

Have a nice play inside America's games industry

Article scanné dans le magazine N64 n°04 (Juillet 1997)

Sujet de l'article : Site

Last month it was Japan. This month, continuing our complete guide to the world's N64 deve

Scans réalisés par les membres du site Nintendo64EVER,

usage exclusivement destiné aux autres membres du site.

Toute reproduction, partielle ou complète, ainsi que la diffusion de ce fichier est interdite.

Les magazines originaux sont la propriété intellectuelle exclusive de leurs éditeurs respectifs,

les scans regroupés dans ce fichier ont un but uniquement documentatif et informatif,

aucune exploitation commerciale ne peut en être faite.



Last month it was Japan. This month, continuing our complete guide to the world's N64 developers, we pack our toothbrushes and take a tour of the United States of America.

HAVE A NICE PLAY

inside America's games industry

by Mark Ramshaw



America may have been the birthplace of the video game, but since the launch of the NES console in the 1980s it's been Nintendo's machines that have dominated. Not surprisingly, a whole army of US game developers has marched out over the years, ready to pledge allegiance to the Japanese giant and bring a uniquely Western vision to a new generation of Nintendo games.

For, while Miyamoto and other

leading lights of the Japanese development scene strive to push their games to more surreal, cartoonish and dream-like levels, America's coders have further refined other genres. And they reflect a society in love with fast-paced action, sports, and outlandish violence, just like their movies and television. All presented as a lavish, big budget spectacle, of course.

It's an approach which inevitably leads to more licence-based gaming, as well as titles which rely more on

presentation value than content. But equally, the US development scene has been responsible for some of Nintendo's greatest moments. Electronic Arts, which as just committed itself to the N64, has been responsible for a whole slew of impressive sports titles for the SNES console. We've seen some excellent conversions of Williams' coin-ops make it to the Nintendo systems, including *NBA Jam* and that epitome of US gaming, *Mortal Kombat*.

And then there's the movie spin-

offs from LucasArts, the work done by new developers on the block like Paradigm, and the new talent pushed by Nintendo of America itself. It may be Japan that's thus far been responsible for the bulk of N64 releases, but with American programmers at last getting to grips with the system, and more and more respected developers in line to become N64 licensees, it looks like the playing field is about to be evened. It's time to get ready for the Hollywood factor.





Nintendo and the U.S.

The story so far

In the beginning there was Nintendo, and America wasn't very interested. Having witnessed the collapse of the console industry in the early '80s at the hands of Atari, the US was understandably less than smitten with the NES system when Minoru Arakawa and his small band of Nintendo of America employees attempted to break out of the coin-op market and into the homes back in 1985.

A lot of persistence and twelve months later, however, and one million systems had been sold. Nintendo had not only revived the American thirst for console systems, it had claimed the entire market as its own (for a while at least). The emergence of American developers, keen to buy into the world of Nintendo was inevitable. Not to mention highly desirable for Nintendo, who resisted setting up its own internal US division, but wanted to fully address the tastes and needs of the US gamers.

First to sign up were the US divisions of Japanese 'friends of Nintendo', such as Konami, Data East and Capcom. The first wave of wholly American developers signed up in '87, (including Acclaim, a company formed by two ex-Activision men) but Electronic Arts – with its

impressive knack for bagging big sports licences and attaching them to quality simulations – took another three years to come on board and probably lost millions and millions of sales in the process. By the time the SNES hit the US, most developers (around 100 worldwide) were ready to work on the new system, although the arrival of Sega's 16-bit Mega Drive ensured Nintendo would never again have total control over the video game market.

With SNES game development Nintendo had bowed to pressure to ease licensing restrictions, though as in Japan, most developers were still obliged to pay Nintendo to manufacture their cartridges, and even those that didn't still had to buy security chips. Developers were now able to release the same games on other formats such as the Mega Drive, but to maintain quality, a limit was placed on the number of titles a publisher could release, unless they came out highly rated in Nintendo's internal evaluation system.

In reality Nintendo was still making as much money per cartridge and still controlling the actions of the third party developers. Nevertheless, some questioned the motive behind the US Government's Federal Trade Commission's hounding of Nintendo over allegations of price fixing, and

accusations of unfair trade arising from the licensing restrictions and Nintendo's famous security lock-out chips. As Nintendo Of America's Peter Main said, "If Nintendo were an American company no one would have said a word."

