bundle is going to retail for \$99. It will come with a Web browser, but more exciting, special NetLink editions of Virtual On and Sega Rally. Both these titles can be played as normal one-player games as before. But

now players can challenge anyone else in the world to a full-screen, head-to-head competition (assuming both parties own a Saturn and a NetLink). You can play two-player games without a split screen, just like in the arcade. And since you can dial straight to your opponent's NetLink, you won't have the same hassles of two-player PlayStation link cable games (i.e., having to have two TVs and systems in one location).

Players can also enter NetLink World (assuming they have an Internet service provider). Here, they can check bulletin boards (for potential NetLink opponents) or create a profile (so others



will know what they like to play and when). NetWorld's user-friendliness allows players to connect directly from NetLink World. So if you are online and find Duke Nukem 3D bait, you can click a button and NetLink will automatically connect the two players to start the game.

EGM gave Virtual On and Duke Nukem 3D a hands-on test at E' and came away thoroughly impressed. The action was as smooth, without any latency. Hopefully, the NetLink will give the Saturn a slight, but much needed, edge in what it offers over the competition.

Current NetLink owners can pick up the software extras for about \$20.

# E3 SCORES HIGH WITH SPORTS FANS

This year's E' was a great one for sports fans, as a dizzying array of sports titles were displayed for the first time on the show floor. As expected, Sony and EA Sports had the most impressive lineups—each showed a great number of impressive and diverse sports titles that revealed a few surprises.

The best way to distinguish the two major sports camps would be to draw the line between collegiate and professional sports. For instance, EA Sports nailed down the college sports with March Madness 98 and NCAA Football 98, while Sony's games consisted of pro sports such as MLB '98, NHL FaceOff '98 and the gorgeous NFL GameDay '98. Both companies displayed competing racing games—EA's NASCAR 98 and Sony's Cart World Series. While Sony's NCAA

GameBreaker '98 wasn't shown, it is in development and will be based on NFL GameDay '98's impressive 3-D engine.

Sega had a modest crop of sports games on the show floor, led by Manx TT and World Series Baseball '98 (reviewed this issue). NBA Action '98 was also playable, and already looked much cleaner and faster than the original. Interestingly enough, Midway is releasing a PlayStation game that looks identical to it called Hardwood Heroes.

Other players were showing their select sports wares. Virgin is putting the touches on NHL PowerPlay '98 (which is looking very strong), and Acclaim is



nearing completion of the long-awaited N64 version of NFL QB Club '98. Interplay also showed their revamped Jimmy Johnson VR Football (Konami and Sega formerly owned the game engine).

After viewing the titles shown at E', it's a safe bet that this Fall is going to be an incredible season for sports games—maybe the best ever. ■



Sony's MLB '98 (left) was a pleasant surprise at the show.



A little Mario Kart competition left some feeling like big losers.



"Aren't you that guy from 'Beverly Hills Ninja'?" —Crispin Boyer



"So, Shawn, what'd you think of that Wonder Woman model?"



Rescue teams are still looking for the 10 people lost in Sony's booth.



## Home Conversions & Spinoffs



Arcade conversions have always been some of the hottest titles on the console systems. This show was no different. Capcom showed SFEX+ Alpha with two new characters as well as the Street Fighter Collection. Namco had Time Crisis with an entirely new level. Mace from Atari as well as Wayne Gretzky and San Francisco Rush for PS and N64 were there. Rampage by Midway was a perfect translation, and the Sub-Zero MK spinoff, Mythologies, looked great!



## THE CHAMPIONS OF E<sup>3</sup>

As is the case each year at the E<sup>3</sup> show, when large crowds gather around the best game players in the industry, it could only signify one thing: an official E<sup>3</sup> tournament.

Capcom's Street Fighter III competition was slow to start but was certainly the flashiest. Two players at a time walked up on to a stage (surrounded by Resident Evil zombies) to play SFIII, single-elimination style. Cheers, oohs and ahhs rose up from the spectators every time they saw an impressive combo on the 10-foot tall monitors. Our very own Dan Hsu made it to the final six, which is pretty impressive considering

how little SFIII experience he has. He was eliminated by Jason Wilson, freelancer for *Tips and Tricks*, who went on to win the whole event. Andrew Cockburn of *GameFan* took second.

