

# North of the Border

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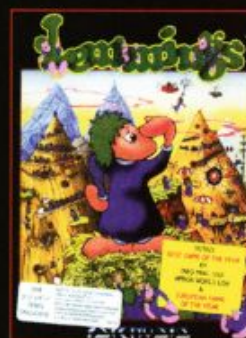
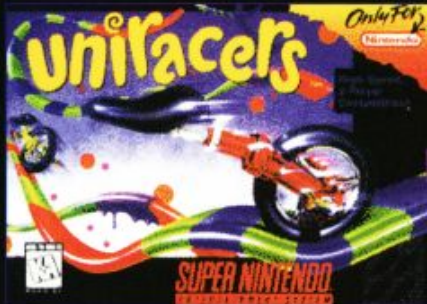
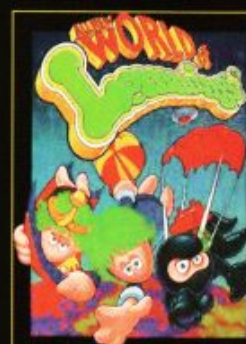
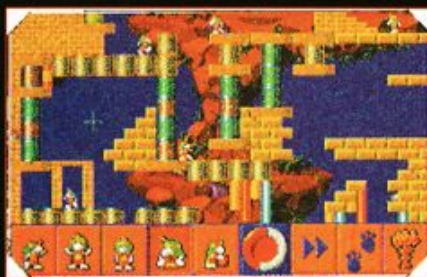
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# NORTH OF THE BORDER



**DUNDEE-BASED GAMES DEVELOPERS DMA HAVE MADE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES WITH SOME EXTRAORDINARY GAMES. STRONG ON ORIGINALITY AND GAMEPLAY, THEY HIT THE BIG TIME WITH THE UNFORGETTABLE LEMMINGS ON THE AMIGA, AND THEY HAVE CARRIED THAT WINNING STREAK ON TO THE PRESENT DAY.**





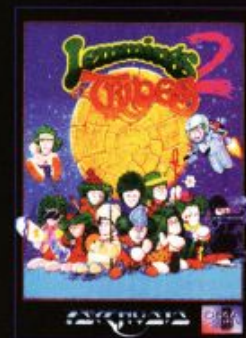
DMA Design have a long history of producing highly original and addictively playable games on many formats

In 1988, David Jones was a student at what is now Abertay University in Dundee. In his spare time he liked to write games programs on his Commodore Amiga. One game in particular, a side scrolling shoot-'em-up in the style of the popular *R-Type*, was sufficiently good to secure David a publishing deal with Psygnosis. The game was called *Menace*, and it was later released on the Atari ST and the PC as well. Impressed by the game's reception in the press, David and some friends started work on a follow-up

**FURTHER SUCCESS**

The following year, DMA were approached by Nintendo, who asked them to develop a title for the Super Nintendo (SNES). The result was *Uniracers*, a wild high-speed racing game the like of which had never been seen on the console. It was published by Nintendo in 1994 in the USA, and 1995 in the UK. *Lemmings 3* was released in the same years on the PC and then the Amiga 1200 platforms.

In 1997 Take 2 Interactive published *Grand Theft Auto* on the PlayStation and PC. The game was a



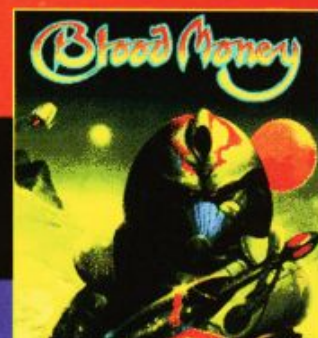
**IN 1991, THE NEW COMPANY SCORED ITS FIRST MAJOR HIT WITH THE LEGENDARY LEMMINGS, ORIGINALLY RELEASED ON THE AMIGA PLATFORM BY PSYGNOSIS**

game. When *Blood Money* was released the following year, it proved to be even more popular than *Menace* had been, and was enough to convince David that he had found his calling in life. That year he abandoned his college course and started his own software development company, called DMA Design.