Now the battle to establish the N64 has begun, and as with the SNES, it looks as though the fight over in America will be a hard, but ultimately triumphant one. And as with the SNES, most if not all US-sourced games will make it over to these shores. The same themes – sports, shoot-'em-ups, graphically intensive action games – are being used, albeit with much more flair and ambition than would ever have been possible in the days of the SNES.

Having fallen for the charms of Zelda and Square's impressive efforts, the Americans now also display a real fondness for story-driven role-playing games, so it's very likely we'll see them tackling the genre some time soon. And we're already witnessing the emergence of beat-'em-ups that attempt to offer a more westernised style of combat (Midway's weapon-heavy *Mace* springs immediately to mind). All of which will no doubt be welcomed with open arms by open minded N64 gamers here in the UK. Read on and make your mind up for yourself.





AMERICA

The developers

Paradigm

Paradigm has gone from being an unknown quantity with an impressive history in military simulations, to being probably the most highly regarded US third-party developer. And all because of *Pilotwings 64*.

Gary Bandy, an artist on *Pilotwings* and Paradigm's manager of business development, gave **N64** Magazine a quick history lesson: "Paradigm Simulation was formed back in the summer of 1990. The founders had been working on Silicon Graphics for other companies, and had a vision of a tool-based approach to creating simulations. Silicon Graphics helped out a little bit, and we wound up with two flagship products - Vega and Audioworks.

"We developed a very good rapport with SGI, working on some cutting edge technology for them, and also worked on the scenery as well as the visual and audio tools for *Magic Edge*, a location-based entertainment centre featuring 18 different aircraft pods all linked together. That whetted our appetite for the entertainment market, and when SGI and Nintendo got together, SGI very nicely recommended us. We had no idea we'd be doing *Pilotwings*, but we're sure glad we did!"

The success of *Pilotwings 64* has led to some changes at Paradigm, with the company now split in half (though the two divisions will continue to share resources), forming a separate 50 person-strong Entertainment division in December. A three-game deal with Japanese publisher Video System was signed a month later. "The whole purpose is to allow each company to focus on what they do best", explains Gary. "The business model for entertainment is very different from working with the

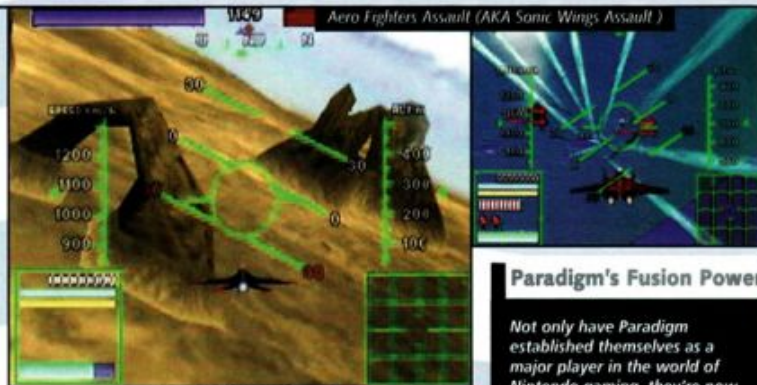
military and defence contractors!

"*Pilotwings* was very much a joint collaboration between the two companies," points out Gary. "It being our first game, we didn't claim to be game experts, we were technology experts. So it made sense working with Nintendo, using their outstanding games knowledge." The relationship proved so harmonious that, in addition to the three games for Video System Japan, Paradigm are already working with Nintendo on another, as yet unnamed, project.

"The first game for Video System will be *Aero Fighters Assault* - it's in the final stages of development right now," confirms Gary. "Whereas *Pilotwings* was whimsical, *Sonic Wings* is more traditional, more of a combat simulator. You'll be flying modern jets, including an F-14, an A-10, an F-SX and an Su-35, as well as two bonus craft."

The enemy planes are similarly diverse, including the Eurofighter, the F-22a, the MiG-34 and the Kafir. Gary again: "All of them have a basis in reality, and then some things we've modified to make sure they're a lot more fun. We've been able to include some very believable manoeuvres which makes for realistic dogfighting. One of the team is a former F-14 pilot, so he should know if something's right!"