Namco's Tekken 3 tourney was a bit unorganized. Everyone crowded around individual machines to see what little they could (an overhead big screen would've been nice). EGM's Crispin Boyer reached the semi-finals before being knocked out by Fighters Guild writer, Glenne Addams (who then beat Paul Teng of *Play by Play* to become the champ).

Finally, Nintendo held a Star

Fox 64 tourney where players sat in life-size Arwings and battled it out in the Battle Royal and Time Trial Modes of the game. The first- and second-place winners (Andy Reiner of *Game Informer* and Nob Ogasawara of *Geisen*, respectively) got to play against Shigeru Miyamoto and Takaya Imamura (the game's producer and art director). Our own John Ricciardi placed just behind the winners in third place (out of 16).



Left: Glenne Addams, winner of the Tekken 3 tournament. Right: Jason Wilson, E<sup>3</sup>'s Street Fighter III champion

## ARCADE GAMES AT THE E<sup>3</sup>? YOU BETCHA!

There wasn't a whole lot of "arcade" products at E<sup>3</sup> this year. However, there was a pretty large arcade presence at the show in the form of a few machines, tournaments and a whole lot of conversions.

Probably the most impressive of the arcade games featured was *Lost World: Jurassic Park* by Sega. It is the first gun game to benefit from Model 3

technology, and it is incredible (perhaps to make up for the movie?).

There were two major arcade tournaments: Street Fighter III and Tekken 3 (see story above for info). Suffice it to say, Namco's parting gift—a way-cool digital organizer—was the best.

There were other arcade games that were soon to be home conversions as well, such as *Mace* and *San Francisco Rush* by Atari. Another

impressive section was the Arcade PC area, where the UFO sim *Incoming* was debuted and was INCREDIBLY AWESOME—thanks to 3Dfx and heavy-duty PC technology.

One game that didn't appear anywhere but a brochure was Capcom's *Pocket Fighter*, a blatant spinoff of Sega's *Virtua Kids*, but it looks cool!



*Lost World* by Sega really showed off the power of the Model 3 board. This title is also the first gun game that utilizes the new architecture.

PF has Ryu, Sakura, Morrigan, Donovan, Dan and more!



It wasn't all fun and games for the EGM staff (doggone deadline!).



As usual, Nintendo's displays were larger than life at the show.



"Hello, Concierge? Know of any good chimp farms in the area?"



This is what makes E<sup>3</sup> the hottest show of the year...literally.





## Shigeru Miyamoto

Nintendo's Star Producer

We were given an audience with one of the greatest gaming minds of our time. He told us about his current projects.

### Press: How involved are you with all of Nintendo's current games?

Shigeru Miyamoto: I'm mainly active as a producer, except for *Zelda 64*, where I'm more of a producer/director. I try to manage the general stream of the other games.

### Press: How much were you involved with *Banjo-Kazooie*?

SM: I'm very impressed by this game. Rare is really a professional company. I was not involved with this game at all.

### Press: How many people and how much time did it take to make *Super Mario 64*?

SM: Five people participated in the preliminary planning stages, but in the final stages, 20 to 25 people were working on the game. It's difficult to say how long the process takes, but probably around two years. On average, 15 to 20 people worked on the game.

### Press: How is *Super Mario 64 2* going?

SM: Well, *Yoshi's Island 64* is kind of a sequel

## "Mario 2 might be ready next year."

(laughs). But right now I am working with a few programmers on concepts for *SM64 2*. If the concepts are good, we might have something by the end of the year.

### Press: How about *Yoshi's Island 64*?

SM: It should be out before the November Shoshinkai (in Japan). I need to head back to Japan to work on this one (laughs).

### Press: What do you think about *Tamagotchi*?

SM: We are currently working on a sort of life simulation game with Mr. Shigesato Itoi (the story writer for *Mother/Earthbound*) called "Cabbage." We've been working on this game for five years, even before *Tamagotchi* was announced. The release date hasn't been decided but expect it in a year or two.

### Press: What's happening with *Pocket Monsters 64*?

SM: This game will be released with the Nintendo 64 Disk Drive. There are currently 10 people working on it. It will be released in Japan, but I'm not sure about the U.S.

### Press: What's happening with the N64 Disk Drive?

SM: The launch delay of the Nintendo 64 Disk Drive was not due to a hardware or software delay. We wanted to have as many titles as possible available for the launch. The launch titles for this system will be: *Mother 3*, *Pocket Monsters 64*, *Mario Paint*, *SimCity* and one

more which is currently confidential.