In 1991, the new company scored its first major hit with the legendary *Lemmings*, originally released on the Amiga platform by Psygnosis. *Lemmings* was an unprecedented success and is undoubtedly one of the real classics of the computer games world. It was converted onto more than twenty different computer systems. Further success for DMA followed in 1993 with the release of *Walker*, an innovative and stylish shoot-'em-up, again published by Psygnosis. The same year saw the release of the critically acclaimed *Hired Guns* and the sequel to *Lemmings*, *Lemmings Tribes*.

commercial success and received good reviews in games magazines but stirred up a wave of controversy in the more hysterical sections of the tabloid press due to its theme of organised crime. This criticism did nothing to harm DMA's reputation, and the company's future was secured when it was bought by the leading UK developer and publisher, Gremlin Interactive. In conjunction with Gremlin they now have the biggest motion capture studio and game audio studio in Europe.

DMA have also done more work for Nintendo, with the release last year of *Body Harvest* and *Space Station Silicon Valley* for the N64 console. The future continues to look bright for DMA Design, and the new games they have in development at the moment show their continued commitment to high quality, supremely playable games. We've got a Beta Look on their latest creation, *Tanktics*, elsewhere in this issue, but let's take a look back at past glories and future successes from north of the border.



*Blood Money* was a critically acclaimed side-scrolling shoot-'em-up

## GRAND THEFT AUTO



When BMG Interactive published *Grand Theft Auto* for the PlayStation in 1997, they probably didn't realise how much controversy the game was going to generate. Because of its content, the game was given an 'eighteen' certificate by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), which is the statutory body with responsibility for setting age limits on films, videos and computer games. However, playable demos of the game were made available on the coverdisks of some PlayStation magazines, and were bought by children under the age of eighteen. This led to a lot of slightly hysterical ranting in the more reactionary sections of the tabloid press, and even to a debate in the House of Lords. However, this sudden

notoriety did nothing to harm the sales of the game, which was later also released on the PC.

The reason for all the controversy was the theme of the game. As a small-time crook out to make an impression on the local organised crime bosses, you were asked to undertake a series of missions, usually involving car theft, drug dealing or some other such nefarious activity. The game was set in three huge top-down viewed cities, complete with other drivers, hapless pedestrians, and of course the police, who would do everything in their power to try and bring your crime spree to a sudden stop.

Despite its content, or perhaps because of it, *GTA* is a superbly playable game, and a sequel is in the pipeline.

## UNIRACERS



In 1993, DMA were approached by Nintendo and asked to develop a game for the popular Super Nintendo console, and they duly obliged. *Uniracers* was the result, and the game was published by Nintendo in 1994 in the United States and 1995 over here. *Uniracers* soon became known as the fastest racing game on the SNES, attracting a wide following.

Set in a world inhabited by a race of sentient unicycles, basically the idea of the game was to race these living machines around a series of utterly devious tracks, performing wild stunts and trying to clock up as many points as possible. The game consisted of eight tours, each named after an animal, with the slowest 'crawler' stage

being sponsored by a snail. After training, you could race against the mysterious 'ghost' racers or play a two-player match against a friend. In the single player game, the aim was to increase your skill until you could take on the Anti-Uni, the end of game boss and the fastest unicycle in the world. The secret to winning was to pull off as many stunts as possible. You could combine stunts into huge combos, and the better the stunt, the more speed you picked up.

This is every inch a DMA game, with the emphasis on originality and supreme playability rather than flashy graphics. The backgrounds may have been a little bit bland, but the game was so fast and involving that you simply didn't notice its shortcomings.

## LEMMINGS



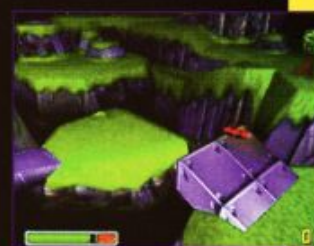
If you ask anyone who has been playing computer games for a few years to list their all-time favourite games, I'd wager a pint or three that nine out of ten of them will have *Lemmings* near the top of their list. One of the undisputed classics of all time, *Lemmings* was first released in 1991 on the Commodore Amiga, and rapidly established itself as a favourite. It was converted to over twenty other formats, including the Atari ST, ZX Spectrum and even

the Philips Cdi system. Two sequels were to follow in 1993 and 1994, and the game is still played by many people to this day.

The basic idea of *Lemmings* was deceptively simple: A trapdoor at the top of the screen would open and a hundred suicidal lemmings would begin to drop through onto the obstacle course below. The courses were a series of 2D platforms, and the idea was to get the lemmings from one side to the other with as few casualties as possible. This was achieved by ordering selected lemmings to build bridges, dig tunnels or simply stand and stop their fellows from plummeting to their doom over the edge of the platform. Simple enough, but each of the fiendishly designed levels was more difficult than the last, and you just had to keep coming back for more. The game was, and still is, totally addictive.