The upshot is that *Aero Fighters Assault* will be the most simulation-



Paradigm's Fusion Power

Not only have Paradigm established themselves as a major player in the world of Nintendo gaming, they're now also taking an active role in third-party development with their Fusion 64 package. "It's a program we put together as a service to Nintendo and other developers," explains Paradigm's Gary Bandy. Developers who buy their emulation system from

Paradigm can make use of development tools like Ultravision, a real-time rendering engine. "The idea is that a developer can come to us, and when they get the package, it's all pre-loaded and ready to go," says Gary.

Paradigm aren't allowed to say who's using the system, but their general customers include Virgin and Namco, so it's likely that these two are currently writing their potential N64 hits with some of Paradigm's software tools.

like N64 title yet, although the actual encounters are fictional. They include defending downtown Tokyo, attacking a stealth battleship in the Pacific, taking out a Flying Fortress bomber near New York, reconnaissance in the Monument Valley, battling another Flying Fortress (in the Andes), then an all-out dogfight over the Antarctic.

There's also one final stage, but, as with the names of the other Paradigm games in progress, Gary isn't giving any hints.



Midway

Published in the UK by GT, Midway – who've already given us *Doom*, *Wayne Gretzky*, *Cruisin' USA* and *NBA Hangtime* – started life as Bally Midway.

They were a pinball manufacturer, and first made their mark with video games when they bought the rights to sell the *Pong* coin-op from Atari. Midway now own Williams and (since last year) Atari Games, along with console developer Trade West. All of which means that N64 gamers can look forward to some pretty high profile stuff from them, including *Mortal Kombat 4*, the first 3D beat-'em-up in the series, and *Robotron X* – an update of the classic Williams coin-op. A similar re-working job will also be applied to *Joust*, though how the game most notable for featuring a 'flap' button will get the '90s treatment is anyone's guess.

The *Mortal Kombat* series gets another opportunity to redeem itself (after the deathly dull *Mortal Kombat Trilogy*) with *MK Mythologies: Sub-Zero*, a beat-'em-up based arcade adventure. The brainchild of MK creator John

Tobias (partner Ed Boon is concentrating on MK4), it's an attempt to flesh out the history of Sub-Zero, with other familiar MK characters cropping up as the martial artist traverses the semi-3D platform-based world.

Back in the land of arcade conversions, early signs are that *San Francisco Rush* will be a big improvement on *Cruisin' USA*, with multiple pathways through the levels, plus visuals comparable with those of the coin-op. And there are yet more beat-'em-ups, with *War Gods*, *Biofreaks* and Atari's *Mace: The Dark Age*. The characters and emphasis on weapons, including swords and battleaxes, should set *Mace* apart from Midway's other

fighting games, particularly the *Street-Fighter*-derived MK series.

Flushed with the success of handling the *Doom* 64 conversion, Midway are also taking on both *Quake* (see below) and *Hexen*, a fantasy-themed first-person title using *Doom* technology. While *Doom* puts all sorts of big guns at the player's disposal, *Hexen*'s style is more swords and sorcery, with spells, staves, and a whole range of magical collectibles. It's even possible to take to the air in some stages.

Unfortunately, the actual level designs will be identical to those on the PC, but fog effects and the machine's filtering abilities will greatly improve graphical quality. Best of all, a Mario Kart-style four player mode is included, recreating the joys of the multi-player deathmatches in the original. Given that *Quake* is on the cards and *Hexen 2* uses that game's 3D engine, we wouldn't be at all surprised if Midway wasn't gearing up to an N64 port of that, too.

QUAKE – just what's so special?

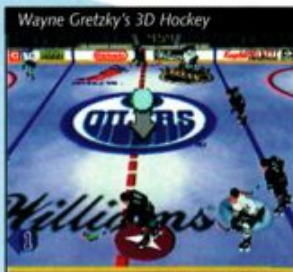
Top dog amongst Midway's impending selection of N64 games has to be *Quake*, for those familiar with the PC original at least. This is essentially *Doom* 64 taken to the next level – in fact it's been coded in-house at Midway by the same team. Gone are the flat sprite monsters, with real 3D characters (each built from 150-200 polygons) lunging at your first-person viewpoint instead. And while the levels in *Doom* were nicely atmospheric, the medieval-meets-industrial sections in *Quake* are far more dynamic and solid-feeling.