### Press: When will *Super Mario RPG 2* come out?

SM: Depends on how many Miyamotos there are! A team of about 20 people is working on this game. It may be out by the end of next year. *Mother 3* will be the biggest featured game at the next Shoshinkai show (in November). We'll also have a playable version of *F-Zero 64* there. We have a lot of really good titles in development so we need to prioritize which one's we'll concentrate on.

### Press: Have you seen or played any interesting games?

SM: Not really. *Tamagotchi* was interesting. We showed some video of our games...and will show more in November. We hope that you can feel some of the basic strength of Nintendo 64. Many game designers are just learning how to use it. For example, each CPU can control eight different lights. Lighting effects will be shown in *Zelda 64* and *Mother 3*. High resolution video games and real time movies are other examples of the power of the N64. Nintendo 64 game designers can decide how they are going to use the power of the CPU. For example, we used it for voice compression in *Star Fox 64*. In another game it could be the light source. You can see some of these different effects used in games on the tape.



## Howard Lincoln

Chairman of Nintendo

Nintendo of America's head honcho talks about how the status of the N64 and what he thinks of the competition.

## "It's a quality over quantity issue."

sales in 1997, and for anybody in the video game business, that's great news.

### EGM: What's the current status of the 64DD add-on for the N64?

HL: The hardware is complete, and we showed that last November at the Shoshinkai Show. Certainly we did demonstrate that we can take any N64 cartridge game and make a 64DD disk game out of it. We decided not to show the product and to delay the launch in Japan to March of 1998 and later in 1998 in the United States for the same reason we delayed the N64—we're not satisfied with the quality of the software. It doesn't meet our standards.

### EGM: Do you think that the number of games being shown for the N64—in comparison to Sony—will hurt you?

HL: I don't think so. It's a quality over quantity issue. I think we've won decisively, based on what the independent sales data demonstrates. The TRST data shows that N64 games, when measured against all of the next-generation software [Sony, Sega, Nintendo], of the top 10 games for all of 1997, seven out of the first 10 are Nintendo 64 [games]. What that means is one guy with

260 titles can't get one of those titles to sell as many as a guy with 15 titles. That proves in my mind that quality is going to win out over quantity. Having said all that, it's also true that the breadth of N64 titles is gradually expanding, but we are not going to dump poor-quality games on the marketplace so that we can have bragging rights that we have the most games. It's like a movie studio saying, "We win the battle because we made more movies in 1997 than anybody else," as opposed to the other guy who's saying, "We only released *Gone With the Wind*." Give me a break. Who's going to win that argument? It's the same in the video game business.

### EGM: Speaking of games, what's happening with *Zelda 64*?

HL: *Zelda* will reach the market in Japan before the end of the year, and it will be introduced in the U.S. in the first quarter of 1998. [Miyamoto] has to get the game done in Japan first, and he's got to make that schedule. But there's not going to be enough time for the kind of translation that is necessary to port it to the N64 in the U.S. by Christmas. And we've got great games with *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Conker's Quest*, so we think we can take the time and translate it.





## Ken Kutaragi

SCEA Chairman and CEO

The man who designed the PlayStation is now top dog at SCEA. We asked for the scoop on PaRappa and the PlayStation 2.

Ken Kutaragi is considered by many as the father of the PlayStation.

He was the lead man who designed and headed up the team of engineers that came up with the current version of the Sony PlayStation.

On April 15 of this year, he was named chairman and chief executive officer of Sony Computer Entertainment of America. He is the third man to head the highly successful division in as many years.

Sony Computer Entertainment had a huge presence at E<sup>3</sup> in Atlanta—everywhere you went someone was buzzing about Crash Bandicoot 2, Blasto, Final Fantasy VII or PaRappa The Rapper. EGM correspondent Glenn Rubenstein was able to sit down with Kutaragi, and get his perspective on what is happening at SCEA and what his vision is for the rest of 1997 and beyond.

Like most other people who have seen it,

## "PaRappa has the appeal of a movie."

Mr. Kutaragi is very excited about PaRappa The Rapper coming to the U.S., but he admitted to the marketing challenge this unique title presents.