## THE NINTENDO 64

Last year DMA released their first two games for the Nintendo 64 console. *Space Station Silicon Valley* was a madcap 3D platform puzzle game set on the long lost space station of the title. The station is populated by a bizarre menagerie of robotic animals, such as a two-litre racing mouse, a rocket-powered fox, a dog on wheels with a built-in rocket launcher and a rat with exploding turds. And sheep, which DMA seem to include in a lot of their games, for some reason. The space station is on a collision course with planet Earth, and you have to solve a series of increasingly difficult puzzles in an attempt to take control of it and prevent a disaster. There are fifty incredibly diverse levels in the game, and more than enough totally original gameplay to satisfy anybody.



From giant insects to rocket-powered foxes, DMA's Nintendo 64 games, *Body Harvest* and *Space Station Silicon Valley*, are full of bizarre adventures

## THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT, THE FUTURE'S TARTAN

DMA are also working on two or three new projects for publication later this year. For a Scottish company to make a game set in Scotland seems only natural, so the lads from Dundee are working on just such a project. *Clan Wars* is a violent PC action strategy game set in the Scotland of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. It was described by one of the programming team as making the film *Braveheart* look like a tea party. The game will combine elements of arcade action and real-time strategy, complete with siege warfare and huge 3D battles. The only thing we've seen so far is a few brief segments of utterly brutal motion capture, but if they are anything to go by, this one's going to be a lot of fun.

Even more secret is *Attack*, described by the team as being "like Millwall supporters let loose in Jurassic Park". The game will be released on the Nintendo 64, the PlayStation and the PC. Featuring a manic cast of dinosaurs and cavemen, this will be one of the big games to watch out for in 1999.

Of course the game we are all waiting to see is *Grand Theft Auto 2*, but DMA are saying nothing about this one at the moment, other than to confirm that there will be a sequel in due course. Gary Penn, Creative Manager of DMA, would only say that it would be "more of the same, only more so". Watch this space for more news when we get it.

# AN INTERVIEW WITH GARY PENN

CREATIVE MANAGER, DMA DESIGN LTD.



Gary Penn is the Creative Manager of DMA Design Ltd. He kindly took time out from his busy schedule to have a few words with Total CONTROL.

**T.C.:** DMA's games are always very original and contain some pretty wacky concepts – for example, the inflammable sheep in *Tanktics*. Who comes up with these ideas? Is it a team effort or do you have some mad genius locked in the cellar?

**G.P.:** Both – except the mad genius runs free.

**T.C.:** Although most of the DMA games that I have seen would appeal to a wide audience, some are obviously more mature than others. When planning a new game, to what extent do you aim it at a specific age range?

**G.P.:** We just do what we do best and leave the demographic considerations to the people who think they know best, i.e. the publishers.

**T.C.:** On a more serious note, *Grand Theft Auto* has generated a lot of controversy in the popular press due to its theme of crime and violence. Were you particularly surprised by this reaction?

**G.P.:** Not at all. Above all the choice of theme helped ensure that an immensely playable game was as accessible to as many 'real' people as possible.

**T.C.:** Do you think that the press attention adversely affected sales of the game, or was it a case of 'no such thing as bad publicity'?

**G.P.:** I think there can be such a thing as bad publicity – a point where the extreme becomes mundane and people grow bored with the monotony.

**T.C.:** Do you think that the moral minority have a point when they claim that films and games depicting violence 'desensitise' viewers to violence in real life?

**G.P.:** I can only speak from personal experience. In the past 25 years, I have tortured and killed thousands – millions – of digital forms, but I have never come close to feeling compelled to cause harm to anyone in the real world, no matter how much they may piss me off.

**T.C.:** Since DMA games are released all over the world, do you find that different countries often have varying attitudes towards game content?

**G.P.:** There certainly is a big difference in attitudes towards games around the world. As far as I can tell (and generalise): the French are in search of aesthetic excess; the Germans above all demand detailed rules and sincerity; the Americans want maximum reward for

**DMA'S GAMES ARE ALWAYS VERY ORIGINAL AND CONTAIN SOME PRETTY WACKY CONCEPTS – FOR EXAMPLE, THE INFLAMMABLE SHEEP IN TANKTICS**

minimum effort; the Japanese are insane in the best possible way; the British are some twisted mish-mash of all the other countries – also in the best possible way.