Some clever pre-calculated light sourcing and the ability to have platforms and rooms above other searchable areas adds immensely to the environment, while the more action-orientated gameplay style, and wealth of sneaky weapons, traps, and underwater passages, makes for a pretty diverse experience. *Quake* 64 may not be able to match up to *Turok* in terms of raw firepower or the number of monsters on screen at once, but the locations promise to be far more interactive.

One thing *Quake* 64 won't have, unfortunately, is the PC's multi-player mode. Because of the complexity of those visuals, the split-screen viewpoint offered by the likes of *Hexen* just isn't possible. Given that the PC *Quake* was deemed lacking in single-player mode this is unfortunate. But Midway is still confident that they can crank up the excitement levels sufficiently to make it a definite step up from *Doom* 64. "It may not be multi-player, but believe me it'll be wonderful," says Andrew Hoolan at Midway.

We'll know how right he is when it's completed in time for a Christmas release.

Quake (PC)



Acclaim

Founded in 1987, and a major player in the world of Nintendo games since the days of the NES.

Acclaim have already proven their worth with *Turok Dinosaur Hunter*, the first game from a third party to match up to Nintendo's own creations. Which is probably why the US division is already hard at work on *Turok 2*, and also why (our source tells us) they have the only 64DD development kit outside Nintendo, and are developing the game for the new format.

This could be great news for *Turok* fans, with Acclaim already

considering the idea of releasing low-price add-on level packs for the game every few months.

Prior to that, keep an eye out of NFL Quarterback Club '98. American football simulations are usually pretty ropey-looking at the best of times, but this one boasts 3D player models so detailed you'd swear they were pre-rendered. This is down to the use of the N64's high resolution 640x480 pixel mode, combined with rendered stadium textures and purpose-designed characters that use motion-capture data taken from New York Jets running back Adrian Murrell.

Interplay

Interplay actually began life way back in 1983, though it wasn't until they began co-publishing in 1987 that gamers really began to sit up and take notice. SNES fans still fondly recall the likes of *Rock 'n' Roll Racing*, *Earthworm Jim*, and (possibly) *Clayfighter*.

It's the latter that's to be first for the 64-bit treatment in *Clayfighter Extreme*, with even better claymation bringing even dafter looking fighters to life (Sumo Santo, a disembodied hand or the Statue Of Liberty, anyone?). The 3D power of the machine will also be put to use, with full 3D locations in which to

creatures will be solid 3D models, and instead of battling the usual bad guys, Jim literally has to confront his own worst nightmares as he battles to repair his brain after a nasty blow to the head.

The game is actually being developed at Dumfermline-based VIS Interactive, so more on this when we interrogate European developers next month.

N



Clayfighter 63 1/2



Earthworm Jim 3

do battle (although the two fighters will always be viewed from the side), and multiple camera views showing it all off to the full. As with previous *Clayfighter* games, the violence is accompanied by slapstick silliness and clay splattering rather than blood 'n' guts. Which should please the family-minded Nintendo.

Ultra Descent was also on the cards, but that idea has now been binned, so the second N64 release from Interplay will now be *Earthworm Jim 3* (due next April), a full 3D outing for the gun-toting invertebrate. The daft humour will remain, but this time all the cartoon

Shiny Entertainment

While Interplay is set to release N64 *Earthworm Jim 3* early next year, its original creators Shiny haven't actually committed to the platform yet. However, don't rule out Shiny just yet.

"I love it, I just think that the cart format will drag it down over time," reckons Shiny head Dave Perry. "I can't wait for the 64DD - I believe it'll be \$99 including a game. That would be splendid." Perry reckons that's when he'll come off the fence and apply that unique Shiny perspective to the machine. "I have an idea. We're running physics tests at the moment. If we can do it, it'll be a new genre of game..."

N

Epic Megagames

Don't be surprised if the name is unfamiliar - Epic carved a reputation in the world of PC shareware, only recently causing a real buzz with their *Unreal* project.