### EGM: What do you think draws gamers to PaRappa the Rapper?

Ken Kutaragi: A game's audience is usually a young adult, but PaRappa has the appeal of a movie, a great movie. It attracts a broad range of users. In Japan, 20 percent of PlayStation users are now women. I expect [the title] to have the same impact in the U.S. PaRappa the Rapper creates a new type of entertainment, and bringing the title to the United States will present a nice challenge for Sony.

The company has never before marketed a game even remotely like this one. He gave us no information about the upcoming sequel, to be released in Japan by the end of the year. Presenting a similar marketing challenge is Final Fantasy VII, the epic title by Square, which is scheduled to be released this fall on the PlayStation.

RPGs have never been huge in the U.S., unlike in Japan, where they do monster business. We are expecting FFVII to do well.

### EGM: Why do you think RPGs haven't caught on over here?

KK: "The graphics, sound and detail are all very high [quality] in Final Fantasy VII, and the story line is like a great movie. But where a movie has only two-hour entertainment, Final Fantasy VII has over 70 hours. Just like the Japanese release, the U.S. release will have all of Sony's marketing muscle behind it. The title will receive a marketing and promotional push this fall.

### EGM: What can you tell us about the PlayStation 2 and when will it be released?

KK: When we developed the PlayStation CD, the graphics and sound made possible many new things. Now with 64-Bit or 32-Bit, it's not that big of a jump; 32-Bit is a good number and we've got a good price. When we can do new things and make a big jump and have a competitive price, then it's time for us to release a new system.

As the conversation came to a close, Kutaragi spoke about how well the division has done and that the PlayStation was 20-30 percent of the way through its life span in the U.S. and 40 percent of the way through its life span in Japan. He also boasted that the PlayStation's revenues outgrossed Sony Music in Japan, and that the next system will be going after Sony Pictures.



## Bernard Stolar

COO Sega of America

We talked to Sega's chief operating officer about how he plans to turn around Sega's fortunes in the coming year.

In recent years, Sega has gone from being an industry powerhouse to an ailing giant struggling to regain ground. But here's the good news for Sega fans: At E<sup>3</sup> in Atlanta, the general consensus is that Sega's software is the best it has been in a long time—and that they could finally be at the beginning of a much-delayed comeback. With only sketchy reports of Sega's future plans, we went to Sega's chief operating officer, Bernard Stolar, to get some clarification.

### EGM: What's your take on last year, the current state of the video game industry, and your position in relation to your competitors?

Bernard Stolar: Sega still today is the number-one software company on a global basis. We made a mistake with the Saturn. Nintendo and Sony are fighting out their own war. And we have a business model that we're

## "There will be another platform!"

following. I'm not really going to get into a hardware game with them. I don't think it's necessary—our model is quite different than their models. We're the only platform company that is doing arcade, PC titles and online—they're not even coming close to that. We're not even publishing as many titles. I think the success that people say Sony is having with their installed base is great, but at the end of the day, how much money are they going to make corporate? How much money are they going to make off the PlayStation with the amount of titles that they've got out there right now? They've got over 400 titles out there, and by the end of this year they're coming out with another 200, that's 600. They already have 15 million pieces of software unsold in the retail marketplace. When that comes tumbling back, what are they going to do with all those mark downs and price cuts that they're going to suffer? They haven't gone through the transition of how to work through that business. Sony has never been good at that—ask their record business.

### EGM: What is the current status of the Saturn and will you keep supporting it?

BS: Saturn is the system we are supporting; the third parties are still publishing titles. We'll keep supporting the Saturn until the next time we start clearly focusing on where our next step on the platform side will be.

Will it be next year? That depends on the software.

### EGM: So is the Saturn riding out its life span for the time being?

BS: Saturn's not our future. As a company we believe that we will take the leadership role on the hardware side, as well as the software side, and it's only a matter of time. It's like CBS going from third to first.

### EGM: Do you have a specific time frame?

BS: I could probably be very direct if I wasn't surrounded by Nintendo and Sony, but I would say again that it's based on software. I got a great look at what the next Sonic after Sonic R will look like and it's pretty astonishing, so if we can get that to 1998, we'll go 1998, because it's got software.

### EGM: Will you bring out another platform?

BS: I can tell you emphatically there will be another platform! We will be highly competitive with it. When we do that we will bring out a platform that will be price competitive, that the developers will embrace and that the retailers and the consumers will support 110 percent. And that is exciting because we will do all those things.

Thanks to VideoGameSpot's Glenn Rubenstein for conducting the interviews