**T.C.:** If you had a completely free reign to make a computer game designed just to entertain Gary Penn, what would that game be like?

**G.P.:** It would certainly be 'physical' – a solid feel is paramount. Its toyset would be tight and efficient and allow for considerable compound interaction and personalisation in the way it was used. It would be messy – involve making a mess. It would be noisy (which is effectively making more mess). I can't be any more specific than that.

**T.C.:** So, what is GTA2 going to be like? Different locations, more cars and bigger crimes, or will you go for a full-on 3D first-person approach?

**G.P.:** All I'm prepared to say is: GTA2 is more of the same, only more so.

**T.C.:** Gary Penn, thank you for talking to us, and we look forwards to seeing DMA's new games soon.



The creative process at DMA Design is a team effort – and what a team! You don't come up with games like *Silicon Valley* without serious talent

# WILD METAL COUNTRY



**W**ild Metal Country is the title of DMA's next big release, due out in the next couple of months. It is set in a distant star system in the far future, where an advanced civilisation destroyed themselves in a cataclysmic civil war. The only remnants of this long-vanished people are the sophisticated artificially intelligent war machines they created to do their fighting for them, the very machines that caused their downfall. Over the years these machines have evolved behaviour patterns that mimic the animal life they destroyed in the war, and now live wild on the surface of the planets once occupied by their masters, jealously hoarding the mysterious Power Cores that are the source of all their energy. These Power Cores are the ultimate energy source, and other

tank. Learning to use these weapons effectively is the key to winning the game, as well as surviving in the hectic multiplayer option. Up to eight players can fight each other using all the weapons from the single player game in one of five different tanks, each with unique characteristics.

## SOUNDS GREAT

The game utilises DMA's proprietary 3D graphics engine, called 3DMA, to generate huge landscapes with varied terrain, realistic weather, dynamic lighting and accurate physics. You are completely free to explore the landscapes, and it is possible to follow and even identify the enemy tanks by the tracks they leave. Any object that is not part of the landscape can be

### DMA'S PROPRIETARY 3D GRAPHICS ENGINE, CALLED 3DMA, CAN GENERATE HUGE LANDSCAPES WITH VARIED TERRAIN, REALISTIC WEATHER, DYNAMIC LIGHTING AND ACCURATE PHYSICS

moves or destroyed, or used for clever tactics. Advanced AI routines control the enemy vehicles, giving each type a distinct and recognisable behaviour pattern.

Just as important to the overall feel of the game is the use of sound. DMA are the only game company other than LucasArts to employ dedicated audio programmers. For Wild Metal Country they have created a 3D world of sound involving multiple samples for each vehicle and weapon which change depending on range and direction, complete with Doppler effects as shells fly overhead. The sound effects simulate a 3D world just as effectively as a 3D accelerator card does for graphics. Wild Metal Country uses more processor time on sound effects than any other game. The result is a compelling and extremely playable game that combines stealth, firepower and tactics. The game is not just going to be available on the PC either - Wild Metal Country has been chosen as one of the European launch titles for the Sega Dreamcast.

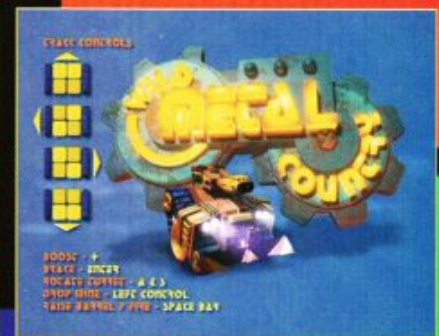
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## TAKING CONTROL

The controls of your tank are different from any other game but allow a unique degree of manoeuvrability. Both tracks are controlled independently, so you can have one go forwards while the other is in reverse, spinning the tank on its axis. The turret is steered separately, and the main gun elevated to give howitzer-type shots which can fire over obstacles. There are a vast range of weapons available in the game, many of which use the amazingly accurate physics modelling to produce their effects. There are bouncing shells, magnetic shells, cluster bombs and guided missiles, amongst others, as well as a selection of mines which can be dropped from the back of your



Expect to see Wild Metal Country on the Dreamcast this September



Wild Metal Country exemplifies DMA's philosophy of putting gameplay above all other considerations, but the graphics are still utterly beautiful