The PC version has still to see the light of day, but early word is that it could well be a *Quake*-beater, featuring more finely detailed environments, real-time light sourcing, and more complex 3D monster shapes. As for the much-rumoured N64 version, Craig Lafferty at Epic's US offices tells us: "At this point it's still too early to comment on the N64



Unreal (PC)

version of *Unreal*, other than to say it'll be for the 64DD add-on. GT will be publishing the game, but who will develop it along with Epic is still unknown."

N

Virgin

Since Virgin were bought out by Viacom, the high profile publishers have been noticeably less boisterous, not to say less prolific. Which may explain the continued non-appearance of premier N64 game *Freak Boy*.

It's always sounded like a great idea, with a proper 3D game world and a hero able to absorb skill-giving items into three different areas of his body, but changes in the development team have already

put development back, and now it's not 100% certain whether it will ever appear. The much-rumoured *Command & Conquer* conversion, meanwhile, appears to have been just that. Virgin tell us that if C&C developer Westwood do transfer one of their acclaimed real-time wargames to the N64, then it'll be *Red Alert* (effectively C&C 2), rather than the original game. Either way, don't expect any N64 stuff from Virgin until well into next year, if at all.

N

Ion Storm

Founded just a few months back by a bunch of high-profile developers, including *Doom*-and-*Quake*-creator John Romero, Ion Storm have already made headlines with rumours of \$10 million deals and the announcement of three PC titles, at least one of which is set to use the impressive *Quake 3D* engine.

There's been much talk of one or more of the games - including Romero's *Daikatana* and Tom Hall's *Anachronox* - making it to the N64, which Ion Storm's Mike Wilson has

now confirmed. "We hope all three of our current titles in progress can be ported to the N64," he tells us. "But our games are so content-heavy, it may come down to a matter of storage space. We won't do the development in-house, but rather use an outside 'port house' familiar with the N64 and the *Quake* technology. We won't ship a port that is a lesser version than the PC product, though. N64 *Doom* is great, and we hear *Quake* is progressing nicely, so you can probably expect *Daikatana 64* in mid '98."

N

Singletrac

Previously a PlayStation-only developer, Singletrac is the latest US-based third party to sign up with Nintendo.

There's been no announcement yet about what games we can

expect, but it's unlikely that Sony hit *Twisted Metal* will make it over. Do, however, expect future titles to retain a similar ultra-explosive, multi-player approach to that used in existing Singletrac creations.

N

GO! GO!



NFL Quarterback Club '98



Konami

Konami is primarily a Japanese concern, but has had offices in the US since the late '80s, when Nintendo's NES system first took hold.

Most of their American team are still working on PlayStation titles, but N64 Magazine does know that at least one game for N64 is in the works. Konami isn't saying what, but it's a fair bet that it'll be a conversion of one of their existing Sony titles. The good money has it that it'll have something to do with American sports, too. **N**

Sierra

While a conversion of impending PC flight sim *Red Baron* was mooted way back when the N64 was first announced, Sierra have now canned all plans to publish the game and indeed anything else on console systems, preferring to focus instead on the PC and Mac.

The acquisition of a smaller, N64-capable developer with whom to create and publish N64 software hasn't been ruled out, however. Watch this space. **N**

Gametek

SNES gamers may remember Gametek for, er, classics like *Kawasaki Caribbean Challenge* and *Vanna White's Wheel of Fortune*. But they did also give us the excellent *Spectre*, and besides, a company shake-up a couple of years or so back has apparently done wonders for quality control.

All of which bodes well for their first N64 effort, *Robotech: Crystal Dreams*. Based on the Japanese big robot cartoon of a few years back, it's a first-person 3D shoot-'em-up

featuring solid polygonal robots, 3D positional sound and something called a MultiBranching Chronosync Algorithm (MBCSA).

Gametek claims MBCSA makes the game world respond to the player's action in real-time, but it may well just be an excuse for a technical-sounding abbreviation. More interesting to players is the ability to transform the player craft from fighter to guardian to battleloid mode, each with its own strengths, weaknesses and control styles. **N**

Ocean

Although primarily a European company, Ocean's US-based development team are working to complete *Mission: Impossible* in time for a late summer release, just in time to tie in with the theatrical outing of the second Mission movie. Happily, the game will be available simultaneously worldwide, rather than the usual release in Japan, then America, then Europe nonsense – something to do with the development team comprising mostly of Brits abroad, apparently.

And speaking of impossible missions, that's exactly what the Ocean US team will be basing their

next game on. "They've already upgraded the engine for the second game and developed gadgets they didn't have a chance to get into the first one," reveals our very own spy at Ocean. (Okay, so it's the PR guy.) The already impressive AI routines, which make it possible for each computer character to react individually to situations, events and even noises, promise to be even cleverer in the second outing. "They've already got lots

of good stuff lined up for the game," says our informant. "Now they're just waiting for the movie script for Paramount to determine the direction of the plot." **N**

Mission: Impossible



Mission: Impossible



Mission: Impossible



Kemco & Boss Game Studios



Kemco, a US subsidiary of a Japanese Engineering company, have a surprisingly long history with Nintendo, publishing games like *Shadowgate* and several Disney titles on the NES before creating *Top Gear* for the SNES.

With their N64 licence it's the latter title they're returning to, working with relatively new development team Boss Game Studios (currently with only *Spider* for the Playstation under their belt) on *Top Gear Rally*. A split-screen mode, excellent weather effects,

Top Gear Rally



stunning scenery and some amazing nighttime lighting effects are all very good reasons why this is one of the best-fancied driving games coming to the N64. **N**

"Blast the door kid!"

LucasArts

With *Shadows Of The Empire* under LucasArts' belt, N64 gamers might expect them to be gearing up for more titles, Star Wars-related or not.

Sadly, there's no word on any more Nintendo work from George Lucas's gaming division, but given that the next Star Wars movie is currently filming it's highly likely that a tie-in of some sort is being planned. And we wouldn't be too surprised if LucasArts dusted off some of their other well-loved licences, like Indiana Jones, for the N64 treatment.

We'll keep you posted.

N

FIFA 64 already available and more conversions of EA Sports staples on the way.

EA are tight lipped about what we can expect in the future, but it would be fair to assume that *John Madden Football*, *NBA Live*, *NHL Hockey* and *PGA Golf* will all make it to the N64 at some point. Electronic Arts also handle Dreamworks titles, so it's conceivable that the game-of-the-movie *The Lost World* (Jurassic Park 2) may also be converted.

N



Electronic Arts

Formed in 1982 by ex-Apple man Trip Hawkins (then just 28), Electronic Arts attempted to emulate the style of Hollywood, both in their choice of name (a throwback to United Artists) and in their studio development system. Hawkins' casual attitude, team spirit and good business sense ensured that the company quickly blossomed, employing around 300 people in three different studios.

But because EA had made their

fortune in the world of PC software, they didn't take Nintendo seriously, and so didn't take the plunge until 1990. The initial cartridge outlay represented a big risk, but EA's small army of sports titles ensured that it soon became one of the biggest NES, and then SNES, developers around.

Up until very recently, EA had shunned the N64, however, citing the cartridge format and the costs involved as the primary reason for avoiding the format. But that decision has now been reversed, with

Angel Studios

Like Paradigm, Angel have absolutely no experience in the field of Nintendo gaming, but possess a hugely impressive graphics-based pedigree. But where Paradigm's expertise lies in the world of simulations, Angel Studio are best known for producing stunning rendered imagery.

Founded in '84, Angel first came to prominence some five years later when they provided the virtual reality sequences for the very silly movie *The Lawnmower Man*. A

state-of-the-art music video (and accompanying hydraulic ride) for Peter Gabriel's 'Kiss That Frog' single followed, and then tentative forays into gaming with experimental coin-ops *Orbit Defenders*, *Dr Megow's Mad Cap Ornithon* and *F-1 NetRace*.

Buggie Boogie is Angel's first N64 title, and after much input from Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto, has been radically transformed over the past twelve months from a family-orientated exploration game into a more realistic and action-packed

vehicle-based idea. A two-player battle mode will be included, along with an unusual time-attack format which requires players to pick-up items that drastically change the abilities of their vehicle. Much time has apparently been spent ensuring that the behaviour and look of the vehicles alters correctly when items are collected.

It sounds intriguing, and with that magic touch from Miyamoto it may well establish Angel Studios as a force to be reckoned with.

N

Player 1

This recently formed developer has thus far worked on just one game: *Robotron X* for GT. And it's this update of the Williams coin-op classic that they're currently porting to the N64.

The game itself will remain identical to that of the PlayStation version, with 200 levels of running and shooting around a flat but 3D

playing area. Visually, the game will boast better camera tracking than the PlayStation version, as well as generally improved visuals.

"All the textures and polygons are way better-looking than our previous version," reckons Player 1. "Essentially, all the N64's graphics effects will be used." And that can't be a bad thing in our opinion.

N



Diablo

Blizzard

Here's another well-regarded PC developer that hasn't taken the plunge into the world of Nintendo as such, but is of interest to N64 gamers. The story concerns Nintendo's plan to develop their own version of *Diablo*, Blizzard's excellent action-based role-playing game.

It's unlikely that the multi-player option will be included, but there should be plenty of opportunity for the machine's graphics to add that extra class to the moody isometric 3D dungeon locations and pre-rendered monster sprites.

N

GO! GO!



H2O

Having been snatched from under Atari's nose by Nintendo, H2O have been working on their 'anti-Tetris' game, Phear, solidly for the last two years.

Renamed Tetrisphere for the N64, the game now boasts cleaner visuals and a two-player mode, although the basic idea – sort of Tetris Attack in 3D – remains the same. Sources at H2O say the much-delayed puzzler (the first such game for the N64) is in the final testing stages, with all the special effects, and features like chain reactions and explosions, in place. Expect a release, via Nintendo, some time this summer.

N

3DO

The company behind a rival system may seem an odd N64 licensee, but Nintendo has already given the go-ahead for an update of 3DO title *Battlesport* for the N64, due some time next year.

A futuresport game reminiscent of LucasArts *Ballblazer*, the original *Battlesport* pitted two-on-two teams of be-weaponed hovercraft against each other, attempting to gain control of a glowing ball and blast it into an arena goal. Developer Cyclone Studios has yet to make a start on *Battlesport 64*, but improved detail on objects, more complex arenas, and the opportunity to damage the scenery have all been mooted. "*Battlesport* is born to be on a system like N64," Cyclone's Helmut Kobler told one journalist. "There is a possibility of the game going four-player, if two systems could be linked up. As far as I know, a link is possible, but I can't speak for Nintendo."

N

DUKE NUKEM – stripped down

PC developer 3D Realms have yet to commit themselves to working on the N64, but they've given Brit-based Software Creations the green light to convert their flagship game, Duke Nukem 3D, to the system for publishers GTi. Which means N64 gamers will have even more Doom-style titles to choose from, this latest boasting a less than serious approach to the usual alien invasion story, and the sort of game content which may well give Nintendo a few headaches.

Duke Nukem 64 takes the battle onto the city streets, you see, where the designers have deemed porn shops, strip shows and even seedy

cinemas a must. At least, that's in the PC version. Whether Nintendo will allow such things to appear in the N64 conversion is still up in the air. George Broussard of 3D Realms has said:

"Essentially, we want to keep the strippers in the game. But I don't know. If it comes down to an issue of censorship, and Nintendo says, 'Well, if you decide to keep the strippers in the game then we can't release it,' we'll have to make a decision there."

The original was easily most fun in multi-player mode, where the inventive cityscapes provided the perfect backdrop for firefights

between players competing for the best power-ups, while at the same time attempting to blast away the aliens. Not surprisingly, then, Software Creations have gone for a complete re-write, making use of the N64's fogging abilities. They've also elected to include a split-screen mode, catering for up to four gamers, Mario Kart-style. Interestingly, the first-person viewpoint has also been dropped, with gamers now playing the game using a view from just behind their own personal Duke. If nothing else, this ought to make the sections which require precise jumping a whole lot easier.

N

Duke Nukem 3D (PC)



Vic Tokai

It's actually the American division of Vic Tokai that's working on *Dark Rift*, not the Japanese as featured in last month's round-up.

Nothing else from the US office has been announced as yet, but hopes are high that the developer can make its mark with this 3D polygonal beat-'em-up. (It has to better than *War Gods*.)

N



NEXT MONTH

N64 comes home to see how developers like Core, Probe and Software Creations are keeping the European end up.

N64